

## **REPORT OF THE TOWN MEETING**

**March 9, 2021**

Assistant Moderator William Lambert called the Annual Town Meeting to order at 7:00 AM on March 9, 2020, and declared the polls would remain open until 7:00 PM. The election of Town Officers requires polling hour balloting.

Moderator Lambert announced a delay of action on Articles 3 through 13 until the official ballots were counted. In addition, that absentee ballots would be cast beginning at 3:00 PM. Once the Town Officers were elected, the Town Meeting would resume at the Boscawen Elementary School.

Ballot Clerks:

Kellee Easler

Kearsten O'Brien

Crystal Tuttle

Polls closed at 7:00 PM. Moderator Charles Niebling explained that Town Meeting would resume at the conclusion of the ballot counting process for the write-in votes, at Boscawen Elementary School.

Moderator Charles Niebling opened the meeting at 7:24 PM on March 9, 2021. He recognized and thanked Town Officials. Administrator Alan Hardy, Town Clerk Nicole Hoyt, Supervisors of the Checklist, Doddy Fisher, Agnes Colby, and Sarah Gerlack. He thanked Police Chief Kevin Wyman and his staff; Public Works Director Dean Hollins and his staff; Merrimack Valley School District Facilities Director Fred Reagan and his staff; other Town staff for all their assistance for today's preparation for the election. The Moderator requested Ray Fisher lead us all in the Pledge of Allegiance. He then recognized those in attendance who are veterans of armed services, active duty, reserves, and guard.

Moderator Charles Niebling recognized Ed Cherian, Chair of Select Board, to introduce the head table. Select Board Members Lorrie Carey, and Paul Dickey. He also introduced Town Administrator Alan Hardy, Town Clerk Nicole Hoyt, Deputy Town Clerk Haley Dilts-Brown, and Moderator Charles Niebling. Ed Cherian recognized Emergency Management Director Mark Varney retiring as Emergency Management Director at the end of March, and thanked him for all that he has put into this position helping the Town and keeping everyone safe.

Moderator Charles Niebling then summarized the rules of the meeting, according to the Moderator, loosely based on Roberts Rules of Order. All articles will be read by the Moderator prior to deliberation. No comments from the floor will be recognized. You will be allowed comments at one of the two microphones. If you cannot get to a microphone, one will be brought to you. All comments shall be directed to the Moderator, limited to the article on the floor. Speakers will be allowed a second time at the microphones after all first timers have spoken. Voting will be by voice vote or voting cards. This is for Boscawen registered voters only. Secret ballot requests must be accompanied by five registered voter signatures. This must be done prior to the voice vote. He went on to explain the rules for applying RSA 40:10, which restricts reconsideration of an article once voted upon during the meeting deliberations. The Moderator recognized Town Clerk Nicole Hoyt, who will keep the official record of the meeting, and asked that everyone who speaks

state their name and address clearly for the record. Bill Lambert moved to accept the rules of the meeting as read. Paul Matthews seconded. Motion was approved.

**Article 1** — To choose all necessary Town Officers for the year ensuing. The votes were counted in a total of 167 ballots cast, and the results are as follows:

<b>Office</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Vote</b>
Cemetery Trustee – 3 year	Beverly Lacy	141
	Edward Merrow	1
Library Trustees – 3 year (2)	Rebecca Davis	18
	Mary Estee	17
	Matt Burdick	71
Selectperson – 3 year	Gary L. Tillman	69
	Other	4
	Charles Niebling	145
Moderator – 1 year	Pauline Dawson	136
	Other	2
Trustee of the Trust Funds – 3 year	Nicole E. Hoyt	136
	Other	9

Mark Varney moved to re-elect the incumbents for Official Weighers: Bruce A. Davis, Ray Fisher, and Mark N. Harbour. Vernon John seconded. Motion approved.

Mason Donovan moved to re-elect the incumbents for Surveyors of Wood and Lumber: William Bailey, Jr., Frederick J. Egonis, and Michael W. Fisher. Ed Cherian seconded. Motion approved.

Ed Cherian moved to re-elect the incumbents for Fence Viewers: Ray R. Fisher, Douglas R. Supry, and Thomas R. Gilmore. Gary Tillman seconded. Motion approved.

**Article 2** — To see if the Town will vote to Amend Article VI, Supplementary Regulations by removing Section 6.02, b) in its entirety?

Recommended to be adopted by the Planning Board. Moderator Niebling read the results of the vote: YES - 111 NO - 24

This article was approved.

**Article 3** — To see if the Town will vote to Amend Article XII, Definitions, Junk Yard, Motor Vehicle by removing “unregistered” before “motor vehicles” in the first sentence.

Recommended to be adopted by the Planning Board. Moderator Niebling read the results of the vote: YES - 110 NO - 29

This article was approved.

**Article 4** — To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$4,288,793 for general municipal operations. This article does not include appropriations contained in special or individual articles addressed separately.

