

**Minutes of the 2023 Annual Town Meeting**  
Tuesday, March 7, 2023 at the Charleston Elementary School

The Annual Town & School District Meeting was called to order at 10:00 am by Moderator Jean Wilson, with School Business concluding at 10:14 am. With Moderator Jean Wilson having been re-elected during School Business, business began with Article 2.

**Article 2. To elect all officers as required by law.**

**Selectboard:** Larry Young nominated by Sherman Allen, second by Bob Devaney. Tim Jenness nominated by Mary Esposito, second by Sherie Lucas. Larry Young declined the nomination. Tim Jenness elected for 3 years.

**Lister:** John Westinghouse nominated by Samantha Stevens, second by Peggy Stevens. Unopposed. Elected for 3 years.

**Auditor:** Janice Bowen nominated by (Natasha) Anya Tynio, second by Mickey Morelli and Mary Esposito. Unopposed. Elected for 3 years.

**Delinquent Tax Collector:** Grace Frizzell nominated by Blair Moulton, second by Pat Austin and Bob Devaney. Unopposed. Elected for 1 year.

**First Constable:** Mike Tynio nominated by (Natasha) Anya Tynio, second by Sarah Jenness. Unopposed. Elected for 2 years.

**Second Constable:** (Natasha) Anya Tynio nominated by Mike Tynio second by Bob Devaney. Unopposed. Elected for 1 year.

**Cemetery Commissioner:** Janice Bowen nominated by Sherman Allen, second by Pat Austin. Unopposed. Elected for 5 years.

**Cemetery Commissioner:** Grace Frizzell nominated by Pat Austin, second by Bob Devaney and Sherman Allen. Unopposed. Elected for 1 year.

**Article 3. Shall the voters authorize the Treasurer to collect current taxes with a final due date of Friday, October 20, 2023, with the policy of turning over to the delinquent tax collector taxes not physically received by the Treasurer in the Town Clerk's office by 5:00 pm on October 20, 2023, with postmarks not accepted as timely payment? Moved by Pat Austin, second by Mike Tynio. Vote: Ayes have it: RESULT: Passed. No discussion.**

**Article 4. Shall the voters authorize total fund expenditures of \$935,658.56 for selectboard, highway, and cemetery operating expenses for the year beginning Jan. 1, 2023, of which \$698,871.56 shall be raised by taxes and \$236,787.00 by non-tax revenue? Moved by Nancy Engels, second by Penelope Newcomb. Vote: Ayes have it. RESULT: Passed.**

Discussion: Selectboard Chair Pat Austin said this year's town budget is as close to last year as possible. Line items like Parts & Repairs, Diesel, Sand & Gravel, and Ambulance service are seeing increased costs, but the overall budget has increased only \$39,000. When the town reassesses, taxpayers end up paying about the same in taxes, but the education rate is reset. Asked when the reappraisal will occur, Jean Wilson, who is also a town Lister, said it will probably happen in 2026 because there are not enough qualified appraisers to keep up with demand. Peggy Stevens asked if taxpayers will pay a higher rate until a reappraisal. Pat Austin said that if the housing market corrects itself, then that would bring the education tax rate down. Bob Devaney acknowledged the late Road Foreman Bernie Pepin, and also said the that new Foreman Wendell Hastings is doing a great job. He is very attentive and it shows. Anya Tynio asked for more information about "non-tax revenue." Peter Moskovites said the town receives state highway aid. Town Clerk & Treasurer Teri Gray said that amount also includes Hold Harmless funds from the state Current Use program, liquor licenses, and referred voters to page 14 of the Town Report where revenues are listed.

**Article 5. Shall the voters appropriate the sum of \$52,291.26 to the Charleston Volunteer Fire Department and direct the Selectboard to assess a tax over and above the budget to meet the same? Moved by Bob Devaney, second by Anya Tynio. Vote: Ayes have it.**

**RESULT: Passed.**

Discussion: CVFD Treasurer Blair Moulton said the department is level funded this year. As discussed at last year's town meeting, the state no longer provides free dispatching, so the department has contracted with Newport Police Department. This year's \$2,291.26 increase represents Charleston's share of the dispatch fee. Morgan's share is \$869.99 based on square mileage covered. David Bradshaw asked about the status of state central dispatch that wouldn't know local areas. Jean Wilson clarified that the dispatch has moved to Newport Police Department so it is local. Blair Moulton said that state dispatch would have cost the town \$15-20,000, so local dispatch saves a lot.

