

TOWN OF WILLIAMSTOWN

2024 TOWN MEETING

MARCH 5, 2024

The legal voters of the Town of Williamstown, in the County of Orange, in the State of Vermont, are hereby warned and notified to meet at Williamstown Middle High School on Tuesday, March 5, 2024 at 10:00 o'clock in the morning (A.M.) to act upon the following articles, viz:

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 A.M. by Winston Chambers, Moderator, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Barbara Graham, Town Clerk read the warning.

Town Meeting called to order at 10:20 A.M.

Topper McFaun and Gina Galfetti, State Representatives from Washington/Orange and Rodney Graham, State Representative from Orange 3 spoke as to what has been happening at the State House. Rodney Graham, Republican announced he would not seek re-election after serving 10 years with the House of Representatives.

ART 1: To elect all necessary Town and Town School District Officers for the ensuing year by Australian Ballot. For the purpose of Article 1, the polls will open at 10:00 A.M. to act upon the following article, viz:

The total votes cast were 665. The results were as follows:

Moderator, 1 year

Write-In: Matthew Powell.....	14
Write-In: Winston Chambers.....	13
Write-In: Miscellaneous.....	37
Blank.....	601
Total.....	665

Selectman, 3 years

Micheal MacAskill.....	226
Rama Schneider.....	179
Clayton Woodworth.....	239
Write-In Miscellaneous.....	2
Spoiled.....	1
Blank.....	18
Total.....	665

Selectman, 2 years

Tyler Mitchell.....	350
Christopher Peloquin.....	280
Write-In: Miscellaneous.....	5
Blank.....	30
Total.....	665

School Director, 3 years

Jessica Van Deren.....	550
Write In: Miscellaneous.....	8
Blank.....	107
Total.....	665

Lister, 3 years

Write-In: Miscellaneous.....	60
Blank.....	605
Total.....	665

Trustee of Public Funds, 3 years

Write-In: Miscellaneous.....	55
Blank.....	610
Total.....	665

Cemetery Commissioner, 5 years

Write-In: Miscellaneous.....	52
Blank.....	613
Total.....	665

Cemetery Commissioner, 4 years remaining of a 5 year term

Write-In: Miscellaneous.....	42
Blank.....	623
Total.....	665

Library Trustee, 5 years

Bernard (Dusty) Mills.....	526
Write In: Miscellaneous.....	2
Blank.....	137
Total.....	665

Library Trustee, 2 years remaining of a 5 year term

Write In: Miscellaneous.....	48
Blank.....	617
Total.....	665

Trustee for the Henry S. Baker Fund, 3 years

Write-In: Marie Graham.....	39
Write-In: Miscellaneous.....	55
Blank.....	571
Total.....	665

- ART 2: **To hear and act upon the reports of the Town Officers.**
The motion was made by Alvin Avery and seconded by Monique Hayden to approve the article as written. There was no discussion and the motion passed by voice vote.
- ART 3: **To see if the Town will pay it's Real and Personal Property taxes to the Treasurer on or before November 15, 2024, with delinquent taxes and assessments having charged against them an eight percent (8%) penalty and interest charges of one percent (1%) per month, or fraction thereof, from the due date, as provided for in 32 V.S.A. § 4773 and 5136.**
The motion was made by Danielle Moffatt and seconded by Josh Dobrovich to approve the article as written. There was no discussion and the motion passed by voice vote.
- ART 4: **To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Selectboard to take advantage of any State or Federal monies available.**
The motion was made by Barry Duquette and seconded by Nancy Avery to approve the article as written. There was no discussion and the motion passed by voice vote.
- ART 5: **To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Selectboard to borrow money to pay the current expenses of the Town in anticipation of money to be received from taxes and the State of Vermont.**
The motion was made by Courtney Wade and seconded by Alvin Avery to approve the article as written. There was no discussion and the motion passed by voice vote.
- ART 6: **To see if the voters authorize the Town to pay its Selectboard members \$750.00 and Chairman \$1000.00. and all other Elected Officers \$13.67 per hour and Chairman \$14.67 per hour, except the Town Clerk.**
The motion was made by Alvin Avery and seconded by John Pepin to approve the article as written. There was no discussion and the motion passed by voice vote.
- ART 7: **To see if the voters authorize to have the names of all delinquent taxpayers, including water and sewer users, with total amount of delinquencies printed in the Town Report as of December 31, 2024.**
The motion was made by Josh Dobrovich and seconded by John Pepin to approve the article as written. There was no discussion and the motion passed by voice vote.
- ART 8: **To see if the Town will vote to approve the sum of \$1,368,392.03 to support the General Budget of which includes Fire Department and Ambulance.**
The motion was made by Larry Hebert and seconded by Barry Duquette to approve the article as written. Charlotte Mills called for a paper ballot and with a show of 7 hands a paper ballot was used. Results of the paper ballot: 41 YES 34 NO Article passed.