(Majority vote required)

Recommended by the Select Board and the Advisory Budget Committee.

Gary Tillman motioned to adopt Article 4 as written, Mark Varney seconded.

Chairman Ed Cherian explained the Operating Budget and Capital Reserves decreased over \$100,000 in taxes to be raised compared to 2020. He illustrated the 5.27% Operating Budget increase.

Article 4 is adopted.

Ed Cherian moved to restrict reconsideration of Article 4, under **RSA 40:10**. Gary Tillman seconded, voice vote taken and motion to apply **RSA 40:10** is approved.

**Article 5** — Shall the Town adopt the provisions of RSA 72:61 through RSA 72:64 inclusively, which provide for an optional property tax exemption from the property's assessed value, for property tax purposes, for persons owning real property, which is equipped with solar energy systems intended for use at the immediate site. Such property tax exemption shall be in the amount equal to 100% of the prorated portion of the assessed value of qualifying solar energy system equipment that is equal to the portion of total electrical power generated by the system that is used on the immediate site, measured on an annual basis, under these statutes.

(Majority vote required)

Recommended by the Select Board.

Gary Tillman motioned to adopt Article 5 as written, Rick Devold seconded.

Loren Martin spoke about the Solar Exemption; she explained the reasoning for this article that this was previously adopted and is due to expire in 2021. She explained that the solar equipment is 100% exempt with the exception of any property generating more electricity than what is needed for the building. The additional electricity would be allocated and taxed. John Porter voiced that he supports the Solar Exemption. He currently has 31 solar panels on his barn.

Article 5 is adopted.

**Article 6** — To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$253,200 to be contributed to the Town Capital Reserve Funds previously established as follows:

- A) Fire Truck \$65,000
- B) Highway Heavy Equipment \$45,000
- C) Public Works Building \$20,000
- D) Police Vehicle \$45,000
- E) Municipal (IT) \$16,200
- F) C&D Landfill Closure \$32,000
- G) Fire Station \$30,000

Said funds to come from the December 31, 2020 fund balance available on January 1, 2021 and no amount will be raised by general taxation.

(Majority vote required)

Recommended by the Select Board and the Advisory Budget Committee

Gary Tillman motioned to adopt Article 6 as written, Loren Martin seconded.

Select Board Member Paul Dickey explained the recommended Capital Reserves contributions for 2021 do not require taxes to be raised. They are proposed to be funded from the Unassigned Fund Balance. He explained the Unassigned Fund Balance is larger this year because of the COVID-19 related grants and reimbursements that were received. The Select Board chose to put these funds towards tax reduction instead of back into department budgets.

Article 6 is adopted.

**Article 7** — To see if the Town will vote, per RSA 35:3, to discontinue the Recreation - Senior Center Capital Reserve Fund, created by the 2008 Town Meeting. The \$0.15 remaining in the account is to be distributed to the Municipal General Fund.

(Majority vote required).

Recommended by the Select Board and the Advisory Budget Committee.

Gary Tillman motioned to adopt Article 7, Cheryl Lambert seconded. Article 7 is adopted.

**Article 8** — To see if the Town will vote to establish a Contingency Fund for the current year for unanticipated expenses that may arise and further to raise and appropriate \$33,000 to put in the Fund? This sum to come from the Unassigned Fund Balance and no amount to be raised from taxation. Any appropriation left in the Fund at the end of the year will lapse to the General Fund.

(Majority vote required)

Recommended by the Select Board and the Advisory Budget Committee.

Gary Tillman motioned to adopt Article 7, Loren Martin seconded. Article 8 is adopted.

**Article 9** — To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$600,000 for environmental cleanup and building removal activities on the former Allied Leather property owned by the Town located at 36-38, 40-46, and 48-56 Commercial Street, of which \$100,000 shall be raised from taxation and \$500,000 shall be raised through receipt of a Brownfields Cleanup Grant. The expenditure of the funds appropriated by this article is contingent on the receipt of a grant of at least \$500,000 for the expenses of the cleanup of the property. This special warrant article will be a non-lapsing appropriation per RSA 32:7, VI and will not lapse until the cleanup of the property is completed or by December 31, 2026, whichever is sooner.

(Majority vote required).

Recommended by the Select Board and the Advisory Budget Committee.

Tama Tillman motioned to adopt Article 9, Barbara seconded.

Select Board Member Lorrie Carey explained that this is a federal grant to be applied for, \$500K in federal grant money and \$100k of in kind donations from the Town. She elucidated that the net cost would be \$0.

Article 9 is adopted.

**Article 10** — To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$6,500 to contribute to the operating costs of the Boscawen Historical Society.

(Majority vote required) (By Petition)

Not Recommended by the Select Board. Recommended by the Advisory Budget Committee.

Gary Tillman motioned to adopt Article 10, Rick Devoid seconded.

