

EPSOM DELIBERATIVE SESSION  
OFFICIAL MINUTES  
FEBRUARY 6, 2016

The annual deliberative session was called to order at 9:00 AM on Saturday, February 6, 2016 by Moderator, Jeff Keeler.

The Moderator read Article 1.

**ARTICLE 1:** Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of seven hundred ninety-eight thousand three hundred eighty-one dollars (\$798,381.00) to construct a Town Office building, including but not limited to site work, septic, water and parking and authorize the issuance of not more than three hundred ninety-nine thousand one hundred ninety-one dollars (\$399,191.00) of bonds or notes for half the cost of this purpose in accordance with the Municipal Finance Act (RSA 33), and to authorize the Selectmen to issue and negotiate such bonds or notes and to determine the rate of interest thereon, and further authorize the use of three hundred ninety-nine thousand one hundred ninety dollars (\$399,190.00) from the unassigned fund balance for half the cost of that purpose, and further to raise and appropriate the sum of eight thousand seven hundred dollars (\$8,700.00) for Bond Counsel fee and the first year's interest payment on the bond? (3/5 ballot vote required) This is a Non-Lapsing Warrant Article and will not lapse until the project is completed or December 31, 2021, whichever comes first. This appropriation is in addition to the operating budget.

Estimated tax impact in 2016 is \$ .02

Recommended by the Selectmen 3 – 0      Recommended by the Budget Committee 7 – 5

Don Harty stated that starting in 2017 we will be paying rent of \$29,017.00 per year. The total for ten years would be \$457,000.00; 20 years would be \$1,071,000.00. At the end of that time we will have nothing to show for it. The five year window has passed this year and we can get out of our lease if we move into a town owned facility that is as big as or bigger than the current space. Two years ago we came forward with a proposal to renovate the Meetinghouse for Town Offices. It did not pass. A petition warrant article was put forth last year to again renovate the Meetinghouse for office space. That article did not pass either. Another committee has now come up with a proposal for a brand new building on town owned property next to the police department. The building will be 6400 square feet. The Town Office will be in the upper level consisting of 3200 square feet. The building will be a turnkey ready facility with parking and access to the highway. It will be in a good location, next to the police department for security, and near the Epsom traffic circle and bank. The building will be new with plenty of windows, a good place to work and easy to get to by the public. The Board of Selectmen proposed to fund half of the cost out of the Town's Unassigned Fund Balance. That amount is funded from surpluses at the end of the year, excess revenue and things like that. This fund has been used to offset taxes in the past. Using the fund for this project will cut the payment by half; it does not lower the cost of the project. It also reduces the amount of interest the Town has to pay from approximately \$103,000.00 to approximately \$27,000.00.

Ben Careno, the proposed contractor of the building, spoke on the project. He stated they have designed a building that meets the current needs and also future needs. It is energy efficient with a high efficiency furnace, air conditioning and will meet all state and federal energy codes. It is a maintenance free building, ADA accessible, will have vinyl siding, asphalt shingles, general drywall, and wood frame and be built to last.

Bruce Graham stated he has absolutely no problem with the building. He has an issue with the support from the Selectmen. He feels it was the will of the people to use the Meetinghouse for the Town Office. Bruce proposed a motion to table the current project for a year and then put both proposals on next year's ballot side by side with instructions to vote for one and offer the same \$399,190.00 from the unassigned fund balance.

The Moderator stated that an article cannot be tabled, but it can be amended. The warrant article must be on the ballot and must maintain the subject matter and must be presented to the voters this year.

Don Harty stated that \$1,602,777.00 is in the fund balance at this time. That is not all cash. If the article passes there will be 1.2 million left in the account. He feels that is a comfortable level. The money will actually be offsetting taxes over the next five or ten years of the bond.

Eric Yeaton proposed an amendment to establish a committee to study the viability to construct a Town Office building vs using the same funds to build the town office space in the historic meetinghouse. The amendment was seconded by Joyce Heck.

