



## **Town of Hinesburg**

10632 Route 116 Hinesburg VT 05461

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### **Town Meeting Minutes**

**March 2, 2021**

**- Draft -**

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. via Zoom. There was no in-person town meeting this year due to the risks associated with Covid-19. Chairperson Phil Pouech laid out the protocols and instructions for the conduct of the meeting and advised people to use the chat room when needed to put forth questions as they would be monitoring that. He also advised the participants could raise their hands.

#### ***ARTICLE 1: To hear the reports of the officers of the Town of Hinesburg.***

The first order of business was to hear Article 1, which was the report of the Select Board. Phil Pouech gave a run down of FY20, beginning with a hearty thank you to staff and community volunteers who had done so much work to continue to offer services to the public while dealing with the challenges and restrictions of Covid-19. He particularly thanked former town administrator Renae Marshall for her dedicated service, and Joy Dubin-Grossman for stepping in to fill that vacancy in the interim. He welcomed new employees Matt Denis from the highway department and Heather Roberts in the town clerk's office.

Pouech mentioned a few key issues from this year's budget saying that the proposed budget is a 3.1 percent increase. This is largely driven by increases due to the ambulance and the hiring of an additional police officer. They were able to keep increases low by utilizing one-hundred thousand dollars from the unallocated fund balance as well as applying unspent funds from the highway garage bond to help pay the cost of the bond.

Many highlights from the year were mentioned, including the Covid-19 response by so many people. He mentioned the Economic Development Committee and the work they had done to assist local businesses during difficult times; the Hinesburg Community Resource Center for their work at the Hinesburg Food Shelf on behalf of those in need; and the Little Free Pantry at the United Church and the volunteers who make all of this happen. Pouech said that we are truly fortunate to live in such a caring and supportive community.

Pouech stated that he is sure that going forward we will continue to provide remote access to meetings of all kinds since people seem to be more willing to attend meetings remotely and it is a great way to increase participation in the democratic process. He then mentioned some specific highlights of the year.

He mentioned that the stars were aligned for the ambulance service to come to Hinesburg. Voters approved the addition of an ambulance by a 2:1 margin in November. We have enjoyed 50 years of free transport service and now we will pay for our own. The ambulance will be donated. Another highlight was the approval of the Wastewater Treatment Facility bond for the upgrade and replacement of our existing facility. We will be able to garner approximately 50 percent of the funding from grants with the possibility of adding to that amount. The facility should be good for 50 years. The CVU-Route 116 intersection upgrade should help to alleviate traffic from all of the new development that is coming to the village. The Community Police Department will be working with the Howard Center to help with mental health issues that arise, and working to revamp the restorative justice program. The Hinesburg Racial Equity Group has been working diligently to raise awareness of racial justice issues and Pouech acknowledged that this was a really important issue that we all need to think about and make progress on. The Energy Committee has been working to get more solar projects going on town facilities, and finally, the CSWD drop-off center has finally returned.

Pouech then continued on with his report, stating that the Town was facing many challenges. He said that the Select Board supports the town manager transition and that though Hinesburg is not a large town, it is a very complex town with lots of new projects in the pipeline. We are looking at lots of new large-scale development, the addition of the ambulance, the wastewater treatment facility replacement and other things as well. He thanked the town employees for their hard work during the past year.

**ARTICLE 2:** *To elect the necessary Town and School District officers by Australian ballot Tuesday, March 2, 2021:*

- *Select Board member for a term of 3 years*
- *Select Board member for a term of 2 years*
- *Select Board member for a term of 1 year remaining of a 2-year term*
- *Town Moderator for a term of 1 year*
- *Cemetery Trustee for a term 3 years*
- *3 Library Trustees for terms of 3 years each*
- *Peck Estate Trustee for a term of 3 years*
- *Champlain Valley School District Director for a term of 1 year remaining of a 3-year term*

**ARTICLE 3:** *“Shall the Town of Hinesburg adopt the town manager form of governance in accordance with the provisions of chapter 37 of Title 24 of the Vermont Statutes Annotated?” (Amended 2019, No. 67 Section 21.)”*

Several people voiced their opinions for and against transitioning to a town manager form of government. Will Patten, a long-time advocate for the change, reiterated his opinion that it is time for Hinesburg to move to a town manager. The complexity of the town’s operations warrants this, in his opinion. Roger Kohn, conversely, feels that the citizens retain more control

over local government when the elected Select Board members take direct input from them. Others weighed in as well.

