

# 2024 TOWN ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES

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2024 Annual Town Meeting was held at the Coventry Community Center on March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at 10 a.m. to act on the following articles of business:

**Note: The Town of Coventry has a checklist of 809 registered voters. The highest number of votes cast during any Town Meeting floor vote election was registered at 84. This represents a 10.4% participation in Town Meeting. There were six (6) guests in attendance at the meeting.**

The Annual Meeting was called to order at 10:04 a.m.

Town meeting rules and guidelines were read by Deb Tanguay. Veterans, Pat Sloan and David Barlow, commenced the Pledge of Allegiance.

## **TOWN DISTRICT MEETING:**

**ARTICLE 1:** To elect a **TOWN MODERATOR** for the ensuing year.

- Matthew Maxwell nominated.
- No other nominations.
- The Moderator instructed the Clerk to case one ballot for Matthew Maxwell for Town Moderator.
- **Matthew Maxwell - Elected**

**ARTICLE 2:** To **ELECT** the following officers required by law:

- a. **SELECT PERSON** 3-year term
- Daniel Webster nominated.
  - Kerry Keement nominated.
  - No other nominations.
  - On voter request, the two candidates were asked to speak.
  - Votes were cast by paper ballot.
  - 84 votes cast – Dan Webster 60; Kerry Keement 22; Brad Maxwell 1; Spoiled vote 1.
  - **Daniel Webster - Elected**
- b. **SELECT PERSON** 1-year term
- Steve Lamos nominated.
  - Scott Briere nominated.
  - Kerry Keement nominated.
  - No other nominations.
  - On voter request, the three candidates were asked to speak.
  - Votes were cast by paper ballot.
  - 84 votes cast – Kerry Keement 38; Scott Briere 37; Steve Lamos 9.



- **Donald Grondin - Elected**

*h.* **PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBER** 2-year term

- Scott Briere nominated.
- Amanda Hussey nominated.
- No other nominations.
- Election was performed by hand count vote.
- **Amanda Hussey - Elected**

*i.* **CEMETERY COMMISSION MEMBER** 3-year term

- Daniel Rondeau nominated.
- No other nominations.
- The Moderator instructed the Clerk to cast one ballot for Daniel Rondeau as Cemetery Commission Member.
- **Daniel Rondeau - Elected**

*j.* **CEMETERY COMMISSION MEMBER** 2-year term

- Alyssa Conn nominated.
- No other nominations.
- The Moderator instructed the Clerk to cast one ballot for Alyssa Conn as Cemetery Commission Member.
- **Alyssa Conn - Elected**

**ARTICLE 3:** Shall the legal voters of the Town of Coventry vote to appropriate the sum of **\$882,309** for support of the fiscal year **2025 TOWN LIABILITIES & GENERAL FUND EXPENSES AND TRANSFER** of which all shall be raised by non-tax revenues received through the Landfill Host Agreement?

- Motion made by Chris Roy.
- Motion seconded by Pat Sloan.
- Brief discussion commenced regarding placement of the funds and if not used, then it remains in the general fund.
- Voice vote; carried.
- **Article PASSED as written.**

**ARTICLE 4:** Shall the legal voters of the Town of Coventry vote to appropriate the sum of **\$522,455** plus the Vermont State Aid funding, for support of the fiscal year **2025 TOWN HIGHWAY FUND** expenses for summer and winter road maintenance, of which all shall be raised by non-tax revenues received through the Landfill Host Agreement?

- Motion made by Pat Sloan.
- Motion seconded by Praneet Menon.
- Brief discussion commenced regarding the increase of this sum versus the prior year. Select Board member Scott Briere stated the road crew now has three (3) full time

employees versus two; in addition to, employees taking health care.

