

**TOWN OF NORTH BROOKFIELD
SPECIAL TOWN MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 10, 2023**

A Special Town Meeting was held in the North Brookfield Elementary School Auditorium on Friday, March 10, 2023 at 6:30pm, according to the warrant as posted. Moderator James N Caldwell called the meeting to order, recessed while voters continued to arrive, and proceeded with a total of 117 voters present. Tellers for the evening were Brian Hayes and Donald Gillette.

Mr. Caldwell explained the wrist bands there were handed out to voters as they arrived were to ensure that ballot votes were made by registered voters. He also made a motion to move around some of the articles, moving 18 and 19 to behind Article 1. There was one vote opposed to this so the motion passed

Action was taken on the following articles:

ARTICLE 1: A motion was made by Jason Petraitis, seconded by John Tripp, that the Town appropriate Six Million One Hundred Twenty Thousand Dollars (\$6,120,000.00) to be expended with the approval of the Board of Selectmen, to pay costs of designing, permitting, and constructing upgrades to the municipal properties located at 56 School Street, 58 School Street and 65 Donovan Road, including the payment of all costs incidental and related thereto; and that to meet this appropriation, the Treasurer, with the approval of the Select Board, is authorized to borrow said amount pursuant to G.L. c. 44, §7(1) or any other enabling authority for such purpose, and to issue bonds and notes of the Town therefor; provided, however, that this appropriation and borrowing authorization shall be contingent upon passage of a Proposition 2½, so called, debt exclusion ballot question pursuant to General Laws Chapter 59, §21C(k).

Fire Chief Joe Holway spoke to the article. Leo Egan asked for clarification on the purchase of 65 Donovan Rd and why that building wasn't already being used; Jason and Joe both responded to Leo's question.

Ethan Melad asked about the high amount; the architect responded that with the work needed, the estimates are on the high side. Ethan followed up asking if there are any unnecessary costs; Joe responded that the upgrades have been cut back as much as possible.

Tashena Holmes gave her support of the article.

Jamie Gilman asked how this affects the taxes. Town Clerk Tara Hayes and Treasurer Allyson Bulger explained the spreadsheets that were available detailing the effect on the tax payers.

Tate Ostiguy asked if everyone was aware of the amount of debt this would create and that we haven't gone forward with the possibility of regionalization and the costs that will incur.

Sheila Orsi moved to vote. Moderator Caldwell explained that this would be a ballot vote with a 2/3 majority to pass; a yes vote would be to move forward with the project; a no vote would not move forward. There were 89 yes and 29 no votes; the motion passed and will be added to the Annual Town Election ballot.

ARTICLE 18: A motion was made by Jason Petraitis, seconded by John Tripp, that the Town appropriate Three Million Three Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$3,300,000.00) to be expended with the approval of the Board of Selectmen, to pay costs of designing and constructing sewer system improvements, including all costs incidental and related thereto; and that to meet this appropriation, the Treasurer, with the approval of the Board of Selectmen, is authorized to borrow said amount pursuant to G.L. c. 44, §7(1) or any other enabling authority for such purpose, and to issue bonds and notes of the Town therefore; provided, however, that this appropriation and borrowing authorization shall be contingent upon passage of a Proposition 2½, so called, debt exclusion ballot question pursuant to General Laws Chapter 59, §21C(k).

Tate Ostiguy asked about the costs and the prior vote taken by the Town; is this the final amount. Sewer Superintendent James Nyberg explained that when the quotes for the project came in, the amount was much higher than originally anticipated. The total amount is \$23,000,000 and a

grant has been approved for \$9,000,000 of that amount. He will continue to look at other grant opportunities.

Eric Hevy asked to have the mandate explained and if all of this is necessary to meet the mandate. Jim explained the new phosphorus levels needed to be met and how all of this will meet the mandate.

Rick Bulger asked about the total costs; Jim reviewed the spreadsheet and the breakout of the sewer users and the taxpayers.

Jim Caldwell explained that this was also a ballot vote with a 2/3 majority to pass; there were 83 yes votes, 27 no votes, the motion passed and will be added to the Annual Town Election ballot.

ARTICLE 19: A motion was made by John Tripp, seconded by Elizabeth Brooke Canada, that the Town vote to appropriate from Sewer Enterprise Funds the sum of Six Million Six Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$6,600,000.00) to pay for costs associated with the Sewer Upgrade project, including all costs incidental and related thereto.

