

TOWN OF BRIDGEWATER
Annual Town Meeting Summary
 March 11, 2014

The Bridgewater Annual Town Meeting opened with a Moment of Silence for our Service Men and Women at approximately 7:35 pm. Present were Moderator Mike Capsalis, Selectman Terence Murphy, Selectman Maurice Jenness, Selectman Henry Woolner and approximately 110 residents. The Rules of Order were provided by the Moderator and the meeting commenced.

The Moderator started the meeting with a few informational comments being as follows:

The following Monday, the town roads will be posted for the upcoming mud season.

The Town Clerk noted that in the event of winter storms, there is a possibility the Town Clerk's office may be closed during normal business hours. Residents can either call the Town Clerks office for a closure message on the answering machine, or watch WMUR news where the municipal closures are scrolling along the bottom during the news broadcast.

There were some printing errors with the town report where pages were not printed in the correct order. When reviewing the town report, be sure to pay attention to the headings at the top of the page. The fonts used within the report also vary with some larger than others. The information contained in the report is correct for the most part.

The Moderator continued the meeting reading the election results with respect to the Town, State and SAU ballots as follows:

Article #1: "To choose a Selectman for three (3) years and all other necessary town officials." Vote was taken by town ballot of which there were 249 ballots cast.

Votes cast were as follows:

Selectman (vote for 1) – 3 year term:

Ronald Olszak – 40 votes
 Maurice (Skip) Jenness – 208 votes*

Town Clerk (vote for 1) – 3 year term:

Colleen Kenny – 237 votes

Moderator (vote for 1) – 2 year term:

Michael Capsalis – 215 votes

Library Trustee (vote for 1) – 3 year term:

Rose Williams – 231 votes

Supervisor of the Checklist (vote for 1) – 6 year term:

Rose Williams – 230 votes

Trustee of the Trust Fund (vote for 1) – 3 year term:

Karen Simula – 236 votes

State of New Hampshire Office of Executive Councilor:

Michael J. Cryans – 95 votes

Joseph D. Kenney – 154 votes*

SAU Election:

Bristol School Board

Kurt Schaffner – 73 votes

Benjamin LaRoche – 80 votes

New Hampton School Board

Francine Wendleboe – 88 votes

Christine Hofling-Davol – 93 votes

Bristol Budget Committee

Christen Dolloff – 156 votes

New Hampton Budget Committee

Paul Rheinhardt – 43 votes

John Jenness – 130 votes

District Moderator

Edward Gordon – 187 votes

Article #2

Yes – 103 votes

No – 91 votes

Article #3

Yes – 133 votes

No – 52 votes

Article #4

Yes – 146 votes

No – 35 votes

Article #5

Yes – 158 votes

No – 31 votes

Article #6

Yes – 66 votes

No – 117 votes

Article #7

Yes – 145 votes

No – 42 votes

Article #2: “To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$1,384,818.00 which represents the operational budget. Said sum does not include amounts in separate or special warranty articles.” (Majority vote required.) Recommended by the Selectmen.

Selectman Murphy moved this article as written which was seconded by Robert Felder. Selectman Murphy spoke to this article with an explanation of the overall budget lines and ending balance.

Resident Ron Olszak questioned how we could have an excess as reported in Article #3 if expenses were as shown in the town report? Selectman Murphy explained that the 2012 audit showed a surplus higher than was initially known. Selectman Woolner also added that there was additional unknown revenue from a lien property that was not known at the time.

Resident Ron Olszak questioned where would the revenue be reported, as it should be listed somewhere and requested a copy of the audit showing the revenue. Selectman Woolner stated that the 2013 audit was not yet available, as the 2012 audit had just been received.

Resident Don Jacques questioned how we could vote on Article #3 if we have nothing to show the numbers and the availability of funds. Selectman Murphy said if the funds were not there, they would not be spent and that residents can turn the Article down if they aren't comfortable. Selectman Woolner confirmed that if the money was not available we wouldn't be able to appropriate it and, therefore, it would not be spent.

