

# Greensboro Selectboard

February 27, 2021

## Meeting Minutes

[Meeting was held via video conference call]

**SELECTBOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Peter Romans, Andy Kehler, Gary Circosta, Tracy Collier, Matt McAllister

**SELECTBOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:** None

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

|                      |                     |                      |
|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Kim Greaves          | Mary Metcalf        | Aaron Green          |
| Josh Karp            | Janet Long          | Dede Stabler         |
| Meaghan Meachem      | Eric Hanson         | Liz Hatch            |
| Trish Alley          | Brett Stanciu       | Ellen Celnik         |
| Eileen Gebbie        | Michael Porrazzo    | Nancy Sullivan       |
| Mary Young           | Judy Dales          | Elaine Cole-Kerr     |
| Maya McCoy           | Andy Dales          | Rod Kerr             |
| Brent McCoy          | Jennifer Ranz       | Heidi Lauren Duke    |
| Naomi Ranz-Schleifer | David Kelley        | Victoria von Hessert |
| Tim Nisbet           | Rep. Katherine Sims | Mike Sardina         |
| Bobbie Nisbet        | Rep. Vicki Strong   | Nancy Riege          |
| Lise Armstrong       | Sen. Bobby Starr    | Wayne Young          |
| MacNeil              | Jennifer Nicasio    |                      |
| Linda Romans         | Tony Acheson        |                      |
| Mike Metcalf         | Roxane Robin        |                      |

**CALLED TO ORDER: 3:30 PM**

**TOWN MEETING/AUSTRALIAN BALLOT INFORMATIONAL HEARING**

Town moderator Tim Nisbet explained that this is not a traditional town meeting, but a public hearing held by the Selectboard to discuss the warning, which will be voted on by Australian Ballot this year. No motions or amendments may be made.

Tim and Andy Kehler explained how the meeting will be run and how to use the video conference interface to participate in a discussion or ask questions. While this meeting is open to the public, preference will be given to town residents who'd like to participate.

Andy said it's possible that someone could use hateful language in the chat or on their video, and that the hosts will remove the person as fast as possible. However, it's not possible to remove offensive language from the chat, so if this happens and you're offended, please close your chatbox.

Tim moderated a discussion of items on the warning.

## ELECTIONS:

- MODERATOR (Vote for no more than one) 1 YEAR TERM [Tim Nisbet]
- TREASURER (Vote for no more than one) 1 YEAR TERM [Kim Greaves]
- SELECTBOARD MEMBER (Vote for no more than one) 3 YEAR TERM [Gary Circosta]
- SELECTBOARD MEMBER (Vote for no more than one) 2 YEAR TERM [Tracy Collier] [Mike Sardina]
- SELECTBOARD MEMBER (Vote for no more than one) 1 YEAR TO FINISH A 3 YEAR TERM [David Kelley]
- COLLECTOR OF DELINQUENT TAXES (Vote for no more than one) 1 YEAR TERM [Janet Long]
- LIBRARY TRUSTEE (Vote for no more than three) 3 YEAR TERM [Jennifer Lucas] [Anthony E. Acheson] [Krissie Ohlogge]
- CEMETERY COMMISSIONER (Vote for no more than one) 3 YEAR TERM [Patricia Mercier]
- TRUSTEE OF PUBLIC FUNDS (Vote for not more than one) 3 YEAR TERM [Kim Greaves]
- TRUSTEE OF PUBLIC FUNDS (Vote for not more than one) 2 YEARS TO FINISH A 3 YEAR TERM [Margaret Lipscomb (Peggy)]
- FIRST CONSTABLE (Vote for no more than one) 1 YEAR TERM [Rick Walsh]
- SECOND CONSTABLE (Vote for no more than one) 1 YEAR TERM [Mark A. Snyder]
- HAZEN UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT #26 BOARD (Vote for not more than one) 3 YEAR TERM [Mike Metcalf]

Selectboard candidates Gary Circosta, Tracy Collier, Mike Sardina and David Kelley spoke briefly about why they're running for a Selectboard seat.

There was a question about what the Trustee of Public Funds does. Kim Greaves said there are no active duties that she's aware of.

### **ARTICLE 1: Shall the voters of the Town of Greensboro authorize the Selectboard to appoint a Town Treasurer as provided by 17 V.S.A. § 2651f?**

Andy explained that the town's finances are very complicated, and this change would allow the Selectboard to vet a broader pool of treasurer candidates to get the skill set we need.

Mike Metcalf said he supports this change.

### **ARTICLE 2: Shall the voters of the Town of Greensboro authorize the Selectboard to appoint a First Constable, and if needed, a Second Constable, in accordance with 17 V.S.A. § 2651a?**

Peter Romans explained that the reasoning here is similar to that discussed for Article 1: if at some point the town decides to give one or both constables a greater role, this change would allow the Selectboard to broaden its search for qualified candidates.

