

## 2024 STRAFFORD TOWN MEETING

The Town Meeting was called to order at 8:00 AM on Tuesday, March 12, 2024 at the Strafford Town Hall, in the Town of Strafford, by Town Moderator Ralph Wegner, to act on Articles 1 through 3 by ballot vote.

The ballots were cast and the meeting recessed at 7:00 PM for the purpose of tallying the votes.

The 204<sup>th</sup> Town Meeting was called to order again at 8:45 AM on Saturday, March 16, 2024 at the Strafford School by Moderator Ralph Wegner to act on Articles 4 through 34.

Kenny Richard led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Pastor Robin Shakal offered opening prayer.

Moderator Ralph Wegner welcomed everyone to the meeting, introduced himself, and reviewed the rules of proper conduct and order for the meeting.

Moderator Ralph Wegner read the results of the March 12, 2024 Election.

**\*\* 1. To choose all necessary Town Officers for the year ensuing.**

Voters on the Checklist 3309

Votes Cast 648 (614 Election Day Voters and 34 Absentee Voters)

Selectman (Three Year Term)

Lynn Sweet 574

Moderator (Two Year Term)

Ralph Wegner 509

Supervisors of the Checklist (Six Year Term)

Carol Cooper 545

Library Trustee (Three Year Term)

Betsy Cozine 513

Trustee of the Trust Fund (Three Year Term)

Jean Chartrand-Ewen 514

Planning Board (Three Year Term)

Don Clifford 268

Zoning Board of Adjustment (Three Year Term)

Jean Chartrand-Ewen 492

\*\* 2. Are you in favor of the adoption of the following amendment to the existing Town of Strafford Zoning and Land Use Ordinances as proposed by the Planning Board:

“To amend the definition of ‘Frontage’ in *Section 1.14.5, Definitions*, of the Zoning Ordinance to clarify that frontage is the contiguous length of the lot bordering on a road, to eliminate the use of private way frontage unless in an approved subdivision, and to clarify the determination of and requirements for frontage for lots that straddle the town boundary.”

Yes 306      No 303

**Article #2 Passes**

\*\* 3. Are you in favor of the adoption of the following amendment(s) to the existing Town of Strafford Zoning and Land Use Ordinances as proposed by the Planning Board:

“To amend the definitions in *Section 1.14.12* (for Accessory Building), *1.14.13* (for Structure, and *1.14.14* (for Building), *Definitions*, of the Zoning Ordinance to add accessory structure and accessory use definitions to the accessory building definition, to clarify the definition of Structure including that all buildings are structures, and to clarify and simplify the definition of Building.”

Yes 283      No 324

**Article #3 Fails**

Moderator Ralph Wegner read the results of the School District Election.

School Board Member (Three Year Term)

Eric Almanzan	360
Kyle Scouten	306

Moderator Ralph Wegner mentioned a recount for School Board Member has been requested.

Selectman Lynn Sweet and past Selectman Joann Brown recognized and thanked retiring Tax Collector, Judy Dupre, for over 27 years of service to the Town. Flowers, gift card, and sash were presented with an invitation to residents to join in after the meeting for cake. Judy was given a standing ovation and she thanked everyone.

Selectman Chris Garcia gave an overview of the warrant articles being voted on. He commended the efforts that have gone into the Master Plan, wished Judy Dupre farewell, highlighted radios for Fire Department, a new to Strafford backhoe for the Recycling Center and Police Cruiser that were purchased with ARPA funds, gave tax break down, and compared Strafford with surrounding towns. The presentation ended with photos of a story featured on WMUR where a beloved stuffed animal, Cupcake, was rescued from the Strafford Recycling Center’s compactor and returned to the owner.

Moderator Ralph Wegner made a general announcement that the meeting is scheduled to start at 8:30 AM and suggested people arrive earlier. He thanked the Selectmen, town employees, and

volunteers. He shared that Election Day is very long and we couldn't do it without volunteers. He invited residents to volunteer and get involved in the process.

Moderator Ralph Wegner began the Articles being considered and voted on at Town Meeting.

**Motion** made by Ben Wolfson to move warrant article 33 to be discussed and voted on at the start of the meeting before warrant article 4.

Seconded by Bryan Begin

Discussion:

*Moderator Ralph Wegner* asked for a vote to move Article #33 to the beginning of the meeting.

*Kurt Wuelper* called for a point of order and shared the vote should be taken after discussion.

*Ben Wolfson* shared that he made the motion to speed up the meeting.

*JD Clarke* shared he was highly suspicious of this motion.

With no further discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

**Motion to move Article #33 Passes**

33. "Shall the following provisions pertaining to elections be adopted? All voting shall be by paper ballot and all ballots shall be hand counted only, rather than by use of optical scanning or any other types of programmable electronic counting devices." This shall constitute a return to hand counting ballots and the immediate discontinuance of all electronic voting machines and electronic devices authorized for use by trial in RSA 656:40." By petition.

