

Town of Wilmington
2024 Annual Town Meeting Held in the Gym at Old School Enrichment Center (OSEC)
Minutes
March 5, 2024

Moderator Robert Fisher called the meeting to order at 10:03am.

In attendance were Moderator Robert Fisher, Selectboard Members Sarah Fisher, Tom Fitzgerald, Vince Rice, Tony Tribuno; Town Manager Scott Tucker, Finance Officer Christine Richter, Highway Supervisor Marshall Dix, Fire Chief Scott Moore, Police Chief Matt Murano, Town Clerk Therese Lounsbury and approximately 104 voters.

Scouts Daltyn Hurley and John Mosher from Scout Troop #461 posted the colors, and Moderator Bob Fisher led the Pledge of Allegiance. The moderator shared that he would be following Roberts Rules of Order and that all questions should be directed through the moderator. A voice vote confirmed that Bob could read the start and conclusion of the Annual Town Meeting Warning, acknowledging 26 articles, and dispense with reading through all the articles before beginning. Articles will be addressed and read as they come before the floor. The moderator also asked whether there were any objections to allowing the non-voting members of the town's administration to speak during the meeting. There were no objections.

Question from the floor: Who can "call the question" – the floor or the board?

Speaker: Barker Willard III

Moderator Response: Any registered voter has the right to "call the question and cease debate".

Article 1: To elect all Town and Town School District Officers required by law AND to authorize that the Town obtain either a general obligation bond or a loan, for the purpose of extending water and sewer infrastructure along Route 9 East. (Australian Ballot – Polls open 7:00 A.M. until 7:00 P.M.)

Article 2: To see if the Town will vote to accept the Town Report.

Motion to approve as read made by Tom Fitzgerald, seconded by Steve Adams.

Debate (including but not limited to): one correction on page 31 – the proposed FY25 Public Lands & Fences Appropriations amount should be \$5,000 not \$30,000.

Speakers: Scott Tucker

Voice Vote: Motion carried.

Article 3: Shall the Town adopt all budget articles by Australian ballot pursuant to 17 V.S.A. § 2680(c)?

Motion to adopt as read made by Tony Tribuno, seconded by Tom Fitzgerald.

Debate (including but not limited to): low attendance, need simple and fair to all voters, current process disenfranchises a portion of our voters, 2023 had 60 floor voters, mean is less than 5% of voters, voters can attend Selectboard meetings for budget information and the pre-Town Meeting, cannot guarantee voters are better informed, look around the room – good turnout, 180 total people voted at the polls in 2023 so against that it appears a better turnout for 60, not always easy to attend, numbers dwindled from COVID, does not feel they are always heard at Selectboard meetings, keep open to floor debate – coming from big city this is valuable process, school is out for the day – upper grades should attend as part of syllabus, consider an evening or Saturday, we are newcomers – appreciate the motive of the proposed article but finds the importance of the gathering of voters to discuss and debate, direct Athenian democracy, let's not give it up, push for greater participation, believe the Board cares deeply

about the community as is apparent by their service, this forum only place to come collectively and listen to debate/discussion – could even change your mind, money matters, Town Reports should be mailed out to all voters and property owners to help improve participation, go to School Board to increase youth participation, could bring officer vote to the floor, number of times articles were amended from the floor through the years – adjustments to monies for budgets, capital funds, 1% funds, Look Bridge, go to Australian Ballot voted down twice, get to honor people that we've lost, gives good sense of public speaking, good lunch put on by school functions, received extra credit when in school for participating – and I needed that, democracy is not an easy thing to keep, keeps people honest too.

Speakers: Tony Tribuno read a letter from John Gannon, Charlotte Verry, Joh Lebron, Steve Adams, Bob McConnin, Lincoln Rathnam, Cliff Duncan, Barker Willard III

Motion made to call the question and end debate made by John Widness, seconded by Bob McConnin.

Voice Vote: Motion to cease debate carries.

Voice Vote: Motion defeated.

Article 4: Shall the Town vote on all public questions by Australian ballot pursuant to 17 V.S.A. § 2680(d)?

Motion to approve as read made by Tony Tribuno, seconded Tom Fitzgerald.

Debate (including but not limited to): what is a public question? Any initiative that does not include money.

Speakers: Carol Debarba, Scott Tucker

Voice Vote: Motion defeated.

Article 5: Shall the town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$3,113,981 to care for the expenses and liabilities of the General Fund for fiscal year 2025 (7/1/24 to 6/30/2025)?

Motion to approve as read made by Tom Fitzgerald, seconded by Tony Tribuno.

