

Town Meeting Minutes

261st Annual Town Meeting of New Haven, Vermont

The legal voters of the Town of New Haven are hereby warned and notified to meet at the Town Hall in New Haven, Vermont on **Monday, March 6, 2023, at 6:30 PM** to act on Articles 1 through 4; and on **Tuesday, March 7, 2023, from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM** to vote by Australian Ballot on Articles 5 through 32.

A DISCUSSION PERIOD FOR THE AUSTRALIAN BALLOT ARTICLES WILL BEGIN IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING TOWN MEETING.

Moderator, Lanny Smith introduced himself and called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm and welcomed approximately 58 people. Selectboard members, John Roleau, Taborri Bruhl and Bruce Many were introduced along with Town Clerk, Pam Kingman. Danielle Hubbell, treasurer was also in attendance. The Moderator indicated the use of Robert Rules of Order, and asked everyone to direct their questions to him, and to be respectful of one another. Lanny Smith read the Warning.

Senator, Chris Bray spoke briefly as well as ADD-3 District Rep. Diane Lanpher.

ARTICLE 1. Shall the Town of New Haven vote to pay real estate taxes to the Town Treasurer on October 2, 2023; delinquent taxes to be subject to interest charges of one percent per month, and an eight percent penalty charged against them from October 2, 2023?

Richard Sawyer made the motion to approve, seconded by Marie Jewett.

Pam Marsh said the Town should consider moving to bi-annual or quarterly tax payments.

Barb Torian said you can make payments on your taxes anytime during the year.

All in favor.

Passed

ARTICLE 2. Shall the voters of the Town of New Haven accept the Auditors' Report for the year 2022?

Kim Callahan made the motion to approve, seconded by Al Karnatz.

Betsy Taylor mentioned we need more than one Auditor, after reading what current Auditor, Ted Foster said in his report.

All in favor.

Passed

Lanny Smith said people need to run for positions, there are a lot of empty seats on the ballot. He chaired the Mt. Abe School Board for many years.

ARTICLE 3. Shall the voters of the Town of New Haven authorize the Selectboard to put funding of those non-profit entities which have petitioned and have been approved for 5 consecutive years at the same amount into the General Fund budget, each listed at current funding level, rather than in separate articles effective with the 2024 budget?

Pam Marsh moved the question and Cheryl Mitchell seconded.

Pam Marsh said she has been a Justice of the Peace for many years, and the Outside Agencies have always passed.

Pam Kingman added the cost savings would be approximately \$600 - \$700 for printing the ballots because the ballots would be reduced to two pages instead of four. Each Article cost \$35, and this would eliminate up to 19 Articles.

Gardner Merriam asked how they would be removed from the General Fund.

Taborri Bruhl said come to the Selectboard with a reasonable request to remove them, and the Selectboard would consider it. He is in favor of moving them to the General Fund budget.

Tim Bouton made a motion to amend the Article by striking the words on line three "at the same amount" and on line four, "each listed at current funding level"

Tim would like it this way, rather than leave up to the Selectboard, he added we need to account for inflation.

Sansea Sparling asked if the petition process still stands.

John Roleau said the requirement stays the same, there is no limit to the "ask"; that way it doesn't limit them due to inflation.

Susie Leonard suggested developing a process to remove them, just going to the Selectboard seems too easy.

John Roleau said they wouldn't be removed out of obscurity, they would be put back on as an article.

Gail Freidin wanted to be sure she understood Tim Bouton's motion. This would be so they don't automatically go back on the budget.

Tim Bouton said yes.

Danielle Hubbell said the amendment would make it too easy to ask for money.

Benj Putnam asked how often the dollar requests increase.

Pam Kingman said about every 5 - 10 years. There are only 4 agencies currently petitioning.

Tim Bouton said years ago, the Fire Dept. was voted on separately; now that amount is debated between the Selectboard and entity.

Lanny Smith asked if there were any more questions on the amendment.

Chris Granstrom wanted to hear from each Selectboard member if they were in favor of the amendment.

Bruce Many said yes.

Taborri Bruhl said no.

John Roleau said no.

No further comments or question on the amendment.

Lanny smith asked all in favor of the amendment: 1 yes / all other's said Nay.

Amendment did not pass.

Discussion about what happens if one agency goes rogue. The Selectboard would eliminate them if they were found to be acting in bad faith. All these Agencies serve people in New Haven in some way.

