

On March 12, 2024 at 8:02 a.m., Moderator Richard Haskins opened the Town of Hancock's Annual Town Meeting by reading the Town Warrant:

Town of Hancock
New Hampshire
Warrant
2024

To the inhabitants of the Town of Hancock in the County of Hillsborough in the state of New Hampshire qualified to vote in Town Affairs; you are hereby notified and warned to meet at the Hancock Town Offices Building on Tuesday, the twelfth (12th) day of March 2024, at eight o'clock in the forenoon until seven of the clock in the evening, to vote on ballot of Town Officers and other matters requiring ballot vote; and to meet at said Hancock Meetinghouse in said Hancock on Saturday, the sixteenth (16th) day of March 2024, at nine o'clock in the forenoon, to act upon the following subjects:

Article 01: To Choose Town Officers.

To choose all necessary Town Officers for the ensuing year.

Article 02: Amendment No.1 To Town Zoning Ordinance.

Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 1 to the existing Town Zoning Ordinance as proposed by the Planning Board, to clarify requirements for Attached and Detached Accessory Dwelling Units and to bring this section of the ordinance into compliance with current NH RSA 674:72. The Planning Board approves and recommends the adoption of Amendment No. 1.

Article 03: Amendment No.2 To Town Zoning Ordinance.

Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 2 to the existing Town Zoning Ordinance as proposed by the Planning Board, to modify Article 8 Historic District to add review criteria to allow Renewable Energy Systems and Mechanical Equipment. The Planning Board approves and recommends the adoption of Amendment No. 2.

Article 04: Amendment No.3 To Town Zoning Ordinance.

Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 3 to the existing Town Zoning Ordinance as proposed by the Planning Board, to modify Article 9 Flood Plain District as necessary to comply with requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program. The Planning Board approves and recommends the adoption of Amendment No. 3.

Moderator Haskins then accepted a motion to forego reading of the balance of the Warrant at this time by Hunt Dowse and seconded by Alice Welden. All present voted in favor of the motion.

Moderator Haskins then declared that the polls were open and would remain so until 7:00 p.m.

At 7:00 p.m. Moderator Haskins declared the polls closed. A motion to reconvene on Saturday, March 16, 2024 at the Hancock Meetinghouse was moved by David Kidd and seconded by David Anderson. The motion carried by voice vote. All the ballots cast were then counted and tabulated.

The reconvened meeting was called to order by Moderator Haskins on March 16 at 9:01 a.m. in the Hancock Meetinghouse in the Lower Meeting Room.

Moderator Haskins then asked Bob Fogg Jr. to lead the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance which he did.

He introduced the Selectboard members Laurie Bryan - chair, Ginger Smith and Jeff Brown; Town Administrator Jonathan Coyne, Administrator Assistant Linda Coughlan; Deputy Town Clerk Alisha Davis; Fire Chief Tom Bates; Police Chief Tom Horne; Director of Public Works Tyler Howe; Town Treasurer William Flatley; Library Director Amy Markus and Supervisors of the Checklist Kathy Anderson, Alice Welden and James Mason.

Moderator Haskins announced that the Ballot Clerks for the meeting would be Beth GrosJean, Linda Coughlan, Barbara Cavely and Hunt Dowse.

Moderator Haskins presented Certificates of Recognition to the following:

Brooke Joseph - Budget Advisory Committee	2 Years
Judson Dexter - Planning Board	3 Years
Robbie Hertnekey - Community Power Committee	3 Years
Bradford Geer - Planning Board	4 Years
Nancy Maclaster - Historic District Commission	9 Years
Leonard H. Dowse Jr. - CIP Committee	11 Years

Moderator Haskins explained that he had one more certificate but that it was premature to deliver it at this time and we would award that later in the meeting.