Chris Pepin, Town Office Committee Member, stated the committee spent sixteen months researching the best option for the Town offices. He feels a lot of time has already been spent on a study.

Don Harty stated the Selectmen sent proposals to many contractors. Many came and visited the site, but only one company bid on it. The Selectmen contacted the others to see why they did not want to bid. They stated that they did not want to bid because Epsom has a bad track record for projects. Don is afraid that if this amendment passes, nobody will bid on the project next year.

The Moderator read Article 1 as amended.

**ARTICLE 1:** Shall the Town establish a committee to study the viability of raising and appropriating the sum of seven hundred ninety-eight thousand three hundred eighty-one dollars (\$798,381.00) to construct a Town Office building versus using the same funds to build the Town Office space in the historic meeting house, including but not limited to site work, septic, water and parking and authorize the issuance of not more than three hundred ninety-nine thousand one hundred ninety-one dollars (\$399,191.00) of bonds or notes for half the cost of this purpose in accordance with the Municipal Finance Act (RSA 33), and to authorize the Selectmen to issue and negotiate such bonds or notes and to determine the rate of interest thereon, and further authorize the use of three hundred ninety-nine thousand one hundred ninety dollars (\$399,190.00) from the unassigned fund balance for half the cost of that purpose, and further to raise and appropriate the sum of eight thousand seven hundred dollars (\$8,700.00) for Bond Counsel fee and the first year's interest payment on the bond? (3/5 ballot vote required) This is a Non-Lapsing Warrant Article and will not lapse until the project is completed or December 31, 2021, whichever comes first. This appropriation is in addition to the operating budget.

The Moderator asked for a voice vote.

The amendment failed.

An amendment was made by Joni Kitson, seconded by Eric Yeaton that no money comes out of the undesignated fund balance. The Article would read as follows:

**ARTICLE 1:** Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of seven hundred ninety-eight thousand three hundred eighty-one dollars (\$798,381.00) to construct a Town Office building, including but not limited to site work, septic, water and parking and authorize the issuance of not more than seven hundred ninety-eight thousand three hundred eighty-one dollars (\$798,381.00) of bonds or notes for that purpose in accordance with the Municipal Finance Act (RSA 33), and to authorize the Selectmen to issue and negotiate such bonds or notes and to determine the rate of interest thereon, and further to raise and appropriate the sum of thirteen thousand five hundred dollars (\$13,500.00) for the Bond Counsel fee and first year's interest payment? (3/5 ballot vote required) [Passage of this article shall override the 10 percent limitation imposed on this appropriation due to the non-recommendation of the budget committee.] This is a Special Warrant Article and its appropriation is in addition to the operating budget.

Eric Yeaton stated that different proposals in the past did not have the same benefit of using the fund balance.

Betsy Bosiak presented a request with the required five signatures for a secret ballot on Article 1.

Don Harty stated the cost of this amendment is \$75,000.00.

The results of the secret ballot were: No: 56, Yes: 20. The amendment failed.

A motion was made by Don Harty, seconded by Dick Verville, to restrict reconsideration of Article 1.

The Moderator asked for a voice vote.

The motion passed.

There being no further discussion, Article 1 shall appear on the ballot as written.

The Moderator read Article 2.

**ARTICLE 2:** Shall the Town of Epsom raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling \$3,252,815? Should this article be defeated, the operating budget shall be \$3,208,271, which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Town or by law, or the governing body may hold one special meeting in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only.

The operating budget is estimated to be a \$ .65 decrease from the 2015 tax rate.

The default budget is estimated to be a \$ .76 decrease from the 2015 tax rate.

Recommended by the Selectmen 3 - 0      Recommended by the Budget Committee 12 - 0

There being no discussion, Article 2 shall appear on the ballot as written.

The Moderator read Article 3.