Article 3 passed as originally written.

ARTICLE 4. To transact, vote and act upon any further non-binding business, which may legally come before this meeting, including but not limited to discussion about how to spend ARPA Funds (American Rescue Plan Act).

Barb Torian moved the question, seconded by Gardner Merriam.

Barb Torian thanked Taborri Bruhl and Steve Dupoise for their time on the Selectboard. Applause.

Barb Torian also wanted to thank the Selectboard for putting the ARPA money into a fund.

Gardner Merriam asked how many acres of land we are looking to purchase. Would it support enough of a septic system to support moderate to low-income housing.

John Roleau said it is a 5-acre parcel located in front of the new VELCO building.

He added the town is not in the rental business.

Discussion about pursuing in-town septic, possibly use ARPA funds towards this. People are having trouble finding affordable housing, we should try to do more to support our community, but we don't have the infrastructure. Some folks would like to discuss this further, possibly hold a special meeting. It was requested the Selectboard look into it.

Chris Granstrom asked for an update on the Train Depot.

The Selectboard has hired a grant writer for the Depot. Once the weather gets warmer, the basement floor will be poured and then around the building will be back filled. Again, during warmer weather, the utilities will be hooked up. Then the interior design will come into place. We will be making room for the Historical Society as well as a private business. There is interest from a credit union wanting to rent one half of the building. All the grants that were previously secured have been used up, which is why we hired a grant writer going forward. Even though Steve Dupoise did not run for re-election, he would like to remain on as the point person for the Depot. Taborri Bruhl added that Steve Dupoise made the Depot into a full-time job. He spent countless hours behind the scenes. Taborri would like to publicly thank Steve. Applause.

Gail Freidin asked about the ARPA funds will be spent. Three years is not a long time to figure out how to spend it.

Taborri Bruhl said the Selectboard has the final say. He and Maggie Eaton held meetings and collected numerous suggestions; all of which can be found on the town's website. Many people wanted broadband and / or affordable housing.

John Roleau added the Selectboard agreed that the ARPA funds would stay in New Haven to benefit our town, and essentially get the best bang for our buck. We had many outside entities asking for our ARPA funds.

Cheryl Mitchell said this is a way cool town to live in.

ARTICLE 5. To elect the following Town Officers by Australian Ballot:

Auditor	3 years
Auditor	3 years
Delinquent Tax Collector	1 years
Library Trustee	3 years
Library Trustee	3 years
Lister	3 years
Moderator	1 year
Mt. Abe Unified School District Director	3 years
Selectboard	2 years
Selectboard	3 years
Trustee of Public Funds	1 year

There are many positions open.

Kim Callahan said she would like to be considered as a write-in candidate for Library Trustee. She mentioned Kathy Cahill would like to be considered for the other Library Trustee position.

Sarah LaPerle said she is the only one from New Haven on the MAUSD Board, and we need to have two representatives. It would be great to not be the only person on the board from New Haven.

Pam Marsh asked the audience when voting, not write-in fictitious characters or someone who does not live in New Haven. If you do this the vote does not count.

Marie Jewett introduced herself as the candidate running for the 3-year Selectboard position.

ARTICLE 6. Shall the voters of the Town of New Haven vote to adopt the proposed Road Fund Budget of \$1,285,297.27, less anticipated revenues of \$353,400.00 less 2022 surplus of \$82,596.07, leaving a portion thereof in the amount of \$849,301.20 to be raised by taxes, for the purpose of maintaining town roads for the year 2023? By Australian Ballot.

Gardner Merriam asked how many miles of roads will be resurfaced in 2023.

Bruce Many said a portion of Munger St., North St., a portion of Plank Road and the parking area by the Village Green Market. Every year we do about 2 miles of roads.

Barb Torian asked if there could be better designated parking spaces along the fence by the Village Green; and move the center line over to narrow the road to slow traffic.

John Roleau agreed it is a good idea to have slower traffic through there.

Discuss the State Project to realign the intersections of East Street, Main Street and Sawyer Rd. This project is scheduled to start on April 1, 2023, and will likely continue into the fall.

ARTICLE 7. Shall the voters of the Town of New Haven vote to adopt the proposed General Fund Budget in the amount of \$1,374,474.38 (General Fund expenses, \$774,474.38 plus school payment due \$600,000.00) less anticipated revenues of \$428,891.81, less 2022 surplus of \$466,101.38, leaving a portion thereof in the amount of \$479,481.19, to be raised by taxes? This amount to be increased by any additional monies voted affirmatively by Australian Ballot on March 7, 2023. The tax rate to be determined by the Selectboard. By Australian Ballot.

