

# MINUTES

## TOWN OF WHITINGHAM ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

### March 5, 2024

The Annual Town Meeting was held on Tuesday, March 5, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. e.s.t. at the Twin Valley Middle High School in the Town of Whitingham, Vermont agreeable to the warning.

At 10:00 a.m. Moderator Leon Corse led the Pledge of Allegiance. Town Clerk, Almira Aekus declared the polls open.

The moderator asked for and received permission from the electorate for State Representative Tristan Roberts to address them. Mr. Roberts gave a brief update on his participation in the legislature and asked the electorate if they had any comments or concerns for him to address. The main takeaway was that education taxes would be going up.

Announcements: Old Home Week survey was available at the meeting, DVFiber representative was available for questions in the entryway. Mr. Corse stated that after 39 years as moderator he would not be seeking reelection after his 40<sup>th</sup> year 2025. He explained that he would like to be available to guide his replacement. Mr. Corse thanked Alyah Walker for acting as page for the meeting.

Mr. Corse asked the Board of Civil Authority to introduce themselves and then proceeded to review the rules of procedures: Scott Reed, James Weber, Craig Hammer, Gregory Brown, Elizabeth McKinley, Susan Cooke Johnson, Abigail Corse, Seth Boyd, Mary LeMaire, Terry Morse, Julie Muller, and Almira Aekus.

At 10:20 a.m. the moderator declared the meeting open for business. The Moderator asked if there were any objections to dispensing with the reading of the warning. There were none.

#### Article 1

A motion was made by Gregory Brown, seconded by Scott Reed to authorize general fund expenditures for operating expenses for fiscal year July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025, of **\$768,609.00** of which **\$399,887.00.00** to be raised in taxes, the balance to be offset by **\$267,982.00** in anticipated revenues and **\$100,740.00** appropriated from prior year's fund balance. A motion was made by Gregory Brown, seconded by Scott Reed to amend the article to authorize general fund expenditures for operating expenses for fiscal year July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025, of **\$766,326.00** of which **\$397,604.00** to be raised in taxes, the balance to be offset by **\$267,982.00** in anticipated revenues and **\$100,740.00** appropriated from prior year's fund balance. **Discussion:** Mr. Brown stated the amendment was to rectify the article. There being no further discussion the motion was called and carried. The amended article was called and carried by voice vote.

#### Article 2

A motion was made by Stanley Janovsky, Jr. and seconded by James Weber to raise and appropriate **\$193,425.00** for the operation of the Town Fire Department for fiscal year July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025. **Discussion:** Abigail Crosby asked why the amount budgeted was so much higher. She questioned if there was private fundraising for the department. Mr. Janovsky stated the increase would be used to replace outdated air packs. He said there had been a grant application

submitted for the packs that they will hopefully get. The department does fundraise and has an annual fishing derby as well as a monthly raffle. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

### **Article 3**

A motion was made by Seth Boyd and seconded by Abigail Corse to raise and appropriate **\$21,000.00** for the Parks Committee for fiscal year July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025. **Discussion:** None. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

### **Article 4**

A motion was made by Stanley Janovsky, seconded from the floor to raise, and appropriate **\$60,000.00** to the Fire Department Equipment Fund for fiscal year July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025. **Discussion:** A question was asked from the floor if the fund was part of the fire department budget. Mr. Janovsky stated it was not. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

### **Article 5**

A motion was made by Stanley Janovsky, seconded from the floor to authorize **\$1,628,053.00** for the maintenance and repair of town highways for fiscal year July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025, of which **\$1,473,589.00** to be raised in taxes, the balance to be offset by **\$138,408.00** in anticipated revenues and **\$16,056.00** appropriated from prior year's fund balance. **Discussion:** None. Motion called and carried by voice vote.

### **Article 6**

A motion was made by Stanley Janovsky, seconded from the floor to raise, and appropriate **\$125,000.00** to the Highway Equipment Fund for fiscal year July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025. **Discussion:** None. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

### **Article 7**

A motion was made by Scott Reed, seconded by James Weber to raise, and appropriate **\$50,000.00** to fund the Town Highway Garage Renovation and/or Replacement Fund for the fiscal year July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025. **Discussion:** Johanna Robohm questioned how much money was in the fund. Mr. Weber stated \$383,386 as of June 30, 2023. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

### **Article 8**

A motion was made by Tanya Bernard, seconded by Henry Millett to authorize **\$94,180.00** for the operation of the Whitingham Free Public Library for fiscal year July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025, with **\$80,155.00** to be raised in taxes, and the balance to be offset by **\$14,025.00** in anticipated grants. **Discussion:** Kristine Sweeter noted the \$14,025.00 was grants and fundraising. Gregory Brown questioned if the \$80,155 was a donation from the town. Ms. Sweeter stated the library was a municipal entity of the Town of Whitingham. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

