

# MINUTES OF THE LOWELL ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 2023

---

The legal voters of the Town of Lowell, Vermont are hereby warned and notified to meet at the Lowell Graded School on **Tuesday, March 7, 2023 at 10:00 a.m.** to act on the following articles of business:

- The Lowell Town Meeting was called to order at 11:10 a.m.

## **TOWN MEETING:**

**ARTICLE 1:** *To ELECT TOWN MODERATOR for the ensuing year.*

- Alden Warner nominated; voice vote / carried.
- **ALDEN WARNER – ELECTED**

**ARTICLE 2:** *To HEAR and ACT upon reports of TOWN OFFICERS.*

## ***Questions and Comments:***

- The first question was asked by Troy Adams about line 2 of the Treasurer's report on why **it** shows we paid \$12,064.00 for the Sheriff's department last year and has a different amount in the book. Becky explained that that is the amount to be voted on this year not last year.
- Becky DiZazzo, Town Treasurer, explained that the Tax Rate may go up this year even more do to the fact that the Grand list will not be finalized until July 2023. She also explained that this is her first year doing the budget on her own with training from VLCT's Sara Macy to make sure she was doing it properly.
- Pam Tetreault explained that she had done some research of all the years from 2014 to current about the \$8000.00 in the Audit fund, and that money is not supposed to be moved. Darren Pion, Board Chair spoke up and said that he would make sure they put it back. He stated that the select board members are still really new to our positions, and we are still learning the rules of can and can't. Pam was satisfied with this response.
- Christina Adams asked why do we spend so much money on Town Report to put color and clip art in when we could spend less by just doing it in black and white. Troy Adams also commented that we could use less pages if we left out the Clip art and pictures. Gordon Spencer agreed that it would be less expensive if we used less color and decoration to the pages. McKenna Blay stated her opinion that clip art is unnecessary, for she is taking a class on reports and her teacher would fail her work if she were to at clip art to the pages. Legh Higgins stated that he felt that the color, clip art and pictures made the book more enjoyable, and that he felt the Clerk worked really hard to make it this way. Rebecca DiZazzo stated that we are an incredibly unique town and that adding color to the book makes the pages more enjoyable to catch people's attention. Ashley Randall asked to have more student drawings throughout the book, which Christy Pion, Town Clerk, responded that she would love to have more student drawings as well, and to have the drawings be more specific to the Town affiliations.
- The Moderator asked if the voters would like to keep the book the way we have been doing it, or if they want to change it to black and white. The majority voted by voice vote to keep it the way it is.
- Christy, Town Clerk stated that she had not put the school budget report in the Town report, that she had overlooked it, and took full responsibility for it not being in the book. She sincerely apologized for it.
- The Moderator asked if the Report was excepted with the exemption of the school budget report and one misspelled word. Voice vote/ carried Town report accepted as written.

- **TOWN REPORT ACCEPTED AS WRITTEN, WITH THE FOLLOWING CORRECTIONS BY VOICE VOTE.**
- Misspelling of the word Dedication inside front cover.
- School Budget pages were missing. The Clerk admitted she had overlooked this when putting the book together.

**ARTICLE 3: To ELECT the following OFFICERS required by law:**

- a. **SELECT PERSON**                      3-year term
  - Darren Pion- nominated.
  - There were no other nominations, the Moderator using unanimous consent, instructed the Clerk to cast one paper ballot for **Darren Pion**
  - **DARREN PION-ELECTED**
- b. **LISTER**                                      3-year term
  - Cheryl Clarke- nominated.
  - Gordon Spencer-Nominated-Declined
  - Steve Clark-Nominated-Declined
  - There were no other nominations, the Moderator using unanimous consent, instructed the Clerk to cast one paper ballot for **Cheryl Clarke**
  - **Cheryl Clarke - ELECTED**

**MARK HIGLEY-TOWN REPRESENTATIVE**

- Mark Higley spoke to the Town's people for a brief moment about the new laws that are being discussed and that have been passed before the Senate.
- Mark had everyone give a big thank you to Lerry Chase for his years of service as a Town Lister as well.

- c. **1<sup>st</sup> CONSTABLE**                      1-year term
  - Ashley Callahan- nominated; voice vote / carried.
  - **ASHLEY CALLAHAN – ELECTED**
- d. **2<sup>nd</sup> CONSTABLE**                      1-year term
  - Christopher Pion-nominated; voice vote/carried.
  - **CHRISTOPHER PION-ELECTED**
- e. **LIBRARY TRUSTEE**                      3-year term
  - Carol Wood-Koob-nominated; voice vote/ carried
- f. **LIBRARY TRUSTEE**                      4-year term
  - Katherine Pion-nominated; voice vote/ carried
- g. **LIBRARY TRUSTEE**                      2-year term
  - Brandie Cochran-nominated; voice vote/carried
- h. **LIBRARY TRUSTEE**                      3-year term
  - Jennifer Higgins-nominated; voice vote/carried

**ARTICLE 4:** *Shall the legal voters appropriate the sum of \$ 358,003.00 for TOWN EXPENSES AND LIABILITIES (Select Board's Account)?*

- Article moved and seconded.
- **Article passed by Voice Vote**

**ARTICLE 5:** *Shall the legal voters appropriate \$ 140,000.00 plus Vermont State Aid funding for WINTER ROADS?*

- Article moved and seconded.

