

# 2024 Thornton Town Meeting Minutes

Tuesday March 12, 2024

The polls were opened at Thornton Central School, located at 1886 Route 175, Thornton, NH at 8:00 AM by Moderator John Piantadosi. Absentee Ballots were cast at 1:00 PM. The Polls did not close until the posted time of 7:00 PM.

Total Number of voters on the checklist: 2053

New Voters on election day: 4

Number of registered voters: 2057

Number of ballots cast: 438

To the residents of the Town of Thornton in the county of Grafton, state of New Hampshire qualified to vote in the affairs and to act upon the following subjects:

Article 1: To choose all necessary officers for the terms stated:

The following elected positions are available for the March 12, 2024, Town Elections.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Select Board Member</u></b></p> <p>Three-Year Term, Two Positions Marianne Peabody Peter Laufenberg</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Planning Board Member</u></b></p> <p>Three-Year Term, Three Positions Name 1 Name 2 Timothy Grace</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Select Board Member</u></b></p> <p>One-Year Term, One Position Matthew Peltier</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Planning Board Member</u></b></p> <p>Two-Year Term, One Position Name</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Cemetery Trustee</u></b></p> <p>Three-Year Term, One Position Mike Benton</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Treasurer</u></b></p> <p>Three-Year Term, One Position Angel Allison</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Library Trustee</u></b></p> <p>Three-Year Term, One Position Anita C. Ross</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Supervisor of Checklist</u></b></p> <p>Six-Year Term, One Position Heather Baldwin</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Overseer of Public Welfare</u></b></p> <p>One-Year Term, One Position Marianne Peabody</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Moderator</u></b></p> <p>Two-Year Term, One Position Logan A. Ross</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Trustee of the Trust Funds</u></b></p> <p>Three-Year Term, One Position Ralph Bradley</p>	

**Saturday the 16<sup>th</sup> day of March 2024**

**The Thornton Town Meeting convened at the Thornton Central School, at 10:00 AM,  
to act on the Articles of the Warrant**

**The Supervisors of the Checklist reported a total of 81 voters.**

The Town Meeting was called to order at 10:00 am by Moderator John Piantadosi. Mr. Piantadosi announced that the local Boy Scout Troop 58 would be posting the colors once again this year. Mr. Piantadosi gave the orders to present and post. The Scouts and Mr. Piantadosi then lead the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance. Resident Terry Penny requested a moment of silence.

Mr. Piantadosi congratulated the candidates who won their races in the Town Election and asked them to remain after the adjournment of the meeting to take their oath of office. A reminder was made that there were Town Reports available at the entrance of the meeting. This was followed by introductions: Town Clerk Anita Ross, Town Administrator Desiree L. Mahurin, Selectboard Chairman Peter Laufenberg, Vice-Chairwoman Marianne Peabody, Selectman Steven Babin, and Interim Selectman Matthew Peltier. Assistant Moderator Kenneth Wolff, Supervisors of the Checklist, Cindy McAuley, Clarissa Palmer.

**Motion: To entertain a motion to disperse from reading the warrant in its entirety.**

**Moved:** Voter

**Seconded:** Peter Laufenberg

**Discussion:** None

**Motion carried by unanimous vote.**

**Motion: To allow out of town non-residents to speak, but not be allowed to vote.**

**Moved:** Peter Laufenberg

**Seconded:** Voter

**Discussion:** None

**Motion carried by unanimous vote.**

**Article 2:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of seventy-five thousand dollars (\$75,000) to be added to the existing Municipal Department Paving Projects Capital Reserve Fund for the purpose of future paving at the Transfer Station. (This appropriation will not have a net increase to the tax rate.) The Board of Selectmen recommends this article (5-0). (Majority vote required).

**Motion:** Richard Baker

**Second:** Bill DeLeo

**Discussion:** Robert Hatcher suggested that instead of voice vote that everyone show their voter cards. The Moderator made note of that request, and all agreed with show of cards.

The Discussion then continued for Article 2.

A brief discussion was held including that the moderator slow down and insure the statement of voter names as clearly as possible.

**Motion carried by majority vote.**

**Article 3:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) to be added to the existing Assessing Capital Reserve Fund. (This appropriation will not have a net increase to the tax rate.) The Board of Selectmen recommends this article (5-0). (Majority vote required).

