

**Dover Select Board
Pre-Town Meeting Minutes
Dover Town Hall
March 1, 2023**

These minutes are not official until approved by the Dover Select Board
A video of the meeting will be available for viewing on YouTube

Select Board in person: Victoria Capitani, Sarah Shippee, Joe Mahon, Dan Baliotti, Scott Salway* arrived at 6:34pm during Article 9

Also, present in person: Moderator Rich Werner, Office Manager, Jeannette Eckert

Public present in person: Dana Sorice, Tabi Freedman, Andy McLean, Eric Durocher, Marc Schauber, Jim McDevitt, Bob Holland, Travis Briggs, Mike Arbogast, Marco Tallini, Ted Blackburn, Mike Eldred, Linda Sherman

Called to Order at 6pm by Chair Vicki Capitani who turned the meeting over to Moderator Rich Werner

Rich Werner pointed out the photos on the first few pages of the Town Report that were provided by Linda Holland—pay attention to them as you may win a jar of pickles on Town Meeting Day if you can identify any of those folks in the photos. There are also some additional trivia questions.

Also, please review the Guide Sheet on page 6-7 which outlines the rules of Town Meeting decorum

Town Meeting takes place on Tuesday, March 7th starting at 10am.

Rich Werner read the Articles into the record for comments and/or questions

ARTICLE 1: To choose all Dover town officers and Unified School District officers for the following positions required by law to be elected at the annual meeting:

Auditor	Tamara Allen	3-year term
First Constable	Andy McLean	1-year term
Library Trustee	Ed Brookman	5-year term
Moderator - Town	Rich Werner	1-year term
Select Board Member	Scott Salway	3-year term
Select Board Member	Victoria Capitani	2-year term
Trustee of Public Funds	Marco Tallini	1-year term

TOWN MEETING

ARTICLE 2: Shall the voters accept the annual report of the auditors and other town officers?

- No comments or questions

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ARTICLE 3: Shall the voters compensate town officers as follows: Select Board Chair \$3,000 annual stipend, Select Board members \$2,500 annual stipend, Town Treasurer \$5,000 annual stipend, Town Clerk \$72,841.19 Town Auditors \$20.39/hr., all others – chairmen Vermont minimum wage plus \$1.50/hr., members Vermont minimum wage, and mileage based on the Federal reimbursement rate for the month in which the mileage occurred?

- The same as in previous years although the Board is proposing a 4% increase for administrative personnel

ARTICLE 4: Shall the voters authorize general fund expenditure for operational expenses of \$2,520,452.51 for the coming year?

- The general fund budget starts on page 26 and goes through 33
- Individual appropriation articles are not included in this figure: Dover Free Library, DVR, SASH, Dover Historical Society, SeVEDS
 - Appears that the budget is down by 2% but that is not the case
- Administrative staff is at a 4% increase
- Highway and Police rate is between 8% and 10%
 - More and more difficult to keep good, qualified staff
 - Currently these two depts are fully staffed
 - Very competitive market right now
 - These are extraordinary raises but believe them to be necessary
- Bob Holland: Is the benefit package taken into account for these higher wages? Seems the benefits are not taken into consideration. Not complaining just wanted an explanation
 - Adjusted the highway overtime down; actual 1% raise
 - This was a struggle to accept; seems the hourly wage is what is the attraction
 - Things are changing and we have struggled in the hiring process
 - Investing in all our staff and want them to stay around
 - Thought long and hard about it
 - Last year Wilmington Police/Hwy got a 10% raise
 - Police Dept wages are in the general fund
 - Highway is a separate fund
- 5 appropriations warned as articles 9 thru 13 for a total of \$317,311.00 will increase the operational cost to \$2,837,763.51 if all are voted on in the affirmative
 - Results in a 10.48% increase over last year
 - The worse case scenario if all are voted in

