

TOWN OF THORNTON
STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
2020 Town Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, March 10, 2020

The polls were opened at the Thornton Central School located at 1886 NH Rte. 175, Thornton, NH at 8:00 am by Moderator Robert MacLeod. The polls remained open until 7:00 pm.

The total number of registered voters on Checklist: 2186

New Voters: 3

Ballots Cast: 293

To the inhabitants of the Town of Thornton in the County of Grafton in said state, qualified to vote in the town affairs and to act upon the following subjects:

Article 1: To choose all necessary officers for the ensuing year.

OFFICIAL ELECTION RESULTS

Select Board Member

3 Year Term, 2 Positions

Brad Benton 185
Roy Sabourn 171
Matthew Peltier 140

Trustee of Trust Funds

3 Year Term, One Position

Richard Baker 243

Cemetery Trustee

3 Year Term, One Position

Gerrienne Benton 28 (write in)

Library Trustee

3 Year Term, One Position

Katherine Hadaway 159
Christopher Wilkie 84

Overseer of Public Welfare

1 Year Term, One Position

Marianne Peabody 248

Town Clerk

3 Year Term, One Position

Donna Monti 254

Cemetery Trustee

1 Year Term, One Position

Wendy Johnston 246

Planning Board Member

3 Year Term, Two Positions

Karen Waters 234
Nancy Decoteau 3 (write in)

Supervisors of Checklist

6 Year Term, One Position

Clarissa Uttley 237

Town Moderator

2 Year Term, One Position

John Piantedosi 243

Warrant Articles

Zoning Amendment # 1:

Are you in favor of the adoption of an amendment to the existing Town of Thornton Zoning Ordinance, as proposed by the Thornton Planning Board, which provides for the insertion of a new item under **ARTICLE II: DEFINITIONS**

Short-Term Residential Rental means any transient occupancy of a dwelling unit or any portion thereof under a written or unwritten lease, license or agreement for a term of thirty (30) days or less.

Recommended by the Planning Board.

YES 170

NO 111

Zoning Amendment # 2:

Are you in favor of the adoption of an amendment to the existing Town of Thornton Zoning Ordinance, as proposed by the Thornton Planning Board, which provides for the addition of a new use under **ARTICLE IV: TABLE OF USES?**

To designate: "Short Term Rentals" as Permitted (P) in all zones, subject to the condition(s) set forth in explanatory footnote 7.

Footnote Explanations:

- 7. Subject to applicable Short-Term Rental Regulations as adopted and as amended.

Recommended by the Planning Board.

YES 157

NO 122

Zoning Amendment #3:

Are you in favor of the adoption of amendment to the existing Town of Thornton Zoning Ordinance, as proposed by the Thornton Planning Board, which provides for an addition to paragraph 1 and the revision of item A. 11. **UNDER ARTICLE V: PERMITTED USES IN VARIOUS ZONES?**

The Planning Board shall have the authority to adopt regulations relative to Short-Term Residential Rental dwellings.

A.11. Renting of rooms and furnishing of board in; private, owner occupied, family dwellings, to resident guests on a long-term or short term basis.

Recommended by the Planning Board.

YES 141

NO 137

Zoning Amendment #4:

Are you in favor of the adoption of an amendment to the existing Town of Thornton Zoning Ordinance, as proposed by the Thornton Planning Board, which provides for the addition of a sentence to the first paragraph of **SECTION IX** under **ARTICLE XV: FLOOD PLAIN**

SECTION IX: SPECIAL FLOOD HAZARD AREAS

In Zone A the compliance officer shall obtain, review, and reasonably utilize any 100-year flood elevation data available from any federal, state or other source including data submitted for development proposals submitted to the community (i.e. subdivisions, site plan approvals). Where a 100-year flood elevation is not available or not known, the 100-year flood elevation shall be determined to be at least two (2) feet above the highest adjacent grade.

Recommended by the Planning Board.

YES 202

NO 73

The Thornton Town Meeting convened at the Thornton Central School on Saturday, March 14, 2020 at 10:00 am to act on the remaining articles of this warrant.

Voters Present: 67

Saturday, March 14, 2020

The Town Meeting was opened at 10:00 am by Moderator Robert MacLeod.

Moderator MacLeod then led the Pledge of Allegiance. Moderator MacLeod introduced the following individuals representing the Town: Town Clerk Donna Monti, Town Administrator Debra Shepard, Select Board Vice Chair Roy Sabourn, Select Board Chair Brad Benton, Select Board member Marianne Peabody, Select Board member Jack Gaites, Select Board member Joseph Monti, Supervisors of the Checklist, Mary Pelchat, Cindy McAuley and Gloria Kimball.

