

Plymouth Annual Town Meeting
Monday, March 4, 2024
7:00 P.M.

Moderator Tom Harris began the meeting at 7:00 P.M by asking the audience to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

He stated the rules of conduct following Roberts Rules of Order and that only legal voters of the town may speak and vote at the meeting. All remarks are to be addressed to the Moderator, with one chance to speak. No one may speak more than 2 times.

He then read the Warning in its entirety to the audience.

Article 1: To elect Town Officers for the ensuing years by Australian ballot (on Tuesday March 5, 2024):

Moderator, Selectman, Lister, Trustee of Public Funds, Cemetery Commissioner, and Constables.

Articles 2 – 8 were discussed and voted from the floor.

Article 2 was read: To see if the legal voters of the Town of Plymouth will vote \$13,491.00 for Human Services to be allocated as in the warning. Bruce Pauley made a motion to approve the article as read. Karen Evans seconded the motion. There was no discussion. All voted in favor.

Article 3 was read: To see if the legal voters of the Town of Plymouth will vote to raise \$1,621,159.00 in taxes to pay estimated expenses in the amount of \$1,913,409.00. Rick Kaminski made a motion to approve the article as read. Karen Evans seconded the motion.

Select Board chairman, Jay Kullman then gave a slide presentation showing the general fund balance from FY22, the transfer of funds into the renovation fund account, the increase of tax revenue and under - budget spending. He stated we need to keep at least \$600,000 in the general fund balance. Jay spoke about the long - term Capital Plan, looking forward to 2036. He discussed a slide showing the Highway Equipment Reserve account, which captured the age and depreciation of equipment and vehicles.

Carol Goodwin and Rick Martin expressed their concern regarding budget increases each year. Others in the audience asked if we were to reduce the budget, how that would impact taxpayers.

Carol Goodwin made a motion to amend Article 3 to raise \$1,621,159.00 in taxes by reducing the amount of the budget by \$100,000, making the tax amount to be raised \$1,521,159.00. Tepper Pepperman seconded the motion.

In discussion of the amendment, Bob Lambert asked how the amended tax amount would impact the cost to an individual property owner.

The amended article was brought to a vote. Five voted yes to amend article # 3. The rest of the audience voted no.

Article 3, as originally stated was then voted as written in the warning. A majority were in favor. The article passed.

Article 4 was read: To see if the legal voters of the Town of Plymouth will establish a Bridge Reserve Fund to be used for the repair and reconstruction of bridges, and for this to be funded annually by the remaining/unused balance of the annual bridge repair account. Anne Brown made a motion to approve the article. Karen Evans seconded the motion.

Mark Fletcher asked if this fund is only for bridges. Tina Fletcher asked what would happen if culverts must be converted to a bridge. Rick Kaminski explained that scenario would fall under bridge repair. He explained that any funds not used during the fiscal year would not go back to the general fund, but remain in the Bridge Fund.

Article 4 was voted as written in the warning. All were in favor. Article # 4 passed.

Article 5 was read: To see if the legal voters of the Town of Plymouth will fix the salaries of the Select Board the same as last year in the amount of \$600.00 annually. Bruce Pauley made a motion to approve the article. Karen Evans seconded the motion.

Karen Evans motioned to amend the salaries of the Select Board to \$1,000.00 annually. Bruce Pauley seconded her motion to amend.

Michelle Pingree praised the Select Board for their hard work and long hours spent meeting town needs. She felt their compensation should be increased to \$1,600.00 per year, to be more in line with the salaries of Select Boards in other towns. She made an amendment to the amendment to raise the salaries of the Select Board from \$1,000.00 to \$1,600.00 per year. Carol Goodwin seconded the amendment.

Tom Harris called for a vote on the amendment to raise the Select Board salaries to \$1,000.00. All were in favor. He then called for a vote on the amendment to increase the salaries from \$1,000.00 to \$1600.00 per year. All were in favor of amending Article 5 to read "To see is the legal voters of the Town of Plymouth will increase the salaries of the Select Board from \$600.00 a year to \$1600.00 a year. Jay Kullman, speaking for the board said they appreciate the vote of confidence from the voters.

Article 6 was read: To see if the legal voters of the Town of Plymouth will vote to exempt the property owned by Bethany Birches Camp, Inc., located at 2610 Lynds Hill Rd. (parcel ID 000167) from the educational portion of property taxes for a period of five (5) years, commencing with the 2024 tax year. Patty Harris made a motion to approve the article, Karen Evans seconded the motion.

Bruce Pauley spoke in disagreement of approval of the article. He stated his concern for those households who cannot afford to pay their property taxes. He would prefer to offer those property owners assistance to prevent losing their property in a tax sale.

Brandon Bergey spoke in support of the request, as director of Bethany Birches Camp. He stated the camp is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, operating as a summer and winter camp for children and teens of Vermont.

He stated property owners have paid the camps education portion of the annual tax bill, listed as a local agreement rate, for the last 5 years. The cost to each property owner will remain the same as in the past. He stated the camp will continue to give a 20% discount to local campers and property rental for events, and free use of the camp facilities for town events.

Margo Marrone next spoke to the benefits the camp provides to the local community. Mark Fletcher asked what effect the increase in education taxes and the potential school bond tax expense will have on the local agreement rate. Brandon Bergey responded that the rate is based on the assessed property value of Bethany Birches Camp parcels. If the school tax increases 30%, property owners could expect the same increase on the local agreement rate.

Tom Harris called for a show of hands vote. Thirty votes were counted in favor of Article 6, twenty votes were counted against the article. Tom Harris announced this motion passed by a margin of 3 to 2.

Article 7 was read: To see if the legal voters of the Town of Plymouth will collect taxes on real property in installments, taxes to be paid to the treasurer, Town of Plymouth on September 1, 2024 and February 1, 2025, and must be delivered to the Town Treasurer on or before the due date. Postmarked envelopes / payments will not be accepted as timely payments.

Pepper Tepperman motioned to accept the article as read; Karen Evans seconded the motion. All participants voted in favor.

Article 8 was read: To see if the legal voters of the Town of Plymouth shall authorize the Select Board to transact any other necessary and legal business.

Jay Kullman, on behalf of the Select Board, presented Elaine Pauley with the Vermont Public Service Award, in recognition of 8 years of service to the Town of Plymouth.

Midge Tucker spoke to the audience regarding the annual report for the Historical Society and private donations for engraved bricks to be installed in the Memory Garden. She invited the public to their meeting on Sunday, March 10, 2024 at 2:00 P.M. in the Community Center.

Bob Lambert asked if a better public address system could be installed.

With no further discussion, Tom Harris asked and received a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded and the meeting adjourned at 8:04 P.M.

Submitted by

Elaine Pauley