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- Adjustments would be made if any are not voted in or amended
- Bob Holland: What about the Landfill rate? Isn't that included in Highway?
 - It was determined that given the type of jobs for Highway and Police personnel they would get the higher raises given they are driving heavy equipment and putting on the bullet proof vests
 - Dept head was consulted and a 4% raise was proposed
 - Admin & Support staff proposal is 4%

ARTICLE 5: Shall the voters authorize highway fund expenditure for operational expenses of \$1,619,759.03 for the coming year? Pages 34-35

- Expecting higher than normal diesel, oil prices
- Bob Holland: What about professional development?
 - CDL training for hiring future employees
 - Paving certification for two road crew members as suggested by local residents
- Dana Sorice: What if we invest in an employee who gets his CDL and then leaves? Can we contract with them? It is a gamble
- Rich: Contracts were found to be unconstitutional

ARTICLE 6: Shall the voters raise and appropriate \$600,000.00 for the Capital Paving Fund?

- Page 37 Capital Paving plan
- Not extending paving but maintaining the best we can with the resources we have
- No new paving to take place
- Same expenditure as last year
- Marc Schaubert: Value of maintaining paving as opposed to maintaining dirt roads over a 5 or 10-year period
 - Travis Briggs: gravel, stone, sand, grading on the dirt roads—numerous materials; endless list
 - May want to prepare an answer for Town Meeting Day
 - Gravel roads lose about an inch of gravel a year
 - How many hours are invested to maintain a dirt versus paved road
- Tabi Freedman: road was recently paved; determine how often to maintain newly paved roads; is there a way to figure out how often it needs to be done
 - Depends on usage and depends on the specific road
 - Usage on Dover Hill Rd versus Johnson Hill Rd; it varies

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- Paved roads are in the paving plan and are rotated
- One reason two of the Highway Dept crew is being trained
- Hoping that will help improve the quality of the paving
- Marc Schauber: Would like to see a comparison between paved and dirt roads; if money could be saved down the road by spending more on paving now it could be considered

ARTICLE 7: Shall the voters raise and appropriate \$650,000.00 for the Capital Equipment Fund?

- Pages 38 and 39 Capital Equipment
 - Equipment purchases that are needed in the next few years
 - Have been putting off purchases and plan was not keeping up with those needs
 - Upped the figure from \$500,000 to \$650,000 this coming fiscal year
- Rich Werner: Fire Trucks are very expensive
 - Parts are getting harder to find
 - Hard to find staff who can operate the older vehicles
- Dana Sorice: Trade in or selling privately?
- Board: Will do it either way, try to get the best value for the vehicle

ARTICLE 8: Shall the voters raise and appropriate \$80,000.00 for the Capital Building Improvement Fund?

- Page 40 Capital Building
- Same amount as last year
- Ongoing repairs at the Town Hall
 - Installing new windows
- Brick building
 - New furnace and reconfigure the maintenance area
 - Trying to find a drinkable water source
 - PFAS contamination—ongoing testing with new well
- Town Office
 - Front door, side stairway

ARTICLE 9: Shall the voters raise and appropriate \$238,939.00 for The Dover Free Library?

- There should be a representative available at Town Meeting to speak to this appropriation request
- Report appears on pages 71-74

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ARTICLE 10: Shall the voters raise and appropriate \$30,000.00 for Deerfield Valley Rescue Inc.?

- There should be a representative available at Town Meeting to speak to this appropriation request most likely Bob Maynard
- Report appears on page 95

ARTICLE 11: Shall the voters raise and appropriate \$25,000.00 for Support and Services at Home (SASH)?

- There should be a representative available at Town Meeting to speak to this appropriation request most likely Becky Arbella
- Increase of \$5000 over last year
- Report appears on page 104

ARTICLE 12: Shall the voters raise and appropriate \$20,000 for Dover Historical Society?

