

Meeting Minutes
Town Meeting Informational Zoom meeting
March 2, 2021

Meeting called to order at 7:00 pm

Jon welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Selectboard members Todd Williams and Chuck Black.

Zoom logistics: Jon clearly laid out the process for communicating during the meeting and options for asking questions and contributing.

History of meeting - Usually community members meet in person on Town Meeting Day. Due to Covid 19 pandemic, we are unable to meet in person and we decided to take advantage of one time law allowing towns to switch to Australian Ballot and an informational meeting for one year. Jon explained that the Informational meeting had to be held within 10 days of voting. This rule guided us to schedule the informational meeting right before voting day to discuss articles on the ballot before voting.

Polls are open for in person voting March 2, 2021 from 9:00am - 7:00 pm

Purpose of meeting - This is an informational meeting to respond to questions and comments about the articles on the ballot this year. General business will be discussed at the end of the meeting. The meeting is considered a meeting of the selectboard. No motions can be made. Articles can not be modified. At town meetings, we can modify motions. That is not the case tonight.

Selectboard meetings happen twice/month. Public is always welcome. Please attend if you have anything you would like to discuss or share. Agendas are posted outside and inside the town office, at the post office and online on the town website.

There are two positions without a candidate on the ballot. Unless there is a write in candidate, the selectboard will appoint someone at the March 17, 2021 Selectboard meeting.

Questions about any town business are welcome after Article 9 discussion.

- **Additions or deletions to the agenda**
 - **Public comment** - None

- **Review and discuss Article I:** To elect a Town Moderator
 - Public comment - None
Gary Ameden is the only candidate for Town Moderator. No questions.

- **Review and discuss Article II:** To elect all Town Officers as the law directs.

- A. Town Clerk for a term of one year;
- B. Town Treasurer for a term of one year;
- C. Selectboard member for a term of three years;
- D. Lister for a term of three years;
- E. Auditor for a term of three years;
- F. Cemetery Commissioner for a term of five years;
- G. First Constable for a term of one year;
- H. Second Constable for a term of one year;
- I. Collector of Delinquent Taxes for a term of one year;
- J. Grand Juror for a term of one year;
- K. Trustee of Public Funds for a term of one year;

There are candidates on the ballot for all of these positions except for Cemetery Commissioner. Peter Bradford and Sarah Hamlett pointed out that we don't have a candidate for Auditor.

- **Review and discuss Article III:**

Shall the voters authorize total fund expenditures for operating expenses for the 2021-2022 fiscal year of \$926,275, of which \$616,650 shall be raised by taxes and \$309,625 by non-tax revenues?

Shall the voters establish the date of payment of such taxes as July 1st, 2021 through September 30th, 2021.

- Public comment
No questions

- **Review and discuss Article IV:** Shall the Voters authorize the Treasurer to collect current taxes?

- Public comment
No questions

- **Review and discuss Article V:**

Shall the voters vote a sum of money to the following organizations which serve the community

	AMOUNT
Bennington County Conservation District	\$300
BROC Community Action	\$200
Cemetery Commission	\$5,000
The Collaborative	\$750
Center for Restorative Justice	\$300

Flood Brook Athletic Association	\$1,000
Green Up Vermont	\$50
Londonderry Volunteer Rescue Squad	\$4,000
Mountain Valley Health Council	\$3,000
Neighborhood Connections	\$1,000
Project Against Violent Encounters (PAVE)	\$150
Rural Fire Protection Task Force	\$100
Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging	\$200
Vt. Ctr. Of Independent Living	\$140
Bennington County Coalition for Homeless	\$500
Visiting Nurse & Hospice	\$2,700
Bennington County Child Advocacy Ctr.	\$500
South Londonderry Free Library	<u>\$1,000</u>
 TOTAL REQUESTS	 \$20,890

Questions - Welthy Myers inquired whether the visiting nurse association from Weston submitted a request. A request was not received.

