

TOWN MEETING – MINUTES
TOWN OF WESTMORELAND, NEW HAMPSHIRE
MARCH 13, 2024

The annual Town Elections were held on March 12, 2024. Elections were called to order at 11:00 a.m. by Moderator Peter Hills. Article 1 was read, reflecting the Town Officials for the coming year. Article 2 was then read for registered voters to consider. Polls were declared closed at 7:00 pm by Moderator Hills. The remaining Articles were discussed during the Town Meeting.

Article 1 To choose all necessary Town Officers for the ensuing year. Of the 1154 registered voters, 144 votes were cast for a turnout rate of 12%.
The results were as follows:

Town Ballot				School Ballot	
Selectman (3 years)		Moderator (2 years)		School Board	
Mark Terry	129	Peter Hills	132	Brian Clark	130
Supervisor of Checklist (6 years)		Trustee of the Trust Funds (3 years)		School Moderator	
Dawn Lincoln	131	Bill Franzen	131	Paul Berch	129
Town Clerk (3 years)		Briggs Committee (2 positions, 1 year)		School Clerk	
Frank Riley	130	Bill Franzen	117	Michael Hinesley	134
Treasurer (1 year)		Timothy Thompson	125	School Treasurer	
Jo Ann LaBarre	136	Library Trustee (2 positions, 3 years)		Deborah Hatt	140
Budget Committee (3 years)		Stephen Breck	71		
Susan Finnegan	130	Christine Hadlow	108		
Overseer of Public Welfare (1 year)		James Kritzer	53		
Rosemarie Semaski	131	Cemetery Trustee (3 years)			
		Robert Davis	133		

Article 2 To see if the voters will approve the Ordinance change as proposed by the Planning Board.

1. Are you in favor of the adoption of a Small Wind Energy System Ordinance as proposed by the Planning Board? This ordinance permits small wind energy systems by Special Exception granted by the Zoning Board of Adjustment in the Rural Residential and Forestry Residential zones, on lots that are 10 acres or larger. The small wind energy system must follow the parameters established by the ordinance which adopts the NH Office of Energy and Planning recommendations.

105 Yes

36 No

The Ordinance Explanation is available in the Planning Board’s Meeting Minutes Binder in the Town Hall.

The Annual Town Meeting was held in the Westmoreland Elementary School on Wednesday, March 13, 2024. The Meeting was called to order by Town Moderator Peter Hills at 7:01 p.m. Moderator Hills led attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance and began the meeting. Moderator Hills noted the passing of long-time resident Bob Moore, whose contributions to the Town were extensive and influential. Attendees observed a moment of silence in Bob’s honor.

Article 3 To hear the reports of Agents and Auditors and take any action relative hereto.

Article 3 motion moved by Scott Talbot and seconded by John Snowdon.

No discussion took place.

ARTICLE 3 WAS AFFIRMATIVELY CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

Article 4 To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the Budget Committee recommended sum of \$1,743,919 for general municipal operations. The Selectmen recommend this Article. This Article does not include special or individual articles addressed separately. Majority vote required. Article 4 motion moved by Scott Talbot and seconded by John Snowdon. No discussion took place.
ARTICLE 4 WAS AFFIRMATIVELY CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

* **Article 5** To see if the town will raise and appropriate the sum of \$137,462.74 to be added to the Bridge Repair Capital Reserve Fund previously established. This sum to come from fund balance. No amount to be raised from taxation. Both the Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend this article. Majority vote required. Article 5 motion moved by Scott Talbot and seconded by Bill McGahie. Discussion: Gwen Mitchell asked where the money came from and how it was raised. Selectboard Chairman Frank Reeder responded that the funds were given to the Town by the State – some from Senate Bill 401 and the remainder from a special Bill. Stipulation for the funds was that they be used only for bridges.
ARTICLE 5 WAS AFFIRMATIVELY CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

* **Article 6** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$127,000 to purchase a generator for the fire station and to authorize the use of \$53,551 of that total to be withdrawn from the December 31st fund balance for this purpose. This \$53,551 represents the interest earned on bond proceeds that were transferred to the general fund on or before December 31. The remaining \$73,449 to be raised from grant funds. No amount to be raised from taxation. Both the Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend this article. Majority vote required. Article 6 motion moved by Scott Talbot and seconded by John Snowdon. Discussion: Gwen Mitchell asked where the money came from and how it was raised. Chairman Reeder responded that these funds came from interest earned on the fire station bond that accrued prior to commencement of construction. The State requires that the fire station have a functioning generator. Although the Town received a generator from the County, the switch to operate it was broken and is no longer manufactured – therefore, the generator was of no use.
ARTICLE 6 WAS AFFIRMATIVELY CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

