

# **MINUTES OF THE DELIBERATIVE SESSION KINGSTON, NEW HAMPSHIRE FEBRUARY 4, 2023**

The Deliberative Session of the Annual Town Meeting, Saturday, February 4, 2023, was called to order at 9:02 AM by the Moderator Ellen Faulconer. Moderator Faulconer welcomed everyone and asked them to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance to our flag. Selectman Chris Bashaw asked for a moment of silence on behalf of Rich St. Hilaire. Moderator Faulconer explained the process and reminded everyone of candidate's night and the election.

Moderator Faulconer introduced the Selectmen: Richard Wilson Chairman, Kevin St. James, Electra Alessio, Chris Bashaw, Chuck Hart, Paula Mahoney Finance & personnel Director, Fire Chief Graham Pellerin, Paul Butler Recreation Director and Tammy Bakie Town Clerk-Tax Collector, who in turned introduced Gail Ramsey Office Clerk, Holly Ouellette Assistant Town Clerk and Caitlin Milhomme Deputy Town Clerk-Tax Collector. The Budget Committee Members were introduced by Trisha Tidd Chairman; Stacy Dion, Rick Russman, Shaw Tilton, John Pramberg, Gary Finerty, Annemarie Roth, Claudine Dias, and Nick Hilfer.

Copies of the proposed Budget, default budget and Warrant Articles were available at the door for people attending the meeting.

Moderator Faulconer stated we would start with article 13 as the public meeting to discuss the zoning articles had already taken place.

**ARTICLE 13:** Shall the Town of Kingston 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 \$ 7,981,390? Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$7,404,896, which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Town of Kingston 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.

Estimated tax impact is \$5.97/\$1,000

Estimated tax impact of default budget is \$5.30/\$1,000

**RECOMMENDED BY THE SELECT BOARD 5-0  
RECOMMENDED BY THE BUDGET COMMITTEE 8-0**

*Trisha Tidd thanked the select board and the two new department heads for their willingness to work with the budget committee to deliver a budget that is both reasonable and respectful to the Kingston taxpayers. The budget committee worked hard to lower the budget from the original 13% increase to the current 8% increase which is much closer to the rate of inflation. All town departments are facing increased cost, as in our own households. They aimed to stay in line with inflation. Ms. Tidd thanked Stacy Dion and the Director of Public Works Phil Coombs for analyzing the utilities expenses. Ms. Tidd stated all departments are struggling to find and keep employees, there is a 3% COLA increase approved by the select board. Ms. Tidd stated salary adjustments result in increase in benefits such as social security and insurance. Ms. Tidd presented an overview for all departments proposed budgets: Select board budget increase is due to PFOA testing and mediation mandated by the state. Elections were down due to only one election in 2023. Cemetery budget is down, as the Public Works Department will be taking over some of the responsibilities which will be more cost efficient and better consistency. Government buildings and Highway Department are up due to increases in fuel, electricity, repairs and supplies also an increase in salaries. Police Department increase in salaries the department is now fully staffed and Police Chief Joel Johnson has put a retention program in place, also ammunition, training and prosecution services cost have risen. The Town Inspectors increase due to increases in salaries, the part time building inspector has retired and replaced with a full time Code Enforcement Officer, this department contributes to the town's income from permits and fees. Human Services, General Assistance and Social Services are level funded. Parks and Recreation increase is due to increase in hours/salaries and more events for seniors and kids. The Fire Department now has a beautiful new facility, the biggest increase is in salaries. The Fire Department and Emergency Services is struggling to keep staff and the per diem is no longer a viable solution. The ambulance generates significant revenue for the town. The library increase is due to a 6% COLA. The Museum is down, as the computer system is now up to date. Sanitation contract with Waste Management was significantly higher and includes penalties and surcharges that the town will incur if residents don't follow trash and recycling guidelines. Kingston is also not hosting the hazardous waste collection this year. The total budget is an overall 8% increase which is the same as last year and close to the rate of inflation. Ms. Tidd stated they estimate 2.8 million in revenue and money turned over from 2022 and warrant articles are for smaller dollar amounts all of these items will keep the tax rate as reasonable as possible.*

*Motion made to accept the article by Stacy Dion seconded by Shaw Tilton. Moderator Faulconer asked for any further discussion. Phil Coombs Director of Public Works thanked the budget committee for their work and for asking the hard questions. Mr. Coombs stated that it is not an easy job and the experienced of the board was evident. Mr. Coombs encouraged members to serve again. There being no further discussion Moderator Faulconer stated the article will move forward.*

**ARTICLE 14:** To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Tax Collector to allow a 1½% deduction from Property Tax when payment is made prior to the due date. It is the responsibility of the taxpayer to take the deduction; deductions not taken by the taxpayer on or before the due date will not be refunded.  
(Majority vote required)