Moderator Haskins proposed a set of Rules of Order for the meeting and they were accepted by voice vote. He also stated that, "For any motion, five voters present may request a vote by secret ballot by signing a petition after the motion has been seconded and before the vote has been called". He identified that the blue voting cards would be used for a show of hands vote. Please don't hand them to someone else. He then asked the meeting grant; "voice without vote" status to non-residents Police Chief Tom Horne and Director of Public Works Tyler Howe.

Moderator Haskins stated: So now we are resuming the meeting that adjourned on March 12th 2024.

Moderator Haskins asked Deputy Town Clerk Alisha Davis if copies of the signed Warrant were posted at the Hancock Post Office, the Hancock Town Building and here in the Hancock Meetinghouse at least seven days prior to Town Meeting. Deputy Clerk Alisha Davis replied that it was so posted. Haskins request and received the signed Warrant and read it:

Town of Hancock, New Hampshire
Warrant 2024

To the inhabitants of the Town of Hancock in the County of Hillsborough in the state of New Hampshire qualified to vote in Town Affairs; you are hereby notified and warned to meet at the Hancock Town

Offices Building on Tuesday, the twelfth (12th) day of March 2024, at eight o'clock in the forenoon until seven of the clock in the evening, to vote on ballot of Town Officers and other matters requiring ballot vote; and to meet at said Hancock Meetinghouse in said Hancock on Saturday, the sixteenth (16th) day of March 2024, at nine o'clock in the forenoon, to act upon the following subjects:

Article 01: To Choose Town Officers,

To choose all necessary Town Officers for the ensuing year.

Moderator Haskins read the results of the March 12th, election as follows:

Total of ballots cast - 523 (includes 14 absentee ballots.)
At the start of the day we had 1412 voters on the checklist.
We received and accepted 5 new voter registration forms.
At the end of the day we had 1417 voters on the checklist.
We had 36.9% voter participation.

The results from ballots cast were:

Selectman for three years - Betsy Villaume, 453
Common Commissioner for three years - Allison Kerwin, 474
Town Treasurer for three years - William J. Flatley, 463
Water Commissioner for three years - Sean Kerwin, 475
Water Rent Collector for three years - Linda Coughlan, 488 *
Library Trustee for three years - Bettie Zakon-Anderson, 467
Trustee of Trust Funds for three years - Leonard H. Dowse, Jr - 473
Checklist Supervisor for six years - Kathy Anderson - 476
Cemetery Trustee for three years - Allison Kerwin, 481
Cemetery Trustee for one year - Suzanne G. Shevenell, 471
Moderator for two years - Richard Haskins, 452

*Moderator Haskins identified that Linda Coughlan once again out polled all candidates on the ballot.

All those newly elected will be sworn in during a break or at the end of the meeting. Newly elected may also choose to visit the Town Clerk during office hours to be sworn in.

Article No 02 - Amendment No. 1 to Town Zoning Ordinance- Yes 451 - No 40

Article No 03 - Amendment No. 2 to Town Zoning Ordinance- Yes 432 - No 61

Article No 04 - Amendment No. 3 to Town Zoning Ordinance- Yes 462 - No 29

From the School District Ballot:

SCHOOL DISTRICT MODERATOR (write-in) - Neal Cass, 216 *

*Moderator Haskins reported that District wide, the total votes cast for Neal were 345 - Neal has accepted the position!

Article # 5. Operating Budget.

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$3,539,991 for general municipal operations inclusive of Water Department Operations. This article does not include appropriations contained in special or individual articles addressed separately. (Recommended by Selectboard and Budget Advisory Committee). (Majority vote required)

The Article was moved as follows by Laurie Bryan and seconded by Ginger Smith.

I move that the Town of Hancock raise and appropriate the sum of \$3,539,991 for general municipal operations inclusive of Water Department Operations. This article does not include appropriations contained in special or individual articles addressed separately.

