

**2024 Annual Town Meeting  
March 4, 2024  
Draft Minutes**

The Annual Town Meeting was held at the Westford Elementary School on Monday, March 4, 2024. Approximately 30 registered voters were present both in person and on zoom. 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 Moderator then read the warning.

**Article 1 – Shall the Town of Westford collect its real estate and personal property taxes in four equal installments, with the due dates being 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, 2024, with postmarks being acceptable?**

The article was moved and seconded. There was no discussion. The motion passed.

**Article 2 – Shall the Town of Westford vote on all public questions by Australian Ballot pursuant to 017 V.S.A. 2680(d)?**

The article was moved and seconded.

John Doane was present; He thinks with public questions we need to have public discussion. The nays had it, the motion was defeated.

**Article 3 – Discussion of other nonbinding business that may come before the meeting.**

Wendy Doane was present. She wanted to thank the current Selectboard for their service.

Lee McClenny, Selectboard member, brought a non-binding article to the floor. Some months ago, a statement of inclusivity was brought forward to the board. The board at the time felt that they should put the question to the voters. Did the people want to sign on to this pledge? Lee read the pledge out loud to the meeting. Ira Allen was present. He says it sounds like it is a very broad statement, to him it feels like it has political overtones. He is wary of any decree that comes along. He hesitates to restrict life. He is opposed. Pat Haller was present. He asked who proposed the measure. It was VT Project Inclusion. 131 Towns have adopted the declaration, about 72% of the state population. Pat thinks we should be making the pledge. He does not think it will put us in any sort of hardship or legal binding. He thinks we need to be outwardly inclusive as well as inwardly inclusive. Wendy Doane was present. She agrees with Pat. The spirit of it is what we want to hold up in this town. She would want to delay it a year so it can go into the town report so more people can see it. She has a little trouble where everyone can live freely and express their opinions. She feels there is a lot of room for interpretation with that. Barb Peck was present. She agrees with Wendy, in spirit it sounds great, and we all want to feel we include everyone in town. She does not feel this Town Meeting is a big enough representation of the entire town to make a decision. Don Pouliot was present. He does not think it is necessary. He thinks we are fortunate in Westford not to need something like this. Paul Birnholz was present. He agreed with Don and Ira. He does not see where we need to adopt a resolution and does not think a resolution will change how anybody behaves. Pat Haller recognize that we all tend to have inclusivity in our hearts, but this declaration let other people outside of Westford know who we are. If they see we do not want to pass the resolution, they will not know why we didn't pass it. Ira remains firmly opposed. He does not care how many towns have passed it or about the institutions that have passed it. He is content to live his life with his own attitudes. He feels it has enough flexible language to come back to bite us. Don Pouliot tries to be open minded, and he hopes he is, but he sees these things as pressure. He does not feel it is necessary.

Town Meeting adjourned at 7:30

### **Public Hearing**

The Public Hearing for Australian ballot articles was called to order.

#### **Article 4 – Shall the voters of the Town of Westford accept the Selectboard’s budget of \$2,223,929 to defray the expenses for the ensuing year?**

Lee presented the PowerPoint that summarized the budget.

Ed opened the floor for discussion on the budget. There was one question online from Vicky Ross who was asking why those online could not see the presentation. There was a limitation with the zoom laptop, but the presentation was available online. There was no further discussion.

#### **Article 5 - Shall general obligation bonds of notes of the Town of Westford in an amount not to exceed Six Hundred Thirty Thousand and 00/100 Dollars (\$630,000.00) subject to reduction by funds from the Fire Department Equipment Reserve Fund, and having a maximum term of ten (10) years, be issued to fund the purchase and equipping of a fire tanker truck for the Westford Fire Department?**

Garrett Bartlett, the Fire Chief, was present. He gave a PowerPoint presentation about the fire truck bond. They are currently asking to build a new tanker. The current tanker was built in 1995.

Ira Allen was present. He asked what the plan for the old tanker was. Garrett replied that to have it traded in with the price going towards the price of the truck. It was not included in the presentation since they do not know the trade in value two years from now when that would happen. As of now the truck is worth \$20,000.

Steve asked if we had other tankers. That was not true. While every truck is multipurpose, we only have one tanker. A tanker is made specifically for hauling water to the scene.

Steve Willard was present. He said the last time they replaced the old truck was sold to a fire department in Tennessee.

#### **Article 6 – To elect officers required by law.**

There was no discussion.

Paul Birnholz had a question. Some years ago, they switched to do motion by Australian ballot. He is curious what they might do to get less of the town meeting by Australian Ballot. Ed explained that the towns people voted to handle all financial articles by Australian Ballot. To reverse that they would have to vote by Australian Ballot to reverse that to go back to the floor. Unless the Selectboard chose to put that article in the warning a petition would have to be circulated to require them to put that article in the warning.

There was a motion to adjourn. Seconded. Motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

**Results of Australian Ballot Articles  
Voted on March 5, 2024**

**Article 4 – Approve the Selectboard’s budget of \$2,223,929 for FY’25**

Total Ballots cast: 827

657 Yes

170 No

**Article 5 – Approve Fire Department Tanker Bond of \$630,000.00**

Total Ballots cast: 828

641 Yes

187 No

**Article 6 – To elect all officers required by law.**

Town Moderator – one year – Lee McClenny

Selectboard – three years – Patrick Haller

Selectboard – three years, two years remaining – Casey Mathieu

Selectboard – two years – Deb Sawyer Jorschick

Selectboard – one year – Wendy Doane

Library Trustee – five years – Helen Sterling

Library Trustee – five years, four years remaining – Marianne Bassford

Library Trustee – five years, one year remaining – Becky Roy