

Wolcott Selectboard Informational Meeting February 23, 2022

Virtual meeting, 6:00 p.m.

All Minutes are draft until approved by the Selectboard
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Present: Linda Martin, Kurt Klein, Allen Carpenter, Kurt Billings
Absent: Richard Lee
Employees: Belinda Harris Clegg, Deb Klein, Tom Martin
Legislators: Rep. Kate Donnally, Rep. Dan Noyes
Public: Dolan Patrick, Harold Schwartz, Dan Pascual, Linda Reeve, Gina Brown, James Roy, Michael Davidson, Amy Davidson, Maxfield English, Kelly Lively, Bill Gilson, Kee Gillan, Sonja Ennis, John Chittick, Eric Furs

Martin called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Legislator introductions

Rep. Kate Donnally (Lamoille-2): Rep. Donnally serves on the Judiciary Committee. She reminded constituents that she and Rep. Dan Noyes are holding monthly information meetings on the fourth Saturday of the month. Notice of these meetings is also posted on Front Porch Forum. Those who would like to join in the conversation can email Rep. Donnally at kdonnally@leg.state.vt.us expressing their interest, and she will respond with the Zoom meeting link.

Rep. Dan Noyes (Lamoille-2): Rep. Noyes serves on the Human Services Committee. Issues he is working on include foster care, opioid addiction, and the needs of older Vermonters. Also of great interest is how American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds will be used. Rep. Noyes can be contacted at DNoyes@leg.state.vt.us.

Meeting Rules and Overview of Meeting: Like last year, there will not be a public Town Meeting due to COVID. Rather, we will have Australian ballot. This Informational Meeting has been scheduled to allow the Selectboard to explain the Budget and Warning. The public will then have an opportunity at the end to get their questions answered so they can make an informed decision when voting.

Articles 1 & 2: Martin presented Articles 1 and 2. Article 1 lists the Town Officer positions up for election this year. There is a need for officers to serve. Article 2 provides voters the option to approve publication of the list of delinquent taxpayers.

Article 3: Klein explained that Article 3 asks voters to authorize the Selectboard to establish a reserve fund to be used for capital expenditures for the Town and for the Highway Department. Such a fund has been used as a financial management tool for several years for the Highway Department. The fund is seeded every year, and is used to prevent big spikes in the budget when there are large expenditures. A capital fund for the Town would be used for large expenditures such as the School Street bridge.

Article 4: Klein explained that this Article gives voters an opportunity to authorize cannabis retailers in Town. Healthy Lamoille Valley had hoped to address the issue at the meeting, but was unable to do so. Information regarding this issue can be found at their website, as well as the State of Vermont website.

Articles 5-23: Billings stated that this year the Appropriations are listed separately on the ballot as opposed to one large group as in the past. Breaking out the Appropriations provides voters an opportunity to decide individually how they wish to vote.

Budget Discussion: Martin addressed a few highlights from this year's Budget. A comparison was not done this year because of some changes. She noted that the Athletic Association and the Recreation Committee had not requested funds last year since there were no activities during the pandemic. They are again requesting funding.

Election costs are up due to the added costs associated with Australian ballot.

There is a slight increase in the Library budget. The librarian had worked 11 months last year, but is now working 12 months per year.

There is an increase in the Highway Department budget based on salaries. There was a point at which the Town was at risk of losing its road crew right before plowing season. The Selectboard offered the road crew a salary competitive with other Towns. The board feels the crew does a good job, and is happy they accepted the offer.

This year's budget reflects the creation of an IT Department. This is a clearer way to track expenditures that otherwise may be used by multiple departments.

The Selectboard budget provides for a Project Manager. The Town Administrator resigned last fall. The new position is still posted. The Sheriff's Office budget is included in the Selectboard's budget this year. There has been strong indication that policing is a service that residents want. The board acknowledges the cost is high. The board is working with the Sheriff to address the level of services provided to determine if there can be a reduction in costs.

Questions and Answers

The board responded to questions about how the capital reserve fund for the Town would operate. Questions were also posed regarding the Sheriff's Office. A citizen commented that the Vermont State Police would not be an alternative to the services of the Lamoille County Sheriff. The board explained why the Town is seeking a Project Manager as opposed to a Town Administrator. The board discussed how the board is proceeding regarding American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. It is expected that a survey will be available shortly after Town Meeting day allowing townspeople to provide feedback on how funds should be spent within the categories available. It was noted that the school's budget is not printed in the Town Report. A copy can be accessed on the Town's website under Documents.

Martin encouraged folks to call one of the Selectboard members if they have a question. Absentee ballots are available from the Town Clerk. A video of this meeting will appear on the Town's website, as well as the Minutes.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Deb Klein