Laurie Bryan spoke about the article and explained that the primary goal with the Selectboard was to maintain a really strong benefit package for our employees. To retain employees is at the top of the list and having a benefit package that will keep them, as well as attracting employees to fill our vacant positions. A new thing added to the budget was the Prosecutor's Group for Police prosecution. Laurie explained that we used to be part of a Prosecutor group based out of Antrim. Unfortunately, that Attorney left the Antrim group so Hancock, Dublin, Fitzwilliam and New Ipswich formed their own group and that is now based here in Hancock.

The budget has an increase of 3.4% of which 25% is health insurance and ambulance cost is \$32,589

David Carney spoke and thanked the Selectboard for doing such a great job on the budget in this inflationary time.

At 9:24 the Fire Department personnel received a tone for a Emergency Call, Moderator Haskins paused the meeting while the volunteers exited the room.

David asked if there is any policy that requires someone who has applied for a building permit or any permit to pay the Property taxes and Water bill before continuing on a project and any process where water service after so many years is shut off for non-payment?

Laurie Bryan responded that the building part goes to deeding after 3 years and follows the statutory process set by the Tax Collector. Any construction must meet all permits by the Building Inspector and Historical District before getting a Certificate of Occupancy.

Tom Shevenell, Chair of the Water Commission said that after 2 certified letters are sent with no response, the Water Commission has the authority to turn the water off.

The motion for the budget was voted by a show of cards, and passed unanimously.

William Ruoff entered a motion to Restrict Reconsideration on the motion for the Article #5, the budget, as provided under RSA 40:10. It was seconded by Kenyon MacLeod.

Moderator Haskins asked why did he wished to restrict reconsideration of that Article/motion?
William Ruoff replied that he wanted to make sure this Article is not revisited later in the meeting when everyone is gone.

The motion, to restrict the Article reconsideration was voted by a show of cards.
The motion passed and Moderator Haskins declared that the Article/motion for the budget is now locked from reconsideration.

Article # 6. Middle Road Bridge.

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$390,210 for rebuilding the Middle Road Bridge and authorize the withdrawal of \$213,577 from the Bridge Capital Reserve Fund created for that purpose. Of the remaining balance of \$176,633; \$26,472 to come from 2023 unanticipated State Highway Block funds, \$25,130 to come from road bond proceeds, with the remainder of \$125,031 to come from general taxation. (Recommended by Selectboard and Budget Advisory Committee). (Majority vote required)

The Article was moved as follows by Jeff Brown and seconded by Laurie Bryan.

I move that the Town of Hancock raise and appropriate the sum of \$390,210 for rebuilding the Middle Road Bridge and authorize the withdrawal of \$213,577 from the Bridge Capital Reserve Fund created for that purpose. Of The remaining balance of \$176,633; \$26,472 to come from 2023 unanticipated State Highway Block funds, \$25,130 to come from road bond proceeds, with the remainder of \$125,031 to come from general taxation.

Jeff Brown explained that the bridge was red listed in 2004, improvements were made over the years but was red listed again in 2019. Middle Road is the busiest town road. It is going to require shutting down the road.

Tyler Howe spoke and explained that they have been working on permits for 2 years and now require a natural crossing because Fish and Game found a turtle. Fish & Game and The Army Corps of Engineers are involved. The estimate of 5 weeks of closure are currently planned in July.

David Carney asked would the Bridge Capital Reserve Fund money cover a large portion of the bridge replacement?

Moderator Haskins replied Yes.

David Carney's response was that had we put in our due diligence (i.e. more) money into funds like this, we would have avoided having to raise this year's taxes to cover the bridge that's going to last 70 years.

Timothy Lord spoke in favor of the bridge repair.

The motion was voted by a show of cards, and passed unanimously.

Article # 7. DPW Admin Building Heating System Replacement.

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$19,950 for the purpose of replacing the current DPW Admin Building heating system with an energy efficient mini-split heating /cooling system and authorize the withdrawal of \$10,000 from the Building Capital Reserve Fund created for that purpose. The balance of \$9,950 is to come from fund balance. (Recommended by Selectboard and Budget Advisory Committee). (Majority vote required)

The Article was moved as follows by Ginger Smith and seconded by Jeff Brown.