Betsy Taylor said she is a relative newcomer, and wondered why there are so many expenses around the town offices.

Danielle Hubbell said it shows the Clerks salary, and Treasurers salary as well as office expenses.

Pam Kingman said it's about transparency.

Barb Torian asked about the upcoming reappraisal.

Lister, Jay Best said properties should be appraised at 100% value. The State monitors this and determine the town's CLA or Common Level of Appraisal. If the town should fall below .85, then we are required by the State to conduct a townwide reappraisal. The process will start at the end of March / early April, it is a 3-year reappraisal ending in 2026. Every house / property will be physically inspected. Our current outside appraiser has been hired to conduct the townwide reappraisal. He will start outside the home with measurements and inspections of all buildings on each property. The last reappraisal was completed in 2013. If the homeowner is not home at that time of the outside inspection, a postcard will be left with instructions on how to make an appointment for the interior inspection. There are many towns in the same situation as we are. Jay added the State is looking into taking the reappraisal process over in the future.

Discuss having a heads up prior to anyone just showing up at their house. If anyone is uncomfortable, they can call the Listers office. Landlords will have to let renters know about interior inspections. The value of properties are based on comparable sales.

ARTICLE 8. Shall the voters of the Town of New Haven vote to expend up to \$140,000.00 from the Reserve Facilities Fund to do major repairs to the façade of the Town Hall? Said repairs to include the front porch and improve ADA accessibility. By Australian Ballot

Tim Bouton asked if this includes a new elevator.

Pam Kingman said no.

John Roleau said the projects have gone out to bid, but we are having trouble finding contractors to bid on it. It's too small for some and too big for others.

ARTICLE 9. Shall the voters of the Town of New Haven authorize the Selectboard to purchase approximately five acres (Lot # 3) of the lands of VELCO whose property lies on the southerly side of Route 17 (Main Street) for a sum not to exceed \$70,000.00, which includes closing costs. Monies to come from ARPA Funds.

By Australian Ballot.

Tim Bouton asked why VELCO wouldn't give us the land.

Taborri Bruhl said \$70k is an excellent price for 5 acres.

John Roleau the purpose is to buy the land to give the Fire Dept. a place to build on. They cannot secure any grants until the town owns the property. If this purchase is approved by voters, in the future we will be able to expand the town garage into the area the Fire Dept currently uses. The new fire station will also have an emergency shelter.

Gail Freidin asked if the purchase and sale agreement will have a contingency if the septic does not work.

John Roleau said yes.

Barb Torian asked if there are septic designs in place.

John Roleau said there is currently one house using a septic easement, and all easements are on the west end of all the lots.

ARTICLE 10. Shall the legal voters of the Town of New Haven, as part of the Mount Abraham Unified School District, approve the withdrawal agreement with the Lincoln School District, which includes the property transfer of the Lincoln Community School building and bond as well as a negotiated portion of the MAUSD Education Reserve Fund in the amount of \$74,754? By Australian Ballot.

The details of the terms can be found in the full withdrawal agreement posted on the MAUSD website, in MAUSD schools and at the town clerk's office.

Craig Zondag mentioned Kathi Apgar addressed this article on Front Porch Forum MAUSD Board member, Sarah LaPerle said she appreciates Kathi's comments on Front porch Forum, but thought she confused the Articles. Sarah said last May 18, 2022, is when Lincoln withdrew from the district. This was a long process. We own the building and Bond, and asked to negotiate this in open session, but was told no; therefore the lawyers handled it. If this doesn't pass in all four towns, she is not sure what happens. The State says come up with an Agreement, which entails more legal fees and another vote. She said we are in a much more stable place than we were a year ago. She said we have massive facilities needs across the district, and it is challenging to get things done. The project at Mt. Abe needs to be finished.

Pam Kingman asked why we are paying Lincoln to exit.

Sarah LaPerle it was part of the negotiations. If this vote doesn't pass, we will need to vote on it again prior to July 1, 2023. She added the bottom line is it is about the kids. All agreed.

Tim Bouton made a motion to speak or make comments on Articles 11 – 32. Motion seconded by John Roleau.

All in favor.