- Dan Baliotti: President of DHS working on restoring old photographs which are a part of our history
- Copies of Nell Cull's *History of Dover* book was republished and are available at the Coffee Barn as well as DHS
- Series of events coming up for both kids and adults
- Construction work is ongoing: replaced old windows & sashes, snow guards on roof
 - Improvements to the steps on the side of the building to make it more accessible to the downstairs
 - Downstairs houses Living History Association displays including Civil War carriage
 - Replaced the furnace which uses less oil, saving money
- Report appears on page 89

ARTICLE 13: Shall the voters raise and appropriate \$3,372.00 for Southeastern Vermont Economic Development Strategies (SeVEDS) activities?

- There should be a representative available at Town Meeting
- Based on previous census numbers which is lower than most recent census
- Report appears on page 107

Board: 7.5% increase in the overall budget if all items are voted in the affirmative

Eric Durocher inquired about The Gathering Place appropriation

Board comments: It is still in the budget but just not warned as a separate article; The Board decided that 5 figure funding would be warned as articles

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except for SeVEDS because we like to hear updates from them and EDVFD since they provide essential services

ARTICLE 14: Shall the voters authorize the Selectboard to apply any surplus from the current fiscal year to reduce taxes in the next fiscal year?

- Basically, take surplus money and buy down the tax rate

ARTICLE 15: Shall the voters authorize the Selectboard to sell properties, which the Town has acquired by gift or through tax sales?

- Marco Tallini: One tax sale held this year

ARTICLE 16: Shall the voters authorize the Selectboard to set the tax rate sufficient to cover the approved expenses of the Town of Dover and the Town of Dover Highway for taxes due on September 15, 2023 and February 15, 2024?

- Standard article

ARTICLE 17: Shall the voters authorize the Selectboard to borrow money in anticipation of taxes?

- Marco: Town has a line of credit with Brattleboro Savings and Loan of about 1.8 million which has never been used

ARTICLE 18: To discuss any items that the voters would like to discuss, and to conduct any other business that may legally come before the voters.

- Rich: These are items that can be discussed but can't be a binding motion to vote on
- Linda Sherman: a lot of talk in the Legislature about how towns will move forward with the assessment process; Budget is approved in March but Grand List doesn't come out until June; should vote on a budget that we have the money for; may be in a better position that way
 - Board: We vote on a number based on the Grand List which reflects what the municipal tax rate is; education tax rate is the big item which we don't know until the Legislature sets it
 - Basically, voting on the money to run the Town
- Rich: If there is something residents want to see done, you can compile a petition of voters to get an article on the warning; typically begin discussing the budget in Nov/Dec each year

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- Board: At the last SB meeting, it was proposed that the Town consider purchasing a potential gravel pit in Jamaica
 - Could take a lot of time and upfront money (\$950,000 plus)
 - Want to gage the Town's response on what direction to take on this topic
 - Would take a lot of time, effort and money to explore it
 - There are many unknowns
 - Most of our gravel is coming from NH
 - Not a lot of interest in opening gravel pits in VT
- Tabi Freedman: Do we know the return on investment whether the Town uses it or sells it?
 - Travis has not looked at it yet
 - Owners had started the Act 250 process
 - Apparently, a beautiful property so not sure why the owners would want to create a gravel pit
- Jim McDevitt: Legal fees, wait time on Act 250, large investment but is it worth it?
- Marc: Have seen the advertising for the two lots of land
 - Stratton has considered it and decided against it and it is much closer to them
- Rich Werner: Gravel and sand is not going to get any cheaper
 - Definitely worth the investment; believe we should consider it as a binding vote
 - Towns have gone into these together like Dummerston & Putney
 - Stockpile of gravel, sand helped us out during Irene
 - If we have our own materials, it would be good
 - Not everyone has a million dollars in their back pockets, may want to find out why Stratton decided against it
 - Encourage the Board to move forward with it
- Marc: Potential for other towns to go in on this?
 - Possible
- Travis: Resources are a concern; was told there was sand, stone and gravel in Jamaica pit; not 100% opposed to the idea and can look into it but a concern is why others in this business have not gone after it; they have the money to go after these permits
- Andy McLean: Bond vote for this or raising in the general fund?
- Vicki: Not sure, have not gone that far; Attorney in Brattleboro is looking into the Act 250 process and why it stalled; don't know enough about it yet