* **Article 7** To see if the town will raise and appropriate the sum of \$104,000 to be added to the Highway Equipment Capital Reserve Fund previously established. This sum to come from unassigned fund balance. No amount to be raised from taxation. Both the Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend this article. Majority vote required. Article 7 motion moved by Scott Talbot and seconded by Barbara Chase. Discussion: Gwen Mitchell asked where the money came from and how it was raised. Chairman Reeder informed the attendees that in 2022, the budget funding line for paving was approved but not all of the money was spent due to the contractor's inability to complete all of the designated projects.
ARTICLE 7 WAS AFFIRMATIVELY CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

Article 8 To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$167,750 for the purpose of purchasing a loader for the Highway Department. \$104,000 of this total to come from Highway Equipment Capital Reserve and the remaining \$63,750 to be raised from awards from State Highway Grants. No amount to be raised from taxation. Vote is contingent of the passing of Article 7. Both the Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend this article. Majority vote required. Article 8 motion moved by Harry Nelson and seconded by Paul Berch. No discussion took place.
ARTICLE 8 WAS AFFIRMATIVELY CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

* **Article 9** To see if the Town will raise and appropriate the sum of \$30,000 to be added to the Town Hall Repairs Capital Reserve Fund previously established. Both the Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend this article. Majority vote required.

Article 9 motion moved by Harry Nelson and seconded by Paul Berch.

Chairman Reeder commended Town Administrator Jodi Scanlan for her efforts in garnering over \$400,000 in grant money to repair Town Hall.

ARTICLE 9 WAS AFFIRMATIVELY CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

* **Article 10** To see if the Town will raise and appropriate the sum of \$25,563 to inventory town owned and maintained stormwater and stream crossing structures of the Class V highways. \$16,607 to come from grant funds to be received. \$8956 to be raised from taxation. Both the Selectboard and Budget committee recommend this article. Majority vote required.

Article 10 motion moved by Harry Nelson and seconded by Ellen Clement.

Discussion: JJ Prior asked who is performing this function and what is the scope of work? Selectman Snowdon responded that the Southwest Regional Planning Commission has a grant that enables bridges and culverts to be inventoried and assessed by the Commission. The result of this study will be captured in a HAZMAT report. If this is not conducted and something happens, there is a possibility that FEMA will not assist or provide funding for reconstruction.

ARTICLE 10 WAS AFFIRMATIVELY CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

Article 11 To see if the Town will raise and appropriate the sum of \$17,775 to paint the back and southside exterior walls of the Town Hall. Both the Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend this article. Majority vote required.

Article 11 motion moved by Scott Talbot and seconded by Kevin Powell.

No discussion took place.

ARTICLE 11 WAS AFFIRMATIVELY CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

* **Article 12** To see if the Town will raise and appropriate the sum of \$15,000 to be added to the Grant Matching Expendable Trust Fund previously established. Both the Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend this article. Majority vote required.

Article 12 motion moved by Scott Talbot and seconded by Harry Nelson.

No discussion took place.

ARTICLE 11 WAS AFFIRMATIVELY CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

* **Article 13** To see if the Town will raise and appropriate the sum of \$10,000 to be added to the Fire Equipment Capital Reserve previously established. Both the Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend this article. Majority vote required.

Article 13 motion moved by Scott Talbot and seconded by Harry Nelson.

No discussion took place.

ARTICLE 13 WAS AFFIRMATIVELY CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

* **Article 14** To see if the Town will raise and appropriate the sum of \$10,000 to be added to the Highway Equipment Capital Reserve previously established. Both the Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend this article. Majority vote required.

Article 14 motion moved by Scott Talbot and seconded by Harry Nelson.

No discussion took place.

ARTICLE 14 WAS AFFIRMATIVELY CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

* **Article 15** To see if the Town will raise and appropriate the sum of \$9,369.59 to be added to the Fire Equipment Capital Reserve previously established. This sum to come from unassigned fund balance. No amount to be raised from taxation. Both the Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend this article. Majority vote required.

Article 15 motion moved by Scott Talbot and seconded by Barbara Chase.

Discussion: Gwen Mitchell asked where the money came from and how it was raised. Chairman Reeder noted that this was the last of the money remaining in the Fire Station Facility Exploration Fund. Transferring this amount to the Fire Equipment Capital Reserve will close out the Exploration Fund and make it available to address fire equipment needs.

JJ Prior asked about the purpose of the asterisk on certain Articles and Town Administrator Scanlan explained that it indicates actions that fall within the specific parameters of RSA 32:3, VI (d) and/or RSA 32:7 VI.

Clerk post script note: these RSAs contain the following language:

RSA 32:3 – Definitions

VI. "Special warrant article" means any article in the warrant for an annual or special meeting which proposes an appropriation by the meeting and which:

(d) Is designated in the warrant, by the governing body, as a special warrant article, or as a nonlapsing or nontransferable appropriation

RSA 32:7 – Lapse of Appropriations

Annual meeting appropriations shall cover anticipated expenditures for one fiscal year. All appropriations shall lapse at the end of the fiscal year and any unexpended portion thereof shall not be expended without further appropriation, unless:

VI. The amount is appropriated under a special warrant article and is explicitly designated in the article and by vote of the meeting as nonlapsing, in which case the meeting shall designate the time at which the appropriation shall lapse, which in no case shall be later than 5 years after the end of the fiscal year for which the appropriation is made.