**Article 6. Shall the voters appropriate the sum of \$12,374 to the following organizations, which received appropriations of the same amount in 20212 and direct the Selectboard to assess a tax over and above the budget to meet the same? a. \$500 to Charleston Historical Society for support of the museum and collection; b. \$1,000 to Echo Lake Protective Association for milfoil prevention programs; c. \$800 to North Woods Stewardship Center for conservation and education services; d. \$1,100 to Dailey Memorial Library for services to residents; e. \$700 to Island Pond Library for services to residents; f. \$1,650 to Rural Community Transportation for transportation services to residents; g. \$500 to Orleans County Citizens Advocacy for mentoring individuals with developmental disabilities; h. \$600 to Northeast Kingdom Council on Aging for services to elder and disabled Vermonters; i. \$1,074 to Northeast Kingdom Human Services, Inc. for mental health, substance use, and intellectual disabilities services to residents; j. \$500 to Pope Memorial Frontier Animal Shelter for care of unwanted pets; k. \$3,000 to Orleans Essex VNA & Hospice for community nursing and health programs; l. \$50 to GreenUp Vermont for the statewide cleanup event and bags; m. \$100 to VT Rural Fire Protection Task Force for the Dry Hydrant Program; n. \$100 to Vermont Symphony Orchestra Symphony Kids for performances for local students; o. \$700 to Umbrella for domestic violence prevention and services to victims Moved by Nancy Engels, who corrected the Moderator's reading of \$300 for VNA to \$3,000 as written, second by Peggy Stevens. Vote: Ayes have it. **RESULT: Passed.****

Discussion: Pat Austin explained that organizations still must gather petition signatures if they ask for a different amount. Rose Hathaway said that many organizations are federally funded and we're paying double taxes. Peggy Stevens said much of that funding requires a local match so town appropriations work in the community's favor to bring more resources. Sherie Lucas said she works with many of the organizations, and they often operate at a deficit. They don't have all the resources needed to meet the great need in our community.

**Article 7. To transact any other business that my legally come before this meeting.**

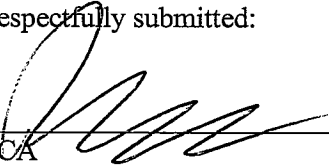
Discussion. Peggy Stevens said she and John Kellogg are Charleston's representatives to the governing board of the NEK Communications Union District, the organization that is attempting to bring high speed internet across the region. Vermont has some of the worst internet access in the country, largely because it is so rural. The organization conducted a survey and found that Route 105 is well served by cable, but the back roads like Dane Hill, Crawford Hill, Hinton Hill, Ten Mile Square, and Hudson have poor service. They found that many people are paying extra to be able to work from home, attend home school, or take online college courses. Expanding telemedicine is hard to access. Residents can pre-register for service online or at the Town Clerk's office to let NEK Broadband know they want better

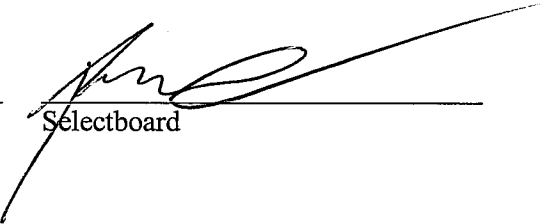
internet. The more people that sign up, the higher a priority Charleston becomes for building out the network in our town. Even if your household doesn't need internet, you can spread the word and pre-register to help neighbors and family who do need it. There was discussion of the technology used, and John Kellogg said NEK Broadband is using a fiberoptic system.

Seeing no other business, the Annual Town Meeting was adjourned at 10:48 am.


DATED AT CHARLESTON, VERMONT THIS 7th DATE OF MARCH 2023.

Respectfully submitted:

  
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BCA

  
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Selectboard

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Moderator

  
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Town Clerk