**ARTICLE 3:** Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of three thousand five hundred dollars (\$3,500.00) to purchase a sign with message board for the Police Department building and authorize the withdrawal of that same amount of three thousand five hundred dollars (\$3,500.00) from the interest in the Lillian Morrison Trust Fund – Police for that purpose? No amount to be

raised by taxes. Majority vote required. This is a Special Warrant Article and its appropriation is in addition to the operating budget.

Estimated tax impact is \$ .00

Recommended by the Selectmen 3 – 0      Recommended by the Budget Committee 12 – 0

Chief, Wayne Preve, stated the message board would be for messages such as when school starts, Halloween hours, possible scams, Concord Crime Line tips, etc. It is not a digital sign.

There being no further discussion, Article 3 shall appear on the ballot as written.

The Moderator read Article 4.

**ARTICLE 4:** Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of twelve thousand five hundred dollars (\$12,500.00) to purchase new swift and ice water rescue equipment and auto extrication equipment and authorize the withdrawal of the same amount of twelve thousand five hundred dollars (\$12,500.00) from the Fire Apparatus Capital Reserve Fund for that purpose? No amount to be raised by taxes. Majority vote required. This is a Special Warrant Article and its appropriation is in addition to the operating budget.

Estimated tax impact is \$ .00

Recommended by the Selectmen 3 – 0      Recommended by the Budget Committee 12 – 0

There being no discussion, Article 4 shall appear on the ballot as written.

The Moderator read Article 5.

**ARTICLE 5:** Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000.00) to be added to the Capital Reserve Fund previously established for the purpose of reconstruction and improvements to town roads? Majority vote required. This is a Special Warrant Article and its appropriation is in addition to the operating budget.

Estimated tax impact is \$ .36

Recommended by the Selectmen 3 – 0      Recommended by the Budget Committee 12 – 0

There being no discussion, Article 5 shall appear on the ballot as written.

The Moderator read Article 6.

**ARTICLE 6:** Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000.00) to be added to the Capital Reserve Fund previously established for the purpose of purchasing motorized vehicles and equipment for the Highway Department? Majority vote required. This is a Special Warrant Article and its appropriation is in addition to the operating budget.

Estimated tax impact is \$ .02

Recommended by the Selectmen 3 - 0      Recommended by the Budget Committee 12 – 0

There being no discussion, Article 6 shall appear on the ballot as written.

The Moderator read Article 7.

**ARTICLE 7:** Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000.00) to be added to the Capital Reserve Fund previously established for the purpose of

bridge replacement and repair? Majority vote required. This is a Special Warrant Article and its appropriation is in addition to the operating budget.

Estimated tax impact is \$ .03

Recommended by the Selectmen 3 – 0      Recommended by the Budget Committee 12 – 0

Gordon Ellis stated this year he would like to do Echo Valley Farm Road Bridge. The next one scheduled would be Cass Road Bridge. He stated we have to have the money in hand in order to apply for State funds.

Mary Frambach stated the principal in the fund currently is \$104,456.99.

There being no further discussion, Article 7 shall appear on the ballot as written.

The Moderator read Article 8.

**ARTICLE 8:** Shall the Town vote to establish a contingency fund for the 2016 year for unanticipated expenses that may arise and further raise and appropriate the sum of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000.00) from the unassigned fund balance to go into the fund? No amount to be raised from taxation. Any appropriation left in the fund at the end of the year will lapse to the general fund. Majority vote required. This Article and its appropriation are in addition to the operating budget.

Estimated tax impact is \$ .00

Recommended by the Selectmen 3 - 0      Recommended by the Budget Committee 12 – 0

There being no discussion, Article 8 shall appear on the ballot as written.

The Moderator read Article 9.

**ARTICLE 9:** Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of three thousand five hundred dollars (\$3,500.00) to be used by the Northwood Lake Watershed Association in the treatment to control Milfoil in Northwood Lake? Majority vote required. This appropriation is in addition to the operating budget.