Select Board Chair Brad Benton then asked for a moment of silence to recognize former town officials who had passed away in the last year: Jim Parziale, Arthur Gross, and Sandy MacIntosh.

Moderator MacLeod then mentioned that there were Town Reports available in the back of the room. There is a Rabies Clinic today from 1-2 at the Plymouth Police Department sponsored by the Plymouth Rotary Club.

There are also sign-up sheets for newly forming committees: Cable Advisory Committee and Transfer Station Advisory Committee, and a petition for the NH Electric Co-op. There is also information regarding the COVID 19 Virus.

MOTION: To permit non-residents and unregistered voters to speak at the meeting for the purpose of information and clarification of the articles at appropriate times.

Moved: Anita Ross

Seconded: John Piantedosi

Discussion: NONE

Motion carried by majority vote.

MOTION: To waive the reading of the warrant in its entirety.

Moved: Robert Ross

Seconded: Richard Baker

Discussion: NONE

Motion carried by majority vote.

Article #3: Shall the Town of Thornton modify the provisions of RSA 72:39-a, Elderly Exemption as follows:

Age Qualifying Exemptions:

Age 65-74	from \$30,000	to \$40,000
Age 75-79	from \$40,000	to \$55,000
Age 80+	from \$50,000	to \$70,000

Financial Qualification Limits:

Income:	Single \$25,000	No Change
	Married \$40,000	No Change

Asset Limitation: \$75,000 No Change

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

Motion: Peter Laufenberg

2nd: Anita Ross

Discussion:

Select Board Member Marianne Peabody explained that an increase in exemptions was necessary to offset the increase in assessed values. This increase will also help keep the elderly in their own homes. The elderly deferral program is another option to help keep the elderly in their own homes when taxes are deferred.

Robert Ross asked what is considered an asset. Ms. Peabody explained that the primary residence up to 2 acres of land is excluded but that bank accounts, other land, buildings or automobiles would be considered an asset.

Motion carried by majority vote.

Article #4: Shall the Town of Thornton vote to adopt the provisions of RSA 72:28-b, All Veteran's Tax Credit? If adopted, the credit will be available to any resident, or spouse or surviving spouse of any resident, who (1) served not less than 90 days on active service in the armed forces of the United States and was honorably discharged or an officer honorably separated from services and is not eligible for or receiving a credit under RSA 72:28 or RSA 72:35. If adopted, the credit granted will be \$500, the same amount as the standard or optional veterans' tax credit voted by the Town of Thornton under RSA 72:28. The Board of Selectmen recommends this article. (Majority vote required).

Motion: Bill DeLeo

2nd: Leo Lecher

Discussion:

Select Board Member Marianne Peabody stated that the Town of Thornton presently offers the \$500 exemption to veterans who served during certain war times. The RSA has changed and now covers all veterans no matter when they served and have resided in Thornton for over 1 year. Veterans must apply at the Town Hall by April

15th and bring a copy of their DD-214.

Robert Hatcher asked if it was known how many veterans receive the credit at this time and Administrator Shepard stated the number was not known at this time. Roy Sabourn stated that the Board is in full support of this article.

Motion carried by majority vote.

Article #5: Shall the Town of Thornton vote to adopt the provisions of RSA 72:61-64 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 residential, non-commercial site. Such property tax exemption shall be in the amount equal to 100% of the assessed value of qualifying solar energy system equipment under these statutes. The Board of Selectmen recommends this article. (Majority vote required).

Motion: Richard Baker

2nd: Ralph Bradley

Discussion:

Selectman Roy Sabourn explained that solar improvements had not been taxed previously. As of 2019, any private solar unit must be included in the assessment. This article is to encourage residents to pursue alternative energy sources. 100% of the value of the solar equipment will be deducted from the taxed value. Residents must go to the Town Hall to complete the necessary exemption form by April 15.

Ralph Bradley asked if this is something that needs to be applied for every year. Administrator Shepard explained no, this is a one-time application and exemption will apply every year.

Julie Piehn asked if a person owns multiple acres and someone contracts to use your land as a solar farm, will that qualify? Roy Sabourn clarified that this exemption is for residential properties only, not commercial.

Motion carried by majority vote.

Article #6: To see if the Town will vote to approve an additional full time police officer position to be added to the Thornton Police Department, and to furthermore see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of sixty thousand dollars (\$60,000) to compensate the wages and benefits for this position hired on or after April 12, 2020. This position will be incorporated into the police department annual operating budget starting in 2021. The Board of Selectmen recommends this article. (Majority vote required).