ARTICLE 11. Shall the voters of the Town of New Haven vote to appropriate \$1,753.25 for the Addison County Home Health and Hospice, Inc.? By Australian Ballot.

No discussion.

ARTICLE 12. Shall the voters of the Town of New Haven vote to appropriate \$750.00 to the Addison County Humane Society, Inc.? (Homeward Bound) By Australian Ballot.
No discussion.

ARTICLE 13. Shall the voters of the Town of New Haven vote to appropriate \$1,800.00 for the Addison County Parent Child Center? By Australian Ballot.
No discussion.

ARTICLE 14. Shall the Town of New Haven vote to appropriate \$750.00 for Addison County Readers, Inc.? By Australian Ballot.
No discussion.

ARTICLE 15. Shall the Town of New Haven vote to appropriate \$500.00 for Addison County Restorative Justice Services? By Australian Ballot.
No discussion.

ARTICLE 16. Shall the voters of the Town of New Haven vote to appropriate \$500.00 for the Addison County Riverwatch Collaborative? By Australian Ballot.
No discussion.

ARTICLE 17. Shall the voters of the Town of New Haven vote to appropriate \$700.00 for Age Well? By Australian Ballot.
No discussion.

ARTICLE 18. Shall the voters of the Town of New Haven vote to appropriate \$500.00 for the Bristol Family Center? By Australian Ballot.
No discussion.

ARTICLE 19. Shall the voters of the Town of New Haven vote to appropriate \$2,500.00 to Bristol Recreation Department? By Australian Ballot.
No discussion.

ARTICLE 20. Shall the voters of Town of New Haven vote to appropriate \$1,750.00 for the Counseling Service of Addison County? By Australian Ballot.
No discussion.

ARTICLE 21. Shall the voters of the Town of New Haven vote to appropriate \$700.00 for Elderly Services, Inc.? By Australian Ballot.
No discussion.

ARTICLE 22. Shall the voters of the Town of New Haven vote to appropriate \$1,700.00 for HOPE? By Australian Ballot.
No discussion.

ARTICLE 23. Shall the voters of the Town of New Haven vote to appropriate \$1,075.00 for the John Graham Housing and Services, Inc.? By Australian Ballot.
No discussion.

ARTICLE 24. Shall the voters of the Town of New Haven vote to appropriate \$1,000 for the New Haven Mentoring Program? By Australian Ballot

Kim Callahan spoke on behalf of the Mentoring program. She said this support provides materials and supplies. There are currently six mentors and room for more. She said it is good for the Town to support the school, please vote in favor of this article.

ARTICLE 25. Shall the Town appropriate \$1,200.00 to the Open-Door Clinic, Community Health Services of Addison County which provides access to high quality dental and healthcare, free of charge, to those who are uninsured or under-insured in accordance with 24 V.S.A.§2691? By Australian Ballot.
No discussion.

ARTICLE 26. Shall the voters of the Town of New Haven vote to appropriate the sum of \$950.00 to the Otter Creek Child Center, Inc.? By Australian Ballot.
No discussion.

ARTICLE 27. Shall the voters of the Town of New Haven vote to appropriate \$390.00 for the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)? By Australian Ballot.
No discussion.

ARTICLE 28. Shall the voters of the Town of New Haven vote to appropriate \$4,850.00 for Tri-Valley Transit to be taken from Town Funds for the purpose of maintaining and improving public transportation services for elders, persons with disabilities and the general public? By Australian Ballot.
No discussion.

ARTICLE 29. Shall the Town of New Haven appropriate \$1,000.00 to the Turning Point Center of Addison County for the purpose of supporting its mission to assist persons, their families, and their friends in recovery from substance use disorder and addictive behaviors? By Australian Ballot.
No discussion.

ARTICLE 30. Shall the voters of the Town of New Haven vote to appropriate \$525.00 for Vermont Adult Learning? By Australian Ballot.
No discussion.

ARTICLE 31. Shall the voters of the Town of New Haven vote to appropriate \$215.00 for the Vermont Center for Independent Living? By Australian Ballot.
No discussion.

ARTICLE 32. Shall the Town of New Haven appropriate the sum of \$1,250.00 to WomenSafe, Inc.? By Australian Ballot.
No discussion.

Tim Bouton made a motion to adjourn at 8:49 pm, seconded by Barb Torian
All in favor.

Attest: _____

Town Clerk

DRAFT