Jim Caldwell explained that this was another ballot vote with a 2/3 majority to pass; there was 77 yes votes, 19 no votes, the motion passed and will be added to the Annual Town Election ballot.

ARTICLE 2: A motion was made by John Tripp, seconded by Elizabeth Brooke Canada, that the Town vote to transfer the sum of Two Hundred Eight Thousand Five Hundred Eighteen Dollars and Forty-Seven Cents (\$208,518.47) from Capital Stabilization to Highway: Equipment Capital Outlay to pay costs of purchasing and equipping a tractor-mower.

James Metcalf stated that the Capital Stabilization Account is a fund to be used for emergencies and made a motion to table this motion. Robert Locatelli stated that the Capital Stabilization Account is not an emergency fund; that would be the Stabilization Account; this account is to be used for capital purchases in excess of \$10,000 that last more than 5 years. Tashena seconded Jim Metcalf's motion. Highway Superintendent Jason Benoit explained that the current tractor for the roadside mowing is over 25 years old and that it has taken hundreds of man hours and thousands of dollars to keep this tractor running; it has been kept together with band-aids. Jim responded that the highway department has too many toys. Jim Caldwell took a vote on the motion to table which needed a 2/3 vote to pass. The motion failed.

John Tripp spoke in support of the purchase; he explained that the tractor and mower are not for lawn mowing, it is to cut back the overgrowth, small trees, etc. on the road sides.

Town Accountant, Shiela Leblanc, stated that the balance in the Capital Stabilization Account was \$327,000.

Finance Committee member Chet Lubelczyk also spoke in favor of the purchase.

The vote needed to pass by 2/3 so Moderator Caldwell voted it backwards; there were six (6) votes against the motion and the rest in favor. Motion carries.

ARTICLE 3: A motion was made by Elizabeth Brooke Canada, seconded by Jason Petraitis, that the Town vote to transfer the sum of \$4,485.60 from Finance Committee Reserve Fund to Library: Salaries account.

Library Trustee Peg Bodine spoke to the article explaining that the Library has hired a new Director and that these funds would cover a slight increase in salary as well as salary for the former director to train the new director. The motion passed.

ARTICLE 4: A motion was made by Jason Petraitis, seconded by John Tripp, that the Town vote to transfer the sum of \$6,000.00 from Finance Committee Reserve to Police: Overtime. The motion passed.

ARTICLE 5: A motion was made by John Tripp, seconded by Elizabeth Brooke Canada, that the Town vote to transfer the sum of \$120.50 from Board of Health: Bacterial Analysis to Prior Year Unpaid Bills. Moderator Caldwell explained that the motion needed a 9/10 approval to pass because it was to pay a prior year bill so it was voted backwards. The motion passed.

ARTICLE 6: A motion was made by Elizabeth Brooke Canada, seconded by Jason Petraitis, that the Town vote to transfer the sum of \$30,000.00 from Free Cash to School Expenses. There were six (6) votes against the motion but it passed.

ARTICLE 7: A motion was made by Jason Petraitis, seconded by John Tripp, that the Town vote to transfer the sum of \$30,000.00 from Free Cash to Judgements/Settlements to pay for a settlement in a lawsuit filed against the Town.

Salvatore Branciforte questioned as to why the taxpayers are required to pay it and not the school; Jason explained that payroll for the school is handled by the town therefore it is up to the town to pay.

After further discussion, the vote was taken with twelve (12) no votes; the motion passed.

ARTICLE 8: MOTION (1): A motion was made by John Tripp, seconded by Elizabeth Brooke Canada, that the Town vote to transfer the sum of \$31,738.00 from Free Cash to Prior Year Unpaid Bills to pay for costs associated with the Complete Streets Project. The motion passed.

ARTICLE 8: MOTION (2): A motion was made by Elizabeth Brooke Canada, seconded by Jason Petraitis, that the Town vote to transfer the sum of \$7,262.00 from Free Cash to Board of Selectmen: Downtown Development Engineering Expense to pay for costs associated with the Complete Streets Project. The motion passed.