Debate (including but not limited to): biggest change was health insurance costs, offered 5% raise to employees, 14.7% increase in spending – is there a new initiative, 15% increase in health insurance, do not have the same surplus this year to offset revenue, small changes to Workers Compensation and Property Insurance, no new initiatives, Town Manager making \$121,890 – what is the bonus, under contract for five years it is done by negotiations, sign-on bonus across a 5-year contract, complete budget starts on page 21 of the Town Report, is it possible to tie out the summaries for anything on an article, total revenues that are not from taxes on page 28, place numbers more specifically for things being voted on, reinstate budget committee – could help facilitate questions, elected body of 7 members, no binding effect but would vote in advisory capacity, encourage under non-binding business, page 24 line 164 – it is actual article coming up, health insurance on calendar year while town operates on fiscal year, fluctuation in employees as well for single to family plans, page 25 line 190 – cost to haul away the waste from the Transfer Station (fuel, transport, weight of trash), line 201 – auditor retired and new auditor came about in bid process, not many auditors in the state, line 217 – town plan and local emergency mitigation will not be used if grant acquired, line 244 – county court uses the in-place Common Level of Appraisal and so will have to wait for it to adjust and our rate to change, felt it was uncomfortable to have the Town Manager singled out for a salary negotiation – vey common to have a sign-on bonus in the business sector, page 36 – the amount of money sent to the state for education, Southern Vermont Task Force on page 16 – directly funded by the State – search & rescue, snowmobiles, winter kits, looked at how to maintain if State dropped this benefit but so far there still seems to be interest by the State to maintain this funding, otherwise the expense would be directed to a capital fund for the Police Department, Noise Ordinance – ruled not germane, line 40 page 34 – town

owned properties and Rescue Barn that are not taxed, is the Health Center included in non-taxed? Yes, Memorial Hall use during winter cost, public use during winter would cost \$100-200 per day.

Speakers: Tom Fitzgerald, Meg Streeter, Christine Richter, John Lazelle, Ralph Staib, Scott Tucker, Dennis McIntosh, Donna Spiller, Martha Gehring, Carol DeBarba, Cliff Duncan, Matthew Moore, William Spirka, Barker Willard III, Carolyn Palmer

Motion to amend the motion to add \$1,000 for a total of \$3,114,981 to allow Memorial Hall to be opened made by John Lazelle, seconded by Adam Grinold.

Debate (including but not limited to): disrespectful that Memorial Hall was not able to be used for Arnie Bernard's funeral service, town did work with the family to make use of the brand new firehouse facility, felt that the family was happy with the result, can a separate line be made for the monies to have the Hall open, felt that the new PSB was a good choice for honoring a respected former police chief and public servant.

Speakers: John Lazelle, Scott Tucker, Tom Fitzgerald

Motion made to call the question and end debate made by Bill Adams.

Voice Vote: Motion to cease debate carries.

Voice Vote: Amended motion defeated.

Voice Vote: Motion carried.

The Moderator, after hearing no objection, recessed the meeting at 11:21am for Representative Tristan Roberts to address the floor. Tristan also made the following presentations:

H.C.R.168: House concurrent resolution honoring the artistic legacy of Skip Morrow and The Art of Humor Gallery in Wilmington. Presented to Laraine Morrow.

H.C.R.157: House concurrent resolution congratulating the Boyd Family Farm in Wilmington on the centennial of its current agricultural home. Presented to DJ Boyd.

The Moderator reconvened the meeting at 11:27am with approximately 90 voters in attendance.

Article 6: Shall the town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$1,625,039 to care for the expenses and liabilities of the Town Road Budget for fiscal year 2025 (7/1/24 to 6/30/2025)?

Motion to approve as read made by Sarah Fisher, seconded by Vince Rice.

Debate (including but not limited to): please give overview, cost of materials going up, planning to pave a little bit more because of multiple mud seasons – we seem to be on our fifth one, how many spots to pave means more speed and traffic, what are paving plans, this summer – other end of Whites Road from Stowe Hill to first hill, Adams Drive, Stowe Hill, part of Chimney Hill – first part of Binney Brook, trying new products – rubber chip seal on Shearer Hill Road, what is the cost of maintenance of the dirt road versus paving, cost per yard of materials to repair has increased substantially making it as expensive to maintain than to pave, how decide which roads to be paved and are residents warned, work with the residents of the road, paved can become potholes and worse shape than left dirt road, try to keep roads patched, have not seen stone put down for muddy sections, often re-freezes before getting to place stone, some ditching and drainage changes that have sent water into the roadway, I would like to look into those, what input taken from residents regarding going to pavement – do not proceed without input, signage placement, concern for road into Transfer Station – car stuck – plan to pave? No current plan to pave, will plan to “mill” the road and re-do using materials drawn from other projects.