**RECOMMENDED BY THE SELECT BOARD 5-0**  
**RECOMMENDED BY THE BUDGET COMMITTEE 8-0**

*Motion made to accept the article by Kevin St. James seconded by Richard Wilson. Moderator Faulconer asked for any further discussion, there being none, declared the article will move forward.*

**ARTICLE 15:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$100,000 to be added to the Buildings Maintenance Capital Reserve Fund previously established. (Majority vote required)  
Estimated tax impact is \$0.12/\$1,000

**RECOMMENDED BY THE SELECT BOARD 5-0**  
**RECOMMENDED BY THE BUDGET COMMITTEE 8-0**

*Motion made to accept the article by Stacy Dion seconded by Shaw Tilton. Director Phil Coombs stated this warrant article has been presented for a number of years. This article allows the department to maintain the buildings we have rather than build new. Recently this fund has been used for the stonework and roof on the museum and the bandstand. Upcoming projects include an energy analysis, heating updates and overdue work at the highway barn. Mr. Coombs strongly recommends the funding of this article. Moderator Faulconer asked for any other questions or comments, there being none she declared the article will move forward.*

**ARTICLE 16:** To see if the Town of Kingston will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$100,000 to be added to the Highway Department Equipment Capital Reserve Fund previously established. (Majority vote required)  
Estimated tax impact is \$0.12/\$1,000

**RECOMMENDED BY THE SELECT BOARD 5-0**  
**RECOMMENDED BY THE BUDGET COMMITTEE 8-0**

*Motion made to accept the article by Rick Russman seconded by Shaw Tilton. Mr. Coombs stated this fund has been in place for years and allows the department to stay on top of the vehicle replacement schedule. The department has a comprehensive maintenance program, they are still using a 1995 dump truck but it will age out, despite their efforts. The fund allows upgrades the department is looking at equipment that will allow them to reuse asphalt, so they don't have to purchase cold patch. Mr. Coombs asked for support. Moderator Faulconer asked for any questions or comments, there being none, declared the article will move forward.*

**ARTICLE 17:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$100,000 to be added to the Fire Apparatus Replacement Capital Reserve Fund previously established. (Majority vote required)  
Estimated tax impact is \$0.12/\$1,000

**RECOMMENDED BY THE SELECT BOARD 5-0**  
**RECOMMENDED BY THE BUDGET COMMITTEE 8-0**

*Motion made to accept the article by Richard Wilson seconded by Chris Bashaw. Chief Pellerin stated this fund is to make incremental payments for apparatus replacement. The departments newest engine is a 2016 it would cost over 700,000 to replace. The oldest truck is a 1993 the replacement schedule is usually every 20 years the tanker that is next to be replaced is already 22 years old. Repairs are becoming cost prohibited and he asked for support. Moderator Faulconer asked for any questions or comments, there being none, declared the article will move forward.*

**ARTICLE 18:** To see if the Town will vote to create two full-time Firefighter/EMT positions. Further to raise and appropriate the sum of \$115,231 for salary and benefits for 9 months. If approved, these positions will become part of the operating budget in ensuing years. (Majority vote required)  
Estimated tax impact is \$0.13/\$1,000

**RECOMMENDED BY THE SELECT BOARD 5-0**  
**RECOMMENDED BY THE BUDGET COMMITTEE 8-0**

*Motion made to accept the article by Graham Pellerin seconded by Kevin St. James. Chief Pellerin stated he realizes it's not a good year everyone is feeling the impact of cost of goods, utilities and taxes. When he proposed a potential solution four years ago for staffing issues her brought forth a private ambulance, per diem and 4 full time positions. At the time per diem was the cheapest and most economical but they knew it was a temporary fix. These two additional positions have been needed for years and asked for support. Kevin St. James stated this article may be hard for voters to understand and asked that they look at the recommendations of the budget committee and select board. Mr. St. James stated the town has a fully staffed Library and Police Department, but not have a fully staffed Fire Department. Calls for service have increased immensely and ask for support. Moderator Faulconer asked for any questions or comments, there being none, declared the article will move forward.*

**ARTICLE 19:** To see if the Town will vote to create one full-time Land Use Administrative Assistant position and eliminate the current part-time position. Further to raise and appropriate the sum of \$23,064 for salary and benefits for 9 months, to be added to the \$33,587 currently in the proposed operating budget. If approved, this position will become part of the operating budget in ensuing years. (Majority vote required.)  
Estimated tax impact is \$0.03/\$1,000

**RECOMMENDED BY THE SELECT BOARD 5-0**  
**RECOMMENDED BY THE BUDGET COMMITTEE 5-2**

*Motion made to accept the article by Chris Bashaw seconded by Richard Wilson. Mr. Bashaw stated he has been on the planning board for several years before becoming a selectman, the town has a large number of projects moving forward and there is a need for a full-time land use administrator. The town is missing out on revenue and economic opportunities because no one is in the office to answer calls or walk applicants through the process. A developer will go to a neighboring community because someone is there to answer the initial call. This is a service to businesses and citizens and it's important to have someone to answer questions. Glenn Coppelman, Vice Chair of the Planning Board supported Mr. Bashaw's comments and stated for a community of our size and amount of development activity on the boards plate a part time staff is not doing a service to the town or the applicants. Mr. Coppleman stated other communities smaller than Kingston have full time administrative staff and a full-time planner which the town someday may need to consider. Mr. Coppleman reiterated it is necessary and asked for support. Moderator Faulconer asked for any other questions or comments, there being none, declared the article will move forward.*