Motion made by Denise Rainey

Seconded by Todd Clairwood

Discussion:

*Moderator Ralph Wegner* called for a vote to bring the article to the floor for discussion.

Cards were raised and the Moderator announced the vote to bring the article to the floor passed.

*Denise Rainey* shared a history of elections and voting.

*Audience members* asked for a time limit.

*Moderator Ralph Wegner* clarified this was on the warrant by petition and Denise Rainey could continue.

*Denise Rainey* continued with her explanation of laws, and history, and that the use of counting machines was not brought into legislation in the usual way. She suggested that the use of ballot counting machines should be stopped immediately until the proper protocol is followed to put them into use.

*Laurie Patrick* shared that she is a registered nurse and has witnessed data breaches in healthcare and shared news of other hacks in healthcare. She shared it has been proven that votes counted by the machine can be affected by bends and scratches on the ballot and attest that the memory card and machines can be influenced and hacked. She advised voters not to trust the machine.

*Heath Howard* introduced himself as a state representative on the NH election law committee. He shared information about NH elections such as: NH elections are all paper ballot, there is a physical record of how many votes are cast, machine is secure and not connected to internet, security chips have encryptions that prevent changing data. He encouraged voters to stay with the accurate reliable machine and trust local election officials to handle properly.

*Ben Wolfson* shared he found zero complaints at the local and state level on Strafford's machines, 2020 saw increase of accusations about election process and they have all been

dismissed. He suggested that the black van driving around with a digital sign to get rid of ballot counting machines shows there is outside money funding this movement.

*Eric Almanzan* shared he has been researching this warrant article through information on the internet and cited two different places of information that showed machines could be hacked.

*Bob Fletcher* shared he understands public and voters concern on accuracy, when we have close elections we can have a recount.

*Moderator Ralph Wegner* asked the Town Clerk the process for asking for a recount and who could ask for a recount.

*Town Clerk Terri Marsh* briefly replied request in writing to Town Clerk by Friday after election for candidates on that race and request from 10 voters 7 days after election for ballot questions.

*Bob Fletcher* stated that it is the close races that matter. He suggested a possible amendment to the article. He motioned to amend the article to read for all elections that a hand count be required if there was a 10% or less difference between leading candidates.

*Heath Howard* stated that the SOS manages recounts and he believes that amendment would not be legal.

*Moderator Ralph Wegner* asked Bob Fletcher to hold the amendment for further clarification.

*Mike Harrington* shared that he has been through recounts in Concord and they go through every ballot by hand, he clarified any candidate can ask for a recount, how close the race is will determine how much they pay.

*Bill Cobb* thanked town staff and volunteers for the safe and fair elections in Strafford. He believes news on election fraud and potential risk needs more specificity, there is zero proof of fraud, and we are searching for problems that don't exist.

*Marilyn Rivera* stated that you do not need to be tech savvy to know machines can get hacked, and has concerns about future machines. She stated voters were told the machines were coming in on trial and there was never a vote to keep them. She stated information is out there about hacking machines and NH is looking to bring in an entire fleet of new voting machines. She was hoping to bring in an outside professional to speak but they were not a Strafford resident.

*Moderator Ralph Wegner* clarified that it is the Moderator's discretion whether to let non-residents speak or not.

*JD Clarke* shared we have heard Heath Howard from the State House speak on the issue and JD shared disappointment on what has proceeded, internet is not always accurate, he suggested someone to move the question to vote.

*Audience member* yells I make a motion to table the Article.

*Moderator Ralph Wegner* asked audience member for his name.

*Ron Lemieux* stood from the audience and made a motion to table Article #33.

**Motion** made by Ron Lemieux to table Article 33.

Seconded by Heather Leas

Discussion:

*Bob Fletcher* stated that we can't move to table until the amendment to the article is withdrawn. He withdrew his amendment to entertain the motion to table.

*Ron Lemieux* stated the motion to table has been seconded and discussion is through.

*Denise Rainey* pointed out the people in line that still had something to say. She felt the motion should not have been recognized from the audience and everyone should stand in line.

*Selectman Lynn Sweet* suggested everyone take a 5 second breath, she asked those approaching the front table to please be seated, and reminded everyone that the Moderator is in charge of this meeting.

*Moderator Ralph Wegner* stated he will allow people in line to speak, he will close the line at the last person, Ron Lemieux.

*Bob Perry* shared he was a state rep and served on the election law committee. He opposes the claim of accuracy of hand count – studies have proven otherwise, claim of ability to hack – security upgrades implemented, SOS stands by accuracy of machines, audits and recounts are done. He stated that hand counting leads to long hours, cost, burden on election staff, and delay of results.

*Denise Rainey* stated Dominion and LHS companies will not comply with new state law mandating accuracy testing because there is insufficient time to be ready for the November elections. She stated this is not an insult to election officials, she commends their work. She stated these machines were brought in unconstitutionally.

*Robin Ficek* stated that all wireless connections have potential to be hacked, a lot of hacking going on right now, what makes Strafford safe.