Historical Society President Mike Nowaj explained that the contribution would go towards

covering the electric, gas heat, internet, and telephone to be able to continue to provide their services and keep the history of the Town. Kim Kenney asked why the Board did not recommend this petition. Chairman Ed Cherian explained that the all the requests in 2020 added up to \$30,000, during this year's budget difficulties the decision was made to zero that line out and offer the different groups the opportunity to present to the Advisory Budget Committee and to petition. Bonny John spoke in favor of the contribution because there are many people that she will redirect to the Historical Society for genealogy and the Town history. Voice vote taken. Moderator asked for a show of voting cards. 39 Yes, 12 No. Article 10 is passed.

**Article 11** — To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$1,500 to contribute to the operating costs of the Boscawen Church Park that is used by the community.

(Majority vote required) (By Petition).

Not Recommended by the Select Board or the Advisory Budget Committee.

Heather Wunschel motioned to adopt Article 11, Rick Devoid seconded.

Beverly Drouin shared the history of the Church Park. She explained that this money is going towards improving the park fields, mowing and tree removal. They currently have three sport leagues with 28 different teams that use the park, the teams do not pay a rental fee. Mike Fisher spoke about the men's softball league of how much they contribute with the fundraisers and upkeep they do for the Park, he also mentioned that most people that use the park are not residents. Heather Wunschel voiced that \$1,500 is not a lot of money and the park is an attraction to residents looking to move into Town. Sarah Gerlack indicated that there are two parks in Town, one that is already paid for and maintained by Public Works. She indicated during the Advisory Budget meeting that Beverly Drouin said they still had \$1,200 left over from the money that was given to them last year. Kim Kenney asked why they are not charging the leagues a rental fee. Beverly Drouin answered that they are not a business model. Chairman Cherian expressed that he would like to see how the remaining \$1,200 will be used and a lot of the work done to the fields has been done by the Merrimack Valley Youth Softball. He does not find it necessary to provide an additional \$1,500 for the Church Park.

Voice vote taken. Moderator asked for a show of voting cards. 26 Yes, 31 No. Article 11 is defeated.

**Article 12** — To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$7,600 for the continuation of services to the residents of Boscawen through the Concord Area Center of the Community Action Program Belknap-Merrimack Counties, Inc.

(Majority vote required) (By Petition)

Not Recommended by the Select Board or the Advisory Budget Committee.

Sarah Gerlack Motioned to adopt Article 12. Haley Dilts-Brown seconded.

Margaret Daneau asked if the request is not funded would this affect the Town Welfare Department. Human Services Administrator Sarah Gerlack answered that Community Action Program has saved the Town \$175,000 in the services within the community. She reported three years ago the community assisted with over 32 people in need of Emergency Help just in fuel assistance, because of CAP that number is down to two people even during a Pandemic. She explained that they support an abundance of homelessness in the Town and if this request is not supported she could see more of the need for Emergency Help to fall back onto the Town.

Voice vote taken. Moderator asked for a show of voting cards. An overwhelming majority vote wins. Article 12 is passed.

**Article 13** — To transact any other business which may legally come before this meeting.

Assistant Moderator Bill Lambert asked to take into consideration modifying the Town Election hours to 11:00 AM — 7:00 PM, because the only voters before 8:00 AM was the Election officials. Moderator Charlie advised that decision would need to be made by Select Board during a public meeting.

Mark Kaplan asked if the Town has considered taking back the Water Precinct and is it legal to take a vote during this evening. Town Attorney Jim Raymond answered that the Water Precinct is a separate municipal entity, they fall under the Village Precinct statutes and you cannot take over another governmental entity. He explained that can be done by agreement of both parties and is a lengthy process.

Bill Heinz asked for the Select Person vote count and being that the count was so close would it be an automatic recount. Niebling let him know the count was 71 to 69. Jim Raymond answered that it would not be an automatic recount and that a written request with a fee is required.

Mike Fisher expressed his disappointment about the school being shut down for Town Election and expressed that the children have not been able to spend a lot of time at school. He also asked when the Town Office would be re-opening. Chairman Cherian expressed that he understands his frustration and explained that the Town did not make the school shut down, they asked for permission from the District and continued to explain the importance of needing the larger space to safely hold all Elections, especially during the November Election. He stated that we could not have held a safe election if we did not have the school. Ed explained that he is not opposed to reopening the Town Office and this question has been debated on many times, no two people can agree on an answer. He explained that more than a few Town employees have been exposed on the job, he illustrated if a few employees got sick the Town would shut down. He mentioned how Nashua's City office shut down because of many people were really sick. He encouraged the audience to hang in there a little longer. Polly Dawson thanked Ed Cherian for his time that he has spent with Boscawen.

Select Board Member Paul Dickey thanked Ed Cherian for his time on the Select Board and presented him with a chair from the Town.

Gary Tillman made a motion to adjourn. Ed Cherian seconded. Meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM. Moderator Charles Niebling thanked all who came out to participate in the Town Meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Haley Dilts-Brown".

Haley Dilts-Brown, Deputy Town Clerk