

SANDGATE, VERMONT ANNUAL TOWN MEETING, MARCH 4, 2024

The legal voters of the Town of Sandgate, Vermont met at the Sandgate Town Hall on Monday, March 4, 2024 at 7:07 p.m. for the purpose of acting on the following articles.

45 people were present. Sheila Kearns, Town Moderator, brought the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. Sheila reviews the Robert's Rules of Order for open meetings, specifically maintaining order, only one person speaking at a time, and no non-voters may speak or vote.

ARTICLE 2. To hear and act on the reports of the Town Officers.

Julie Robertson asks if she can speak about write-ins and recommends Kathleen Hill for Cemetery Commission. Richard Zoppel speaks for the Zoning Commission stating that they have completed revisions of the Town Zoning Bylaws as required by the State including updates to the subdivision laws but the Zoning Board resisted this requirement and subdivision remains the same. There can be no building in flood plains. The Board has to determine the locations of Sandgate flood plains. Richard states that the Zoning Board is looking for a few new members. Septic permits must be approved by the State before obtaining a Town permit. If you need a building permit, check the Zoning Bylaws on the town website. Some structures in Sandgate are non-compliant. There was some discussion about flood plain setbacks.

Sheila Kearns speaks as Zoning Administrator stating that the Selectboard must complete their process and meetings. Jean Eisenhardt encourages residents to apply for the Wuerslin Arts Grant. Joe Nolan, Selectboard Chair, states that everyone is welcome to attend selectboard meetings and express their concerns. Valerie asks Joe about dry hydrant testing the Joe states that the Town has to pay the Arlington Fire Department to do the test and there are a few hydrants that have to be cleaned out before the testing can be done. Shelley Finn asks about ARPA funds. Sheila moves the discussion.

Sheila asks the State Representatives, Kathleen James and Seth Bongartz to speak. Kathleen speaks first about the Appropriation Committee, FY25 State Budget, last year's childcare bill, tuition assistance for families, property taxes and education spending. She explains that it starts with the local School Board. All budgets across the state are added up and the sum total you can use is reserves ??? more money. She spoke of the need to consolidate education spending and incentives as well as more mandated teacher-student ratios. Margaret Phelps asks about the quality of food and food waste and well as the waste of school materials and books. Kathleen James comments that she can't speak to this question. Seth Bongartz, of the House Environment & Energy Committee states that he spends 90% of his time working on legislation for housing and climate change. Summer flooding wiped out 1,000 housing units and 2023 damage was close to a billion dollars. He stated that Act 250 needs to be fixed including Land use maps, regulatory relief. Kathleen James states that she is always in defense of school choice. Kathy Wagner inquires about cell towers – 56 – haven't seen that yet.

ARTICLE 3. Shall current property taxes be paid to the Town Treasurer on or before Oct 1, 2024?

Pat Hall motions, Ann Hammerle seconds, Pat moves, all in favor.

ARTICLE 4. Shall the Town authorize the Selectboard to spend budget surplus funds, that have been collected into a General and Highway “Rainy Day Fund”? *

Margaret Phelps motions, Pat Hall seconds, Ann Hammerle moves, all in favor.

ARTICLE 5. Shall the Town appropriate \$7,500 to the Arlington Rescue Squad?

Jim Henderson motions, Margaret Phelps seconds, all in favor.

ARTICLE 6. Shall the Town appropriate \$1,200 in support of Arlington Nursing Services?

Julie Robertson motions, Karen Tendrup seconds, all in favor.

ARTICLE 7. Shall the Town appropriate \$3,000 in support of Arlington Recreation Park?

Margaret Phelps motions, Pat Hall seconds, all in favor.

ARTICLE 8. Shall the Town of Sandgate appropriate \$3,800 for the Martha Canfield Library?

Ann Hammerle motions, Valerie dePeyster seconds, all in favor.

ARTICLE 9. Shall the Town of Sandgate vote to appropriate the total sum of \$2,882 for the following: Arlington Area Childcare, \$750; Arlington Community House, \$100; Bennington County Child Advocacy, \$200; Bennington County Conservation District, \$300; Bennington-Rutland Opportunity Council (BROC), \$137; Center for Independent Living, \$95; Center for Restorative Justice, \$250; Green-Up Day, \$50; PAVE, \$100; Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging, \$600; Tutorial Center, \$200; VT Association of Conservation Districts, \$100?

There was a discussion about appropriation recipients not submitting annual reports.

Margaret Phelps motions, Rob Viglas seconds, all in favor.

ARTICLE 10. Shall the Town vote to adopt a budget of \$608,185 to defray the expenses of the Town for the period of July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025?

Valerie dePeyster motions, Dottie Sundquist seconds, all in favor.

ARTICLE 11. Shall the Town vote to roll over any excess funds in the pavement budget line item (Budgeted Amount \$30,000) into the Reserve Pavement Account?

Pat Hall motions, Jim Henderson seconds, all in favor.

Valerie dePeyster move to adjourn, Karen Tendrup seconds, meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.