

TOWN OF BARNET, VERMONT

MINUTES

REMOTE PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL HEARING *for* ANNUAL TOWN MEETING ELECTION

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2021

Meeting convened at 7:00 p.m. via GoToMeeting telephone/video conference. There was no physical meeting place for this meeting. This meeting was audio recorded via GoToMeeting.

Board members participating via GoToMeeting telephone/video conference: Dylan Ford, Benjamin Gates, and Mark Jefferson.

Other Town officials and employees participating via GoToMeeting telephone/video conference: Justice of the Peace Rebecca Boardman, Justice of the Peace William Graves, Town Clerk Benjamin Heisholt, and Moderator Dennis McLam.

Members of the public participating via GoToMeeting telephone or video conference: “Jack,” Jennifer Botzjoorns, Lars Botzjoorns, Louis Bushey, Jonathan Carpenter, Millie Curtis, Brynn Evans, Robert Farlice-Rubio, Gerard Haase, Katherine Fiegenbaum (Caledonian-Record), Susan Jensen, Susanne Lesnik-Emas, Heather Lindstrom, Mona Marceau, Tyler McGill, Kathleen Monroe, Laura Nelson, Maurice Roberts, Jay Sprout, Kathy Somers, Jackie Verley, and Levering White.

A. Call to Order

Ms. Ford called the meeting to order. Ms. Ford gave a brief synopsis of some the activities of town government in 2020. These included the operations of various departments under Covid-19 restrictions and modifications. She noted the continuance of the boat wash program at Harvey’s Lake and the construction of an addition to the Recycling Center.

Mr. Gates also spoke regarding the addition to the Recycling Center and thanked the Transfer Station and Recycling Center employees for their hard work and resilience in working through Covid-19’s alterations to their operations. He noted that the Town was unable to undertake any large road construction projects in 2020, because the State of Vermont did not issue any road construction grants, but was able to complete several paving projects, a bridge sealing a paving project in Passumpsic, and significant ditching and roadside brush-clearing work. He indicated that in 2021 the Selectboard intends to perform a large construction project on Roy Mountain Road. With regard to the long-term plans for construction of new town office space, he indicated that the Selectboard has done some preliminary site evaluation on the Town Garage site and that, if the site proves to be optimal,

the Board may perform some excavation work in 2021 in anticipation of construction in 2022.

Ms. Ford indicated that, as an informational hearing, this is a meeting of the Selectboard. She explained the structure of the meeting, indicating that the Moderator Dennis McLam would lead the discussion.

After Item A, Moderator Dennis McLam assumed leadership of the meeting and chaired the discussion.

Mr. McLam gave brief introductory remarks, explaining the nature of an informational hearing and re-iterating the structure of the meeting.

B. Additions or deletions to the agenda

- **Public comment**

There was no public comment and no additions or deletions to the agenda.

C. Review, discuss, and accept public comment on each of the following Australian ballot articles on the 2021 Annual Town Meeting Warning:

Mr. McLam read each of the following 29 articles. After the reading of each article, he paused to allow public comment. There was no public comment given for any of the articles.

- ARTICLE 1. To elect a Moderator for a term of one year.
- ARTICLE 2. To elect a Town Clerk for a term of three years.
- ARTICLE 3. To elect a Treasurer for a term of three years.
- ARTICLE 4. To elect a Selectboard member for a term of three years.
- ARTICLE 5. To elect a Lister for a term of three years.
- ARTICLE 6. To elect an Auditor for a term of three years.
- ARTICLE 7. To elect a Collector of Delinquent Taxes for a term of one year.
- ARTICLE 8. To elect a First Constable for a term of two years.
- ARTICLE 9. To elect a Second Constable for a term of two years.
- ARTICLE 10. To elect a Trustee of Public Funds for term of three years.
- ARTICLE 11. To elect a Library Trustee for a term of five years.
- ARTICLE 12. Shall the Town of Barnet appropriate the sum of Two Hundred Fifty Dollars (\$250.00) to the American Red Cross of New Hampshire and Vermont?
- ARTICLE 13. Shall the Town of Barnet appropriate the sum of Five Hundred Dollars (\$500.00) to the Barnet Historical Society to be used for maintaining the Goodwillie House?