The Moderator confirmed there were no further questions on Article #2, all were in favor, and Article #2 was ruled in the affirmative.

Article #3: “To see if the Town will vote to appropriate the sum of \$90,000.00 for capital improvements to replace the town hall and highway building roofs; the purchase of a highway sander and snow plow; paint two buildings; supplemental road surfacing; ambulance upgrades and, further, to authorize the transfer of \$90,000.00 from the December 31st, 2013 fund balance. (Majority required.) Recommended by the Selectmen.

Selectman Woolner moved this Article as written which was seconded by Ralph Lyford. Selectman Woolner spoke to this article once again explaining if there were no funds for this article, no funds would be spent.

Resident Gene Bank suggested the potential of a solar panel system roof replacement for a more energy efficient building.

Selectman Murphy spoke on the use of funds that were available as opposed to raising taxes with future debt payoff and maintaining the town's infrastructure. There were no questions regarding this article. All were in favor, Article #3 ruled in the affirmative.

Article #4: “To see if the town will vote to accept the provisions of RSA 289:6 II-a providing that the Selectmen serve for the term of elected office as the cemetery trustees indefinitely until specific recession of such authority by subsequent Town Meeting by voting the following: ‘Shall we delegate the duties and responsibilities of the cemetery trustees to the Board of Selectmen?’” (Majority required.) Recommended by the Selectmen.

Selectman Woolner moved the article as written, Selectman Murphy seconded. There were no questions regarding this article. All were in favor, **Article #4 ruled in the affirmative.**

Article #5: “To see if the voters of the Towns of Hebron and Bridgewater will direct the School Board of the Newfound Area School District to undertake a study of the feasibility and suitability of the withdrawal of the Towns of Hebron and Bridgewater from the cooperative district. In accordance with RSA 195, Section 25, the study shall be conducted by a committee composed of at least one member of the School Board from each of the pre-existing districts, one member of the School Board of Selectmen from each town, and such other members as may be appointed by the committee. Within 180 days after the date of formation, the committee shall report its findings to the State of New Hampshire Board of Education. There is no cost for this study.” (Majority required.) Recommended by the Selectmen.

Selectman Woolner moved this article as written, Stephanie Peters seconded this article. At this time, the Moderator asked if there were any objections to allowing a non-resident to speak on this article in the event any wished to do so. It was noted that if a non-resident rose to spoke we would address that non-resident at that time.

Resident Vince Migliore spoke on this article and his role on the School Board and voiced his support of this Article. He cited student outcomes, lower costs for each town based on enrollment, etc. Migliore continued to state that this study will allow both towns to know if this would be a feasible arrangement. Vince Migliore also provided the following statement which he requested be included in the minutes of this meeting, as follows:

“Vincent Paul Migliore rose again to clarify points made regarding the RSA 195 “study” as people have characterized it. He made it clear that there is a process and timeline prescribed by the law itself, and while it includes a study to determine whether it is both feasible and suitable to withdraw, the process will ultimately include sending a recommendation to the Commissioner of Education for review by NH DOE, within 180 days of undertaking the task. Whatever the local committee’s recommendation may be, a minority report is also possible. Either way, a recommendation is then made to the State Board of Education, and they will decide whether either plan is doable. It would be at that time that the entire co-operative school district would get to vote whether to allow the recommendation of the DOE (presumably to withdraw) to happen. He said we

would still need to convince the rest of the district to vote in favor of allowing us to do so. But he wanted to be clear that this is more than just a study. People's input would surely be asked for, but while it could happen, there is no other required vote on the matter as may have otherwise been indicated."

Resident Natalie Murphy spoke in opposition of this article and in support of the school district as it currently stands. Ms. Murphy stated she does not believe 7th and 8th graders would have the same benefits if separated from the district as they would within the SAU, specialty classes, sports, etc. Ms. Murphy further stated she believe students would be faced with a culture shock when they transitioned to the high school. Ms. Murphy stated she believed the middle school issues will only be moved to BHVS, they will still occur and that children need to grow in stages.

Resident Amie Kolomick spoke of her support of this study in order to learn the best result.