Speakers: Charlotte Verry, Marshall Dix, Barker Willard III, Tamara Bolognani, Daniel Boyd, John Lebron, Nicki Steel, Carlotta Gladding

Voice Vote: Motion carried.

Article 7: Shall the town vote to raise and appropriate \$12,000 to Beaver Brook School whose purpose is to provide year-round childcare for 0-2 year-olds, and multiple preschool programs for 3-5 year-olds.
Motion to approve as read made by Sarah Fisher, seconded by Vince Rice.

Debate (including but not limited to): can someone speak to this, costs have increased since opening, do not wish to pass these costs on to users, can share how many served, currently serve 29 families during school year and 50-60 in summer, summer camp grant did not come through for this year, important to have strong daycare options for our community, only one in Wilmington, nice to see the kids on the property and about town, remember the Selectboard supporting Kids in the Country, changes on state level has reduced the number of private homes offering daycare, why was this separate and not rolled into the budget, this is new request so it is placed before the voters, also see increases to requests placed before the voters, is it given more consideration by being a separate article? It is just the way the board has done it – new and increases before the voters, feels board should be able to make the decision.

Speakers: Cliff Duncan, Julie Kohler, Sarah Fisher, Meg Streeter, John Meyer, Carol DeBarba, Sheila Osler
Motion to call the question and cease debate made by Gary Henry, seconded by John Boyd.

Voice Vote: Motion carried to end debate.

Voice Vote: Motion carried.

Article 8: Shall the town vote to raise and appropriate an additional \$1,500, for a total of \$2,500, to fund Grace Cottage whose purpose is to provide acute and rehabilitative care?

Motion to approve as read made by Tony Tribuno, seconded by Helen Staib.

Debate (including but not limited to): None.

Voice Vote: Motion carried.

Article 9: Shall the town vote to raise and appropriate an additional \$250, for a total of \$1,000, to fund SafePlace whose purpose is to help children and their families begin the process of healing after a child has been a victim of sexual abuse or egregious physical abuse and conduct investigations?

Motion to approve as read made by Tony Tribuno, seconded by Matthew Moore.

Debate (including but not limited to): it would be helpful to see how the board voted on these, board doesn't vote because of the practice of placing new and increased requests before the voters, where is SafePlace, Brattleboro, who mans this, write-up on page 69 of the Town Report, neutral and safe place to provide forensic interviews with children, concern for how this is dealt with, individual's children were not protected, process of how each of these are coming before the voters, how does the board choose to place these as articles, if germane to the town would be considered, old budget committee would place this before the voters with a recommendation of a peer review, speak in favor of the process that Wilmington uses – other towns ask for a petition to be collected and submitted.

Speakers: John Boyd, Martha Gehring, Chief Matt Murano, Jessica Lee Smith, Carol DeBarba, Elizabeth McEwen, Adam Grinold.

Motion to call the question and cease debate made by Ralph Staib, seconded by Bill Adams.

Voice Vote: Motion carried to end debate.

Voice Vote: Motion carried.

Article 10: Shall the town vote to raise and appropriate an additional \$200, for a total of \$1,000, to fund Senior Solutions whose purpose is to promote the well-being and dignity of older adults, helping them to age in the place of their choice, with the support they need and the opportunity for meaningful relationships and active engagement in their community?

Motion to approve as read made by Sarah Fisher, seconded by Helen Staib.

Debate: new services in Wilmington at the old firehouse on two occasions a month, also Memory Café offered for caregivers of others for socialization and support, glad to be in Wilmington to help, good to have these resources, want to keep loved ones at home.

Speakers: Joann Erenhouse (non-voter, no objections) from Senior Solutions, Jessica Lee Smith
Motion to call the question and cease debate made by John Widness, seconded by Bob McConnin.

Voice Vote: Motion carried to end debate.

Voice Vote: Motion carried.

Article 11: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate an additional \$1,000, for a total of \$11,000, to fund Wings Community Programs whose purpose is to actively engage students in experiences to help them be successful in school and in life as they grow into productive adults?

Motion to approve as read made by Sarah Fisher, seconded by Therese Lounsbury.

Debate (including but not limited to): really cool program, program has shown its positive aspects, daughter involved, turned a child from quiet student to performing in theater, act as mentors, best involvement, expressed a thank you, see page 71.

Speakers: Barker Willard III, Jessica Lee Smith, Adam Grinold, Katie Boyd, Cindy Hayford

Motion to amend to raise and appropriate an additional \$5,000, for a total of \$15,000, was made by Barker Willard III, seconded by Tony Tribuno.

