



State of New Hampshire

2024 Town Meeting Minutes

Brookfield voters came out steadily throughout the chilly but sunny day to participate in the Town Election on March 12, 2024. There were 632 registered voters at the end of the day with 186 votes cast in the local election.

Moderator James Cowles called the 230th meeting of the Town of Brookfield to order at 10:00 AM on Saturday, March 16, 2024. There were 47 registered voters in attendance. After leading residents in the Pledge of Allegiance, the Moderator asked those present to honor our past and present service members and town residents who died during the last year with a moment of silence. The Moderator introduced Selectmen Richard Zacher and Ed Gauthier, who were present, and Brian Robischeau who was absent. He also recognized those officials completing their terms with gratitude for their service.

New Brookfield residents Donna Faucette on Wentworth Road; Tom and Lynn Hahn on Wentworth Road, and Faith Buell on Lyford Road introduced themselves.

Moderator Cowles reminded those present that if not a registered voter, residents are not allowed to vote on any of the articles and voting if unregistered is punishable as a misdemeanor offense. Rich Zacher made a motion, seconded by Susan Raban, to dispense with the reading of the Rules for Procedure that are printed in the front of the annual report.

The Moderator announced the results of the Town Election Warrant Articles 1-5, which were acted upon by ballot on March 12, 2024; then proceeded with action on Articles 6 through 14.

Article 1: Town Officers chosen by ballot for coming year:

Selectman (3 years): Richard Zacher	159 votes
Moderator (1 year): James Cowles	166 votes
Trustee of Trust Fund (3 years): Richard Nordin	168 votes
Cemetery Trustee (3 years): Pamela Skeffington	166 votes
Planning Board (3 years): Marshall Goldberg	156 votes
Planning Board (3 years): Gus Stratton	151 votes
For Supervisor of the Checklist (6 years): Susan Raban	164 votes

Article 2: Are you in favor of adoption of amendment #1 to the Brookfield Zoning Ordinance as recommended by the Planning Board as follows: Increase the minimum lot size in the Residential Agricultural Zone from two acres to five acres and require that at least two of those acres be contiguous non-hydric soils with slopes of less than 8%. (Majority Vote Required) – By Ballot – The Planning Board recommends (6-0-0)

Yes: 93 **No: 91**

Article 3: Are you in favor of adoption of amendment #2 to the Brookfield Zoning Ordinance as recommended by the Planning Board as follows: Increase the road frontage required in the Residential Agricultural Zone from 250 contiguous feet to 400 contiguous feet, with access to the lot via that contiguous frontage. (Majority Vote Required) – By Ballot – The Planning Board recommends (6-0-0)

Yes: 86 **No: 98**

Article 4: Are you in favor of adoption of amendment #3 to the Brookfield Zoning Ordinance as recommended by the Planning Board as follows: adopt a new Article defining and regulating the installation of various types of solar energy systems. (Majority Vote Required) – By Ballot – The Planning Board recommends (6-0-0)

Yes: 125 **No: 51**

Article 5: By citizen’s petition: Are you in favor of the adoption of the following Amendment to the Brookfield Zoning Ordinance: Add to the existing Section A 2c (page four) of the current Ordinance the following: “Lots located on Class VI Roads – Lots having at least 500 feet of frontage on a Class VI Road may, upon successful completion of the permit process as set forth in RSA 674:41 and Brookfield Regulations, be developed with one dwelling. The lot shall have a minimum of 217,800 square feet (five acres). Subdivision of lots whose sole access or frontage is on a Class VI Road shall not be permitted.” (Majority Vote Required) – By Ballot – The Planning Board does not recommend (3-1-2)

Yes: 71 **No: 109**

Article 6: Shall the Town vote to readopt the provisions of RSA 72:28, Optional Veterans’ Tax Credit? If readopted, the credit will apply to every resident of this state who is any person who is a veteran, as defined in RSA 21:50, and served not less than 90 days on active service in the armed forces of the United States in any qualifying war or armed conflict listed in this section, and continues to serve or was honorably discharged or an officer who continues to serve or was honorably separated from service; or the spouse or surviving spouse of such resident, provided that training for active duty by a member of the national guard or reserve shall be included as service under this subparagraph; (b) Every resident of this state who was terminated from the armed forces because of service-connected disability; or the surviving spouse of such resident; and (c) The surviving spouse of any resident who suffered a service-connected death. If adopted, the credit granted will be \$250, which is the amount adopted by the town in 2018. The Selectmen recommend this article.