- **Review and discuss Article VI:** Shall the voters approve a veteran’s exemption to include an amount up to \$30,000. The State of Vermont currently provides a maximum exemption of \$40,000 with the first \$10,000 provided by the state. The total exemption is deducted from the appraised value of the parcel.
 - Public comment

Questions - Welthy Myers inquired about how the Veteran’s Exemptions work? Is it for all Veterans, low income veterans? Not limited to low income veterans. If a veteran wants to request this exemption the person should contact the clerk. Sarah Hamlett read from an online source that state law mandates all town have this article on the ballot.

- **Review and discuss Article VII:** Shall the voters approve combining the New Pavement Reserve Fund with a balance of \$69,429.66 and the Highway Resurface Fund with a balance of \$61,383.89 plus any accrued interest into a new Reserve Fund called the Highway Surfacing Fund?
 - Public comment
 - No questions on Article VII
- **Review and discuss Article VIII:** Shall the voters approve combining the Village Green Reserve Fund with a balance of \$5,243.45 and the Peru Park Reserve Fund with a balance of \$2,907.01 plus any accrued interest into a new Reserve Fund called the Town Park Reserve Fund?

- Public comment

Questions: Jay Reichman asked about the history of the park on North Rd. Tracy Black explained that the park was started about 30 years ago. There were some squatters living there. The community took away the garbage, raised some money and turned it into a park. Susan Bradford noted that it doesn't appear that much money is spent on the Peru Park Reserve Fund. Is that typical for every year? Last year a committee was working on town park and secured a donation for tables that will be assembled in the spring. Jon said that in the past 18 years or so that he has been here, there were some new swings and a swing set that were added about 15 years ago. In about 10 years there has been virtually no money spent on the town park. Not much money gets spent on the village green. All wiring was put in, electricity was run. Grading has been done for drainage improvement, and this fall part was graded again to level for hockey rink.

No specific questions about the reserve funds.

- **Review and discuss Article IX:** Shall the Town of Peru vote a sum of money not to exceed \$200,000 to construct a multi-use pavilion on the Town Green.
 - Public comment

This is a pre-authorization to spend up to \$200K on the town green.

Jane Worley - Helpful discussions when exploring options for town green that she experienced at Walpole town green. Veterans recognition. Playground. Gazebo - how big? What kind? What will the space be used for? For rent? Walpole has two different locations, similar to Peru.

Jon Mowry said that bottom line is we, the community, need people to be involved.

Susan Bradford - She has heard people talking about town park for pickleball court. Jon responded that the town park was discussed. There have been discussions about whether a pickleball court could be built on the ice rink for use in warmer seasons and to consolidate efforts for leveled areas.

Susan asked about open slots on the ballot. Jon said email him directly or call Jennie at town office.

Beth Knox/Bill Hutchins suggested creating an electronic system for communication amongst the community.

Tracy Black - Kathleen James has been skiing regularly at WW. She is a representative from Manchester. She talked about Build Better Places grants that would support this exact type of project. If we could get a project started, it will be much easier to apply for the grant. Kathleen feels strongly we would receive the grant.

Jon asked if anyone would like to be involved in the town park committee. That committee could gear back up again.

Barbara Ardell said the skating rink has been fabulous for Peru. In years past the town green committee discussed various projects. In the end, that committee decided that having open space gives flexibility for use. Barbara questioned whether a pavilion would work for the Peru Fair.

Welthy Myers - Question to Tracy - Did Kathleen share the size of grants. Tracy reported that the last grant cycle was \$5,000-\$20,000. The town should not be afraid to ask for what is needed.

Tracy talked about the fire department needing help to maintain the skating rink. Jon shared that the rink is a loosely organized group of people who wanted a rink and made it happen.

- **Discussion of other non-binding business (if applicable)**

School ballot - Peru is part of Taconic & Green School District. We vote on all of the officers in the district, not just Peru.

Jane Worley spoke about the school board looking for more community engagement in the future.

Jon opened up the opportunity for any other questions or comments.

Jon responded to Jane Worley's question regarding the ability of the Selectboard to appoint individuals to roles that are not fulfilled through voting. They will do so at the next Selectboard meeting on March 17, 2021.

- **Entertain motion to adjourn hearing.**

Meeting adjourned at 8:04 pm.