- Voice vote; carried.
- **Article PASSED as written.**

**ARTICLE 5:** Shall the legal voters for the Town of Coventry vote to rescind the following **RESERVE FUNDS**, created in accordance with 24 V.S.A 2804, with the approximate values as indicated, and transfer the balances to long term investments? **BUILDINGS AND MAINTENANCE FUND \$665,000.00; ROADS CAPITAL EQUIPMENT FUND \$175,000.00; ROADS INFRASTRUCTURE FUND \$572,000.00; COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FUND \$225,000.00**

- Motion made by Praneet Menon.
- Motion seconded by Pat Sloan.
- Discussion commenced regarding what this article means and where the funds would reside. Select Board Scott Morley spoke to this article. Stated the town has been receiving more money than what has been needed for expenses from landfill tipping fees. Thus, the additional monies has continually been placed in reserve funds versus being invested for long term. Scott Morley believes this current system of handling the additional money into reserves has been outgrown by the Town and needs to be revisited. David Barlow (Town Treasurer) stated currently the bulk of additional funds are being held in short term CD's at the bank which are coming due shortly and some funds are available should the need arise for spending. Voters were concerned with the intermingling of these funds in the general fund and the loss of transparency of the funds. Mike Marcotte stated he was against removing the special fund accounts but rather the Town should reduce the amount of money being placed into the reserve funds and bring these funds to voters yearly for approval of what the Select Board wants to spend the reserve funds on. The money remaining after special funds allocation can be placed into investments for long term growth. There was discussion if there is not enough money in the reserves to cover the entire cost of projects and the answer is the Town would need to hold a special meeting requesting for additional money to be used towards the project. There has been some concern over how much reserve money has been spent over the past years and what the funds are being used for; such as tearing down of the Kimball property to make a parking lot for the town office. Barlow commented the reserve funds should have a budget within the reserve funds depicting the amount and purpose of those funds spending in the fiscal year. Scott Morley stated even though the Town has current investments of \$12M; this does not represent what the Town needs to cover town taxes when the landfill has closed and wants to plan for the future of the Town paying municipal taxes. Scott Morley would like the voters to become more involved in the spending of the reserve funds as far as approving what the funds are to be spent on – whether road projects, town equipment, etc. Scott Morley stated the Select Board is looking for a level of control over the reserve funds and the spending of the reserve funds. Dan Rondeau suggested that the Town may be at the point where it should have more Select Board members (3 to 5) to help better discuss the

finances and investments of the monies versus relying on just a three (3) member Select Board presently. Pat Sloan motioned the Moderator to recall the article and was seconded. Article was recalled.

- Voice vote; failed.
- **Article FAILED as written**

**ARTICLE 6: Shall the legal voters of the Town of Coventry appropriate the sum of \$850,000 for Summer 2024 Paving Projects?**

- Motion made by Pat Sloan.
- Motion seconded by Chris Roy.
- Brief discussion commenced regarding which roads the town was anticipating on paving this year. Barlow mentioned if this article is passed the monies will be in the general fund and not a reserve account. Praneet Menon mentioned if funds are pushed into a reserve account; then, the funds remain there until spent. Scott Morley commented if this article does not pass, the Town still has the ability to do the paving with funds already in the Roads and Infrastructure Reserve Fund. Voters suggested to reduce amount down to \$600k.
- Motion made by Praneet Menon to amend original motion to "Shall the legal voters of the Town of Coventry appropriate the sum of \$600,000 for Summer 2024 Paving Projects?".
- Amended motion seconded by Mike Marcotte.
- Moderator reread amended motion.
- Voice vote; carried.
- **Amended Article** - "Shall the legal voters of the Town of Coventry appropriate the sum of \$600,000 for Summer 2024 Paving Projects?" - **PASSED as written**

**ARTICLE 7: Shall the legal voters of the Town of Coventry appropriate the sum of \$375,000 for a 60x60 Addition to the Town Garage on Route 14?**

- Motion made by Pat Sloan.
- Motion seconded by Jaime Stenger.
- Brief discussion commenced regarding the specifications, construction costs and purpose of additional building for the Town Garage. Jim Cobb stated the Route 14 garage is crowded; however, felt an additional 60x60 building was not necessary but rather an addition or tear down existing building and construct a new building contoured to the equipment and use of the building. Scott Briere commented he did some preliminary planning and quotes to construct a steel building to the north side of the existing building with radiant heat for heating system. He did not feel exact plans was not necessary until the voters approved the project at Town Meeting. Mike Marcotte stated although there are funds in the reserve account to expend for this article; he commended the Select Board for bringing the article to the voters for their approval prior to expending. Jim Cobb also commented the Select Board has done a good job this year but requested voters to vote no and

have the Select Board come back to the voters with actual plan and costs for building either a new garage or a smaller addition to the existing garage. Mike Marcotte again commended the Select Board for bringing these types of discussions and transparency to the voters of what their plans are and ask the Select Board to come back to the voters via a special meeting with what they are planning on doing with the special funds.