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- Dan: Friend in NY who is an excavator can no longer sell his gravel but only use it on his own property; that's what happens when you go for permits

Eric Durocher: Will be bringing up at Town Meeting to get general feedback about the continuation of Valley Trail A- on Route 100; many years ago, plans were made to extend the trail past Dorr Fitch Rd heading south, crossing the road at the Kerstens over the river and continuing past Bogle Rd

Original cost was \$325,000 in 2016; requested updated numbers for 2024 and the cost is now \$866,000 to go 566 feet across Route 100 to Bogle Road; to access the one retail store that is in this area would have to cross Route 100 again; doesn't take in to account the money previously spent and the administrative costs to be reimbursed to the State of approximately \$10,000; strong feelings on both sides of the issue; need to determine a decision on whether to move forward or not; decision will be made by the Select board based on feedback from the voters

Board: Gaging feedback from the voters; cost of easements past and present which has been a nightmare; prices will continue to increase

Marco: What is the worse-case scenario on what the Town is on the hook for?

Eric: \$30,000 plus 20% of \$550,000 over the original quote; worse case is if we don't get another grant

Eric: Requesting feedback; easements versus engineering; grants are a possibility to be approved for additional funding. Original grant was 90% with 10% match, this new one would be 80% with 20% match; funding can only be used on this portion of Valley Trail, not moving North; although another grant could be applied for projects on other portions of the trail just can't reallocate these funds; an interested citizen has compiled a 17-page report with detailed information that will most likely be shared at a future SB meeting

Tabi Freedman: If we take the hit for the \$10,000 versus potential of being on the hook for \$500,000; is there anything that will push us to finish that section of the trail? What would that last mile actually get us?

Eric: Bridge across the river and a path to the wrong side of Route 100 from the only retail business; Toll gate plaza has been turned into residential; old appliance building will be turned into ½ residential and ½ electrical business

Rich: It is possible for more retail space to develop there

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Andy McLean: John Hannon provided a fantastic report on the A- trail section, lives on Bogle Rd and did a lot of research with information from AOT; properties south of the bridge and residential properties that might benefit; focus on safety of pedestrians and hikers; worth the read, eye opening; a lot depends on the money and the potential for grants & what's in the ED budget; two of the best things that the Town has done with 1% funds is the Park and the paved portions of the Trail; people love them and it is great to see people enjoying these spaces; infrastructure doesn't go away; don't write it off until you can get hard numbers; would be fantastic to see it happen

Marc: Safety concerns around that corner

Dan: Dover Police have not had any reports or complaints

Eric: dangerous intersection absolutely for vehicles, pedestrians, bikers even if there are no police reports; reminder that the funds come from 1% funds not taxpayer money

Further discussion to take place at Town Meeting

Other Business:

On a motion by Sarah Shippee, seconded by Dan Baliotti, the Board unanimously recessed as Select Board and convened as local Liquor Control

On a motion by Sarah Shippee, seconded by Scott Salway, the Board unanimously approved the following:

- I. Board of Liquor Control:
 - A. Special Event Permits for Ski Vermont Event at Mt Snow on March 4
 1. Cold Spring Spirits LLC
 2. Vermont Hard Cider Company LLC

On a motion by Sarah Shippee, seconded by Dan Baliotti, the Board unanimously adjourned as local Liquor Control and reconvened as Select Board

ARTICLE 19: Adjournment at 7:15pm by Chair Capitani

Respectfully submitted by Jeannette Eckert

Public notices of these minutes have been posted at the following locations: Dover Town Clerk's Bulletin Board, Dover Town Meeting Bulletin Board, Dover School, Dover Free Library, East Dover Post Office, Town of Dover Website: www.doververmont.com