*Genny Rizzotti* suggested a time restriction of two minutes for comments and asked if she could make a motion to put the article to vote.

*Bob Fletcher* stated a seconded motion was on the floor.

*Moderator Ralph Wegner* said he would let those in line speak before a vote was taken.

*Kurt Wuelper* called for point of order, and reminded the Moderator that Ron Lemieux's motion to table was on the floor.

*Ron Lemieux* after standing in line reiterated his motion to table Article #33 that had already been seconded.

*Moderator Ralph Wegner* clarified if the vote to table Article #33 passes, the article is done.

*Mike Harrington* called for point of order, the motion came by someone yelling in the crowd.

*Moderator Ralph Wegner* stated he stood in line and reiterated his motion.

*Heath Howard* asked if something is put to table can it be removed.

*Kurt Wuelper* replied yes it may be removed from table.

*Ron Lemieux* clarified motion to table removes it from this meeting, it can be brought back to another meeting.

*Bob Watson* expressed he is very upset with the process.

*Moderator Ralph Wegner* stated we are voting to table Article #33 that will remove it from discussion for the rest of the day.

*Moderator Ralph Wegner* stated again we are voting on the motion to table Article #33.

With no further discussion a vote was taken by count of raised cards.

Counting Volunteers: Michelle Benger, Chas Leas, Jose Rivera

In Favor 101                      Opposed 71

**Motion Passes**

**Motion** made by Bob Fletcher to restrict reconsideration of Article # 33.

Seconded by Dan Perry

With no discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

**Motion Passes**

4. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$430,000. for Capital Improvements (Drainage work, culverts, gravel and paving) of roads within the Town boundaries at the discretion of the Road Agent, as funding permits.

Motion made by Lynn Sweet

Seconded by Brian Monahan

Discussion:

*Moderator Ralph Wegner* called for a vote to bring the article to the floor for discussion.

Cards were raised and the Moderator announced the vote to bring the article to the floor passed.

*Gary Fowler* request to not visit other items on the warrant.

*Moderator Ralph Wegner* stated no we cannot do that.

*Mike Harrington* called for a point of order, people should show up at school district meeting because that is where the majority of the money is spent.

*Selectman Lynn Sweet* commented that is not the article put on the floor.

*Road Agent Matt Messenger* gave a review of road paving in town.

*Ken Berry* questioned the gravel being used because the sand overlay has large rocks.

*Bryan Begin* stated that the Messengers do an amazing job and go above beyond for our town.

*Moderator Ralph Wegner* asked Matt Messenger to speak to the question.

*Matt Messenger* stated there is a lot of mud which required use of more stone, we will get back to put gravel on top of it soon.

*Ken Berry* stated he appreciates the Messenger's work.

With no further discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

#### **Article #4 Passes**

5. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$900,873. for the operation and maintenance of the Strafford Police Department.

Motion made by Chief Randy Young

Seconded by Chief Scott Whitehouse

Discussion:

*Police Chief Randy Young* reviewed the Police Department budget and cost using a power point presentation.

With no further discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

#### **Article #5 Passes**

6. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$101,889. for the purpose of funding a full-time Police Officer position and associated costs.

Motion made by Chief Randy Young

Seconded by Daniel Perry

Discussion:

*Police Chief Randy Young* discussed the article and needs using a power point presentation. He shared challenges and increase in the communities need for services. His goal for 2023 was to be more proactive and visible, the result was zero burglaries and zero fatal accidents in 2023.

Programs are working. He shared that the plan was to bring on a new officer and promote an existing officer to detective to give much needed support.

*Todd Clairwood* asked if the increase in service needed was a one-year spike, is it possible next year it will go back down.

*Police Chief Randy Young* shared that this year is already on track and increased from last year.

*Todd Clairwood* stated that typically people want more than a one-year study.

*Police Chief Randy Young* shared he cannot forecast numbers but we are already ahead for this year.

*David Ekstrom* asked for clarification on 911 calls, page 49 of the Annual Report reads 911 - calls 12.

*Police Chief Randy Young* stated that number is accidental 911 calls.

*Eric Almanzan* asked if overtime for 2023 exceeded the amount of \$101,889 and commended the PD for no fatalities.

*Police Chief Randy Young* shared that this year over time is at \$40,000.

*MaryAlice Fischer* thanked the Chief for stepping up patrols and asked if the department has done any benchmarking and comparisons against other towns for relativity.

*Police Chief Randy Young* stated we have the lowest budget of other towns.

*MaryAlice Fischer* asked for more information in the future relative to other towns of similar size.

*Police Chief Randy Young* stated that he can do that.

*Mike Harrington* stated he is not a big promoter of increased spending but in this case they have done well. He thanked Chief Young and stated we should deliver for you.

*Genny Rizzotti* asked if the 2024 amount includes a part time officer.

*Police Chief Randy Young* stated that we have two part time officers.

*Genny Rizzotti* clarified that we have two part time officers and are looking to hire a full time and promote a current officer to detective.

*Police Chief Randy Young* replied correct.