ART 9: **To see if the Town will vote to approve the sum of \$1,246,390.76 to support the Highway Budget.**
The motion was made by Scott McCarthy and seconded by Nancy Avery to approve the article as written. Danielle Moffatt asked if this included Falls Bridge Road, Felicity, and other road projects. Jackie Higgins, Town Manager, was given permission to speak as she is not a town resident. Jackie Higgins replied that Falls Bridge Road is already in the paving reserve and is working on a grant with other roads that need to be re-paved. Jamey Laird asked about the Graniteville Road, Adams Road to Baptist Street and Jackie Higgins replied that would be a Selectboard decision. Steve Hardaker asked about the guardrail on Menard Crossroad if that would be replaced and Jackie Higgins said she would check with the Road Foreman. With there being no further discussion, the motion passed by voice vote.

ART 10: **To see if the voters will approve transferring the 2023 General Fund Surplus in the amount of \$19,869.68 to the Tax Stabilization Fund.**
The motion was made by Alvin Avery and seconded by Ben Moffatt to approve the article as written. There was no discussion and the motion passed by voice vote.

ART 11: **To see if the voters will appropriate the sum of \$110,000.00 from the Tax Stabilization Fund to reduce the 2024-2025 taxes.**
The motion was made by Mike Sprano and seconded by Josh Dobrovich to approve the article as written. There was no discussion and the motion passed by voice vote.

ART 12: **To see if the voters will appropriate the sum of \$47,523.20 or some other amount to support Williamstown Cemeteries.**
The motion was made by Nancy Avery and seconded by John Pepin to approve the article as written. There was no discussion and the motion passed by voice vote.

ART 13: **To see if the voters will appropriate the sum of \$118,708.00 or some other amount to support the Ainsworth Public Library.**
The motion was made by Alvin Avery and seconded by Barry Duquette to approve the article as written. Danielle Moffatt asked why a full time, 40 hour a week librarian is never in the building. Jill Plastridge, Library Trustee Chair, stated that Librarian Sarah Snow works most mornings from home working on grants. Danielle Moffatt also questioned monies for a cleaning person and why can't the full-time librarian do the cleaning. Jill Plastridge said it was not part of her job description to clean the library. Chris Dessureau asked why the librarian wasn't here representing the library and herself. Dusty Mills, the library trustee replied that the librarian was home sick. There was some more discussion, Chris Dessureau called for a paper ballot. There was some more discussion and Monique Hayden called for the question and seconded by John Pepin. With there being a request for a paper ballot and a show of 7 hands a paper ballot was used. Results of the paper ballot: 50 YES 40 NO Article passed.

ART 14:

To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Williamstown Ambulance Replacement Reserve in the amount of \$180,743.42 and the Williamstown Ambulance Equipment Reserve in the amount of \$12,624.73 to be allocated to the Tax Stabilization Fund or to another Town Reserve Fund.