I move that the Town of Hancock raise and appropriate the sum of \$19,950 for the purpose of replacing the current DPW Admin Building heating system with an energy efficient mini-split heating /cooling system and authorize the withdrawal of \$10,000 from the Building Capital Reserve Fund created for that purpose. The balance of \$9,950 is to come from the fund balance.

Ginger Smith spoke about the article and explained that the current system was installed in 1985 and the DPW building has the only heating system in the town that uses #2 fuel, which we put out to bid annually. The new system would be a propane furnace for the utility bay and mini-splits for the administration office.

The motion was voted by a show of cards, and passed unanimously.

Article # 8. Lease New Dump Truck with Plow.

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to authorize the Selectboard to enter into a five-year lease agreement in the amount of up to \$145,000 for the purpose of leasing a new truck upfitted with dump body, plows and ancillary equipment; first payment to be made one year from closing. This lease agreement contains an escape clause. (Recommended by Selectboard and Budget Advisory Committee). (Majority vote required)

The Article was moved as follows by Ginger Smith and seconded by Jeff Brown.

I move that the Town of Hancock authorize the Selectboard to enter into a five-year lease agreement in the amount of up to \$145,000 for the purpose of leasing a new truck upfitted with dump body, plows and ancillary equipment; first payment to be made one year from closing. This lease agreement contains an escape clause.

Ginger Smith spoke about the Article and explained that this non-DOT truck is set up with plow/sanding accessories and will be integrated into the highways, buildings and grounds and will be utilized for year round maintenance. We will be leasing the truck as we have in previous years. Bigger trucks need a CDL licensed driver and there are not enough CDL drivers. It's hard to hire them and it is very expensive to get a CDL license. We are trying to get the fleet down to a more manageable size so non-CDL drivers can drive. This lease agreement is really a lease buy agreement, we will own the truck after 5 years of payments. The first payment is at the beginning of next year. Next year we finish paying off several big

ticket items for the DPW and the Town. It's easier with a small truck to get the roads cleaned up, plowed and sanded.

The motion was voted by a show of cards, and passed unanimously.

Article # 9. Establish Fogg Family Meetinghouse Clock Fund.

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to establish a Robert A. Fogg Family Meetinghouse Clock Expendable Trust Fund per RSA 31:19-a, for the purpose of maintaining the Meetinghouse clock and to raise and appropriate \$20,000 to put in the fund, with this amount to come from donations; further to name the Selectboard as agents to expend from said fund. (Recommended by Selectboard). (Majority vote required)

The Article was moved as follows by Laurie Bryan and seconded by Ginger Smith.

I move that the Town of Hancock establish a Robert A. Fogg Family Meetinghouse Clock Expendable Trust Fund per RSA 31:19-a, for the purpose of maintaining the Meetinghouse clock and to raise and appropriate \$20,000 to put in the fund, with this amount to come from donations; further to name the Selectboard as agents to expend from said fund.

The following Amendment was moved by Laurie Bryan, Seconded by Ginger Smith.

Amendment:

I like to Amend this to read, I move that the Town of Hancock establish a Robert A. Fogg Family Meetinghouse Clock Expendable Trust Fund per RSA 31:19-a, for the purpose of maintaining the Meetinghouse clock and to raise and appropriate \$20,882 to put in the fund, with this amount to come from donations; further to name the Selectboard as agents to expend from said fund.

The purpose of this Amendment is that we received more money than when we first wrote this Article. Where we started with \$20,000, we now have \$20,882, so we need to flex that, and that is the purpose of this Amendment.

The **Amendment** was voted by voice, and **passed** unanimously.

This Article allows for donations to continue to come in through the Hancock Improvement Association or directly to the town, and will be put into the Expendable Trust Fund. There is no cap on this fund nor does it end it and it's an ongoing fund. People can donate as they see fit in the future.