Motion to accept: Susan Raban; Seconded by: Jan Ledbetter

Discussion: Selectman Gauthier explained that the state requires that the town vote to re-adopt the credit.

Passed – 47 voters; none opposed.

Article 7: Shall the Town vote to readopt the provisions of RSA 72:28-b, All Veteran’s Tax Credit? If readopted, the credit will be available to any resident who is a veteran, as defined in RSA 21:50, and served

not less than 90 days on active service in the armed forces of the United States and continues to serve or was honorably discharged or an officer who continues to serve or was honorably separated from service; or the spouse or surviving spouse of such resident, provided that training for active duty or state active duty by a member of the national guard or reserve shall be included as service under this paragraph; provided however that the person is not eligible for and is not receiving a credit under RSA 72:28 or RSA 72:35. If adopted, the credit granted will be \$250 the same amount as the optional veterans' tax credit voted by the Town under RSA 72:28. The Selectmen recommend this article.

Motion to accept: Craig Evans. Seconded by: Dick Peckham.

Discussion: Selectman Gauthier clarified the difference between this Article and Article 6 is that the town extends the benefit to anyone who served in the armed forces as described, regardless of whether the service was during a designated conflict.

Passed – 47 voters: none opposed.

Article 8: Is the Town in favor of establishing the office of Gafney Library Trustee to represent the Town of Brookfield on the Gafney Library Board of Trustees for a term of one year as provided in the current Bylaws of the Gafney Library, Inc. The library trustees have general charge, oversight, and direction of the fiscal and operational affairs and adoption of rules and regulations that reflect the purpose of the Gafney Library Corporation. The Selectmen recommend this article.

Motion to accept: Susan Raban Seconded by: Susan Weiske

Discussion: Selectman Zacher explained that the Gafney Library Bylaws include an elected Brookfield Trustee on the Board of Trustees. In the past, Brookfield has an appointed representative on the Board; however, the Article make the Brookfield representation more appropriately reflect the Bylaws of the Library Trustees. Bob Servacek asked for clarification of whether it is a funded position, and Selectman clarified that it is a volunteer position.

Passed – 47 voters: 1 opposed.

Article 9: Is the Town in favor of using RSA 669:16 and RSA 669:54-669:60 to elect the Gafney Library Trustee by unofficial ballot at this town meeting to serve until the next Town election. The Selectmen recommend this article.

Motion to accept: Rich Zacher; Seconded by: Donna Faucette

Discussion: None. Nominations from the floor and the election procedure by unofficial ballot were postponed until the completion of the warrant articles.

Passed – 47 voters: 1 opposed.

Article 10: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$10,000 for painting the exterior of the Town House and authorize the withdrawal of said sum from the Town House Repair Capital Reserve Fund. (Majority Vote Required) The Selectmen recommend this appropriation.

Motion to accept: Ed Comeau; Seconded by: Sandy Pace

Discussion: Selectman Gauthier described some of the current conditions of the exterior of the Town House, including mold, rotting wood, and chipping and flaking of paint. In response to Charlie Pace's question regarding finding a longer lasting paint, since the Town House was painted in 2019, but the paint issues are thought to be related to the exceptionally wet weather this year as well as the age of the building

and its exposures over the years. The Selectmen clarified that they do not expect bids to exceed the appropriation and the funding is already in reserve so will not require additional taxation.

Passed – 47 voters; none opposed.

Article 11: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$32,000 for the revaluation of properties in town and authorize the withdrawal of said sum from the Property Re-evaluation Expendable Trust Fund. (Majority Vote Required) The Selectmen recommend this appropriation.

Motion to accept: Ed Comeau; Seconded by: Charles Pace

Discussion: Selectman Zacher explained that the state mandates the reassessment every 5 years and reflects 63% of the fair market value of properties. It is expected there will be a significant increase in the values, but the tax rate will be adjusted accordingly. Michael Moore inquired about the process for the annual assessment versus the 5-year assessment – the assessor clerk evaluates 25% of the town properties annually to update the tax cards, then the assessing firm reviews comparisons and values with the quarterly updates to determine the assessment, which is then validated by the state with a random review of assessments against state data to verify results.

Selectman Zacher clarified that the \$32,000 from the trust fund will be supplemented by the general fund for any additional money required for preparations. The projected total cost is \$50,000.

Regarding the impact of the assessment on county and school tax assessments, Selectman Zacher indicated the state will adjust based on the final assessments.

Passed – 47 voters; none opposed.