A question was asked if the town had a way to keep track of the gallons of fuel used in the winter? The Board stated that we get a report every month from the fuel company, and people are more than welcome to see them.

- A question was asked if the town received State aid for the roads? The Road Commissioner answered that we never know what we will have for aid until after our budgets have passed.
- **ARTICLE PASSED By Voice Vote.**

**ARTICLE 6:** *Shall the legal voters appropriate \$ 140,000.00 plus Vermont State Aid funding for SUMMER ROADS?*

- Article moved and seconded.

- A question was asked about road signs being missing and will they be replaced? The road commissioner answered that the signs come up missing every year and they get replaced every year.
- Jenn Blay, selectperson, asked the town's people if they would like the town to put welcome signs at all the entry points to the town? The majority of the people voted no with voice vote.
- A question was asked why the town clerk's office keeps changing its days? Christy, the Town Clerk answered that we can work more efficiently 3 days in a row rather than having a day off in the middle of the week.

- **ARTICLE PASSED By Voice Vote.**

**ARTICLE 7:** *Shall the legal voters appropriate \$ 33,000.00 for the FIRE DEPARTMENT?*

- Article moved and seconded
- **ARTICLE PASSED By Voice Vote**

**ARTICLE 8:** *Shall the legal voters appropriate \$ 6,500.00 for the COMMUNITY LIBRARY?*

- Article moved and seconded.
- A question was asked how many hours is the library open during the week? Answer was 4 hours per week.
- **ARTICLE PASSED By Voice Vote.**

**ARTICLE 9:** *Shall the legal voters appropriate \$ 3,000.00 for the LITTLE LEAGUE & T-BALL teams?*

- Article moved and seconded.
- Motion was made to pass over the article. Voice vote No
- A question was asked how much money was in the little account? The answer was \$7,337.00 carried over from prior years. Jenn Blay had also stated that due to covid the fund has built up from not being able to have the program running.
- **ARTICLE PASSED BY VOICE VOTE.**

**ARTICLE 10:** *Shall the legal voters appropriate the sum of \$ 3,500.00 to the ORLEANS ESSEX VNA & HOSPICE, INC. for the services of Skilled Nursing, Physical Therapy, Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy,*

*Medical Social Work, Licensed Nurse's Aide, Homemaker, Personal Care Attendant, Hospice, and Maternal Child Health Programs, and other community health programs provided by the Agency?*

- Article moved and seconded
- **ARTICLE PASSED BY VOICE VOTE.**

**ARTICLE 11:** Shall the Town appropriate the sum of **\$12,064.00** for contract services to the **ORLEANS COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT** for law enforcement services and to direct the Select persons to assess a tax over and above the budget to sufficient to meet the same? This will be used for approximately 192 hours of routine patrols, answering complaints, and investigating incidents. It will also cover administrative expenses, including salaries, vehicle, benefits, liability Insurance, maintenance, gasoline, supplies, telephone costs, and crime prevention programs.

