

Greensboro Selectboard

February 19, 2022 Special Meeting – Minutes

[Meeting was held in person and on video conference]

SELECTBOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Peter Romans, David Kelley, Tracy Collier

SELECTBOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Matt McAllister, Gary Circosta

OTHERS PRESENT: Kim Greaves, Josh Karp, Brett Stanciu, Ellen Celnik, Amy Obenauf, Sen. Bobby Starr, Nim Nisbet, Renee Circosta, Anne Stevens, Bobbie Nisbet, Joseph Gresser, Jane Woodruff, MacNeil, Kelsey Stevseth, Mike Metcalf, Mary Metcalf, Rep. Catherine Sims, Tim Brennan, Trish Alley, Bill Alley, Rep. Vicki Strong, Lise Armstrong, Eric Hanson, Nancy Hill, Clive Gray, Jennifer Lucas, Jane Hoffman, Billy Eisner, Harold Gray, Christine Armstrong, Becky Arnold, Stew Arnold, Tanya Thomas, Meghan Wayland, Alison Gardner, Laira Hill

CALLED TO ORDER: 3:37 PM

INFORMATIONAL DISCUSSION ABOUT TOWN MEETING 2022

Peter Romans welcomed residents, explaining that the purpose of this meeting is to provide information about items on the warning, and not to debate them.

Town moderator Tim Nisbet said the meeting is being recorded, participants will be muted unless speaking, and comments will be limited to one minute. Parliamentary procedures will not be used, no decisions will be made, ballot items may not be amended, and no voting will occur – discussion only.

As in 2021, all town meeting voting will be by Australian Ballot in 2022. All registered voters should have received a town ballot in the mail. School ballots were not mailed out, and can be picked up at the town offices. Ballots must be received at the town clerk's office by 7 PM on town meeting day (Tuesday, March 1), and can be mailed to the town, hand delivered to the town clerk, or placed in the drop box at the entrance to the town offices. Voting in person is also an option on town meeting day between 10 AM and 7 PM.

Tim invited Greensboro's representatives Sen. Bobby Starr, Rep. Vicki Strong and Rep. Catherine Sims to speak about their work in the legislature, which they did for some time.

The ballot was then reviewed article by article. [*Note: only articles where discussion took place are included below].

Elections.

- The only contest for a town position is a two-year term for Selectboard, with Matt McAllister (the incumbent) and Ellen Celnik running. Matt was not present. Ellen spoke, saying she's a retired social worker who moved to Greensboro in 2011 after visiting for a number of years. She's served on the Planning Commission since 2018, served as treasurer of the Recreation Committee since fall 2021, and serves on the ARPA committee. Ellen said she attended many Selectboard meetings over the past year in order to better understand the job of a Selectboard member.

- Current Selectboard member David Kelley, who's running uncontested for a three-year seat, spoke highly of Town Clerk Kim Greaves and Town Treasurer and Zoning Administrator Brett Stanciu.
- MacNeil, who's running uncontested for a second term on the Hazen Union High School District 26 board, said the work is both challenging and interesting.

Articles 1-4: proposed amendments to the Zoning Bylaw.

Planning Commission (PC) members said that many of the changes were made in order to implement goals of the Town Plan – a plan that was voted on and supported by a majority of voters. The PC was also guided in its Bylaw amendment work by town survey results.

Article 2: Shall the voters approve the proposed amendment to the Greensboro Zoning Bylaw and create an Extended Village District?

- Members of the PC said this could be a small contribution to the affordable housing problem in Greensboro. Meghan Wayland said she's new in town and currently rents, and hears again and again about the lack of affordability in town, and appreciates the PC putting this proposal before the voters as a great first step.
- Sen. Starr suggested the PC talk to Josh Hannaford at the Agency of Commerce and Community Development about affordable housing issues and programs.

Article 4: Shall the voters approve the proposed amendment to the Greensboro Zoning Bylaw know as 'Miscellaneous Changes'?

- It was explained that these are mostly minor, operational changes to make the Bylaw work better overall.

Article 5: Shall the voters of Greensboro approve setting a speed limit of 35 MPH for all gravel roads in Greensboro?

- Peter Romans explained that over the years, there have been complaints of speeding on gravel roads. A number of surrounding towns have instituted a blanket 35 MPH policy for all gravel roads, since the default speed limit on unmarked roads is 50 MPH and this is too fast for many areas. A majority of Selectboard members voted to put this on the warning. If approved by the voters, there will be some expense for new signage, but this change would potentially help with the speeding problem.

