

Budget Hearing/Public Hearing-Solar
February 2, 2022, 6:00 p.m.
Fuller Town Hall

Selectmen Present: Macdonald, Goulet and Juergens.

Public Present: Chuck Stinson, Vicki DeLalla and Suzanne Goulet

Clayton called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm.

Clayton started the Hearing by informing everyone in attendance that the Town Meeting will be held on Saturday March 12th at 10:00 am at the School Gym. This decision was made by Jamie Sayen, the Town's Moderator, under RSA 40:4 Allowing Emergency Separation due to the Covid Virus. The Voting portion of Town Meeting will still be held on Tuesday March 8th at Fuller Town Hall from 10:00 am to 7:00 pm. with masks and social distancing required.

Clayton read all the Warrant Articles.

State of New Hampshire
Town of Stratford
2021 Town Meeting Warrants

To the inhabitants of the Town of Stratford in the County of Coos qualified to vote in Town affairs:

You are hereby notified to meet at the Fuller Town Hall on Tuesday, March 8, 2022, at 10 a.m. to act upon the subjects hereinafter set forth. The voting on Articles 1 and 2 will be by official ballot and the polls shall be open for balloting from 10 a.m. and close at 7 p. m.

You are hereby notified, in accordance with the provisions of RSA 40:4, to meet at the Stratford Public School on Saturday March 12, 2022, at 10 a.m., to consider Articles 3 through 20.

Article 1. To choose by non-partisan ballot the following officers: 1 Selectman (3 Year Term); 1 Cemetery Trustee (3 Year Term); 1 Library Trustee (3 Year Term); 1 Trustee of Trust Funds (3 year term); 1 Treasurer (3 Year Term); 1 Moderator (2 Year Term); 1 Supervisor of the Checklist (6 Year Term).

Article 2. To choose by non-partisan ballot: Do you approve of having 2 sessions for the annual town meeting in this town, the first session for choice of town officers elected by an official ballot and other action required to be inserted on said official ballot and the second session, on a date set by the selectmen, for transaction of other business? (Insert as Petition)

Article 3. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate **\$877,330** for the operating budget. This article does not include the cost of any other warrant article.

Article 4. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate **\$8,298** to be added to the previously established Fire Department Expendable Trust Fund, with the full amount to come from the unassigned fund balance. (Board Recommends)

Article 5. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate **\$25,000** to be added to the previously established Highway and Bridges Capital Reserve Fund. (Board Recommends)

Article 6. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate **\$10,000** to be added to the previously established Fire Department Capital Reserve Fund. (Board Recommends)

Article 7. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate **\$3,000** to be added to the previously established Recycling Capital Reserve Fund, with the full amount to come from the unassigned fund balance. (Board Recommends)

Article 8. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate **\$1,000** to be added to the previously established 250th Celebration Expendable Trust Fund for the purpose of funding the 250th Anniversary Celebration to be held in 2023. (Board Recommends)

Article 9. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$10,000 to be added to the previously established Government Buildings Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund. (Board Recommends)

Article 10. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$25,000 to be added to the previously established Municipal Solar Capital Reserve Fund. (Board Recommends)

Article 11. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$10,000 to be added to the previously established Recreation Revolving Fund. These funds will be specific to upgrading/replacing park equipment. (Board Recommends)

Article 12. To see if the Town will vote to restrict the discharge of permissible (consumer) fireworks under RSA 160-B and RSA 160-C by accepting the Fire Works Use Ordinance as proposed in the 2021 Town Report.

Article 13. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$5,000 to be added to the previously established Cemetery Reserve Fund. (Board Recommends)

Article 14. To see if the Town will vote to authorize 100% of the Land Use Change Tax collected pursuant to RSA 79-A:25 to be deposited into the existing Conservation Fund in accordance with RSA 36-A:5, III, as authorized by RSA 79-A:25, II. If adopted this article shall take affect April 1, 2022, and shall remain in effect until altered or rescinded by future vote of the town meeting. (Majority Vote Required)

Article 15. To see if the Town will vote to adopt RSA 41:14-a, to allow the selectmen to acquire or sell land, buildings or both; provided, however, they shall first submit any such proposed acquisition or sale to the Planning Board and to the Conservation Commission for review and recommendation by those bodies. This article will remain in effect until rescinded.