Selectman Murphy spoke in support of this Article and spoke of many towns that operate this way very successfully, Plymouth, Holderness, Waterville Valley, Andover, etc. Selectman Murphy continued to state that the current system does not want to change and a study of a school board in town for this school is the appropriate next step. Selectman Murphy stated this could possibly provide a better education for the students. Selectman Murphy also stated that once the study is complete, there will be a joint meeting with Hebron for further discussion.

Non-resident Kathi Gickas spoke on this article and recalled her son's Kindergarten enrollment where she, who was then a Bridgewater resident, was told her son had to go to Bristol. Ms. Gickas stated she feels the middle school will cause her son to be lost in the crowd.

Resident Peter Holman requested clarification of the members that would comprise this committee based on how the Article was written. Selectman Woolner responded that the word "district" means "town" for this RSA. Selectman Woolner continued to state that each town will be represented within the entire school district and additional numbers as needed from the school boards.

Resident Holman stated he hoped this would be a significant study and that it would be represented by everyone, and not just the towns who currently are in the school at this time. Resident Holman also stated he hoped that because it is a "no cost" study he questioned the quality of the study and how we can be sure all members are equally part of the input. Resident Holman stated he would be against this Article until further clarification.

Resident Jeff Bird spoke in support of this Article as he has 3 children in the BHVD School and while serving in the capacity of the school budget committee he felt more emphasis was placed on the budget and less on the students. Resident Bird stated that this is a study and it would be good to know our options and make a decision based on the results.

Resident Ken Weidman asked about the clause “no cost” and clarification on that. Resident Weidman also questioned if we ask the school board do they have to do it.

Resident Vince Migliore responded to this question and stated if he had more time he could talk about this further with residents. Resident Migliore further spoke of the history of this idea and why he believed it would be a good idea to have this study. Results have to be sent to the State Board of Education with the recommendation of the members of the study. Costs would be administrative and would not be an allocated cost. Resident Migliore asked residents who had further questions to meet with him to further discuss the details.

Resident Stephanie Bednaz spoke in support of this Article and her history regarding this study.

Resident Natalie Murphy asked if after 180 days would there be a special meeting to discuss the results of the study. Selectman Murphy said there would be a joint meeting of the two towns at a special meeting for a resident vote.

Resident Vince Migliore provided clarification stating that once the study is done, a report is sent to the State, and it would then go to the next deliberative session. Time wise we would remain in the SAU for the first year of being independent. Vince Migliore stated his hope is for open communication, input and support to be successful with all the residents of all towns involved.

Resident Stephanie Peters spoke in support of this study stating more information can't hurt, stating many K-8 models have seen success.

The Moderator moved to end this debate which was rejected by Vince Migliore who then asked to overrule the moderator.

Felder seconded the Moderators move to end the debate on this article. Majority voted in favor of this article, **Article #5 ruled in the affirmative.**

Article #6: “To see if the town will vote to call upon the US Congress with the support of the NH State Legislature, to move forward with a Constitutional Amendment to regulate political spending and clarify that constitutional rights were established for people and not corporations, and, if such an amendment be approved, that the NH State Legislature support such an amendment if sent to the State for ratification. By Petition.

This Article was moved by Bob Martens and second by Robert Felder. Resident George Blaisdell spoke on this article with a history of why this article is included in the Town Warrant. Bob Martens spoke in favor of this article stating that people, not money, should be the factor in governing our country. Bob Martens requested the support of Bridgewater residents in passing this Article.

This Article was moved to a vote, all were in favor, **Article #6 ruled in the affirmative.**

Article #7: “To transact any other business that may legally come before this meeting.”

The Selectmen introduced our new Interim Police Chief, George Hill, and our new Part Time Officer, Angela Lyford.

Lori Lerner spoke on the wind tower issues and provided documentation which is attached to these minutes for further clarification to be included with these minutes.

A Motion to Adjourn was moved by Don Atwood and seconded by Robert Felder.

Voted in the affirmative

Meeting concluded at approximately 8:45.

Respectfully submitted,

Colleen Kenny

Town Clerk