

**22ND ANNUAL TOWN MEETING AND PUBLIC HEARING**  
**March 3, 2014**  
**Draft Minutes**

The Annual Town Meeting was held at the Westford Elementary School on Monday, March 2, 2015. Approximately 80 registered voters present as well as the news media. Moderator Edward Chase called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He reviewed Roberts Rules of Order procedures, made several announcements and recognized nonresidents. The Town Clerk led the Pledge of Allegiance. The Moderator then read the warning.

**Article 1 To act on the several reports of the Town Officers.**

Martha Heath made a motion to accept Article 1, seconded by Andre Roy.

Two errors in the Town Report were noted: the State Representative District should be Chittenden 8-3 not 6-3 (Page 5) and Dick Styles should be Dick Stygles (page 25).

Jeremy Berger asked why the income received from traffic fines hasn't increased as the same rate as the contractual services provided by the State Police and Sheriff's Office. Bob explained that \$30,000 has been budgeted to split between the State Police and Sheriff's Office. The fines submitted to the Town are for traffic tickets issued on the Town roads. The amount of the fines that are remitted to the Town are dependent on the number of tickets issued and the violation that occurred. The Selectboard has asked both entities patrol town roads, not Route 128 because most, if not all of the fines issued for Route 128 don't come to the Town.

There was no further discussion. The Moderator called for the vote.

**Article 1 was voted in the affirmative as written.**

**Article 2 Shall the Town of Westford collect its real estate and personal property taxes in four equal installments due on August 15<sup>th</sup>, November 15<sup>th</sup>, March 15<sup>th</sup> and May 15<sup>th</sup>, commencing with the fiscal year that begins on July 1, 2014, with postmarks being acceptable?**

Chet Balon made a motion to accept Article 2, seconded by Dave Gauthier.

Moderator Chase entertained a motion to amend the date for beginning of the fiscal year to correct an error. Becky Roy made a motion to amend the fiscal year to July 1, 2015, seconded by Ira Allen. The amendment passed.

There was no further discussion. The Moderator called for the vote.

**Article 2 was voted in the affirmative as written.**

**Article 3 Shall the Town of Westford decrease the number of members serving on the Conservation Commission from seven to five?**

Dave Gauthier made a motion to accept Article 3, seconded by Pat Haller.

Barb Peck asked why the number of members were being reduced and what would happen to the two seats that would be eliminated. Nanette advised that the Conservation Commission asked that this article be placed on the warning because they are having difficulty filling vacant seats. This has created issues with meeting quorum requirements for meetings.

There was no further discussion. The Moderator called for the vote.

**Article 3 was voted in the affirmative as written.**

**Article 4 To do any other business that may legally come before this meeting.**

Dan Strobridge asked what the long term plan is for the Spiller property. Bob advised that the short term plan is to demolish the building because it is unsafe. Nothing has been decided on the long term plan. There has been some discussion that a new town office or an annex may be built to address adequate space issues in the current town office, however that is not a definitive plan.

Becky Roy expressed her concerns with winter maintenance of the town roads. The roads are not cleared in a timely fashion when there is drifting, and it seems that the roads are being maintained on a different schedule when the school busses are not running. Alex advised that the Road Foreman sets the road schedule and they usually begin at 7am. Alex isn't sure if the Road Foreman has adopted a strategy during school vacation or if he's just not aware of the problem. The Board has discussed with Brent keeping the roads safe but also to be cognizant of overtime. Becky feels that because most people leave early in the morning for work, the road crew should begin earlier and end earlier on days when snow removal is needed.

Town Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

**PUBLIC HEARING**

The Public Hearing for Australian ballot articles was called to order at 7:30 p.m.

**Article 5 Shall the Town of Westford accept the Selectboard's budget of \$2,523,167 to defray the expenses for the ensuing year and authorize the Selectboard to set the tax rate?**

Selectboard Chair, Bob Bancroft, gave a presentation on the proposed budget. The budget is increasing by approximately 9%, which is primarily due to the construction of the Seymour Road bridge and repaving the Westford Milton Road. The revenue is also increasing by approximately 32.2% primarily due to anticipated funds from FEMA and the State of Vermont for these two projects.

Another significant increase in the budget is for the Spiller property. The Town needs to have the house demolished because it is not safe. The cost of the demolition is high due to the finding of asbestos, which must be abated before the deconstruction of the building.

The Town is not using a carry over to reduce the amount to be raised by taxes as has been done in previous years. Bob explained that the Town has undergone a major undertaking in changing from a cash basis to a modified accrual basis of accounting. This is expected to be a three year process, of which the Town is mid-way through. With the assistance of the Internal Financial Controls Committee and the financial software vendor (NEMRC), the bookkeeper and the treasurer and have revamped the General Ledger to reflect standard accounting procedures. Part of this process required the Town to book expenses in the fiscal year they were used in, not they year they were paid in to comply with the modified accrual method. When these adjustments were made for FY'14, the Town discovered a deficit of \$73,240.79. The Fund Balance had \$70,138.03 in it as of June 30, 2014. The Selectboard voted to use the Fund Balance to pay down the deficit and make up the difference in the current fiscal year (FY'15) by reduced spending.

After factoring in the revenue and Grand List numbers, the tax rate is expected to increase by approximately 0.35% or \$8.60 per assessed value.

Dan Strobridge asked if chloride can be spread only on certain spots of roads, such as only in front of houses to keep the dust down. Bob explained that the chloride is used to hold the road together, not to reduce dust. The best time to apply the chloride is right after a rain storm because the moisture helps the chloride hold the road together.

Dan also commented on plowing. He sees the truck go by early in the morning. Sometimes there is only a half inch to two inches of snow when the Town plows and thinks this is not necessary. This could address the overtime concern expressed by the Selectboard. Bob advised that the Road Foreman determines when the road crew plows, adding that it could be contentious if we don't plow. Bob added that we tend to plow small amounts to prevent packing down of the snow, creating icy roads.

There was no further discussion.

**Article 5 Shall the Town of Westford establish a Seymour Road Bridge Replacement Reserve Fund in accordance with 24 VSA §2804 and deposit \$75,000 contained in the 2014-2015 budget for the replacement of the bridge into such fund?**

Bob explained that this article would transfer \$75,000 that is included in the current budget to a reserve fund because the project won't be done in the current fiscal year due to delays by FEMA

There was no further discussion.

**Article 7 To elect all officers required by law.**

There was no discussion.

Frank Howrigan made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Becky Roy.

The public hearing ended at 7:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Edward Chase  
Moderator

Robert L. Bancroft, Chair  
Selectboard

Nanette Rogers  
Town Clerk

**Results of Australian Ballot Articles  
Voted on March 3, 2015**

**Article 5 Approved the Selectboard's budget of \$2,523,167 for FY'16 and authorized the Selectboard to set the tax rate.**

Total ballots cast: 446  
318 Yes  
127 No  
1 Blanks

**Article 6 Approved to establish a Reserve Fund for the Seymour Road Bridge and transfer \$75,000 included in the 2014-2015 budget into the fund.**

Total ballots cast: 4461  
315 Yes  
125 No  
6 Blanks

**Article 7 To elect all officers required by law.**

Town Moderator - one year – Edward Chase  
Selectboard - three years – Casey Mathieu  
Auditor – three years –  
Auditor – two years remaining – Kristen Elliott  
Library Trustee - five years – Beth Albarelli Lane  
Library Trustee – two years remaining – Allison Weinhausen