**Motion:** Voter

**Second:** Bill DeLeo

**Discussion:** There was a discussion about Avatar. Chairman Laufenberg clarified questions about how Avatar was chosen to perform our assessing, including how the process of bid/proposals were handled by the Selectboard. Chairman Laufenberg stated that there were no other bids for our assessing other than Avatar. The selectboard will be sending out another bid once more, but for now we are using Avatar as our assessing firm. Our assessing is done every 5 years.

**Motion carried by majority vote.**

**Article 4:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of eighty thousand dollars (\$80,000) to be added to the existing Police Cruiser and Cruiser Equipment Capital Reserve Fund. This sum to come from the unassigned fund balance. No amount to be raised by taxation. The Board of Selectmen recommends this article (5-0). (Majority vote required).

**Motion:** Bill DeLeo

**Second:** Fran Chevalier

**Discussion:** None

**Motion carried by majority vote.**

**Article 5:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of eighty thousand dollars (\$80,000) to be added to the existing Fire Truck/Rescue Vehicle/Equipment and Major Maintenance Capital Reserve Fund. This sum to come from the unassigned fund balance. No amount to be raised by taxation. The Board of Selectmen recommends this article (5-0). (Majority vote required).

**Motion:** Bill DeLeo

**Second:** Richard Baker

**Discussion:** Questions about sharing costs between Campton and Thornton. A question was raised as to if we shared with Waterville Valley. We do not share with Waterville Valley. Questions regarding fund balances and tax rate were discussed and clarified by Selectman Chair Peter Laufenberg. The share with Campton and Thornton is by population number.

**Motion carried by majority vote.**

**Article 6:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **forty thousand dollars (\$40,000)** to be added to the existing Municipal Buildings Capital Reserve Fund. (This appropriation will not have a net increase to the tax rate.) The Board of Selectmen recommends this article (5-0). (Majority vote required).

**Motion:** Bill DeLeo

**Second:** Ken Wolff

**Discussion:** Questions were asked about town owned properties. Town owned properties have been sold except for 2. The rest cannot be sold. Discussion continued including the usage of the Capital Reserve and its use. The use of these funds are for Renovations, maintenance for the building, and other building issues that may occur.

The Trustees of Trust Funds are working together with the CIP trustees and the selectboard to come up with a 10-year plan for renovation use etc. The funds balance can be found on page 44 in the town report.

**Motion carried by majority vote.**

**Article 7:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **four million two hundred thirty-nine thousand seven hundred ninety-five dollars (\$4,239,795)** to support town operations for the 2024 year. Said sum does not include special or individual articles. (This appropriation may have an estimated net tax impact of .75 cents increase to the tax rate depending on actual revenues & fund balance usage in 2024.) The Board of Selectmen recommends this article (5-0). (Majority vote required)

**Motion:** Bill DeLeo

**Second:** Richard Baker

**Discussion:** George Humphrey made comments to amend the article relative to the library. Chairman Laufenberg inquired about the new total. Many voters spoke highly of all the library director has provided for the town and of the improvements she has made to the library. The process of budgeting and meeting of boards was discussed. It was stated that Thornton is not a Home Rule State and thus we follow the state laws.

**Motion to amend Article 7:** George Humphrey motioned to amend the article with an increase of \$2,258.00 pertaining to the library.

**Second:** Sally Davis.

**Motion to Amend Article 7 was carried.**

**Amended Article 7:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **four million two hundred forty-two thousand fifty-three dollars (\$4,242,053)** to support town operations for the 2024 year. Said sum does not include special or individual articles. (This appropriation may have an estimated net tax impact of .75 cents increase to the tax rate depending on actual revenues & fund balance usage in 2024.) The Board of Selectmen recommends this article (5-0). (Majority vote required)

**Motion for the Amended Article 7:** Voter

**Second:** Voter

**Discussion:** A discussion was made about the impact on the tax rate. The questions were clarified. There was a continued lengthy discussion about employee raises and the changing of line items.

Ralph Bradley asked to move the question and suggested that voters read the town report and attend the various board meetings to educate themselves in the budgeting process.

**Motion carried for Article 7 as Amended.**

**Article 8:** Shall the Town modify the provisions of RSA 72:39-a for elderly exemption from property tax, based on assessed value for qualified taxpayers to be as follows: for person 65 years of age up to 75 years, \$56,000; for a person 75 years of age up to 80 years, \$77,000; for a person 80 years of age or older, \$98,000. To qualify, the person must have been a NH resident for at least 3 consecutive years, own the real estate individually or jointly, or if the real estate is owned by such person's spouse, they must have been married to each other for at least 5 consecutive years. In addition, the taxpayer must have a net income of not more than \$30,000 or, if married, a combined net income of less than \$48,000; and own net assets not in excess of \$90,000 excluding the value of the person's residence.