Article 12: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$5,000 for the development of a conceptual design for the expansion of the Town Office and authorize the withdrawal of said sum from the Town Building & Ground Maintenance Capital Reserve Trust Fund. (Majority Vote Required) The Selectmen recommend this appropriation.

Motion to accept: Rose Zacher; Seconded by: Jan Ledbetter

Discussion: Selectman Zacher described the impact of limited office space on staff and adequate file storage. There are currently 12 staff people who regularly use the office space and have attempted to coordinate staggered work hours to accommodate shared offices. The consultants will obtain employee and public input on design and feasibility for proposed expansion ideas.

Passed – 47 voters: 1 opposed.

Article 13: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$150,000 to be deposited into the Road and Bridge Repair Capital Reserve Fund. (Majority Vote Required). The Selectmen recommend this appropriation.

Motion to accept: Donna Faucette Seconded by: Susan Raban

Discussion: Selectman Zacher clarified that the funds will be deposited for future roadwork and maintenance to extend the life of town roads, with the current 3–5-year plan of expected expenditures estimated at \$400,000. Last year the capital reserve funds were used to pave the roads, and this is to replenish the road fund.

Passed – 47 voters; none opposed.

Article 14: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the Selectmen's recommended sum of \$1,372,365 for the Town Operating Budget. Said sum does not include special or individual articles addressed in this Warrant. (Majority Vote Required) The Selectmen recommend this appropriation.

Motion to accept: Craig Evans Seconded by: Charles Pace

Discussion: Selectman Zacher explained the \$150,000 – \$200,000 increase in expenditures is in large part due to roadwork and planned paving costs of \$150,000.

Passed – 47 voters; none opposed.

Moderator Cowles concluded the Warrant portion of the meeting and accepted the motion from Susan Raban, seconded by Rose Zacher, to proceed with nominations for the Library Trustee. The motion passed with 47 voters: 1 opposed.

Roberta Holland nominated Jan Ledbetter, seconded by Susan Weiske. There were no additional nominations from the floor and Jan had an opportunity to speak to the nomination prior to the vote by unofficial ballot. Votes were counted and announced by the Moderator with Jan Ledbetter elected as Library Trustee with the majority (32) of the total number of votes (44).

Moderator Cowles opened the meeting for additional business.

The Moderator announced that the Supervisors of the Checklist collaborated with the Secretary of State's office to review and correct the undeclared issue during the January primary. The last day to change party affiliation prior to the September primary is June 4, so if voters have questions, they can contact the Town Clerk, attend a Supervisor of the Checklist session, or check their information on the Secretary of State website as soon as possible.

It was suggested that a less cumbersome process be considered for future meetings that require an unofficial ballot, so that the unofficial ballots are easily distributed and submitted by each voter.

Frank Frazier acknowledged the excellent work of the new road agent. The Town Clerk recognized the committees and departments for timely submissions for the annual report and the dedicated efforts of Kate Kinville, Rose Zacher, and Harriet Wilson to produce the document.

Donna Faucette inquired about the differences between Brookfield's traditional town meeting and the SB-2 process. The main issue during the discussion related to communications and the best way to inform the residents about hearings and meetings, as well as other town events. Richard Zacher reminded everyone about e-alerts on the town website, and Ed Comeau verified that records of town meetings and various other town meetings and hearings since 2011 have been video recorded and are available to view. By show of hands, about 12 residents present subscribe to the Granite State News, and approximately 10 additional people purchase a copy on a regular basis. Moderator Cowles verified that any change to the town meeting would require a petition to add to next year's ballot.

Bob Servacek spoke on behalf of the Heritage Commission to invite residents to the activities planned for 2024 and listed in the Commission event brochure. After recognizing the commission members: Chair Marilou MacLean (absent), Harriet Wilson, Jan Ledbetter, Susan Raban, Sandy Pace, and Brian Robischeau, Bob thanked Ed Gauthier for his contributions over the recent months.

The question was raised regarding the Brookfield benefits for the money that we pay to Wolfeboro Parks and Recreation. Selectman Zacher confirmed that our residents receive the same benefits as Wolfeboro

residents, except for beach access and library use. The Wolfeboro-resident only beach restriction was a voter decision, which hampers our ability to negotiate access for Brookfield residents.

Moderator Cowles asked the newly elected officials to gather in the schoolhouse to be sworn into office. Ed Comeau requested consideration to do the oaths on the stage at the close of the meeting for the public's presence. At this time, the tradition of doing the oaths afterward will continue.

There being no further business, Moderator Cowles adjourned the meeting at 11:19 AM.

Respectfully submitted,



Karen E. Servacek
Brookfield Town Clerk