### **Statements from Greensboro's legislators:**

Vicki Strong spoke. This is her 11<sup>th</sup> year serving in the legislature. They are doing their work remotely. She's on the Agriculture and Forestry Committee. Dairy has been a huge part of our economy but is dwindling, they're assessing the current picture of farming in the state, looking at food systems, food security. How can we keep our food system strong in a natural disaster or pandemic? Rep. Strong suggested that everyone go out and explore the 55 state parks we have in Vermont. She thanked local farms such as Jasper Hill Farm for donating food to area food shelves.

Rep. Katherine Sims spoke. As a first term legislator, she's been working hard to build relationships across state government. She's been assigned to Energy and Tech committee, and is a member of both the Social Equity and Climate Solutions Caucuses. At the top of her list of critical issues are Broadband build-out and affordable childcare. Rep. Sims also spoke about supporting the VT state college system and dealing with the shortfall in the teacher's pension fund.

Sen. Bobby Starr spoke. He's chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee and also serves on Appropriations. Key issues they're looking at are affordable housing and upgrading existing housing. There's money from ACCD to help rehab rental housing, and VHCB is taking on a project to upgrade housing for farm laborers. There's an infrastructure bill in Congress that would send a lot of money our way for broadband; he's hoping that within a few years we'll have halfway-decent broadband statewide. Sen. Starr said that the state college system needs a lot of investment. They're working on changes to food scraps and recycling laws that would allow farmers to compost others' food waste on their farms. Also working on a universal meals program for schools, so all kids will have free meals at their school. Looking at more investments in our state parks, for modest improvements and expansions. We've lost quite a few of our dairy farms, there's a dairy pricing task force trying to figure out ways to help farmers. Sen. Starr said that VHCB has good grant programs, be sure to contact them if you have a particular need in your community. He concluded by saying that if there's anything we can do for you down in Montpelier, don't hesitate to contact us.

Tim asked if there were any questions or comments for the legislators.

Meaghan Meacham thanked them for their support of the VT state college system.

### **ARTICLE 3: Moving forward, all open elected positions be voted on by Australian Ballot?**

Naomi Ranz-Schleifer said that this is the first time all registered voters have received a ballot in the mail, creating a unique opportunity to ask everyone this question. She likes knowing ahead of time who's on the ballot, and added that she can't always make it to town meeting and would take advantage of the opportunity to vote by mail and make her voice heard.

Peter clarified that this article is not a Selectboard initiative, but was included in the warning because a petition was submitted.

Bobbie Nisbet said she will vote 'no', not because she doesn't want people to have a voice, but because she believes in discussion. Town meeting is a chance to meet your neighbors, share a meal. She sympathized with those who can't come to town meeting, and suggested the town consider changing the day and/or time of the meeting to make it more accessible. There needs to be a larger discussion about this proposed change, she said.

Kim said that ballots were sent out to all registered voters this year, with the cost absorbed by the state because of the pandemic. In future years, the town would likely have to pay all costs associated with Australian ballot voting.

**ARTICLE 4: Moving forward, any bylaw or ordinance change be voted on by Australian Ballot?**

Naomi said that similar to Article 3, passage of this would give more voters a voice, since many voters can't make it to town meeting.

Kim noted that almost all zoning bylaw changes over the years have been voted on by Australian ballot on town meeting day – so in that particular instance, we're already using Australian ballots.

David Kelley said that he has concerns about Articles 3 and 4, and felt that such big changes to the way we vote merit broader discussion at a regular town meeting.

Dede Stabler spoke in favor of Articles 3 and 4, asking how can residents participate or give input if they can't make it to town meeting?

Naomi added that it doesn't have to be an either/or, it could be an 'and'. Voting to pass these two articles doesn't mean we can't continue to have discussions at a floor meeting about the location, date and time of town meeting.

Josh Karp said that in the future, it seems possible that registered voters will be allowed to join town meeting via computer video conference. This could allow more to participate, while preserving in-person discussion.

**ARTICLE 5: Shall the voters of the Town of Greensboro authorize a property tax exemption for the "Ballfield" property identified as Parcel ID 005-0002 (the playing field across the street from the fire station and theater) for one year period? This will eliminate all property taxes due for the landowners (about \$1,000)?**

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 6: Shall the voters approve transferring the surplus, if any, from the current fiscal year (2021) Highway Fund into the Highway Equipment Reserve Fund (HERF) in the next fiscal year (2022)?**

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 7: Shall the voters approve the proposed budget in the amount of \$1,574,491.00 which contains the necessary amount required by law and proposed expenses for the fiscal year 2022?**

Gary Circosta said the budget is down \$66k from last year, mostly due to a cut in the police line item. However, taxes are likely to go up a little this year, because a \$100k surplus was used to reduce the municipal tax rate last year.