*Genny Rizzotti* commented on increased stops as she was one of them.

*Police Chief Randy Young* asked if the officer was polite.

*Genny Rizzotti* replied yes

*Stacey Henderson* stated that she worked in child protection for years and can attest that the added stress of being short staffed increases stress even more.

With no further discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

#### **Article #6 Passes**

*Moderator Ralph Wegner* stated that if you or someone in town would like more information about computer crime contact the library.

7. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$21,000. for the purpose of repairs and improvements to the central air unit at the Police Department building.

Motion made by Daniel Perry                      Seconded by Sonja Smith

Discussion:

*Police Chief Randy Young* shared that the air conditioner broke last year and they used stand ups. Once air conditioner is replaced he will return any money not used.

*Eric Almanzan* asked if the general fund could be used for these smaller expenses and if so he would like to make a motion to pull this out of the unassigned fund.

*Daniel Perry* Seconded

*Selectman Lynn Sweet* stated that if an amendment is made she cannot guarantee we can do that.

*Eric Almanzan* questioned what the unassigned fund was used for.

*Selectman Lynn Sweet* stated some is used to offset taxation, \$233,000 last year and estimated to use the same next year.

*Police Chief Randy Young* shared that they cannot go without AC this year, if an amendment is put through and the use of funds is not approved it will cause problems.

*Eric Almanzan* decided after discussion, to withdraw his amendment at this time.  
*Hammond Brown* asked on behalf of the Green Committee if the PD had considered a different way of heating and cooling that is more economical.  
*Police Chief Randy Young* stated it would be costlier to replace with mini splits but he would consider that in the future. For now, he would like to replace the existing unit.  
*Don Clifford* stated that he felt all these additional things for each department should be in the budget that we just vote on once. He cannot see the need for a \$21,000 AC unit.  
*Kelsey Nowak* stated we saw the statistics on understaffing and bringing crime down, and encouraged voters to think about the Police Department's needs.

With no further discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

**Article #7 Passes**

8. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$20,000. to be placed in the Police Vehicle and Equipment Capital Reserve Fund. The Selectman recommend this article.

Motion made by Daniel Perry                      Seconded by Sue Higgins

Discussion:

*Selectman Lynn Sweet* stated that there is \$1,285.99 in fund now.

With no further discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

**Article #8 Passes**

**Motion** made by Bill Cobb to restrict reconsideration of Articles 4 – 8.

Seconded by Kelsey Nowak

With no discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

**Motion Passes**

9. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$851,953. for the operation and maintenance of the Strafford Fire Department.

Motion made by Dan Perry                      Seconded by Heath Howard

Discussion:

*Chief Scott Whitehouse* reviewed articles 9-18 by power point, beginning with budget, EMT needed, equipment needed, new engine, capital reserve fund for class A uniforms.

*Eric Almanzan* asked if Article 9 includes the paramedic approved last year.

*Chief Scott Whitehouse* replied yes.

*Eric Almanzan* asked to what size the Chief envisioned the fire department growing.

*Chief Scott Whitehouse* stated that they are not there yet, he does his best to keep the budget reasonable while still providing the best service to residents every year. Personnel is needed, per diem personnel do not stay.

*David Ekstrom* wanted to ask about the class A uniforms.

*Moderator Ralph Wegner* asked him to wait until we get to that article.

With no further discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

**Article #9 Passes**



10. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$129,915. for the purpose of funding a full-time Firefighter/Advanced EMT or Paramedic position and associated costs.

Motion made by Daniel Perry

Seconded by Bill Cobb

With no discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

**Article #10 Passes**

11. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$60,217. for the fifth year's payment of the lease agreement for the new ambulance approved at the 2020 Town Meeting, and to authorize the withdrawal of \$60,217. from the Rescue Vehicle and Equipment Special Revenue Fund to be used for this purpose. This lease/purchase agreement contains an escape clause. No funding to come from general taxation. The Selectman recommend this article.

Motion made by Lynn Sweet

Seconded by Brian Monahan

With no discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

**Article #11 Passes**

12. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$25,000. for the purpose of purchasing equipment and supplies for the ambulances, and to authorize the withdrawal of \$25,000. from the Rescue Vehicle and Equipment Special Revenue Fund to be used for this purpose. No funding to come from general taxation. The Selectman recommend this article.

Motion made by Sue Higgins

Seconded by Kelsey Nowak

With no discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

**Article #12 Passes**

13. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$154,161. for the third year's payment of the lease agreement for the new Fire Engine Tanker approved at the 2022 Town Meeting and to authorize the withdrawal of \$77,081. from the Fire Engine Capital Reserve Fund to be used for this purpose. The balance of \$77,080. to come from general taxation. This lease/purchase agreement contains an escape clause. The Selectman recommend this article.