The motion was made by Chris Peloquin and seconded by Alvin Avery to approve the article as written. Larry Hebert amended the original motion to read Ambulance Replacement Reserve to increase \$215,743.42 and the Williamstown Ambulance Equipment Reserve to increase \$12,625.73, since the ambulance has been sold since the warning was written and seconded by Scott McCarthy. After much discussion on how to allocate this money in an emergency fund. Chris Dessureau made an amendment to put this money in a reserve emergency fund seconded by Josh Dobrovich. Motion passed. The motion to authorize the Williamstown Ambulance Replacement Reserve in the amount of \$215,743.42 and the Williamstown Ambulance Replacement Reserve in the amount of \$12,625.73 is now in an emergency reserve fund. Tyler Mitchell with a FAST Squad starting up and in three years the contract with Barre Town Ambulance doesn't work out this money will be available. Tyler Mitchell appreciated the support from the Town for the Williamstown Ambulance Service. Steve Hardaker spoke about the fact that there was a petition that was presented to the selectboard regarding disbanding our local ambulance service with enough signatures for a vote and it was ignored. He felt that any board members who were sitting up front and supported disbanding the ambulance should resign immediately. Steve Hardaker made the motion to amend the fund to be Williamstown Emergency Fund seconded by Jamey Laird. The amendment was voted on and carried. The amendment to Authorize the Williamstown Ambulance Replacement Reserve in the amount of \$215,743.42 and the Williamstown Ambulance Equipment Reserve in the amount of \$12,625.73 to be allocated in the Williamstown Emergency Fund. Tyler Mitchell said that it should be known as the Williamstown Emergency Medical Services Fund. Winston said if there were no objections he would change it to read the Williamstown Emergency Medical Services Fund. There were no objections. Marie Graham mentioned if anyone was interested in joining the new Williamstown FAST Squad to contact her and after much more discussion Helen Duke made the motion to call for the question and seconded by Monique Hayden. Motion passed. Amended motion passed by voice vote.

ART 15:

Shall the voters appropriate the sum of \$54,672.00 in support of Orange County Parent Child Center \$750.00, Barre Area Senior Center \$1500.00, Orange County Restorative Justice \$500.00, Washington County Youth \$250.00, Central Vermont Home Health & Hospice \$6700.00, Central Vermont Council on Aging \$1750.00, People's Health & Wellness \$1000.00, Central Vermont Adult Basic Education \$1500.00, Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation \$500.00, GMTA \$2004.00, Williamstown Food Shelf \$10,000.00, Williamstown Beautification \$1500.00, Williamstown Youth Sports \$8500.00, Good Beginnings \$300.00, Vermont Center of Independent Living \$500.00, American Red Cross \$1500.00, Central Vermont State Police Advisory \$100.00, Historical Society \$9000.00, Safeline \$1200.00, Clara Martin Center \$4968.00, Green Up \$150.00, Family Center of Washington County \$500.00.

The motion was made by John Pepin and seconded by Barry Duquette to approve the article as written. Chris Dessureau made the motion to amend the article and vote on each one individually seconded by Jayme Laird. With there being no discussion, voted on the amendment and the amendment failed by voice vote. The original motion passed by voice vote.

ART 16:

To see if the Town will vote to approve moving the Harry S. Baker Fund to care of the Trustees of Public Funds.

The motion was made by Larry Hebert and seconded by Courtney Wade to approve the article as written. Larry Hebert said there is \$4300.00 in the Harry S. Baker Fund with no longer trustees to oversee and should be placed in care of the Trustees of Public Funds. Jayme Laird and Elaine Owen questioned what this fund is. Town manager, Jackie Higgins spoke it was a set up for women in need and hasn't been used in 20 years. Marie Graham is a nurse who is certified in sexual assault cases and very passionate about this and didn't realize there was a fund set up for something like this. Several people never knew what this fund was for and are interested in keeping it going and being a part of it. Larry Hebert said that if you wanted to keep this fund you would need to be appointed to it by the selectboard. After much discussion Monique Hayden called for the question and seconded by Barbara Graham, all stood in favor in calling for the question. Motion failed by voice vote.

ART 17:

To see if the Town will vote to adopt all budget articles by Australian ballot pursuant to 17 V.S.A. Section 2680(c).

The motion was made by Rama Schneider and seconded by Mike Sprano to approve the article as written. Rama Schneider spoke in favor to moving all financials to Australian ballot. Many people spoke on behalf of seeing this tradition continue as they enjoy the discussion. Charlotte Mills stated that 371 people out of 2600 voters voted last year by Australian ballot, asking is that really being represented. That you need to realize that Town Meeting is important. Motion failed by voice vote.

ART 18:

To see if the Town will vote to approve moving Town Meeting to the first Monday in March, 2025 in the evening to begin at 7:00 P.M.