Estimated tax impact is \$ .01

Recommended by the Selectmen 2 – 1      Not Recommended by the Budget Committee 5 – 7

Kevin Ash, President of Northwood Lake Watershed Association, spoke on the article. He thanked the residents of Epsom for their support last year in the Association's efforts to control milfoil. The Association used to be a donation driven organization. Last year the Association spent over \$50,000.00. Kevin stated that 18% of the shore land of Northwood Lake is in Epsom. Northwood's share this year is \$10,000.00, Deerfield's share is \$8,000.00. Epsom is being asked to contribute \$3,500.00. Kevin stated it costs \$7,000.00 for the permitting process alone to treat milfoil. A licensed treater costs another \$25,000.00. They do not just dump chemicals into the lake. One of the ways to treat milfoil that they use is called Dash. This consists of divers going in and getting the plants up to the surface. The divers are certified and trained to pop the plants up from the bottom which minimizes the amount of fragmentation so that the plants do not flower and release seeds and spread. Another way to fight milfoil is by using two types of herbicide treatment. Once the herbicide is on the bottom of the lake it is slowly released and kills the plants within two weeks. Kevin stated that all of this is very expensive to do. Kevin stated that milfoil spreads easily and rapidly from fishing, swimming and boating.

Virginia Drew, Budget Committee Member, thanked Kevin for speaking today and clarifying everything. She would like the opportunity to change her recommendation.

Jeff Keeler stepped out of his role as Moderator to speak as a citizen. Jeff turned the meeting over to the Assistant Moderator, Don Keeler. Jeff stated that the effect of Milfoil reduces property values by as much as half and that we have a number of Epsom residents with property on Northwood Lake. He stated that keeping the current value on only one of those properties would offset this \$3,500.00.

An amendment was made by Virginia Drew, seconded by Ralph Weeks, to increase the amount to \$3,501.00 so that the Budget Committee could revote on their recommendation.

The Assistant Moderator read Article 9 as amended.

**ARTICLE 9:** Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of three thousand five hundred one dollars (\$3,501.00) to be used by the Northwood Lake Watershed Association in the treatment to control Milfoil in Northwood Lake? Majority vote required. This appropriation is in addition to the operating budget.

The Assistant Moderator asked for a voice vote.

The amendment passed.

There being no further discussion, Article 9 shall appear as amended to read:

**ARTICLE 9:** Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of three thousand five hundred one dollars (\$3,501.00) to be used by the Northwood Lake Watershed Association in the treatment to control Milfoil in Northwood Lake? Majority vote required. This appropriation is in addition to the operating budget.

The meeting was turned back to Jeff Keeler.

The Moderator read Article 10.

**ARTICLE 10:** Shall the Town vote to establish a revolving fund pursuant to RSA 31:95-h, for the purpose of ambulance services and deposit into that fund each year twelve thousand dollars (\$12,000.00) of the revenue received from providing ambulance service? These funds shall be allowed to accumulate from year to year and shall not be considered to be part of the Town's general fund. These funds are to be expended to pay the cost of billing for ambulance services and for paramedic intercepts performed by other towns. The Town Treasurer shall have custody of all monies in the fund and shall pay out the same on the order of the Fire Chief. This article is contingent on the passage of Article 11, and will be void if Article 11 does not pass. Majority vote required.

Recommended by Selectmen 3 – 0

Recommended by the Budget Committee 12 – 0

Chief Stewart Yeaton stated the ambulance fund was set up many years ago. Revenue is about \$200,000.00 every year and \$12,000.00 is about 3 ½ weeks of transports. He does not feel that removing that amount of money from that fund will cause any problems when it comes to replacing an ambulance. The \$12,000.00 is the cost that is needed to do the collections and for paramedic intercepts.

There being no further discussion, Article 10 shall appear on the ballot as written.

The Moderator read Article 11.