Voice Vote: Amended motion carried.

Article 12: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate an additional \$5,000, for a total of \$15,000, to SASH whose purpose is to coordinate the resources of social-service agencies, community health providers and nonprofit housing organizations to support Vermonters who choose to live independently at home?

Motion to approve as read made by Tony Tribuno, seconded by Sharon Adams.

Debate (including but not limited to): None.

Voice Vote: Motion carried.

Article 13: Shall the Town vote to allocate the State per parcel payment estimated to be \$26,792 to the Reappraisal Reserve Fund?

Motion to approve as read made by Sarah Fisher, seconded by Tony Tribuno.

Debate (including but not limited to): when do we need another reappraisal, doing a statistical reappraisal now, had just finished townwide reappraisal in 2020 – the abundance of real estate sales through COVID changed the market and dropped our Common Level of Appraisal, started putting monies aside to help with cost of appraisals about 5/6 years ago, required to have one every 10 years.

Speakers: Barker Willard III, Sarah Fisher

Voice Vote: Motion carried.

Article 14: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate \$200,000 to fund the Highway Town Road Equipment Capital Fund?

Motion to approve as read made by Vince Rice, seconded by Tony Tribuno.

Debate: None

Voice Vote: Motion carried.

Moderator Bob Fisher, hearing no objection, recessed the meeting for lunch at 12:30pm with approximately 60 voters in attendance.

The Spanish Class from TVMHS offering lunch by donation for their trip to the Galapagos.

The Moderator reconvened the meeting at 1:15pm with approximately 32 voters in attendance.

Article 15: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate \$160,000 to fund the Bridge Capital Fund?

Motion to approve as read made by Vince Rice, seconded by Tony Tribuno.

Debate (including but not limited to): None.

Voice Vote: Motion carried.

Article 16: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate \$20,000 to fund the Highway Building Capital Fund?

Motion to approve as read made by Vince Rice, seconded by Tony Tribuno.

Debate (including but not limited to): None.

Voice Vote: Motion carried.

At 1:45pm, approximately 50 voters were in attendance.

Article 17: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate \$215,000 to fund the Fire Department Equipment Capital Fund?

Motion to approve as read made by Vince Rice, seconded by Sarah Fisher.

Debate (including but not limited to): None.

Voice Vote: Motion carried.

Article 18: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate \$35,000 to fund the Old Fire House Capital Fund?

Motion to approve as read made by Sarah Fisher, seconded by Vince Rice.

Debate: None

Voice Vote: Motion carried.

Article 19: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate \$20,000 to fund the Memorial Hall Capital Fund?

Motion to approve as read made by Vince Rice, seconded by Fred Houston.

Debate (including but not limited to): could it benefit to add money to this for winter use of the building, this is a capital fund for repairs and flood proofing, maintain historic look of building, upset over movement of memorial service from Memorial Hall.

Motion to amend to Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate \$20,000 to fund the Memorial Hall Capital Fund provided that the use of Memorial Hall for memorial services for Wilmington residents will be non-discretionary made by Carolyn Palmer, seconded by John Lazelle.

Debate (including but not limited to): is there another solution for this, next year budget with proposal for how to make use of the building, as architect see buildings that aren't used die, Wilmington lucky to have a building designed by McKim, Mead & White, not concerned about nuances but keep using, want use of the building, doesn't seem to be enough going on there, told there is a board to bring events, needs a manager and a way to coordinate and private pay, Friends of Memorial Hall group, history info out on table, part of historical walking tour, had quilt shows, jazz nights, theater events, need someone to oversee and manage, fund is established for specific operating functions, does this amendment help the board make decisions on spending the money? Any operating costs would need to come from the General Fund, monies cannot be co-mingled, hope to see an article next year.

Speakers: Barker Willard III, Scott Tucker, Carolyn Palmer, Jessica Lee Smith, Ann Manwaring, Joseph Cincotta, Gary Henry, Carlotta Gladding, Steve Adams

Maker of the motion to add the proviso withdrew the amendment.

Motion to call the question and cease debate made by Tom Fitzgerald, seconded by Sharon Adams.

Voice Vote: Motion carried to cease debate.

Voice Vote: Motion carried.

Article 20: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate \$12,000 to fund the Library Capital Reserve Fund?

Motion to approve as read made by Tony Tribuno, seconded by Vince Rice.

Debate: None

Voice Vote: Motion carried.

Article 21: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate \$20,000 to fund the Town Hall Capital Fund?

Motion to approve as read made by Sarah Fisher, seconded by Vince Rice.