**ARTICLE 4:** *Shall the Town approve a General Government budget of \$1,946,828 with the estimated sum of \$1,411,403 appropriated from property taxes to defray the general government expenses of the Town?*

There was discussion including the addition of a police officer, the need for additional water and sewer personnel once the treatment facility upgrade happens, and just general questions about the budget.

**ARTICLE 5:** *Shall the Town approve a Highway Department budget of \$979,902 with the estimated sum of \$841,902 appropriated from property taxes to defray the highway expenditures of the Town?*

There was very little discussion about the highway department other than to offer gratitude for a job well done and appreciation for their hard work. Lenore Budd asked a question about the capital funds and the Select Board said the funds were for culverts.

**ARTICLE 6:** *Shall the Town approve the Hinesburg Community Police Department budget of \$686,970 with the estimated sum of \$596,470 appropriated from property taxes to defray the police expenditures of the Town?*

The police budget precipitated some questions, especially regarding the addition of an officer through the COPS grant. Sharon Lee Trefry asked if there had been an increase in mental health related calls and the answer was no. Sau asked if the town has been contributing to the State database regarding stops and racial profiling. The answer was yes, they have been doing so for a while. Chief Cambridge said they are looking forward to their partnership with the Howard Center.

**ARTICLE 7:** *Shall the Town approve the Hinesburg Fire Department budget of \$376,295 with the estimated sum of \$336,295 appropriated from property taxes to defray the fire expenditures of the Town?*

Andrea Morgante asked about the renovations to the fire station. Chief Barber answered that they removed the old Engine 1 and used the space to create a bunkroom so that people can stay overnight. Will Patten asked what it means to integrate the fire department into the town and Phil Pouech, chair of the Select Board, said that it means we will work with them and support them just like any other town department. They have been mostly integrated for several years and have their payroll and other financial activities going through the Town.

**ARTICLE 8:** *Shall the Town approve a new ambulance transport service budget of \$178,149 with the estimated sum of \$105,760 appropriated from property taxes to defray the ambulance transport service of the Town?*

There was lots of discussion around the addition of an ambulance. There were questions about staffing and billing for the cost, as well as whether we would need a second ambulance. Pouech said that we had approved one full-time staff member last year but that we hadn't hired anyone. There will be 2 full-time staff members who will do admin and maintenance work during the day as there are not many calls, generally speaking. The question was asked why our budget is so low when compared to surrounding towns? Chief Barber said the budget had been vetted by outside experts.

**ARTICLE 9:** *Shall the Town approve the Carpenter-Carse Library allocation from the Town of Hinesburg of \$225,487 with the estimated sum of \$225,487 appropriated from property taxes to defray the library allocation from the Town?*

There was no discussion but Phil Pouech gave kudos to the library for adapting to Covid and continuing to serve the community so well.

**ARTICLE 10:** *Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$37,700 with the estimated sum of \$37,700 appropriated from property taxes, to be distributed as specifically designated to the following agencies and organizations?*

Hinesburg Community Resource Center	\$23,100
UVM Home Care & Hospice (VNA)	\$6,500
Agency on Aging (CVAA)	\$2,000
VT Family Network	\$1,000
American Red Cross	\$400
Hinesburg Senior Meal Site	\$650
Vermont Center for Independent Living	\$200
Steps to End Domestic Violence	\$2,350
Prevent Child Abuse Vermont	\$500
COTS	\$1,000

Andrea Morgante said that the HCRC does a great job, and Rachel Kring thanked the community for their on-going support and the volunteers who make it all happen.

*(If voters approved Articles 4 through 10 as presented, total general fund expenditures of \$4,431,331 will be required, with the estimated amount of \$3,555,017 to come from property tax revenue.)*

**ARTICLE 11:** *Shall voters authorize the payment of real and personal property taxes for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022, payable in full to the Town of Hinesburg in one (1) installment, with the due date being November 15, 2021 and to be collected by the Town Treasurer? Any and all payments received in the Town Treasurer's Office later than midnight on November 15, 2021 will be considered delinquent and will be subject to the collection of interest at the rate of 1%*

*per month or fraction thereof for the first three (3) months and thereafter at the rate of 1.5% per month or fraction thereof.*

There was no discussion about this article.

Signed and dated this \_\_\_\_\_ day of January 2021, and as attested to by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phil Pouech, Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jeff French

\_\_\_\_\_  
Merrily Lovell, Vice-Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Michael Loner

\_\_\_\_\_  
Maggie Gordon

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Attest: Melissa Ross, Town Clerk