**ARTICLE 11:** There presently exists a Fire and Rescue Apparatus Special Revenue Fund, established under the provisions of RSA 31:95-c, into which all of the revenue earned from providing ambulance services, is deposited each year, to be expended by Town vote on replacement and maintenance of fire and ambulance apparatus. Are you in favor of changing the amount of revenue deposited into the fund to the amount of revenue received each year in excess of \$12,000.00? 2/3 ballot vote required. This article is contingent on the passage of Article 10, and will be void if Article 10 does not pass.

Recommended by Selectmen 3 – 0

Recommended by the Budget Committee 12 – 0

There being no discussion, Article 11 shall appear on the ballot as written.

The Moderator read Article 12.

**ARTICLE 12:** Shall the Town vote to increase the exemption amount and eligibility requirements of the previously adopted Elderly Exemption, per RSA 72:39b, as follows: for 65-74 years of age, increase from thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000) to forty five thousand dollars (\$45,000); for 75-79 years of age, increase from sixty thousand dollars (\$60,000) to seventy five thousand dollars (\$75,000); and change the eligibility requirements by increasing the income limit for singles from eighteen thousand four hundred dollars (\$18,400.00) to twenty-one thousand seven hundred seventy-five dollars (\$21,775.00); increase the combined income limit for married couples from twenty-six thousand four hundred dollars (\$26,400.00) to twenty-nine thousand four hundred seventy-one dollars (\$29,471.00); and increase the assets from not to exceed thirty-five thousand dollars (\$35,000.00) to not to exceed fifty-five thousand dollars (\$55,000.00)? The exemption amount for 80+ years of age would remain at one hundred twenty thousand dollars (\$120,000.00). Majority vote required.

Recommended by Selectmen 3 – 0

Don Harty stated the figures have not changed for ten years whereas individual's incomes have changed. They are trying to move these amounts up based on the cost of living and still protect the same people who qualified in the past. The amounts are to adjust for inflation.

There being no further discussion, Article 12 shall appear on the ballot as written.

The Moderator read Article 13.

**ARTICLE 13:** Shall the Town vote to increase the eligibility requirements of the Disabled Exemption, previously adopted per RSA 72:37b, as follows: increase the single income limit from eighteen thousand four hundred dollars (\$18,400.00) to twenty-one thousand seven hundred seventy-five dollars (\$21,775.00); increase the married income limit from twenty-five thousand four hundred dollars (\$25,400.00) to twenty-nine thousand four hundred seventy-one dollars (\$29,471.00); and increase the assets amount from not to exceed thirty-five thousand dollars (\$35,000.00) to not to exceed fifty-five thousand dollars (\$55,000.00)? Majority vote required.

Recommended by Selectmen 3 – 0

There being no discussion, Article 13 shall appear on the ballot as written.

The Moderator read Article 14.

**ARTICLE 14:** Shall the Town vote to adopt the provisions of RSA 72:65 through 72:68, which provide for an optional property tax exemption from the property's assessed value for property tax

purposes, for persons owning real property which is equipped with any wind powered energy system intended for use at the immediate site? Such property tax exemption shall be in the amount equal to 100% of the assessed value of qualifying equipment under these statutes. Majority vote required.

Recommended by Selectmen 2 – 1

Hugh Curley stated this is something that has been enabled by the Legislature for several years. The increased property value placed on a homeowner that has these systems would increase their taxes and defeat the savings of having these placed on their properties. This would be for residential use only, not for commercial use.

There being no further discussion, Article 14 shall appear on the ballot as written.

The Moderator read Article 15.

**ARTICLE 15:** To see if the town will vote to adopt the provisions of RSA 72:61 through RSA 72:64 inclusively, which provide for an optional property tax exemption from the property's assessed value, for property tax purposes, for persons owning real property, which is equipped with solar energy systems intended for use at the immediate site. Such property tax exemption shall be in the amount equal to 100% of the assessed value of qualifying equipment under these statutes. **BY PETITION.** Majority vote required.

Recommended by Selectmen 3 – 0

There being no discussion, Article 15 shall appear as written.

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 11:23 AM.

Respectfully submitted,



Dawn Blackwell