- Pat Sloan motioned the Moderator to recall the article and was seconded by Israel Sanville. Article was recalled.
- Voice vote; failed.
- **Article FAILED as written**

**ARTICLE 8:** Shall the legal voters of the Town of Coventry vote to appropriate the sum of **\$275,000** for the purchase of 6-wheel plow truck?

- Motion made by Chris Roy.
- Motioned seconded by Praneet Menon.
- Brief discussion commenced with Barlow commenting the Capital Equipment Reserve needs to be large enough for sudden necessary purchases when needed. If this article is approved, the funds will go into the general fund waiting for the truck to be ordered and bought. Scott Morley reiterated the Select Board has the funds and authority to just go purchase the truck; however, the Select Board wanted to bring this purchase to the voters for their approval as what all large denominations of spending should be for. He stated the Town does have a contract unsigned pending voters approval. Scott Briere mentioned for trucks of this size there is a year and a half waiting period before the trucks are manufactured and delivered. There were two (2) different bids on the truck and the Select Board will choose which bid to continue with. Zack Patridge commented he was previously on the road crew and understands the cost of these trucks and the use they are put through on town roads and would suggest for voters to approve this article.
- Daniel Rondeau motioned the Moderator to recall the article and Praneet Menon seconded. Article was recalled.
- Voice vote; carried.
- **Article PASSED as written**

**ARTICLE 9:** Shall the legal voters of the Town of Coventry vote to appropriate the sum of **\$250,000** for the support of the **Coventry Town Foundation**?

- Motion made by Praneet Menon.
- Motion seconded by Pat Sloan.
- Brief discussion commenced with Leo Piette, Foundation President, giving an overview of how the Foundation was established, what the Foundation is and what they do. Leo stated the Foundation is not bonded but does carry several insurance policies covering, D&O, Liability and Errors & Omissions. There was some additional discussion regarding the timeframe of Foundation requests to the voters and their

anticipated goal/plan. Scott Morley stated he has worked hard to engage in healthy discussions with the Foundation Board; thus, why the article is being presented today for funding by the voters. Scott Morley stated the Select Board will continue to work with the Foundation in devising a good business plan for future funding to their limit of perpetuity of the Foundation and hopes there will be a Memorandum of Understanding set in place. Jim Cobb commented it was a great start for planning as what the Foundation provides to residents for assistance is needed and recommends approval of this article.

- Voice vote; carried.
- **Article PASSED as written**

**ARTICLE 10:** Shall the legal voters of the Town of Coventry vote to appropriate the sum of **\$50,000** for the **Replacement of the Heating Systems** in the Coventry Community Center, Main Street Garage, and Route 14 Garage?

- Motion made by Dan Rondeau.
- Motioned seconded by Chris Roy.
- Brief discussion commenced as to the purpose of this article and the planning that has occurred. Deb Tanguay briefly explained boilers were looked at for being converted to propane from #2 heating fuel. During inspection, vendor stated all boilers were overdue for replacement and would not recommend converting but replacing the units. Preliminary quotes were obtained to help determine approximate dollar amount for this article. Discussion continued regarding alternative heating methods. Scott Morley stated the Select Board will continue to research and compile further information for voters. If article is voted down, the Town does have enough in the Building & Maintenance Reserve Fund to pay should any of the boilers fail prior to next presentment to the voters.
- Voice vote; failed.
- **Article FAILED as written**

**ARTICLE 11:** Shall the legal voters of the Town of Coventry vote to appropriate the below expenditures for the **Service Agencies** in the amount of **\$24,092?** (Service Agencies reports are printed in the back of this Town Report under the Service Agencies section.)