- ARTICLE 14. Shall the Town of Barnet appropriate the sum of Five Hundred Dollars (\$500.00) to the Barnet Historical Society to be used for conservation and preservation of collections of historical materials associated with the township of Barnet?
- ARTICLE 15. Shall the Town of Barnet appropriate the sum of Two Thousand Three Hundred Dollars (\$2,300.00) to Caledonia Home Health Care & Hospice?
- ARTICLE 16. Shall the Town of Barnet appropriate the sum of Five Hundred Dollars (\$500.00) to Catamount Arts?
- ARTICLE 17. Shall the Town of Barnet appropriate the sum of One Thousand Seven Hundred Dollars (\$1,700.00) to Fairbanks Museum and Planetarium?
- ARTICLE 18. Shall the Town of Barnet appropriate the sum of Five Hundred Dollars (\$500.00) to Habitat for Humanity in the Northeast Kingdom?
- ARTICLE 19. Shall the Town of Barnet appropriate the sum of Five Hundred Dollars (\$500.00) to Kingdom Animal Shelter?
- ARTICLE 20. Shall the Town of Barnet appropriate the sum of One Thousand Dollars (\$1,000.00) to Northeast Kingdom Council on Aging?
- ARTICLE 21. Shall the Town of Barnet appropriate the sum of One Thousand Seven Hundred Seventy-Five Dollars (\$1,775.00) to Northeast Kingdom Human Services, Inc.?
- ARTICLE 22. Shall the Town of Barnet appropriate the sum of Three Hundred Dollars (\$300.00) to Northeast Kingdom Learning Services, Inc.?
- ARTICLE 23. Shall the Town of Barnet appropriate the sum of One Thousand Dollars (\$1,000.00) to Northeast Kingdom Youth Services?
- ARTICLE 24. Shall the Town of Barnet appropriate the sum of One Thousand One Hundred Dollars (\$1,100.00) to Rural Community Transportation?
- ARTICLE 25. Shall the Town of Barnet appropriate the sum of One Thousand Two Hundred Dollars (\$1,200.00) to Umbrella Inc.?
- ARTICLE 26. Shall the Town of Barnet appropriate the sum of Two Hundred Eighty Dollars (\$280.00) to the Vermont Center for Independent Living?
- ARTICLE 27. Shall the Town of Barnet appropriate the sum of Four Thousand Dollars (\$4,000.00) to the West Barnet Senior Meal Site?
- ARTICLE 28. Shall the voters authorize property taxes to become due and payable in hand to the town Treasurer during business hours on or before October 16, 2021 with said taxes to be actually received by the said treasurer on or before the due date without regard to postmark; and thereafter said taxes shall be payable to the Collector of Delinquent Tax with interest at the rate of 1% per month or fraction thereof, for the first three months and thereafter at the rate of 1.5% per month or fraction thereof, plus the collector's fee of 8% as provided by law?

ARTICLE 29. Shall the Town of Barnet raise the sum of \$1,607,574.21 to pay for the general fund for the Town of Barnet during the fiscal year commencing January 1, 2021?

D. Discussion of other non-binding business (if applicable)

i. Mona Marceau regarding offices of Grand Juror and Town Agent

Ms. Marceau noted that there is no election of Grand Juror or Town Agent on the ballot this year, and asked why this is the case. She also noted that current Town Agent Steven Adler is not a Town resident, and asked if residency is a requirement for this position.

- Ms. Ford indicated that Town Agent is not required to be a Town resident.

Correction: The Town Agent is required to be Town voter, but this position is no longer exists under Vermont law. Mr. Adler currently serves as Town Attorney, not Town Agent. In Barnet, the elected Town Agent traditionally has served as Town Attorney, but the Town Agent's statutory role was more limited, only defending and prosecuting suits at the Selectboard's request. A Town Attorney, which still may be appointed by the Selectboard and need not be a Town voter, has the broader role of advising Town Officers in legal matters and representing Town Officers in legal matters when requested.

- Town Clerk Benjamin Heisholt indicated that these two offices are no longer elected, per action of the legislature. Mr. Heisholt stated that the office of Grand Juror has been eliminated and the office of Town Agent may now be left vacant or appointed by the Selectboard.

Correction: While it is true that both Grand Juror and Town Agent are no longer elected positions, it is the Town Agent that has been eliminated altogether, not Grand Juror. A Grand Juror may, but need not, be appointed the Selectboard.

ii. Kathleen Monroe regarding accessibility for hearing impaired participants

Ms. Monroe noted that most participants in this meeting, including the Selectboard members, appeared remotely via audio only, without video accompaniment. She indicated that several Barnet residents with hearing impairments are unable to participate in this meeting because they are unable to understand the discussion without video to aid them.

At this point in the meeting, the Selectboard re-assumed leadership the hearing and chaired the discussion for the remainder of the meeting.

iii. Absentee ballots and voting

Ms. Ford indicated that absentee ballots are available and that polling will take place at the Fire & Rescue Station (151 Bimson Drive) on Tuesday, March 2, 2021 from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

E. Entertain motion to adjourn hearing.

Ms. Ford moved to adjourn. Seconded by Mr. Gates.

- Louis Bushey asked if the minutes of this meeting could be sent to those who were unable to participate in this meeting.
- Mr. Heisholt indicated that the minutes or an audio recording could be sent to

- anyone who requests them.
- Ms. Monroe commented that an audio recording is of little value to the hearing impaired and the minutes are not a complete record of the discussion. She suggested that video is beneficial for hearing impaired persons, as it allows them to observe gestures and facial expressions and read lips, which are important aids for hearing impaired persons. She indicated that remote Selectboard meetings have likewise lacked video input, and that she had previously complained to the Selectboard about this omission.

The motion to adjourn was passed by voice vote. Meeting adjourned 7:25 p.m.

A true copy.

Attest: _____ *Town Clerk*