

TOWN OF SOUTH BERWICK
TOWN MEETING
MAY 18, 2021

Pursuant to the foregoing warrant, the inhabitants of the Town of South Berwick, qualified to vote in Town affairs, assembled at the Town Hall on Tuesday, May 18, 2021 and transacted the following business. The meeting was called to order at 6:30pm by the Town Clerk.

Council members present included Chair John C. Kareckas, Abigail Sherwood Kemble, John James, Mallory Cook, and Keagan T. Roberts. Town Manager Perry A. Ellsworth and Assistant Town Manager Jennifer Janelle were also in attendance. There were approximately 15 voters present.

ARTICLE 1: Thomas Harmon was nominated as moderator, received three votes of three votes cast, was elected and duly sworn by the Clerk.

ARTICLE 2: Jack Kareckas made a motion to authorize the Town Council to dispose of tax-acquired property in any manner in which the Town Council deems to be in the best interest of the Town. Abby Kemble seconded the motion.

No discussion. Article 2 passed unanimously

ARTICLE 3: Abby Kemble made a motion to authorize the Tax Collector to charge and collect interest at a rate of six (6) percent per annum on all unpaid taxes not paid by the due dates, with one-half of the taxes due on September 30, 2021 and one-half due on March 31, 2022. Mallory Cook seconded the motion.

No discussion. Article 3 passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 4: Mallory Cook made a motion to authorize the Tax Collector to accept prepayment of taxes not yet due or assessed. Any excess paid in over the amount finally assessed shall be repaid at zero (0) percent interest. John James seconded the motion.

No discussion. Article 4 passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 5: John James made a motion to authorize the Tax Collector to continue an eight (8) month payment plan known as the "Tax Club", with interest waived for all members of the Club making regular payments in accordance with the rules and regulations governing said Club. Keagan Roberts seconded the motion.

No discussion. Article 5 passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 6: Keagan Roberts made a motion to set the rate of interest paid on overpayment of taxes due to abatement at three (3) percent per annum as allowed per MRSA 36 §506A. Jack Kareckas seconded the motion

No discussion. Article 6 passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 7: Jack Kareckas made a motion to appropriate from Undesignated Fund the payment of property tax abatements (and applicable interest) granted during this fiscal year. Abby Kemble seconded the motion.

No discussion. Article 7 passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 8: Abby Kemble made a motion to authorize the deposit of all proceeds from the Parking Lease Agreement between the Town and Avesta Young Street LP, dated December 12, 2014 and December 22, 2015 into a non-lapsing designated reserve account and to appropriate and expend those funds to pay the costs associated with the repair and maintenance of said parking lot. Mallory Cook seconded the motion.

No discussion. Article 8 passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 9: Malory Cook made a motion to all the Town Council to utilize funds from the TIF Account (Tax Increment Financing) for the purposes denoted in the Final TIF Agreement approved in 2020. seconded the motion.

No discussion. Article 9 passed

ARTICLE 10: John James made a motion to raise and appropriate \$1,361,689 from general taxation and other revenue sources for Police Services. Keagan Roberts seconded the motion.

No discussion. Article 10 passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 11: Keagan Roberts made a motion to raise and appropriate \$663,468 from general taxation and other revenue sources for Emergency Services. Jack Kareckas seconded the motion.

Jerome Bshara, Earls Rd, questioned the 8% increase in this budget. Town Manager Ellsworth explained that we have increased the number of volunteers and that requires more training. We are also trying to stay on top of repairing and replacing older equipment. Mr. Ellsworth went on to say that South Berwick is very fortunate to have the number of volunteers that we do. Our department is run very efficiently and we have some of the best (and most) volunteers in the state.

Article 11 passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 12: Jack Kareckas made a motion to raise and appropriate \$1,573,717 from general taxation and other revenue Sources for Public Works. Abby Kemble seconded the motion.