The motion was made by Josh Dobrovich and seconded by Jayme Laird to approve the article as written. Josh Dobrovich spoke on behalf of keeping Town Meeting on the first Tuesday of March as people are so used to attending and getting time off to attend. Jayme Laird felt it needed to be moved to a Saturday. Chris Dessureau supported moving the day but not to a Monday evening. Conrad Beattie has attended many Town Meetings throughout his years, but he felt that if it was moved to evening it would be hard for him and many others to attend as they would go late into the evening and past some people's bedtime. With several suggestions to move the Town Meeting to the weekend, Moderator, Winston Chambers indicated proposing alternative dates and times weren't germane to the warned question. Rama Schneider made the motion to challenge the moderator and seconded by Monique Hayden and to vote to have Town Meeting on the first Saturday in April. The voice vote was undecided in changing the article to the first Saturday in April is not germane, and the Moderator called for a paper ballot with the show of seven hands. Results of paper ballot: 39 YES 41 NO and overruled the moderator. Rama Schneider spoke to having town meeting the first Saturday in April at 10:00 AM. Larry Hebert made the motion to amend Rama Schneider's amendment to the first Saturday March at 10:00 AM seconded by Jayme Laird. Shannon Sweet stated Town Meeting should remain traditionally on the first Tuesday in March. After more discussion Alvin Avery called for the question and seconded by Barbara Graham. All stood in favor of calling the question. Shall the Town of Williamstown vote to approve moving the town meeting to the first Saturday in March at 10:00 AM. Motion failed by voice vote. Shall the Town of Williamstown vote to approve moving the town meeting to the first Saturday in April at 10:00 AM. The moderator was in doubt and Phil Winters called for a paper ballot and with a show of 7 hands paper ballot was used. Results of the paper ballot: 8 YES 68 NO the amendment failed. Steve Hardaker made a motion to amend the first Sunday in March and seconded by Jayme Laird. With there being no discussion the amendment failed by voice vote. The original motion to move to the first Monday in March at 7:00 PM failed by voice vote.

ART 19:

Shall the Town of Williamstown provide notice of availability of the annual report by Town of Williamstown website at least 30 days before annual meeting instead of mailing or otherwise distributing the report to the voters of the town pursuant to 24 V.S.A. Section 1682(a)

The motion was made by Barbara Graham and seconded by Alvin Avery to approve the article as written. Barbara Graham spoke that the annual town reports should no longer be mailed as there seems to be many that are discarded at the Post Office and that anyone who would like one could pick them up at Town Hall. It is also available online on the Town website. John Taylor made the amendment that the town report needs to be available in 3 places in Town plus the website, seconded by Ann Kunkle. Chris Dessureau wanted to know how many are printed and the cost of postage to mail. Barbara Graham said 1600 are printed and the cost of the postage was \$600.00. Chris Dessureau would like to continue to see them mailed. Motion failed by voice vote.

ART 20:

To see if the Town will vote to exempt from taxation, that portion of the property owned by Summit Lodge No. 104 F & AM, that is used exclusively for the purpose of fraternal organization, for a period of 5 years, as provided for in 32 V.S.A. Section 3840. This vote shall first effect the April 1, 2024 Grand List.

The motion was made by Conrad Beattie and seconded by Barry Duquette to approve the article as written. Barry Duquette spoke to how and what the building is used for. Besides using the building for their own use, they have held several suppers and functions at the lodge. Motion passed by voice vote.

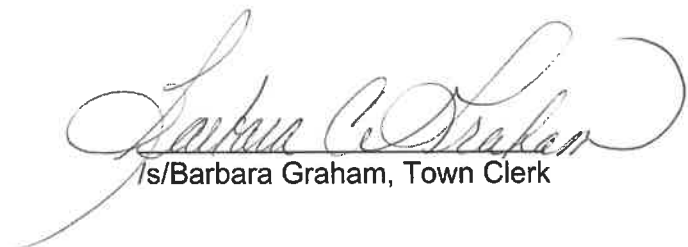
ART 21:

To transact any other business deemed necessary and proper.

Larry Hebert stated if anyone was interested in serving on the Harry S. Baker Fund, to send a letter of interest to the Town Manager, Jackie Higgins by April 3, 2024. Rama Schneider thanked the members of the Williamstown Ambulance for their service. Rama Schneider also thanked the trustees and members of the Williamstown Food Shelf who do so much throughout the year.

Motion was made by Travis Pierce and seconded by Alvin Avery to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed by voice vote and adjourned at 1:30 P.M.


/s/Winston Chambers, Moderator


/s/Barbara Graham, Town Clerk