

Town of Worcester Town Meeting Information Session – February 22, 2021

Present: Paul Hanlon (moderator), Ted Lamb, Cheri Goldstein, Roger Strobridge, Connie Riggs, Toni Keading, Katie Winkeljohn, Hollie Friot, John Keading, Elaine Ball, Ginny Humphries, Christina Goodwin, Carolyn Brennan, Caitlin Howansky, Penny Marwede, Marcia Hill, Brian Powers, Steve Barrows, Allen Gilbert, Stewart Clark, Avram Patt, Nancy Gore, Mieka & Eric, Morgan LaPointe, also some unidentified callers by phone.

Moderator Paul Hanlon called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m., and noted that the meeting is for informational purposes. There will be no voting.

Katie Winkeljohn noted that this is the first year that town tax is due in September instead of August. She shared that because of the extension last year due to COVID, more people paid their taxes in full with a September due date.

Article 2 questions/comments – none

Article 3 questions/comments – Roger Strobridge noted that there is very little, if any, tax increase as compared to last year, and that the budget is pretty much in line with last year. He thanked others for the work they had done on the town budget.

Ms. Winkeljohn noted that the town will be able to file for several grants for COVID-related issues – including reimbursement for mailings and postage. She shared that there are appropriations for some improvements in the town office building.

Article 4 questions/comments – Christina Goodwin, a representative of the Worcester Social Concerns Committee, thanked the committee for their work. Connie Riggs, – voiced support for home health and hospice organization.

Article 5 questions/comments – Mr. Hanlon noted the amount for the Kellogg Hubbard Library is the same as last year. Carolyn Brennan – one of two co-directors of library, stated that the library has not asked for an increase in four years. Penny Marwede voiced support for the library.

Article 6 questions/comments – Ms. Winkeljohn shared that the full amount of the budget and the library appropriation are \$763,971.75. She noted that even with those numbers, there will be no tax increase. She shared that there was a small increase in the grand list this year, and we will know the numbers after April 1.

Article 7 question/comments – Ms. Winkeljohn shared that there are six disabled veterans in Worcester. The first \$10k of this Article is a state exemption. The amount that town would raise is less than \$1,500 spread over everyone paying taxes. This Article offsets the first \$20k of assessed property value for disabled veterans.

Article 8 questions/comments – Ms. Goldstein noted that this Article is more of a procedural piece and is done every year. Ms. Winkeljohn stated that if you look in the budget, you will notice that there were highway funds that were not spent last year. They were to be used for a grant that was put on hold, so those grant funds were put in this fund.

State Representative Avram Patt noted that he and State Representative Dave Yakavone are going to be offering a Town Meeting report for Front Porch Forum. They will also be recording an interview that will be shared. Allen Gilbert asked if there was an update on repaving Minister Brook Road. Ted Lamb noted that the state put all of their projects on hold. Brian Powers shared that Worcester’s grant application was submitted last week, so if there are funds available, we will hear from the state.

Connie Riggs asked what the town is doing for animal control. Mr. Lamb noted that former animal control officer Erica Holm retired. Ms. Winkeljohn stated that the town is actively looking for a replacement, and there are two line items in the budget for this purpose. There is an on-call line item and another is a contract with the Central Vermont Humane Society for holding animals. Further discussion was held. Ms. Goldstein shared a story of her tenure as animal control officer. State Troopers called her because of loose turkeys in the road, and when she arrived at the location the turkeys in question were wild turkeys.

Ms. Winkeljohn stated that residents may drop off their ballots at the town office between 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Town Meeting Day.

Mr. Strobridge made a motion that to conclude the informational meeting at 7:07 p.m. Ms. Goldstein seconded. The meeting was adjourned.