Jerome Bshara, Earls Rd, asked if \$200 for the food pantry was enough. Manager Ellsworth explained that the \$200 covers the sewer costs, and the Town provides the building.

Article 12 passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 13: Abby Kemble made a motion to appropriate \$62,500 from DOT Highway Block Grant (URIP/LRAP) and raise and appropriate \$637,500 from general taxation and other revenue sources Capital Improvements - Roads and Road Bond Debt. Mallory Cook seconded the motion.

No discussion. Article 13 passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 14: Mallory Cook made a motion to appropriate \$700,000 from the Undesignated General Fund and to raise and appropriate \$1,346,671 from general taxation and other revenue sources for General Government. John James seconded the motion.

Jerome Bshara, Earls Rd, asked how much would be left in the undesignated fund after this transfer and could more be transferred to further reduce taxes. Manager Ellsworth explained that after this transfer and the return of unspent funds from the 2021 budget, the undesignated fund balance will be about \$6 million. It is important to keep a healthy balance to cover any unforeseen issues that could arise. The Town does invest the money and is currently earning about .35% on the 'sweep account'. (Different investments are paying different rates of return)

Barbara Hopkins, Vaughan's Ln, asked if there is money in the budget for the website and better public notifications. Manager Ellsworth explained that there are funds to improve technology in the budget. We are hoping to hold board meetings in the Police Station training room. Better internet there should make things easier. We are trying to put together a system that will integrate zoom with in person attendees.

Article 14 passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 15: John James made a motion to raise and appropriate \$546,483 from taxation and general revenue sources for Debt Service. Keagan Roberts seconded the motion.

No discussion. Article 15 passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 16: Keagan Roberts made a motion to raise and appropriate \$104,991 from general taxation and other revenue sources for Code Enforcement and Health Department. Jack Kareckas seconded the motion.

No discussion. Article 16 passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 17: Jack Kareckas made a motion to raise and appropriate \$373,876 from general taxation and other revenue sources for Public Welfare. Abby Kemble seconded the motion.

Audrey Fortier, Rodier Rd, asked if the \$187,106 for the library was for the building or the operating cost. Manager Ellsworth stated it covers both.

Article 17 passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 18: Abby Kemble made a motion to raise and appropriate \$371,700 from general taxation and other revenue sources for Capital Improvements - Reserves. Mallory Cook seconded the motion.

Article 18 passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 19: Mallory Cook made a motion to apply \$1,400,000 from Excise Taxes, \$901,600 from Non-Tax General Fund Revenues, \$800,000 from State Revenue Sharing, \$500,000 from Homestead Exemption Reimbursement, and \$13,200 from BETE Reimbursement (for a total of \$3,614,800) to use toward the 2021/2022 Budget Appropriates, thereby decreasing the amount to be raised by taxation. John James seconded the motion.

Town Manager Ellsworth explained that we based the revenue sharing numbers on what we thought we would be getting at 3.7%. The legislature has voted to increase it to 5%; it has not yet been funded, so we may or may not get the increase. We made the decision to not use too much of the undesignated fund to be better prepared for the future when it might really be needed.

Article 19 passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 20: John James made a motion to increase the property tax levy limit of \$4,295,078 established for the Town by State law in the event that the municipal budget approved under the preceding articles will result in a tax commitment that is greater than that tax levy limit. Keagan Roberts seconded the motion.

Mr. Ellsworth explained that the budget, based on the preceding votes, would not exceed the LD1 limit, (we are under by \$838,000) making Article 20 unnecessary. Everyone should vote no.

Audrey Fortier, Rodier Rd, thanked Mr. Ellsworth for his hard work over the last 11 years. It has been nice that during his tenure, the Town has not exceeded the LD1 limit.

Article 20 was voted on and failed unanimously.

ARTICLE 21: On a motion by Keagan Roberts, seconded by Jack Kareckas, it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 7:06pm.

Barbara Bennett
Town Clerk