ARTICLE 15 WAS AFFIRMATIVELY CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

Article 16 To see if the Town will raise and appropriate the sum of \$8,148 to convert Tax Maps to Digital Format. Both the Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend this article. Majority vote required.

Article 16 motion moved by Scott Talbot and seconded by Kevin Powell.

Discussion: Beth Franzen asked if the tax maps will be online following this process – the answer was yes.

ARTICLE 16 WAS AFFIRMATIVELY CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

Article 17 To see if the Town will raise and appropriate the sum of \$6,479 requested by Library for new fire alarm system. Both the Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend this article. Majority vote required.

Article 17 motion moved by Scott Talbot and seconded by Bruce Clement.

Discussion: Barbara Chase stated, "Great idea!"

ARTICLE 17 WAS AFFIRMATIVELY CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

Article 18 To see what disposition the Town will vote to make the income from the Jotham Lord Fund. This money \$93 is included in the proposed operating budget. Majority vote required.

Article 18 motion moved by Scott Talbot and seconded by Bruce Clement.

Discussion: Bruce Clement moved that the funds be given to the Town Library. Jodi Scanlan seconded that motion.

ARTICLE 18 WAS AFFIRMATIVELY CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

Article 19 Shall the town modify the Veteran's Tax Credit in accordance with RSA 72:28 II from its current tax credit of \$200 per year to \$500 per year. Majority vote required.

Article 19 motion moved by Scott Talbot and seconded by Harry Nelson.

Discussion: Tim Thompson asked if this is a property tax abatement. Chairman Reeder responded affirmatively and stated that the Selectmen discovered Westmoreland has the lowest veteran's property tax abatement rate in the County. Ernie Perham asked if this pertains to Disabilities and was informed that the next Article addressed his question.

ARTICLE 19 WAS AFFIRMATIVELY CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

Article 20 Shall the town modify the provisions of RSA 72:35 for an optional tax credit for a Service-Connected Total Disability from the current tax credit of \$1,400 per year to \$2,000 per year on a residential property. Majority vote required.

Article 20 motion moved by Scott Talbot and seconded by Kevin Powell.

Discussion: Madeline Ullrich noted, "Well deserved!"

ARTICLE 20 WAS AFFIRMATIVELY CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

Article 21 Shall the town modify the provisions of RSA 72:61-64 inclusively, which provide for an optional property tax exemption from the property's assessed value, for property tax purposes, for persons owning real property, which is equipped with solar energy systems intended for use at the immediate site. Such property tax exemption shall be in the amount equal to 100% of the assessed value of qualifying solar energy system equipment under these statutes. Majority vote required.

Article 21 motion moved by Scott Talbot and seconded by Kevin Powell.

Discussion: TJ Kelly asked if this applies to businesses, too. Chairman Reeder responded that if the individual owns the business and the property, they can apply for the exemption. He clarified that solar is now included in assessments of a property's value and this Article offsets the increased tax burden on the property owner. JJ Prior asked if this was an increase from the previous cap of 30% and the Selectmen confirmed that to be true. The Selectmen clarified that the original percentage was a best-guess estimate at the time regarding what the solar energy systems would be worth – that amount has increased significantly with the improvements in technology and capability of such systems. Andy Mackey asked if this exemption would be applied every year and the answer was Yes. Bruce Clement asked who determines the value of the solar energy system and was told that the assessor is responsible for those data. Jim Church asked if the benefit transfers with the sale of the property. The Selectmen indicated that the specifics would need to be researched but they believe eligibility remains with the property, as long as the solar energy system is in place.

ARTICLE 21 WAS AFFIRMATIVELY CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

Article 22 To transact any other business that may legally come before this meeting.

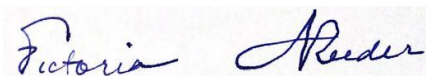
Article 22 motion moved by Scott Talbot and seconded by Jodi Scanlan.

Discussion: Selectman Snowdon addressed the audience and noted that we are very fortunate to have so many volunteers. He asked that all persons who volunteer, serve in elected positions, or work for the Town please stand. An estimated half of the audience stood up and were applauded by the attendees. He welcomed two new members of the Town Hall cohort – Mark Terry as the new Selectman and Frank Riley as the new Town Clerk. Selectman Snowdon stated that incoming persons must replace outgoing members and acknowledged the contributions resulting from Chairman Reeder's six years as Selectman and Vicki Reeder's two years as Town Clerk.

No further discussion ensued.

A motion to close the meeting was moved by Scott Talbot and seconded by Bruce Clement. The Town Meeting adjourned at 7:33 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Victoria A. Reeder
Westmoreland Town Clerk