ARTICLE 9: A motion was made by Jason Petraitis, seconded by John Tripp, that the Town vote to transfer the sum of \$4,000.00 from Police: Part Time Salary to Police: Overtime. The motion passed.

ARTICLE 10: A motion was made by John Tripp, seconded by Elizabeth Brooke Canada, that the Town vote to transfer the sum of \$400.00 from Board of Selectmen: Town House Repairs to Board of Selectmen: Office Supplies to cover a negative balance. There were three (3) votes against the motion but the motion passed.

ARTICLE 11: A motion was made by Elizabeth Brooke Canada, seconded by Jason Petraitis, that the Town vote to transfer the sum of \$333.32 from Board of Selectmen: Selectmen Salary to Board of Selectmen: General Insurance, and further to transfer the sum of \$8,435.00 from Board of Selectmen: Technology to Board of Selectmen: General Insurance to cover a negative balance. The motion passed.

ARTICLE 12: A motion was made by Jason Petraitis, seconded by John Tripp, that the Town vote to accept the provisions of MGL, Title VII, Chapter 41, Section 19K, Additional Compensation, in the amount of \$1,000.00 annually, for Certified Town Clerk. The motion passed.

ARTICLE 13: A motion was made by John Tripp, seconded by Elizabeth Brooke Canada, that the Town vote to accept the provisions of MGL, Title VII, Chapter 41, Section 1B, to have the elected Playground Committee become an appointed Parks, Recreation and Open Space Committee, to be known as Parks & Recreation, and to further combine Parks & Recreation with Town Beach and Town Forest to create a five-member committee.

Salvatore Branciforte asked how we are getting people to do the work when we haven't in the past. Tara Hayes explained that there are already many people who are interested in working on this committee; that the committee isn't required to do the manual labor, it is about setting policies and ensuring work is done.

Shiela Leblanc asked why an appointed committee and not an elected one; Jason explained that we can't get people to run and stay on the committee.

Sheila Orsi asked about the finances and how the budgets would work; Jason explained that the budgets would be combined.

Tashena Holmes asked if the maintenance of the Playground would fall to the Highway Department; Jason said no.

The motion was voted; with four (4) no votes, the motion passed and will be added to the Annual Town Election Ballot.

ARTICLE 14: A motion was made by Elizabeth Brooke Canada, seconded by Jason Petraitis, that the Town take no action on this article. The motion passed.

ARTICLE 15: A motion was made by Jason Petraitis, seconded by John Tripp, that the Town take no action on this article. The motion passed.

ARTICLE 16: A motion was made by John Tripp, seconded by Elizabeth Brooke Canada, that the Town vote to establish, under MGL Chapter 40, Section 3, a separate account for funds received from the rental or lease of storage units at 65 Donovan Road and costs associated with those units; and to further accept that portion of MGL Chapter 40, Section 3 to authorize that any balance in this account at the end of any fiscal year to remain in the account to be expended for the purposes of upkeep and maintenance of said property.

Tate Ostiguy asked who maintains the units currently. John explained that there hasn't really been any maintenance done at this point but these funds would be used for that purpose. There are some doors and gutters that need to be fixed; this account would be the source of funding.

Jim Metcalf suggested contacting a storage company for guidance or possibly outsourcing the running of the units.

Ethan Melad asked where the money from the units is currently going. Shiela Leblanc explained that the funds currently go into the general fund. This article is to set up the revolving account for new fiscal year beginning July 1st.

Finance Committee member Kathy Crevier asked how much the rent is for these units; Administrative Assistant Ashley Barre explained the rent is \$85/month per unit.

A vote was taken and the motion passed.

ARTICLE 17: A motion was made by Elizabeth Brooke Canada, seconded by Jason Petraitis, that the Town vote to transfer the sum of \$277,832.00 from Sewer: Retained earnings to Sewer: Nitrogen Reduction Project to cover the costs of a Nitrogen Reduction Project, including all costs incidental and related thereto.

Jim Metcalf asked if the Green Gold Group facility on Prospect St is contributing to any excess nitrogen issues; Sewer Superintendent Jim Nyberg took this under advisement.

A vote was taken and the motion passed.

Chet Lubelczyk made a motion, Sheila Orsi seconded and it was voted unanimously to dissolve the meeting at 8:49pm

A true copy, Attest:

Tara M Hayes, Town Clerk
March 15, 2023