The Board of Selectmen recommends this article (5-0). (Majority vote required)

**Motion:** Bill DeLeo

**Second:** Myrtle Lewis

**Discussion:** A short discussion to clarify the provisions was made by Selectboard Chair Peter Laufenberg. He directed voters to view page 77 of the town report that reflected the proposed budget and warrant article in form of a quicksheet.

**Motion carried by majority vote.**

**Article 9:** Shall the Town modify the provisions of RSA 72:37-b, Exemption for the Disabled from property tax, based on assessed value for qualified taxpayers to be \$56,000. To qualify, the person must have been a NH resident for at least 5 consecutive years, own the real estate individually or jointly, or if the real estate is owned by such person's spouse, they must have been married to each other for at least 5 consecutive years. In addition, the taxpayer must have a net income of not more than \$30,000 or, if married, a combined net income of less than \$48,000; and own net assets not in excess of \$90,000 excluding the value of the person's residence.

The Board of Selectmen recommends this article (5-0). (Majority vote required)

**Motion:** Bill DeLeo

**Second:** Butch Burbank

**Discussion:** None

**Motion carried by majority vote.**

**Article 10:** Shall the Town modify the provisions of RSA 72:37, Exemption for the Blind, to allow a resident who is legally blind as determined by the blind service program, bureau of vocational rehabilitation, department of education, to be exempt each year on the assessed value, for property tax purposes, of his or her residential real estate to the value of \$21,000. The Board of Selectmen recommends this article (5-0). (Majority vote required)

**Motion:** Kate Hadaway

**Second:** Bill DeLeo

**Discussion:** None

**Motion carried by majority vote.**

**Article 11:** To see if the Town will vote to delegate the duties and responsibilities of the cemetery trustees to the board of selectmen pursuant to RSA 289:6. If the majority vote in the affirmative then the delegation shall take effect 90 days after adoption and shall continue until rescinded by vote of the town meeting.

Submitted by petition. (Majority vote required)

**Motion:** Bill DeLeo

**Second:** Roy Sabourn

**Discussion:** Barbara Patterson spoke favorably about the Cemetery board and how various times had met on days off to help assist with burial services. Of the many times they gave to the town cemetery services on their own time.

A suggestion was made that the cemetery trustees needed to work together and should have a town phone and not use their personal ones for town business.

It was mentioned that UpToDate cemetery software should be used for a better cemetery burial paper trail. A stipend for Cemetery trustees was needed. The increase of older townspeople passing away and having their lots taken care of was brought up as a concern as well.

Chairman Laufenberg explained that the board was receiving no communication, reports, or budget from the cemetery trustees. Selectwoman Peabody suggested that perhaps the cemetery trustees could have their meetings at the town hall and post all their meetings, agendas, and minutes. Roy Sabourn brought up the importance of communication and how it was time to benefit the citizens by getting rid of the cemetery trustee board and put a good cemetery administration in place. Times are changing and we need a more visible and easier access to the cemetery.

Matt Peltier spoke that this article's goal was to benefit the residents. If a board is not benefiting the residents then it must be changed.

Steve Babin said that you can make suggestions, but without communication you cannot implement items without communication with the trustees and their agreement.

Peter Laufenberg spoke about the efficiency of how cemetery issues could be handled, if the selectboard were to take over the cemetery.

**Motion carried by majority vote.**



**Article 12:** To see if the Town will vote to accept Jack's Run as a town road from the Tri-Intersection of Fraser Road and Holly Lane. (It is a dead-end road.) Said road is depicted on the plan of approved subdivision dated May 4, 2022, and recorded at the Grafton County Registry of Deeds as plan no. 16413. This acceptance is to be final and effective only upon a vote of the Board of Selectmen, that the road has been constructed to current town standards, that the condition is acceptable to the Selectmen and the Road Agent, that there are no title deficiencies with the road ownership and that the town is given a satisfactory deed for such road. Any and all costs associated with the legal review by town counsel shall be reimbursed to the Town of Thornton prior to acceptance.  
Submitted by petition. (Majority vote required)