- \$500 to American Red Cross
- \$5,000 to Goodrich Memorial Library
- \$1,200 to Green Mountain Farm to School
- \$4,000 to Jones Memorial Library
- \$330 to Northeast Kingdom Council on Aging
- \$2,172 to Northeast Kingdom Human Services
- \$500 to Northeast Kingdom Learning Services
- \$935 to Northern Vermont Development Association

- \$550 to Orleans County Historical Society
  - \$3,000 to Orleans and Essex VNA & Hospice
  - \$750 to Pope Memorial Animal Shelter
  - \$850 to Rural Community Transportation
  - \$1,125 to Umbrella
  - \$130 to Vermont Center for Independent Living
  - \$100 to Vermont Green Up
  - \$100 to Vermont Symphony Orchestra, Kids Program
  - \$250 to Vermont Family Network
  - \$100 to Vermont Rural Fire Protection
  - \$2,500 to Wednesday on the Waterfront
- Motion made by Pat Sloan.
  - Motion seconded by Leo Piette.
  - Voice vote; carried.
  - **Article PASSED as written**

**ARTICLE 12:** Shall the legal voters of the Town of Coventry authorize the Select Board to pursue a FEMA grant for the permanent repair of **Coventry Station Road**?

- Motion made by Praneet Menon.
- Motion seconded by Phil Marquette.
- Brief discussion commenced with the Select Board stating grant funding is not necessary for voter approval; however, due to this grant being a large denomination it was prudent to bring before the voters as the Town will be commencing the work before receiving grant monies. Should the grant not pay the amount we are expecting for it to pay, then the Town would need to make up the difference. FEMA grants are federal grants and the Town needs to spend the money first and then ask for the reimbursement. Scott Morley stated most Towns do not have reserve funds; however, Coventry does so the impact on our Town will not be as significant as a Town that does not have reserve funds to fall back on should the grant not pay the full amount. Mike Marcotte stated the spending of Town funds or FEMA funds for this project is a good thing as this poses a public safety issue that the Town needs to rectify regardless of FEMA funding.
- Voice vote; carried.
- **Article PASSED as written**

**ARTICLE 13:** Shall **EXCESS REVENUES** received in Fiscal Year 2023 into the General Fund of **\$500,000** be **TRANSFERRED** to the **LONG-TERM INVESTMENT ACCOUNT**?

- Motion made by Praneet Menon.
- Motion seconded by Chris Roy.
- Brief discussion commenced regarding the amount being conservative.
- **Article PASSED as written**

**ARTICLE 14:** Shall the Town of Coventry vote to adopt the **DECLARATION OF INCLUSION** as included in the Town Report?

- Motion made by Chris Roy.
- Motioned seconded by Mark Morhmann.
- Brief discussion commenced with Karen Hack (member of the inclusion committee) explaining the article was received by the Governor of VT requesting for Towns to pass the article. She stated there are no mandates, no laws; but rather, suggestions of what they want Towns to do. Some voters voiced their opinion stating Coventry is already a welcoming and supportive Town and this article is not required to further instill we are a welcoming Town. Some voters voiced their opinion stating it presents Coventry as a whole highlighting we are welcoming to everyone and highlights for residents to celebrate who they are.
- Voice vote; undetermined.
- Motion made by Chris Roy for ballot vote.
- 72 votes cast: Yes 33, No 39
- **Article FAILED as written**

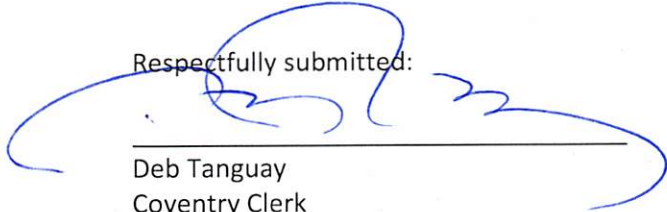
**ARTICLE 15:** To conduct all other business that legally comes before the Town

- Voters thanked Scott Briere for his past years of service on the Select Board as well as the other officials for their continued service to the Town and residents.
- Officials thanked the voters for coming out and voting.
- Amber Huntington and Jim Cobb spoke on behalf of the new Coventry Community Action Group. This new group was formed by citizens to help citizens in time of need and disaster. The group is looking for volunteers to assist Phil with emergency plans. The Town has seemed to be self-sufficient but the group would like community involvement with planning and creating procedures for future emergencies. The group meets at the Community Center every second Wednesday of the month at 5 p.m.

**ARTICLE 16:** To Adjourn Town Meeting

- Motion made by Praneet Menon at 1:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

  
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Deb Tanguay  
Coventry Clerk

  
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Scott Morley, Selectboard Chair

  
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Matthew Maxwell, Moderator