### **Article 9**

A motion was made by Scott Reed, seconded by James Weber to raise, and appropriate **\$10,000.00** to the Municipal Facilities Fund for fiscal year July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025, for continued maintenance. **Discussion:** None. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

### **Article 10**

A motion was made by Bradford Lackey and seconded from the floor to raise and appropriate **\$22,950.00** for the operation of town cemeteries for fiscal year July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025, with **\$19,916.00** to be raised in taxes, and the balance to be offset by **\$1,200.00** in anticipated revenue

and **\$1,834.00** appropriated from prior year's fund balance. **Discussion:** None. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

#### **Article 11**

A motion was made by James Weber, seconded by Scott Reed to raise, and appropriate **\$6,000.00** to support economic development in Whitingham for the fiscal year July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025. **Discussion:** John Robohm questioned what the money would be used for. James explained the money would be used for an overhaul of the town website. He stated the front of the website would mostly remain the same, but the backend of the site would be getting a major overhaul which includes increased firewalls. He said the website would need to be upgraded about every ten years. The backend upgrade will cost around \$12,000. Sherry Adams questioned the Amount in Article 22 as that was for Southern Vermont Economic Development SeVeds and wondered if they would be able to help the website. Mr. Weber stated the SeVeds was regional and offered help to businesses and towns. They help with grants but are not specific to Whitingham and are not controlled by Whitingham. Elaine Foster asked for clarification that the upgrade was for safety and firewalls and questioned if there was any other use for the fund. She was told there were no other allocations planned. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

#### **Article 12**

A motion was made by Seth Boyd, seconded from the floor to raise, and appropriate **\$20,000.00** for support of Old Home Week activities 2026. **Discussion:** None. Motion called and carried by voice vote.

#### **Article 13**

A motion was made by Dennis Pike and seconded from the floor to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$20,000.00** for the continuing support of ambulance operations by Deerfield Valley Rescue for fiscal year July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025. **Discussion:** James Weber questioned if anyone knew how many Whitingham subscriptions there were. Mr. Pike did not. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

#### **Article 14**

A motion was made by Almira Aekus, seconded by Julia Muller to raise, and appropriate the sum of **\$1,000.00** for Deerfield Valley Community Cares, an organization that provides fuel assistance for those not on state aid. **Discussion:** Ms. Aekus stated the organization has helped a lot of people in town. Motion was called and carried by voice vote.

#### **Article 15**

A motion was made by Julie Muller, seconded from the floor that the voters raise and appropriate the sum of **\$2,500.00** for Deerfield Valley Community Partnership, an organization that provides programming and activities for youth and families that promote healthy behaviors and prevent youth drug and alcohol use. **Discussion:** None. Motion was called and carried by voice vote.

#### **Article 16**

A motion was made by Julie Muller, seconded by Henry Millett to raise, and appropriate the sum of **\$500.00** for Deerfield Valley Food Pantry for the purpose of providing supplemental food assistance to area families in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §2691. **Discussion:** John Robohm questioned what 24 V.S.A. §2691 was. Ms. Aekus looked it up and reported it was an aid to social services for town residents. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

### **Article 17**

A motion was made by Theresa Dumaine, seconded by Gregory Brown to raise, and appropriate the sum of **\$305.00** for Green Mountain RSVP for support of senior volunteer program with training and support for the volunteers who teach Bone Builder classes and who deliver meals in Whitingham in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §2691. **Discussion:** None. Motion was called and carried by voice vote.

### **Article 18**

A motion was made by Abigail Corse and seconded by Susan Johnson to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$1,203.00** for Health Care and Rehabilitation Services, Inc. to help support outpatient mental health and substance abuse services, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §2691. **Discussion:** None. Motion was called and carried by voice vote.

### **Article 19**

A motion was made by James Weber and seconded from the floor to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$1,500.00** to offset the cost of providing Senior Meals, to Terrie Dumaine, who provides the meals to the senior citizens in the valley. **Discussion:** Elaine Foster questioned why the appropriation was going to a person instead of a group. Theresa Dumaine explained the senior meal program was going to go away, so she took it upon herself to keep the program going. Ms. Foster thanked Ms. Dumaine for providing the service. Sherry Adams stated she was not against the article and questioned if Ms. Dumaine paid rent. She was told yes. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

### **Article 20**

A motion was made by Abigail Corse, seconded by Gregory Brown to raise, and appropriate the sum of **\$750.00** for Senior Solutions -The Council on Aging for Southeastern VT, Inc. to serve elders and assist with funding the community meal, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §2691. **Discussion:** None. Motion was called and carried by voice vote.