Tom Shevenell spoke to the article and explained that when the clock died the Meeting House Oversight Committee realized that we needed to do a bit more than we had ever done since 1963 and that is when a professional came in and cleaned the clock. A gentleman (Phil) from Goffstown came and got the clock running again. The clock was put in 1872 and over the 150 years some gears needed to be fixed and bearings replaced. Phil thought the Fogg's have done a tremendous job over the 58 years that they have been taking care of the clock. He gave us a price of \$5,500 for repair work. We raised \$8,000 from the community to help support the fund and are looking into grants.

Tom spoke further, specifically to the Trustees of the Trust Fund, as time goes on I would like them to understand what this fund can be used for: Improving access to the clock tower room (ladder), getting out to fix the tower clock arms(platform), training for any future clock agents, future technology to assist clock agents and providing professional support.

The motion was voted by a show of cards, and passed unanimously.

Article # 10. Establish Fire Department Expendable Trust Fund.

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to establish a Fire Department Expendable Trust Fund per RSA 31:19-a, for the purchasing and maintaining equipment and to raise and appropriate \$9,045 to put in the fund, with this amount to come from donations; further to name the Selectboard as agents to expend from said fund. (Recommended by Selectboard). (Majority vote required)

The Article was moved as follows by Jeff Brown and seconded by Laurie Bryan.

I move that the Town of Hancock establish a Fire Department Expendable Trust Fund per RSA 31:19-a, for the purchasing and maintaining equipment and to raise and appropriate \$9,045 to put in the fund, with this amount to come from donations; further to name the Selectboard as agents to expend from said fund.

Hunt Dowse spoke and explained that the Town received a notice that the estate of a resident of Hancock donated \$9,045 in support of the Fire Department. Consultation with the Trustee of Trust Funds (he is the current Chair), Fire Department and Selectboard, it was determined the best thing to do was to set up an Expandable Trust Fund. Expandable funds can continue to receive donations through the town and seemed to be the most appropriate way to support the wish of the estate and make sure we could offset some of the tax requirements in buying large Fire Department equipment.

David Carney expressed a concern that he felt that the Selectboard are becoming the primary decision makers on some of these things. He stated, "We, at Town Meeting, voted in the past to spend money on softballs and baseballs but for now Police cruiser or Fire Equipment which we have always had a Town Meeting to discuss and authorize expenditure money for these big items." Is there an explanation why we are cutting out the Town Meeting for these expending decisions?

Moderator Haskins spoke and explained that it would be a good policy for large ticket items to come back to Town Meeting.

Laurie Bryan explained there are times when something has come up (heating system fails or chimney falls over) and at this time Selectboard needs this authority and can't wait until Town Meeting.

Don Lussier asked the difference between Expendable Trust Funds and Capital Reserved Funds.

Hunt Dowse explained the difference between the two and the process of getting the funds.

The motion was voted by a show of cards, and passed unanimously.

Article # 11. Establish Police Vehicle Capital Reserve Fund.

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to establish a Police Vehicle Capital Reserve Fund under the provisions of RSA 35:1 for the purpose of purchasing and upfitting police vehicles and to raise and appropriate the sum of \$15,000 to be placed in this fund. This amount to come from fund balance. Further, to name the Selectboard as agents to expend from said fund. (Recommended by Selectboard and Budget Advisory Committee). (Majority Vote Required)

The Article was moved as follows by Laurie Bryan and seconded by Ginger Smith.

I move that the Town of Hancock establish a Police Vehicle Capital Reserve Fund under the provisions of RSA 35:1 for the purpose of purchasing and upfitting police vehicles and to raise and appropriate the sum of \$15,000 to be placed in this fund. This amount to come from fund balance. Further, to name the Selectboard as agents to expend from said fund.