Motion made by Daniel Perry

Seconded by Chief Randy Young

With no discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

**Article #13 Passes**

14. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$13,984. for the purpose purchasing ZOLL Ventilator service contract, and to authorize the withdrawal of \$13,984. from the special revenue fund known as the Rescue Vehicle and Equipment Fund established by Article 8 at the March 14, 2000 Town Meeting to be used for this purpose. This lease/purchase agreement contains an escape clause. No funding to come from general taxation. The Selectman recommend this article.

Motion made by Sue Higgins

Seconded by Lynn Sweet

With no discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

**Article #14 Passes**

15. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$23,824. for the purpose of purchasing a LUCAS Compression Device and associated equipment, and to authorize the withdrawal of \$23,824. from the Rescue Vehicle and Equipment Special Revenue Fund to be used for this purpose. No funding to come from general taxation. The Selectman recommend this article.

Motion made by Sue Higgins

Seconded by Kurt Wuelper

With no discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

**Article #15 Passes**

16. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$19,000. for the purpose of purchasing an E-Hurst Tool.

Motion made by Sue Higgins

Seconded by Daniel Perry

With no discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

**Article #16 Passes**

17. To see if the Town will vote to establish a capital reserve fund pursuant to RSA 35:1 to be called the Fire Department Class A Uniform Capital Reserve Fund for the purpose of purchasing Fire Department Class A Uniforms and to raise and appropriate the sum of \$15,000. to be placed in this fund, and to designate the Selectman as agents to expend. The Selectman recommend this article.

Motion made by Sue Higgins

Seconded by Chief Randy Young

Discussion:

*David Ekstrom* asked who will be issued the class A uniforms.

*Chief Scott Whitehouse* replied that every member of the department will get a uniform.

*Moderator Ralph Wegner* asked how many.

*Chief Scott Whitehouse* replied about 35.

With no further discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

**Article #17 Passes**

18. To see if the Town will vote to hear the report of the New Fire Station Committee established by a vote at the 2022 Town Meeting to be comprised of the Fire Chief, one Fire Department member, one Selectman, and two Town residents. The committee to report back at the 2023 Town Meeting. Article was tabled at the 2023 Town Meeting until the 2024 Town Meeting.

Motion made by Heath Howard

Seconded by Lynn Sweet

**Motion** made by Selectman Chris Garcia to table Article 18 to hear the report of the New Fire Station Committee, established by a vote at the 2022 Town Meeting, until the 2025 Town Meeting.

Seconded by Terry Hyland Jr.

Discussion:

*Moderator Ralph Wegner* asked why.

*Selectman Chris Garcia* replied because they were not prepared.

*Don Clifford* asked if a committee had been formed and stated that he volunteered for this committee and has not been contacted.

*Selectman Chris Garcia* replied that the committee had been formed.

With no further discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

**Motion Passes**

**Motion** made by Bill Cobb to restrict reconsideration of Articles 9 - 18.

Seconded by Kelsey Nowak

With no discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

**Motion Passes**

19. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$166,905. for the operation and maintenance of the Hill Library.

Motion made by Carolyn Clarke

Seconded by Bill Cobb

Discussion:

*Jessie Copeland* Trustee of the Hill Library gave a power point presentation on the happenings at the library and articles being put forward. Many programs are available. She pointed out a miss print on page 59 of Annual Town Report, they no longer have a pandemic shift and differential total should read \$153,507. There are some unexpected changes as the youth librarian is leaving. There is investigation on going into a new library site, looking to the future to consider a new library building with a nudge from the Board of Selectmen. The current library is limited and they have outgrown the space. A committee has been formed, you can reach out to the Library to join. Please fill an orange comment card to give some feedback.

*Mike Harrington* suggested that all the extra services go way beyond the idea of a library, extra services should be charged for, not provided by the tax payer.

*Jessie Copeland* shared that their services are beyond the initial intention, there is opportunity for more than books and NH Law prohibits charging for the use of the library.

*Winn Hayes* shared that he volunteers to mow for the library and the back bushes are overgrown.

*Ron Lemieux* shared that his dog Toby visits the Library and helps young children to read and the library is a great asset to the town. He asked if an amendment was needed to correct the article amount.

*Jessie Copeland* said it was the comparison number that was incorrect in the Annual Town Report not this budget item.

*Eric Almanazan* stated that he loves the library and asked if they have a location.

*Sharon Omand* Alternate Library Trustee replied that the new library committee is in the exploratory state.

*Christine Trotter* asked if there was any room at the library for expansion.

*Sharon Omand* replied that there is not enough room to expand, everything is limited.

*Jessie Copeland* replied no we can't expand.

*Mary Thibeau Davis* shared she is excited to see the movement and it is good to see the Recreation Committee join with the Library to tie in Master Plan efforts and save the town money. Her and her grandson enjoy the library.

*Hammond Brown* stated that the Library does a lot for the community in a very small space, he supports their current and future budget.

*Ken Berry* gave some history about the library and past efforts made for expansion. He expressed his support.

*Tahja Fulwider* stated that the town does have a community center, the Bow Lake Community Center (formerly the Grange). There are many community programs and functions there.