- Article moved and seconded
- A statement was made that the sheriffs are a waste of time, and that their hours are not accurate.
- Someone asked to hear from the sheriff. The Moderator stated that the voters would have suspend the rules to allow the Sheriff to speak because of not being a town resident.
- A paper ballot was requested to vote on suspending the rules to hear from the sheriff.
- Results of paper ballot : 27 -No 49-YES
- The motion was made to break for lunch but was voted down to allow the sheriff to speak.
- Sheriff Wells spoke with the townspeople on behalf of the Sheriff's department. He explained that all the reports for our Town were emailed to the Town Clerk every month and are available for viewing anytime they are requested. He stated that the sheriff's department being in town is not a waste of time. He stated that last year was a new contract in Lowell, so they are still getting their bearings on our wants and needs from their department. Most of the hours spent in our town are patrolling only do to the fact our town does not have a town ordinance for traffic yet. He stated that he is willing to come to a board meeting to help set one up for our town so they may better serve us. He stated that by state statute our town would receive money back every year if we had a traffic ordinance, which would benefit us. The Sheriff's department would like to be able to take over the traffic control so that the State police can help out the fire department more efficiently.
- A question was asked if the Sheriff's department was short staffed? Officer Wells answered that they are short staffed, but they had cadets currently in training to fill the positions very shortly. Calls will be better answered as soon as these spots have been filled. He recited the Number to call the sheriff's department as being 802-334-3333 for anyone who didn't know the number. This is a 24-hour call number for the sheriff's department. He stated the reason they do not work nights in the towns is that the amount of money they receive from the towns does not cover overnights. He also stated that without the traffic ordinance to name specific roads in the town they cannot enforce the speed laws.
- Sonja Blodgett stated that she had a tremendous love for the sheriff's department for they had helped her several times in the last year that she had to deal with locally.
- Motion was made and seconded to break for lunch. The ayes have it by voice vote/carried.
- Meeting to reconvene at 1:15 pm
- Meeting called to order at 1:15 pm
- Moderator recapped Article 11
- A question was asked, how long has the Town gone without the Sheriff's department? Answer was about 7 to 8 years.
- Troy Adams spoke to the townspeople about his understanding of what the sheriff's department represents to him. His understanding is that they are enforcing the state law but not the town for there is no ordinance for traffic. His opinion is that the general public is going to be paralyzed. He stated that another town paid \$50,000 for ordinance enforcing and that they rely on the state police. He feels that the town should be putting these ordinances in place so that we as townspeople can get that money back for our town.

- Darren, selectboard chair, stated that the townspeople could vote to suggest the Board put these ordinances together to help our town.
- David DiZazzo stated that he feels that no one is thinking that they want to be able to speed. He feels that the sheriff's department would be an asset and that the board should put the traffic ordinance together.
- Lyse stated that the town needs to feel protected, and that our town would be fine looking after our own. She feels people should really think about it before choosing to keep the sheriff's department in our town.
- Motion to call the question, voice vote/carried
- More than 7 voters wanted paper ballots.
- **Results by paper ballot: Yes-46 No-25**

**ARTICLE 12:** Shall the legal voters appropriate the following sums:

2023

- a) \$300 to AMERICAN LEGION JAYPEAK POST #28, INC.
- b) \$800 to GREEN MOUNTAIN FARM-to-SCHOOL, INC.
- c) \$1000 to LAMOILLE COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH
- d) \$200 to MISSISQUOI RIVER BASIN ASSOC.
- e) \$300 to NORTHEAST KINGDOM COUNCIL ON AGING
- f) \$1,758 to NORTHEAST KINGDOM HUMAN SERVICE, INC.
- g) \$250 to NORTHEAST KINGDOM LEARNING SERVICES, INC.
- h) \$754 to NORTHEASTERN VT. DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION
- i) \$250 to ORLEANS COUNTY CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER
- j) \$200 to ORLEANS COUNTY CITIZEN ADVOCACY
- k) \$500 to ORLEANS COUNTY FAIR ASSOCIATION-(OCFA)
- l) \$550 to ORLEANS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
- m) \$700 to RURAL COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION
- n) \$825 to UMBRELLA
- o) \$100 to VACD – VERMONT RURAL FIRE PROTECTION
- p) \$200 to VT ASSOC for the BLIND and VISUALLY IMPAIRED
- q) \$90 to VT CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING
- r) \$350 to VERMONT FAMILY NETWORK
- s) \$100 to VERMONT SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

---

**\$9,227.00 Totals for above appropriations**

**PLEASE NOTE: Individual service reports printed towards the back of the town report.**

- Motion made and seconded.
- Motion was made to reduce appropriations to 50%, No Second
- A question was asked what VACD was for. The Fire Chief stated that this company is where the Fire department gets Hydrant grants from.
- **ARTICLE PASSED AS WRITTEN BY VOICE VOTE.**

**ARTICLE 13:** *To transact any other business that may legally come before the Town.*

- Lyse McAllister asked if there were any updates on the four corners traffic issue? Jennifer Blay, Selectperson, voiced that we as a Board are working on this. The State will only do what they feel is necessary. Jennifer also found the email from the State and read it aloud for the townspeople to hear for themselves.

- Kitty Ufford-Chase spoke about starting a Lowell Energy Committee. This committee would be to help town residents get proper weatherization to bring down their heating cost.
- Sonja Blodgett asked the Clerk to change the date of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade bingo fundraiser to March 25, 2023 on the town website.

**ARTICLE 14: TO ADJOURN**

- The motion was made and seconded to adjourn the Town Meeting; voice vote / carried.
- **MEETING ADJOURNED AT 2:15 P.M.**

**Attest:**

MODERATOR: Alden Warner \_\_\_\_\_

JUSTICE OF THE PEACE: Jeff Parsons \_\_\_\_\_

PRESIDING OFFICER: Christy M. Pion \_\_\_\_\_

*Received for recording in Town Proceeding Book*

*Attest: Christy M. Pion- Town Clerk*