### **Article 21**

A motion was made by Jason LaSelva, seconded by Abigail Corse to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$1,200.00** for Southeastern Vermont Community Action, Inc. (SEVCA) to assist Whitingham in responding to the emergency needs of the community and providing all available and applicable services, including crisis intervention, housing, fuel assistance, weatherization, tax preparation, financial coaching, Head Start services, thrift stores, and micro business development, to families and individuals in need in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §2691. **Discussion:** None. Motion was called and carried by voice vote.

### **Article 22**

A motion was made by John Doty and seconded from the floor to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$4,071.00** to Southeastern Vermont Economic Development Strategies (SeVEDS) to provide workforce and economic coordination services to the Windham Region. **Discussion:** Mr. Doty stated they provide many services to the town and have a five-year comprehensive plan. A new one will be completed in 2024 for the next five years. There is \$3.00 per pupil assessment to support the efforts. They helped the town with grants for the new sewer system and students in school with their Pipe Way to Pathways programs as outlined on page 68 of the town report. James Weber stated he was thankful for their help with the sewer department. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

### **Articles 23-27**

A motion was made by Chris Walling and seconded from the floor to combine Articles 23 -27 in the amount of \$19,895.00. Moderator asked if there were any objections. There were four voters that objected. Moderator explained that since there were objections, the electorate would need to vote to suspend the rules in order to consider Mr. Walling's motion. A motion was made by Karen Pratt and seconded from the floor to suspend the rules which requires a two-thirds vote. The motion was called, and the moderator declared a two-thirds majority. There were seven voters that indicated they would like a paper ballot. There were 68 votes cast: 46 yes and 22 no. The motion to suspend the rules carried. **Discussion:** Abigail Crosby questioned if all students including home school students, were able to take part. She was told yes. Joyce Forbush questioned how many kids were taking part. Abigail Corse stated the programs benefit a decent number of students from both the home school and public-school environment. Sherry Adams questioned what the reason was for combining the articles together. Mr. Walling stated it was to save time, but he said he learned his lesson. Ms. Foster stated the values were for different entities and that she would advocate keeping them separate. The motion was called and carried by voice vote. The articles read:

#### **Article 23**

Shall the voters raise and appropriate the sum of **\$6,000.00** for Twin Valley Youth Sports, an organization that provides all students in Whitingham, grades pre-k through 6<sup>th</sup>, the opportunity to play the organized sports of soccer, basketball, baseball, and softball?

#### **Article 24**

Shall the voters raise and appropriate the sum of **\$250.00** for the Windham County Disaster Animal Response Team ("WinDART") to assist in the care and sheltering of pets in the event of a local emergency?

#### **Article 25**

Shall the voters raise and appropriate the sum of **\$1,795.00** for Wings Community Program's summer programming providing four weeks of academic, enrichment, and physical activity for students entering grades K-8 in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 2691?

#### **Article 26**

Shall the voters raise and appropriate the sum of **\$11,000.00** for Wings Community Programs that provide after school programs for Whitingham students Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade?

#### **Article 27**

Shall the voters raise and appropriate the sum of **\$850.00** for the Women's Freedom Center for general operating support to provide services to survivors and their children who are experiencing emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse and are residents of Whitingham, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 2691?

#### **Article 28**

A motion was made by Almira Aekus and seconded from the floor to authorize payment of real estate taxes on or before November 1, 2024, with ninety-days' notice; to be made by physical delivery to the tax collector before 2pm on that date or with a first-class postmark on or before that date. **Discussion:** John Doty questioned the use of the drop box. Ms. Aekus stated tax payments could be placed in the drop box and would be considered timely if they were in the box before it was opened first thing in the morning on November 2<sup>nd</sup>. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

## Article 29

A motion was made by Almira Aekus and seconded from the floor to make overdue taxes bear interest at a rate of one percent (1%) per month or fraction thereof for the first three (3) months and thereafter one and one-half percent (1 ½%) per month or fraction thereof from the due date of such tax pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 5136. **Discussion:** None. Motion was called and carried by voice vote.

## Article 30

### **To transact any other business that may legally come before this meeting.**

A motion was made by Sherry Adams, seconded by Mary Lemaire, that the service article have a representative from the group available to speak to that request and if a representative was not available, they have someone from town represent the article. **Discussion:** It was noted that any vote taken in other business would be non-binding. Karen Hein acknowledged the reasoning for the motion but spoke against it as there are a fair number of town meetings on the same day and the agency representative cannot make all the meetings. Many spoke about the inability of the service representative members to be able to attend all the meetings that would be going on at the same time. Sherry Adams and Mary Lemaire withdrew the motion.