**Motion:** Bill DeLeo

**Second:** Voter

**Discussion:** An Amendment for this article was read by Peter Laufenberg

**Motion to Amend Article 12 :** Peter Laufenberg

**Second:** voter.

**Motion to Amend Article 12 carried.**

**Amended Article 12: To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Board of Selectmen to accept** Jack's Run as a town road from the Tri-Intersection of Fraser Road and Holly Lane. (It is a dead-end road.) Said road is depicted on the plan of approved subdivision dated May 4, 2022, and recorded at the Grafton County Registry of Deeds as plan no. 16413. This acceptance is to be final and effective only upon a vote of the Board of Selectmen, that the road has been constructed to current town standards, that the condition is acceptable to the Selectmen and the Road Agent, that there are no title deficiencies with the road ownership and that the town is given a satisfactory deed for such road. Any and all costs associated with the legal review by town counsel shall be reimbursed to the Town of Thornton prior to acceptance.  
Submitted by petition. (Majority vote required)

**Motion to vote on amended Article 12:** Peter Laufenberg

**Second:** Roy Sabourn.

**Motion carried on Article 12 as amended.**

**Discussion on the Amended Article 12:** A discussion on the amended article took place. Several residents spoke on the accepting of the road. Clarification of authorization the

Selectmen to accept the road was made by Chairman Laufenberg. Laufenberg stated that this article was by petition.

**Motion carried on amended Article 12.**

**Article 13:** To see if the Town will vote to accept Fondue Drive as a town road from Upper Mad River Rd., a distance of approximately 1,725 feet to a cul-de-sac. This acceptance is to be final and effective only upon a vote of the citizens, that the condition is acceptable that there are no title deficiencies with the road ownership and that the town is given satisfactory deeds for the road and cul-de-sac areas. Any and all costs associated with the legal Deed or Title review by town counsel shall be reimbursed to the Town of Thornton prior to acceptance. Submitted by petition. (Majority vote required)

**Motion:** Bill DeLeo

**Second:** Richard Baker

**Discussion:** An Amendment to Article 13 was read by Peter Laufenberg

**Motion to amend Article 13:** Peter Laufenberg

**Second:** voter.

**Discussion:** None

**Motion carried to amend Article 13.**

**Amended Article 13:** To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Board of Selectman to accept accept Fondue Drive as a town road from Upper Mad River Rd., a distance of approximately 1,725 feet to a cul-de-sac. **This acceptance is to be final and effective only upon a vote of the Board of Selectmen, that the road has been constructed to current town standards, that the condition is acceptable to the Selectmen and the Road Agent, that there are no title deficiencies with the road ownership and that the town is given a satisfactory deed for such road. Any and all costs associated with the legal review by town counsel shall be reimbursed to the Town of Thornton prior to acceptance.** (Majority vote required)

**Motion for amended Article 13:** Peter Laufenberg

**Second:** Voter

**Discussion:** Rosanna Yarnell asked about the standards of the road. Peter Laufenberg stated that the road is not up to standards. Clarification of what it would mean for a yes vote on this

amendment. Laufenberg spoke on what would be needed for the road to be brought up to standards. As of now the road is not up to standards that consider it as a road.

**Motion on Amended Article 13 carried.**

**To transact any other business, which may legally come before this meeting.**

Kate Hadaway thanked everyone who served on town boards. Stated that they all did a great job in their challenging roles, with some not receiving a stipend and had great gratitude to the board. She commented that the town employees do a great job for our town. As neighbors and citizens, we owe it to speak kindly regardless of the laws that are in place that must be followed. It can be challenging to be in the hotseat, but it is appreciated.

Robert Hatcher expressed a second to the comments made by Kate. He also stated thanks for keeping the tax bill down. The board deserves a round of applause for keeping the costs down.

Marianne Peabody recognized Treasurer Susan Dumont as our treasurer who is retiring as our Town Treasurer. Sue has been our elected treasurer since 1998. For 26 years Sue has overseen the Town funds and invested our money. We would like to acknowledge Sue for her dedication, professionalism, and expertise as our Treasurer. Thank you, Sue.

Peter Laufenberg recognized John Piantadosi, who has served as our Moderator since 2020. John came into the office in the midst of Covid 19. He handled navigating Covid very well. Thank you, John, for your service.

John thanked everyone in turn and spoke about voting during Covid and how they handled the voting. He thanked all the townspeople.

There was a motion made to adjourn and a second.

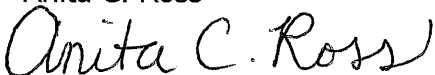
The meeting adjournment time was at 11:45 AM.

People were reminded if they needed to be sworn in to office, please do so before they left.

Given under my hands and seal this 24th day of April 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

Anita C. Ross



Town Clerk

Town of Thornton