Article 7: Shall the voters approve transferring the surplus, if any, from the current fiscal year (2022) Highway Fund into the Highway Equipment Reserve Fund (HERF) in the next fiscal year (2023)?

- Peter said that this question is on the warning every year. Discussion of what the HERF is, and where highway fund surplus comes from (budgeted vs actuals).
- Mike Metcalf said the HERF was set up about 15 years ago in order to keep the municipal tax rate more stable given that highway equipment is so expensive to purchase.
- Hal Gray: there's a memo from Selectboard member Gary Circosta that's confused me, it discusses issues with the general ledger and the auditor's final report. Is the Selectboard aware of this memo? Peter said the issues in the memo will be addressed, but that the memo doesn't have much to do with

today's discussion. He added that the memo came late in the budgeting process, after much of the work was done.

Article 8: Shall the voters approve the proposed budget in the amount of \$1,648,658 which contains the necessary amount required by law and proposed expenses for the fiscal year 2023?

- David Kelley said the Selectboard worked hard on this budget, which is essentially level funded despite inflation pressures. He looked at budgets in surrounding towns, and most have % increases higher than ours.
- Discussion of discrepancies in the town report between the written explanation of some budget items and the related numbers on budget spreadsheets. Brett suggested that some of the spreadsheets may not have received a final update prior to printing, and that voters should refer to the written verbiage.
- Brett Stanciu said the Selectboard needs to do more long-range planning in areas such as the Capital Budget, HERF, and funding for the new town garage. David Kelley agreed.

Article 11: Shall the voters appropriate \$20,945 to the Hardwick Rescue Squad?

- Tim Nisbet said this amount is a significant increase. It's been very hard to get volunteers, so they've had to hire expensive EMTs. Plus, call volumes have been up significantly.
- Tim asked the state representatives to consider implementing tax breaks for volunteer fire dept. and rescue squad members.

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

Article 13: Shall the voters appropriate an additional \$5,000 to the Greensboro Free Library?

- Jennifer Lucas gave an overview of the library budget and said the GFL is only seeking a \$2500 increase over last year.
- Discussion about a change in billing for the library phone, and how the library is now paying for its own phone service. David Kelley said this was a difficult issue, and during the budgeting process the Selectboard took into account the library's considerable reserve fund. Jennifer said the GFL can't just dip into the reserve fund's principal, and that the library is often deficit spending until the annual town appropriation is received.

Article 32: Shall the voters appropriate \$300 to NEKCA Community and Justice Program?

- Hal Gray said that if this program is the successor to the Restorative Justice program, it should be supported and is a tremendously valuable program to keep people who commit minor offences out of the court system.

Article 36: Shall the voters appropriate \$100 to Green Up Vermont?

- Kim said that this \$100 appropriation is sent to the statewide organization 'Green Up Vermont'. The town also spends about \$1500 on Green-up day costs such as dumpsters for trash and tires, which is included in the general town budget.

Article 37: Shall the voters appropriate \$1,524 to Northeast Kingdom Human Services?

- NEKHS director Kelsey Stevseth spoke about services provided by NEKHS.

- Meghan Wayland spoke about some of the ways NEKHS is falling short in providing services to area residents. Kelsey said he is very aware of the needs of the community, and that there are serious workforce and budgetary challenges that NEKHS is working hard to overcome. Sen. Starr said Gov. Scott's budget only calls for a 3% budget increase for organizations such as NEKHS – which is simply not enough.

Article 38: Shall the voters approve having the Town Treasurer serve as collector of current taxes and set the tax due date of Thursday, November 3, 2022 at 4 PM in the Town Office?

- Discussion of town employee payroll costs. While there was a small decrease in health insurance rates, a new person was added to the town's plan. There was an increase in retirement costs due to the new treasurer. There were payroll increases across the board due to inflation. A new town employee was hired to clear sidewalks. David said our road crew is being paid less than many of our surrounding towns, but they do a great job and we want to keep them.

Peter said the Board would try in the future to do a clearer job explaining the budget.

Bobbie Nisbet thanked all the town officers and Selectboard members for their hard work.

Peter asked if there was any other business, and there was none.

ADJOURNMENT

The Board agreed unanimously to adjourn at 5:30 PM.

Respectfully Submitted: Josh Karp, Selectboard Clerk