Debate: None

Voice Vote: Motion carried.

Article 22: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate \$50,000 to fund the Police Equipment Capital Fund?

Motion to approve as read made by Vince Rice, seconded by Tony Tribuno.

Debate (including but not limited to): None.

Voice Vote: Motion carried.

Article 23: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate \$5,000 to fund the Transfer Station Capital Fund?

Motion to approve as read made by Sarah Fisher, seconded by Vince Rice.

Debate: None

Voice Vote: Motion carried.

Article 24: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate \$5,000 to fund the Public Lands and Fences Capital Fund?

Motion to approve as read made by Tony Tribuno, seconded by Sarah Fisher.

Debate (including but not limited to): None.

Voice Vote: Motion carried.

Article 25: Shall the voters authorize payment of real property taxes in two installments, with the due dates being August 30, 2024, and February 28, 2025, by delivery to Town Hall by 4:30pm on the due date or postmarked on or before the due date?

Motion to approve as read made by Tony Tribuno, seconded by Sarah Fisher.

Debate (including but not limited to): None.

Voice Vote: Motion carried.

Article 26: To transact any non-binding business.

Debate (including but not limited to): center of town is decaying, buildings need to come down, DRB needs to be more lenient, make things more attractive; thanked people for coming.

Motion to instruct the selectboard to NOT have an article regarding Australian Ballot for at least three years and that the selectboard spend time actively pursuing ways to continue to increase town meeting participation made by Nicki Steel, seconded by Marie Paige.

Voice Vote: Motion carried.

Debate (including but not limited to): look for other days for floor vote, great if include other formats of joining in, there isn't an easy fix, many reasons for why people aren't here, mail-in proxy? Form community committee to make some more concrete suggestions rather than placing it on the Selectboard, feels the Selectboard does a marvelous job, Moderator offered that statute allows you to have the floor vote any of the three days preceding Town Meeting Day – must be voted on by a special Town Meeting, 1% fund monies – perhaps for Memorial Hall, East Main sidewalks is one project on the books for the 1% fund as well as extending sidewalk on North St (west side), why isn't sidewalk part of General Fund, part of infrastructure, empty buildings are paying their taxes, would like the Selectboard to re-establish Budget Committee, needs to be petitioned to the Selectboard for a special vote, in favor of Budget Committee, feels that the Budget Committee was created illegally to begin with and that's why it went away, thanks to the Selectboard for all the hard work, thank you to all that came today, thank you to Nicki and Meg for placing the ad in the newspaper about Town Meeting.

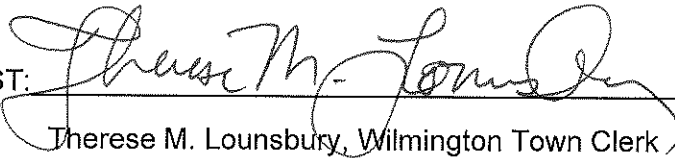
Speakers: Merrill Mundell, Jr, Nicki Steel, Joseph Cincotta, Meg Streeter, Gary Henry, Bob McConnin, Carol DeBarba, Tom Fitzgerald, Cliff Duncan, Ann Manwaring, Matthew Moore, Tony Tribuno

Moderator Bob Fisher thanked the Selectboard, Department Heads, Scouts, Spanish Class, and Town Clerk for their work in putting Town Meeting together.

Motion to adjourn made by Tom Fitzgerald, seconded by Tony Tribuno.

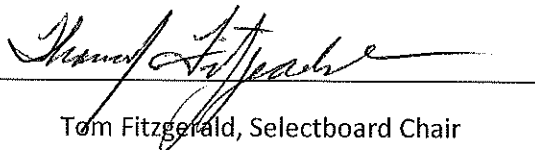
Adjourned at 2:08pm.

TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE, INFORMATION AND BELIEF, THESE MINUTES ARE A TRUE AND OFFICIAL RECORD OF ALL ACTION TAKEN AT THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING HELD, MARCH 5, 2024.

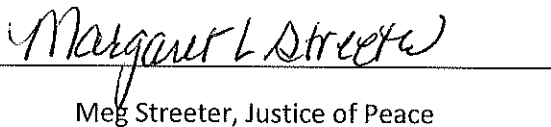
ATTEST: 
Therese M. Lounsbury, Wilmington Town Clerk

ATTEST: _____
Robert Fisher, Moderator

DATE: _____

ATTEST: 
Tom Fitzgerald, Selectboard Chair

DATE: 3/11/2024

ATTEST: 
Meg Streeter, Justice of Peace

DATE: 3/12/2024