*Jessie Copeland* apologize for not referencing the bow lake community center. She was referencing a Master Plan Subcommittee earlier.

*Moderator Ralph Wegner* asked for another motion to vote on this article.

*Chief Randy Young* motioned.

*Ken Berry* seconded.

With no further discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

#### **Article #19 Passes**

**20.** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$6,000. for the purpose of repair of rotting trim on the library building (\$3,500) and to remedy poor drainage in the back of the building (\$2,500), and to authorize the withdrawal of \$6,000. from the Library Expansion/Improvement Capital Reserve Fund to be used for this purpose. No funding to come from general taxation. The Selectman recommend this article.

Motion made by Betsy Cozine

Seconded by Chief Randy Young

With no discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

#### **Article #20 Passes**

**21.** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$5,000. for the purpose of completion of projects associated with investigation for a new library site and building, which may include but is not limited to land surveying, test pit etc., and to authorize the withdrawal of \$5,000. from the Library Expansion/Improvement Capital Reserve Fund to be used for this purpose. No funding to come from general taxation. The Selectman recommend this article.

Motion made by Betsy Cozine

Seconded by Chief Scott Whitehouse

**Motion** made by Lynn Sweet to Amend Article #21 to read: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$5,000, for the purpose of completion of projects associated with investigation for a new library site and building, which may include, but is not limited to land surveying, test pit etc. Funding to come from general taxation.

Seconded by Carolyn Clarke

With no discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

#### **Vote to amend Article #21 Passes**

**21. Amended.** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$5,000, for the purpose of completion of projects associated with investigation for a new library site and building, which may include, but is not limited to land surveying, test pit etc. Funding to come from general taxation.

With no discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

**Article #21 Amended Passes**

**22.** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$16,000. to be placed in the Library Expansion/Improvement Capital Reserve Fund. The Selectman recommend this article.

Motion made by Lynn Sweet

Seconded by Betsy Cozine

Discussion:

*Mike Harrington* shared that the Article should be amended from \$16,000 to \$11,000 because the last article amended \$5,000 and we don't need another \$5,000 here.

**Motion** made by Mike Harrington to Amend Article #22 to read: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$11,000 to be placed in the Library Expansion/Improvement Capital Reserve Fund.

Seconded by Christine Trotter

Discussion:

*Betsy Cozine* stated that the \$16,000 was \$10,000 for capital reserve and \$6,000 for repairs.

*Moderator Ralph Wegner* clarified the amendment is subtracting from the last article.

*Sharon Omand* stated that every year the library asks for \$10,000 that will go towards and new library. This helps build up the money now instead of later.

*Hammond Brown* asked if the Selectman would recommend the amendment.

*Moderator Ralph Wegner* stated the Selectman have not recommended an amendment.

*Mike Harrington* clarified that no future library has been voted on and the amendment is revenue neutral, leaving it the way it is would raise taxes by \$5,000.

*Moderator Ralph Wegner* offered some more clarifications on the amendment.

With no discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

**Motion to Amend Article #22 Passes**

**22. Amended.** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$11,000 to be placed in the Library Expansion/Improvement Capital Reserve Fund.

With no discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

**Article #22 Amended Passes**

**Motion** made by Heath Howard to restrict reconsideration of Articles 19 – 22.

Seconded by Chief Scott Whitehouse

With no discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

**Motion Passes**

23. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$5,000. to be placed in the Town Hall Building Maintenance, Improvements and/or Expansion Capital Reserve Fund. The Selectman recommend this article.

Motion made by Lynn Sweet

Seconded by Ken Berry

Discussion:

*Selectman Lynn Sweet* shared that the balance is just over \$36,000.

With no further discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

**Article #23 Passes**

24. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$10,000. to be placed in the Future Reval/Statistical Update Capital Reserve Fund. The Selectman recommend this article.

Motion made by Lynn Sweet

Seconded by Chief Scott Whitehouse

Discussion:

*Moderator Ralph Wegner* asked when the next reval would be.

*Selectman Lynn Sweet* replied 2025.

With no further discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

**Article #24 Passes**

25. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$10,000. to be placed in the Highway Department Vehicle and/or Equipment Capital Reserve Fund. The Selectman recommend this article.

Motion made by Lynn Sweet

Seconded by Mike Harrington

With no further discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

**Article #25 Passes**

26. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$5,000. to be placed in the Reflective Road Signage Capital Reserve Fund. The Selectman recommend this article.

Motion made by Lynn Sweet

Seconded by Chief Scott Whitehouse

Discussion:

*Selectman Lynn Sweet* stated that this is to replenish funds.

With no further discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

**Article #26 Passes**

27. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$10,000. to be placed in the Repair/Replace Recycling Center Equipment Capital Reserve Fund. The Selectman recommend this article.

Motion made by Lynn Sweet

Seconded by Judy Dupre

With no discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

**Article #27 Passes**

**28.** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$10,000. to be placed in the Bridge Construction & Repair Non-Capital Reserve Fund. The Selectman recommend this article.