Wayne Young thanked the Board for supporting the cemetery fund and all the cemetery restoration that's been underway in recent years.

**ARTICLE 8: Shall the voters approve spending \$78,000 to fund the Highway Equipment Reserve Fund (HERF, a reserve fund) for fiscal year 2022 (July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022)?**

Gary said this amount is a little lower this year, due to surplus in the highway fund last year.

**ARTICLE 9: Shall the voters approve spending \$190,000 to fund the Capital Budget Fund (a reserve fund) for fiscal year 2022 (July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022)?**

Gary said that \$64k of this reserve fund goes directly to the fire station payment.

**ARTICLE 10: Shall the voters approve expending \$4,400 for 4th of July fireworks?**

Andy said that the question of whether to fund the fireworks came up at a prior Selectboard meeting, so it was decided to put this on the warning as a separate article.

**ARTICLE 11: Shall the voters appropriate \$14,947 to the Hardwick Rescue Squad (the town's ambulance service)?**

Tim noted that there would still be ambulance service in town even if this Article is voted down.

Ellen Celnik felt that a disadvantage of using Australian Ballot voting is that appropriation amounts can't be amended up or down.

Gary noted that the Rescue Squad's appropriation request was down \$826. All other appropriation requests are the same as last year's amounts.

**ARTICLE 12: Shall the voters appropriate \$25,000 to the Greensboro Free Library?**

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 13: Shall the voters appropriate \$22,500 to the Greensboro Nursing Home?**

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 14: Shall the voters appropriate \$10,500 to the Craftsbury Community Care Center?**

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 15: Shall the voters appropriate \$9,500 to the 4 Seasons of Early Learning?**

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 16: Shall the voters appropriate \$5,000 to the Greensboro Historical Society?**

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 17: Shall the voters appropriate \$3,500 to WonderArts?**

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 18: Shall the voters appropriate \$2,500 to the Hardwick Area Food Pantry?**

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 19: Shall the voters appropriate \$2,000 to AWARE?**

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 20: Shall the voters appropriate \$2,000 to the Greensboro Conservation Commission?**

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 21: Shall the voters appropriate \$1,500 to the Clarina Howard Nichols Center?**

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 22: Shall the voters appropriate \$1,400 to Caledonia Home Health?**

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 23: Shall the voters appropriate \$1,000 to the Lamoille Family Center?**

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 24: Shall the voters appropriate \$1,000 to the NEK Council of Aging?**

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 25: Shall the voters appropriate \$1,000 to the Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD)?**

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 26: Shall the voters appropriate \$900 to Rural Community Transportation?**

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 27: Shall the voters appropriate \$800 to Orleans County Citizens Advocacy?**

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 28: Shall the voters appropriate \$625 to the Orleans County Historical Society?**

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 29: Shall the voters appropriate \$600 to the North Country Animal League?**

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 30: Shall the voters appropriate \$572 to the Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA)?**

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 31: Shall the voters appropriate \$300 to Orleans County Court Diversion?**

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 32: Shall the voters appropriate \$250 to NEK Learning Services?**

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 33: Shall the voters appropriate \$250 to the Red Cross?**

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 34: Shall the voters appropriate \$210 to the Vermont Center for Independent Living?**

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 35: Shall the voters appropriate \$100 to Green Up Vermont?**

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 36: Shall the voters approve having the Town Treasurer serve as the collector of current taxes and set the tax due date of Thursday, November 4, 2021?**

No discussion.

**General discussion.**

Kim said that it's too late to mail in ballots at this time. Options are 1) to deliver the ballot to the town offices on town meeting day, or 2) use the drop box. Either way, ballots must be received by 7PM on town meeting day, Tuesday March 2.

Nancy Riege said that she missed the discussions that we would have had at a floor meeting, adding that appropriations should not be voted on by Australian ballot in the future.

Janet Long thanked Jasper Hill Farm for donating cheese to the library.

Peter and Janet thanked the three legislators for taking part in the meeting.

Peter thanked outgoing Selectboard member Andy Kehler for his service to the town. Andy said that he really enjoyed the work and looks forward to participating again in the future.

Judy Dales wondered when the 4<sup>th</sup> of July will be held this year. After discussion it was agreed that the 4<sup>th</sup> will be celebrated on Saturday July 3.

Naomi encouraged the town clerk to use multiple modes of contact to better advertise monthly Selectboard meetings, with the hope of engaging more citizens. She advocated building up a robust email list that the town can use to communicate with residents.

Gary said more participation in town governance is always needed, and suggested that everyone look at page 12 of the town report, where Selectboard appointments are listed. The Board will be making appointments next month, please reach out if anyone has questions about serving in any position.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The Selectboard voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 5:20 PM.

*Respectfully Submitted: Josh Karp, Selectboard Clerk*

*AMENDED 3/10/21 J.K.*