**ARTICLE 20:** Shall the Town readopt the OPTIONAL VETERANS' TAX CREDIT in accordance with RSA 72:28, II, for an annual tax credit on residential property of \$500? (Majority vote required)

**RECOMMENDED BY THE SELECT BOARD 5-0**

*Motion made to accept the article by Rich Wilson seconded by Kevin St. James. Mr. Coombs proposed an amendment stating the RSA allows a credit up to \$750. Kingston in the past has supported this credit for Veterans. Mr. Coombs made a motion to amend the amount from \$500 to \$750 this motion was seconded by Kevin St. James. Claudine Dias asked what the difference between Article 20 and Article 21. There was a discussion regarding the difference, Moderator Faulconer stated there was a motion and a second and asked for a verbal vote, all in favor. There was further discussion, on the wording being confusing, Rich Wilson and Electra Alessio stated that per the DRA both articles need to be on the warrant. Mr. St. James stated one article sets the dollar amount and one allows the credit. Moderator Faulconer asked for any other questions or comments, there being none, Moderator Faulconer asked for a vote all in favor, declared the article will move forward as amended.*

**ARTICLE 21:** Shall the Town readopt the ALL VETERANS' TAX CREDIT in accordance with RSA 72:28-b, for an annual tax credit on residential property which shall be equal the same amount as the standard or optional veterans' tax credit voted by the Town under RSA 72:28? (Majority vote required)

**RECOMMENDED BY THE SELECT BOARD 5-0**

*Motion made to accept the article by Rich Wilson seconded by Kevin St. James. Mr. Coombs stated he believes this pertains to who the tax credit applies to. Claudine Dias asked if the RSA could be included on the ballot. Moderator Faulconer stated it could not but the selectboard could make it available at the election, the board agreed. Moderator Faulconer asked for any other questions or comments, there being none, declared the article will move forward.*

## **ARTICLE 22**

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$8,000.00 for the purpose of updating the Forest Management Plan for Valley Lane Town Forest and to develop new and existing trails within the town forests. Said funds to come from the Forest Fund (RSA 31:113). (Majority vote required). No tax impact.

### **RECOMMENDED BY THE SELECT BOARD 5-0**

*Moderator Faulconer stated this article is being brought forward as amended. Motion made to accept the article by Rich Wilson seconded by Kevin St. James. Mr. St. James stated the Conservation Commission works tirelessly, this article would allow them to spend money that they already have and asked for support. Shaw Tilton stated this was a new requirement, the money comes from timber harvest and reiterated that they would be spending money that they have. Moderator Faulconer asked for any other questions or comments, there being none, asked for a vote to bring forward as amended, all in favor.*

**ARTICLE 23:** Shall the Town approve joining the existing Valley Lane Town Forest (Kingston Tax Map R-001, Lot 5) with the abutting properties located on Kingston Tax Maps R-001, Lots 6, 7, 9 & 10 and to be defined as one parcel with the designation: *Valley Lane Town Forest*. These combined properties will continue to be managed by the Conservation Commission pursuant to RSA 31:112. (Majority vote required) No tax impact.

### **RECOMMENDED BY THE SELECT BOARD 5-0**

*Motion made to accept the article by Kevin St. James seconded by Shaw Tilton. Kevin St. James stated the town acquired the property and this article would combine the lots, name it, and asked for support. Moderator Faulconer asked for any other questions or comments, there being none, declared the article will move forward.*

**ARTICLE 24:** To see if the Town of Kingston will vote to move forward with determining the feasibility of the concept, proposed in the Envision Kingston Charrette in 2017 and put into practice temporarily during the 2022 Kingston Days celebration, to convert the Plains to a one-way traffic pattern that allows the incorporation of walking and biking lanes as well as defined parking areas. This is a non-binding referendum.

### **RECOMMENDED BY THE SELECT BOARD 5-2**

*Motion made to accept the article by Kevin St. James seconded by Richard Wilson. Kevin St. James stated Envision Kingston I and II both had the one-way traffic, and it was utilized during Kingston Days. This article will allow board to find out if the voters want to see it happen. Glenn Coppleman stated he had visual representation the artist renderings particularly from Envision II. That is where the concept came up to improve the usability of the plains and make more available to cars, bikes walking and so forth. Moderator Faulconer asked for any other questions or comments, there being none, declared the article will move forward.*

*Moderator Faulconer asked if there was any other business there being none, she adjourned the meeting at 9:51 am.*

Respectfully submitted

Tammy L. Bakie  
Town Clerk-Tax Collector