Motion made by Lynn Sweet

Seconded by Carol Cooper

Discussion:

*Selectman Lynn Sweet* shared that Barn Door Gap Bridge is complete and there is just under \$17,000 left in the fund. This is to build it back up.

With no further discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

**Article #28 Passes**

**29.** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$1,879,288. for general Town operations.

Executive.....	\$ 100,814.
Election & Registration.....	33,350.
Financial Administration.....	105,026.
Appraisal of Property & Tax Maps.....	47,992.
Legal Expenses.....	60,000.
Employee Benefits, FICA, Medi & Unemp. Comp.....	44,712.
Planning and Zoning.....	52,550.
General Government Building.....	53,575.
Auto Permits/Town Clerk Fees.....	42,350.
Insurance.....	69,148.
Advertising and Regional Association.....	4,637.
Strafford Regional Planning Comm. Dues.....	5,511.
Contingency Fund.....	15,000.
Annual CPA Audit.....	13,000.
Emergency Management.....	5,000.
Building Inspection.....	39,501.
General Highway Expenses and Town Maintenance.....	733,690.
Street Lighting.....	6,200.
Solid Waste Disposal.....	393,749.
Animal Control.....	1,800.
Cemeteries.....	9,000.
Cornerstone VNA (formerly Roch Dstr VNA).....	3,991.
General Assistance and Welfare.....	10,000.
Community Action.....	2,000.
Haven Sexual Assault Support Services.....	992.
My Friend's Place.....	1,000.
The Homemakers Health Services.....	3,200.

Catamount Womenaid.....	1,000.
Ready Rides.....	1,500.
CASA.....	500.
Strafford Nutrition & Meals on Wheels.....	1,000.
Parks and Recreation.....	6,200.
Patriotic Purposes and Fireworks .....	6,800.
Conservation Commission.....	2,500.
Interest Expense & Tax Anticipation Notes.....	2,000.
TOTAL.....	<u>\$1,879,288.</u>

(The intent of this article is to raise the sum of \$1,879,288. exclusive of all other Articles addressed.)

Motion made by Lynn Sweet

Seconded by Martha English

With no discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

**Article #29 Passes**

**30.** Shall the Town of STRAFFORD ADOPT the ALL VETERANS' TAX CREDIT in accordance with RSA 72:28-b, for an annual tax credit on residential property which shall be equal to the same amount as the standard or optional veterans' tax credit voted by the Town of STRAFFORD under RSA 72:28? (Majority vote required)

Motion made by Martha English

Seconded by Heather Leas

Discussion:

*Judy Dupre* shared that she would like to leave this as her legacy. This article will cover everyone who has served as long as it has been 90 days or better.

*Moderator Ralph Wegner* shared that he is a veteran and has benefited from services.

*JD Clarke* shared that he thinks that is way too low and ask for someone to make an amendment to come up with more.

*Don Clifford* shared that he is a veteran and feels it should be the Board of Selectmen to look at neighboring towns and come back with a larger amount because \$200 does seem low.

*Selectman Brian Monahan* stated that this article is just to allow people to apply, this is not about the dollar amount.

With no further discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

**Article #30 Passes**

**Motion** made by Heath Howard to restrict reconsideration of Articles 23 - 30.

Seconded by Mike Harrington

With no further discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

**Motion Passes**



31. “To see if the Town will vote to reclassify from a Class VI town road to a Class A Trail a section of First Crown Point Rd from a point at the northeast corner of Tax Map 17, Lot 20 and the southwest corner of Tax Map 17, Lot 19 to the Barnstead town line (approximately 5,900 feet).” By petition.

Motion made by Phil Lovejoy

Seconded by Brian Monahan

Discussion:

*Phil Lovejoy* shared that he initiated this petition. He used a power point presentation to share the area impacted. He shared some history on the Blue Hills Foundation that was started by his parents and now owned by him and his brother. The Blue Hills foundation owns 8,000 acres of conserved land in Stafford and into Barnstead, they own all of the frontage impacted in this article. This petition is not looking to take away rights of people who want to use the land, it is to help conserve the land and wildlife. He offered clarification that a Class A Trail does not change vehicle use unless the Board of Selectmen changed the access.

*Mike Harrington* asked if the Selectman recommend this article.

*Selectman Brian Monahan* replied that there is no money involved.

*Terry Hyland Jr* shared that he opposes this amendment and clarified the two major differences in Class VI Roads and Class A Trails, roads remain open, trails invite restrictions. He stated that roads were built for wheeled traffic and Strafford has lost many Class VI roads already. He does not want Strafford to lose these historic features and wants the country side left open for exploration.

*Eric Almanzan* shared that the use of these roads by wheeled vehicles has been a part of our history in Strafford, he personally travels these roads and has removed trash on occasion. He stated that a decision to conserve land is not dependent on Class VI Roads or Class A Trails. He would like to see the road left open for responsible travelers.