Article 16. To see if the Town will vote to modify the elderly exemptions from property tax in the Town of Stratford, in accordance with RSA 72:39-b, based on assessed values, for qualified taxpayers, to be as follows: for a person 65 years of age up to 75 years, \$15,000; for a person 75 years of age up to 80 years, \$25,000; for a person 80 years of age or older, \$40,000. To qualify, the person must have been a New Hampshire resident for at least 3 consecutive years, own the real estate individually or jointly, or, if the real estate is owned by such person's spouse, they must have been married for at least 5 consecutive years. In addition, the taxpayer must have a net income of not more than \$20,000 or, if married, a combined net income of less than \$25,000; and own net assets not in excess of \$40,000, excluding the value of the person's residence. (Majority Vote)

Article 17. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$47,090 to be used towards the purchase of new extrication tools, also known as 'jaws of life', with \$23,545 to come from the Fire Department Expendable Trust Fund and \$23,545 to be raised by taxation. (Board Recommends)

Article 18. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$250 for the Cohos Historical Society in showing support of the Town in helping to match the current LCHIP Grant for the restoration of the Marion Blodgett Museum in Stratford Hollow.

Article 19. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$5,700 in donations to the following groups: \$500, North Country Home Health & Hospice; \$200, Upper Connecticut Valley Hospital; \$200, Northern Human Services; \$2,500, Tri-County CAP; \$500, Colebrook Food Pantry; \$200, Helping Hands; \$500, Backpack Program; \$200, CASA; \$500, NH Veterans; \$200, Stratford Old Home Day, Inc.; \$200, American Red Cross.

Article 20. To transact any other business that may legally come before said meeting and to hear reports from any agents or committees heretofore chosen.

Given under our hands and seal this 7th day of February in the year 2022.

Clayton asked if anyone, from the public, had any questions concerning the Warrant Articles. Clayton did say that Articles 1 & 2 will be ballot votes on Tuesday.

Chuck spoke about Article 17 concerning the purchase of a new Jaws of Life for the Fire Department. Chuck said that the one that they have is obsolete, broken and he can no longer get parts to repair it. Chuck was encouraged to come prepared to defend the Article at Town Meeting.

Vicki asked about Article 16 concerning Elderly Exemptions. Vicki was told that the last time the income levels were adjusted were in 2007.

Vicki asked about Article 15 submitted by the Conservation Commission because it was never adopted in the past concerning land purchases. This would allow the Board to make decision without holding a special meeting. Vicki asked where the money would be coming from and the answer was the Conservation Fund. Clayton did say that the Conservation Commission is authorized to accept donations.

Chuck asked about Article 19 concerning Old Home Day, Inc. and that they haven't been doing anything. The Board told Chuck that they have been unable to hold their suppers, which is their only income, so therefore they have no money to hold Old Home Day. They request this money to help defray the cost of the Water Bill to Kimball Hall.

Clayton started with the MS-636 (Budget) line by line and asked if anyone had any questions to please raise their hand.

The only concern in the budget was that a couple of departments had a fairly large increase with some others with a fairly large decrease. Suzanne said that the Town only hired one person when they had intended to hire two, all department utilities will now come under Town Buildings and Water and Sewer are combined under a contract by Mike Lynch.

Vicki did ask about the Solar Panels and how they seem to be working. Suzanne said that they will try to have some stats for Town Meeting but it is hard right now since they were only installed a few months ago.

Vicki also asked if the 250th Celebration had anyone working on it and she was assured that there is.

Macdonald/Goulet (3/0 approved) motion to adjourn at 7:09 pm.

Recorded by B. Ladd

