

SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
June 3, 2019

The Special Town Meeting was held at the Westford Elementary School on Monday, June 3, 2019. Approximately 90 registered voters were present. Moderator Edward Chase called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He reviewed Roberts Rules of Order procedures and recognized nonresidents.

Article 1 Shall the voters of the Town of Westford disapprove the proposed Town of Westford Outdoor Fire Safety Ordinance adopted by the Selectboard on March 14, 2019?

Allison Hope provided a summary of the process the Board went through prior to adopting the Ordinance. The initial draft included a lot of information that was duplicative of State Statute therefore that information was removed. The Ordinance adopted in March is basically the same Ordinance that was adopted in 1996 with the exception of the 30" diameter requirement. Allison acknowledged that a Frequently Asked Questions sheet was handed out prior to this meeting but noted that the Selectboard had not seen the document.

Larry White expressed his opposition to the new Ordinance. He noted that approximately one and a half years ago there were many comments on Front Porch Forum opposing an ordinance. He feels this Ordinance was dumped on residents without any input. He also feels that this Ordinance is too "Big Brother" and finds it frustrating that the Town is dictating what he can do on his property.

Several voters clapped and/or hooted in agreement with things Mr. White said.

Barb Peck called the question. A 2/3 vote is required to cease debate. Moderator Chase declared that more than 2/3 voted to cease discussion.

Moderator Chase explained that a yes vote would disapprove the Ordinance adopted in March and the Town would revert to the Ordinance adopted in 1996. A no vote would make the Ordinance adopted in March to go into effect immediately.

Moderator Chase called for the vote and ruled that the affirmatives vastly exceeded the opposition.

Article 1 was voted in the affirmative.

Marge McIntosh asked permission to speak. Moderator Chase advised that because the vote has occurred Marge can only speak if the voters don't object. There was no objection. Marge offered some comments: 1) the Ordinance is confusing citing items such as the definition of an open outdoor fire and no mention if a permit is needed if snow is on the ground, 2) the 30" diameter is too restrictive, 3) remove the items to be burned because they are covered under State Statute and 4) with regard to severe weather use the language from the 1996 Ordinance which is more clear.

Carol Winfield questioned whether a permit is needed at all. She advised that State Statute does not require a permit if the fire is not located within 200' from timberland and that it does not apply for cities and villages that have their own fire department.

There were no further comments.

David Lavallee made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Carol Howrigan.

The meeting adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Edward Chase
Moderator

Allison Hope, Chair
Select Board

Nanette Rogers
Town Clerk