*Phil Auger* introduced himself as Planning Board Chair and shared that Class VI Roads are suffering because of vehicle traffic, roads are degrading massively and some are even impassable because of erosion. He clarified that Selectmen have authority to restrict Class VI roads, gates can be put up, on a Class A trail gates can be locked. He shared that the Town can't afford to maintain the Class VI Roads and changing the road to a trail could get some recreational trail funding.

*Meg Herndon* asked what part of the road is in Barnstead as she is concerned about connectivity.

*Phil Lovejoy* replied that it was a very short stretch of about 400 feet through swamp into Barnstead.

*Jim Sherwin* just moved to First Crown Point Rd and signed the petition, now he is reconsidering and would like to leave the road open because he is concerned it will restrict use for many people.

*Mike Witonis* shared that he lives on Mousom Road, a Class VI Road. He has posted his property as private but ATV groups and vehicles drive across his property to get by an area of the road that is not passable. Game Warden and local PD cannot help. He feels a few ruin it for the rest.

*Josh Hatchel* stated he would like to keep roads open for his daughter to enjoy, we have already lost Little Niagara.

*Liz Evans* stated that people have lost sight of what we are voting on here. The roads stay open to vehicle access and closures would come from the Selectmen, not from today's vote.

*Phil Lovejoy* stated that people can enjoy the land for hunting and his family has never posted any of the 8,000 acres of land. He is supportive of people accessing the land. He is looking to protect and preserve, look at Barrington to see what can happen.

*Eric Almanzan* stated if the Board of Selectmen change they could restrict use.

*Phil Lovejoy* stated that part of the land does not have an easement and could be developed.

*Eric Almanzan* shared that a Zoning Amendment was just passed by ballot vote and he does not think there should be more restrictions.

*Terry Hyland Jr* acknowledge that everyone is speaking truths. He is concerned there is a deeper intent to make limitations. He suggests volunteers pool together to help the roads.

*Phil Auger* clarified the Zoning Amendment voted on was to provide clarification not to change a rule.

*Mary Thibeau Davis* stated that the bigger issue is large wheeled vehicles that cause erosion and affects water quality and impacts land and wildlife.

*Moderator Ralph Wegner* shared that he lives on Second Crown Point Rd and making that area a Class A Trail has helped a lot. He shared he supports this article.

*Judy Dupre* asked the Board of Selectmen if they could close a Class A Trail without a vote.

*Selectman Lynn Sweet* stated there would have to be a public hearing.

*Judy Dupre* stated that everyone would have a say if the road was going to be closed.

With no further discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

### **Article #31 Passes**

#### **32. "Third of July Celebrations**

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$4,000.00 for purposes of supporting the annual July 3<sup>rd</sup> fireworks display (This is would still be in consideration of the \$6,000.00 already allotted). This appropriation, together with individual and business donations, will pay all direct display costs as well as the inspection, repair, and insurance for both pyrotechnics launch platforms." By petition. The Selectman recommend this article.

Motion made by Tahja Fulwider

Seconded by Brian Monahan

Discussion:

*Mike Harrington* asked for clarification that this would be in addition to the \$6,000 and now the fireworks display cost \$10,000.

*Selectman Brian Monahan* clarified that \$6,000 was approved in the budget and this article is asking for \$4,000 more.

*Sue Higgins* shared that she is taking over the fireworks display and last year it cost \$7,700 for a pyro tech company from Maine. This year the barges need to be stamped, repaired and insured. \$4,000 will be used to keep the Strafford fireworks tradition alive.

*Dan Howard* stated that he opposed this additional cost for fireworks and feels the money could be better spent on welfare and assistance.

With no further discussion a vote was taken by show of cards.

### **Article #32 Passes**

**33.** Article #33 was moved by a motion to the beginning of the warrant.

**34.** To transact any other business that may legally come before this meeting.

Discussion:

*Heath Howard* shared there are some issues in legislation in Concord and that he would be asking the Selectmen to support a Broadband search.

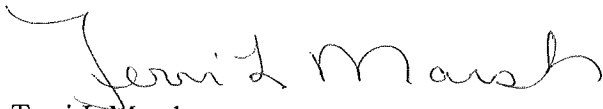
*Mike Harrington* shared he is always getting emails about email problems. Breezeline is not sending emails saying your email is ending. Should come from Breezline.com. IRS only contacts through the mail not email. He advised residents to not give out personal information.

*Moderator Ralph Wegner* reminded newly elected officials that they can be sworn in after the meeting by the Town Clerk.

With no further discussion a motion was made to adjourn the meeting  
Motion made by Lynn Sweet                      Seconded by Brian Monahan  
The meeting was adjourned at 1:40 PM

Given under my hand and seal, this 16<sup>th</sup> day of March, in the year of our Lord Two Thousand and Twenty-four.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Terri L Marsh".

Terri L Marsh  
Strafford Town Clerk

\*Comments made at the meeting are not included in these minutes as quotes but instead as a summary.

\*\*200 registered voters were checked in at the 2024 Annual Town Meeting.