Motion: Anita Ross

2nd: Bill DeLeo

Discussion:

Police Chief Kenneth Miller discussed handouts he had supplied to show comparison to other towns with the same population as Thornton. He went on to explain that the Town does not have enough supervisors to supervise the officers. This puts the officers at risk. Officers will have to sometimes call for assistance and the Town could be held liable for failure to supervise. If we are able to hire one more full-time officer, then one more supervisor could be promoted to cover liability issues. Chief is trying to build longevity, with chances to advance. One more officer would allow steady shifts and improve morale. He wants officers to stay. Some officers are working 12-16 hour shifts. He is trying to build a solid foundation to keep officers on the job. He wants to continue to promote community service that the police department does such as National Night Out,

Thanksgiving Meals, Christmas Toys for kids, etc. Since Chief Miller has been in Thornton, he has applied for and received over \$100,000 in grant monies and has recently applied for a Cops Hiring Grant which would provide 25% of the new officer's salary for 3 years. He thanked everyone for their support and he will continue to support this community.

Attorney Kayla Slaughter who is a prosecutor in Lincoln, Woodstock and Campton, brought attention to page 3 of Chief's handout which shows that Campton has 2 prosecutors. She wanted it known that she is the only prosecutor in Campton. Chief responded that the website indicates there are two prosecutors.

Stephanie Oleson spoke about the Town having no coverage during certain periods and she does not feel it is acceptable that with 5 officers this should be the case. Yet they have time to work details in different towns and have officers delivering meals and collecting toys. The supervisor position is not going to make an officer making less than \$20 an hour want to stay. Why are we not looking at pay raises based on experience instead to keep them.

Chief responded that yes, we do have 24-hour coverage and when not on the road, they are on call. He has all new officers and cannot leave them out there alone with no supervision. It's only a matter of time before the Town gets sued. We no longer rely on Campton or Woodstock for coverage. Chief agreed that the officers do need a raise. We are doing what we can with what we have.

Stephanie Oleson refuted the Chief's statement that we do have 24-hour coverage. She stated she knows for a matter of fact that on multiple days a week the town has no coverage from 2:30 AM to 7:30 AM.

Chief stated he cannot speak for prior administrations but that yes, we do have 24- hour coverage. We have to have the supervisors because the officers cannot be alone. It is critical to the structure of the police department.

Stephanie Oleson stated that towns with businesses bring in a lot more money and that any tax increase here would be felt by the taxpayers. She cannot believe that Thornton receives 7200 dispatch calls in a year. She further feels that an officer that has been on the job for 2 years shouldn't need a supervisor.

Chief thanked her for her thoughts but he can only tell us that we need the additional help. Officers need a supervisor, mentor to assist or they would need to make a decision on their own which could be a wrong decision.

Moderator MacLeod then stopped the discussion stating that others wanted to speak.

Sgt. Dan Gilman then spoke to advocate for the need for the additional officer. He has been here in Thornton for 7 years, previously working in Campton for 5 and Waterville Valley for 3. Chief Miller has been a breath of fresh air, he leads us and gives us what we need. All the officers we have are brand new, he does the training. Officers are on call 4 out of 7 nights a week. They need to have that 3 days off. With a 6th officer, it will give the residents what they asking for 24- hour coverage.

Mary Anne Medaglia moved for a vote.

2nd: Peter Laufenberg

Eric James, Grafton County Sheriff's Department, wanted to know when the Cop Grant would go into effect and the details of the grant.

Chief Miller-not known at this time, he just submitted the grant last week. It is very competitive and only so

much is given per state.

Eric James asked when the position would start and Chief Miller indicated it is budgeted to start April 12 through the end of the year.

Moderator MacLeod called on Mary Anne Medaglia to clarify what kind of vote she was asking for. She indicated she would like to call to move the vote forward by hand count.

Motion to move the vote made.

Article read again.

Motion carried by majority vote

Article #7: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of six thousand dollars (\$6,000) to be added to the existing Transfer Station Equipment Capital Reserve Fund. The Board of Selectmen recommends this article. (Majority vote required).

Motion: Joe Morris

2nd: Shirley Batchelder

Discussion: NONE

Motion carried by majority vote

Article #8: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000) to be added to the existing Assessing Capital Reserve Fund. The Board of Selectmen recommends this article. (Majority vote required).