James Weber stated the selectboard was interested in a non-binding vote from the electorate as to what direction they would like the selectboard to take regarding policing. They would like to know if the voters would like policing to stay as is, increase, or decrease the hours. Travis Wheeler stated he felt the town had adequate coverage. David Farrington stated in the past the town would have a state police officer that lived in the area and encouraged putting pressure on the state to get more coverage. Mr. Weber said that there would be a substantial increase in cost if the town were to get more coverage. Elaine Foster questioned what the \$14,000 per year covered. Mr. Weber said the Wilmington police patrol and go to emergencies if they are available and assist the state police as they are 56 minutes away from the Town of Whitingham. Abigail Crosby spoke in favor of leaving coverage as is. Lyman Tefft questioned if the town could specify when they would like coverage and was told no. William Sellman spoke of an accident that occurred on a corner above his house on 8A and the dangerous situation for people that waited 45 minutes for police to respond to the call. He questioned the use of a constable as was done many years ago. Gregory Brown stated the constable provided minimal duties such as dog issues and was at times unreliable due to lack of training which could have put the town in jeopardy. Lise Barus questioned where the crime rate statistic for Whitingham were. Abigail Corse stated there has been a rise in incidents at the school where police presence is needed. Christopher Walling spoke regarding increase in break-ins, mental health issues, and drugs. He stated he used to leave his home unlocked, but not anymore. Elaine Foster stated she does not have children in school but works with children. She said that with the increased mental health level in schools and or community, a resource officer in the school separate from the police would be helpful. She said she would like more coverage in the community but would need more information as she does not know what the crime rate is. Kristine Sweeter spoke about last year being a rough year with an active shooter and two murders in town. She felt the town should support increased police presence. Allan Twitchell spoke regarding the court system not working. He said a person can be arrested in the morning, released, and then be arrested again all in the same day.

Mr. Weber asked the electorate if they were happy with the number of newsletters being sent out now or if they would like more. After a few comments, it was the consensus that more information would be better.

A motion was made by Allan Twitchell and seconded from the floor to adjourn. The motion was carried by voice vote.

## Article 31

To elect all Town Officers required by law. Polls were open from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Twin Valley Middle High School Auditorium, 4299 Vermont Route 100, Whitingham, Vermont with the following results:

### Moderator, 1 year

Leon L. Corse	257
Seth Boyd	1
Lyman Tefft	1
Blank	13
Overvote	1

### Treasurer, 1 year

Almira L. Aekus	249
David Farrington	1
Tanya Bernard	1
John Robohm	1
Sherry Adams	1
Blank	18
Overvote	2

### Selectboard, 2 years (2 members)

Craig Hammer	170 (elected)
Glen Merrill, Jr.	69
Lyman "Skip" Tefft	88
Blank	43
Travis Wheeler	122 (elected)
Blank	103
Overvote	0

### Selectboard, 3 years

James Weber	229
Lyman Tefft	1
Overvote	0

### Collector of Delinquent Taxes, 1 year

Almira L. Aekus	254
David Farrington	1
Sherry Adams	1
Blank	17
Overvote	0

### Library Trustee, 3 years (2 members)

Cindy Holveck	208
Shandell Soumar	193
Blank	145
Overvote	0

### Cemetery Commissioner, 3 years

Madeline Dix Klein	257
Blank	16
Overvote	0

### School Director, 2 years (TVUUSD)

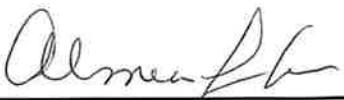
Jared Kingsley	248
Abigail Crosby	1
Blank	23
Overvote	1


### School Director, 3 years (TVUUSD)

Frank "Ed" Dornburgh	244
Abigail Crosby	1
Blank	23
Overvote	1

The floor meeting adjourned at 12:20 p.m.

Dated at Whitingham, This 14<sup>th</sup> day of March 2024


Attest:   
Almira L. Aekus  
Town Clerk

  
Leon L. Corse  
Moderator

  
Abigail Corse, BCA Chair

  
Susan Cooke Johnson, BCA Vice Chair

NUMBER OF VOTERS ON THE CHECKLIST – 1015  
NUMBER WHO VOTED BY AUSTRALIAN BALLOT – 273  
HIGHEST NUMBER VOTED FROM THE FLOOR – 68

WHITINGHAM, VERMONT  
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE  
RECEIVED FOR RECORD  
This 29 day of MAY A.D. 2024 at  
06 o'clock 05 minutes P.M. and  
Recorded in Vol. 13 at Page 6  
of LAND RECORDS  
Attest   
Town Clerk