Motion: Bill DeLeo

2nd: Peter Laufenberg

Discussion:

Mary Anne Medaglia asked what the difference is between Assessing Capital Reserve Fund and Property Tax Map Capital Reserve.

Selectman Roy Sabourn explained that The Capital Reserve Fund covers the 5 year reevaluation assessment and the Property Tax Map Capital Reserve is for new tax maps which are needed.

Robert Hatcher asked why this is a Fund and not an actual expense we budget for.

Selectman Roy Sabourn explained that this is not a yearly expense so it is put in capital reserve to keep the tax rate stable.

Motion carried by majority vote.

Article #9: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of twenty-eight thousand dollars (\$28,000) to be added to the existing Property Tax Map Capital Reserve Fund. The Board of Selectmen recommends this article. (Majority vote required).

Motion: Richard Baker

2nd: Bill DeLeo

Discussion: NONE

Motion carried by majority vote.

Article #10: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of thirty-one thousand dollars (\$31,000) to be added to the existing Highway Vehicle, Equipment and Major Maintenance Capital Reserve Fund. The Board of Selectmen recommends this article. (Majority vote required).

Motion: Shirley Batchelder

2nd: Peter Laufenberg

Discussion: NONE

Motion carried by majority vote.

Article #11: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of thirty-two thousand dollars (\$32,000) to be added to the existing Police Cruiser and Cruiser Equipment Capital Reserve Fund. The Board of Selectmen recommends this article. (Majority vote required).

Motion: Richard Baker

2nd: Kari Miller

Discussion:

Robert Hatcher asked how much money is currently in the fund now.

Richard Baker, Trustee of the Trust Funds Chairperson responded \$46,508.00.

Motion carried by majority vote.

Article #12: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of one hundred and fifty-three thousand dollars (\$153,000) to be added to the existing Fire Truck/Rescue Vehicle/Equipment and Major Maintenance Capital Reserve Fund. The Board of Selectmen recommends this article. (Majority vote required).

Motion: Shirley Batchelder

2nd: Anita Ross

Discussion:

John Palmieri asked why \$153,000 is designated for this year when in the past it has only been about \$50-\$60,000.

Selectman Roy Sabourn explained that the Reserve Funding varies greatly from year to year based upon what is needed in each fund in the near future. \$270,000 is the total amount of funding for this year. The CIP committee decides where the \$270,000 should be allocated. This year the Town will need to purchase a new fire engine.

Motion carried by majority vote.

Article #13: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **three million one hundred and seventy-two thousand eight hundred and fifty-five dollars (\$3,172,857)** to support town operations for the 2020 year. Said sum does not include special or individual articles. (Majority vote required)

Motion: Anita Ross

2nd: Shirley Batchelder

Discussion:

Robert Hatcher is looking at the Town Report and wants to know what the difference is between the Operating Budget numbers and the Proposed Budget.

Selectman Roy Sabourn explained that the Operating budget does not include the Reserve Fund monies.

Motion carried by majority vote.

Moderator MacLeod then asked if any other Town Business. He then asked to recognize Select Board Member Brad Benton.

Selectman Benton reminded people that the Town is seeking people to join the Cable Service Advisory Committee, the Transfer Station Advisory Committee and that sign-up sheets for these two committees are in the front of the room. Chairman Benton also recognized Moderator Robert MacLeod for his 4 years of service as Town Moderator and presented him with a certificate of appreciation. Chairman Benton also took the opportunity to recognize Dennis Day, who was not present, for his over 30 years of service on the Zoning Board of Adjustment. Brad also took a moment to thank the other members of the Board of Selectmen for supporting him throughout the past year as he was dealing with some personal issues.

Selectman Joseph Monti then asked for support to sign the New Hampshire Electric Coop petition to get a question on their ballot to get the Coop to be more supportive towards internet and cable services. The goal is to get 300 signatures to get the question on the NHEC Board of Director's ballot.

Anita Ross, Library Trustee, wished to thank Christopher Wilkie for his past service on the board and welcomed new member Katherine Hadaway.

Nina Sargent, Librarian, mentioned that there would be a trustee meeting for getting things in place for customers, maybe curbside delivery during the virus outbreak. She indicated that the Library Facebook page is very active and encouraged residents to call the Library if they have any questions..

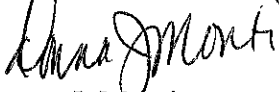
Motion to adjourn: Julie Piehn

2nd: Shirley Batchelder

Meeting was adjourned at 11:25 AM

Given under my hand and seal this 23rd day of March, 2020.

Respectfully Submitted,



Donna J. Monti

Town Clerk

Town of Thornton