Laurie Bryan explained that the next five Articles are Capital Reserve Funds and this year are to be funded from the fund balance. Fund balance is money that was not expended in the previous year's budget. The past few years, we have been building this fund balance because it is critical to maintain cash flow.. Happy to say, we have reached the point again where we have a very healthy fund balance. We were unfortunately unable to fill positions in town, so we have had vacancies that we budgeted for in the past year and those set wages and benefits were not expended.

The Selectboard, Budget Advisory and Capital Improvement Committee all agreed that one of the best ways to use this money was to give it back to the Town in terms of putting it into the Capital Reserve Funds to use for future purchases.

This new Police Vehicle Capital Reserve Funds will be used to purchase a new and outfit a new vehicle.

Tom Shevenell explicitly stated that the CIP Committee approves the way the town is using these unassigned fund balances to feed into these Capital Reserve Funds.

The motion was voted by a show of cards, and passed unanimously.

Article # 12. Bridge Capital Reserve Fund.

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$40,000 to be added to the Bridge Capital Reserve Fund previously established. Of this amount \$23,977 to come from 2023 unanticipated state bridge aid, the remainder of \$16,023 to be offset by unassigned fund balance and no amount to be raised by taxation. (Recommended by Selectboard and Budget Advisory Committee). (Majority vote required)

The Article was moved as follows by Ginger Smith and seconded by Jeff Brown.

I move that the Town of Hancock raise and appropriate the sum of \$40,000 to be added to the Bridge Capital Reserve Fund previously established. Of this amount \$23,977 to come from 2023 unanticipated

state bridge aid, the remainder of \$16,023 to be offset by unassigned fund balance and no amount to be raised by taxation.

Ginger Smith spoke and explained that we do have more bridges in town that are going to need some work, so with this Bridge Capital Reserve Fund, it gives us a nice boost to start with.

The motion was voted by a show of cards, and passed unanimously.

Article # 13. Building Capital Reserve Fund.

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$20,000 to be added to the Building Capital Reserve Fund previously established. This sum to come from unassigned fund balance. No amount to be raised from taxation. (Recommended by Selectboard and Budget Advisory Committee). (Majority vote required)

The Article was moved as follows by Jeff Brown and seconded by Laurie Bryan.

I move that the Town of Hancock raise and appropriate the sum of \$20,000 to be added to the Building Capital Reserve Fund previously established. This sum to come from unassigned fund balance. No amount to be raised from taxation.

Jeff Brown explained that we are trying to use the fund balance to help us in the future. Trying to level off the tax rate, and the best way is to establish these Capital Reserve Funds in different areas.

The motion was voted by a show of cards, and passed unanimously.

Article # 14. DPW Machinery, Equipment and Vehicle Capital Reserve Fund.

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$50,000 to be added to the DPW Machinery, Equipment and Vehicle Capital Reserve Fund previously established. This sum to come from unassigned fund balance. No amount to be raised from taxation. (Recommended by the Selectboard and Budget Advisory Committee). (Majority vote required)

The Article was moved as follows by Ginger Smith and seconded by Jeff Brown.

I move that the Town of Hancock raise and appropriate the sum of \$50,000 to be added to the DPW Machinery, Equipment and Vehicle Capital Reserve Fund previously established. This sum to come from unassigned fund balance. No amount to be raised from taxation.

Ginger Smith spoke and explained that it is for helping the DPW maintain equipment and buying new as needed.

The motion was voted by a show of cards, and passed unanimously.

Article # 15. Meetinghouse Capital Reserve Fund.

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$10,000 to be added to the Meetinghouse Capital Reserve Fund previously established. This sum to come from unassigned fund balance. No amount to be raised from taxation. (Recommended by Selectboard and Budget Advisory Committee). (Majority vote required)

The Article was moved as follows by Jeff Brown and seconded by Laurie Bryan.

I move that the Town of Hancock raise and appropriate the sum of \$10,000 to be added to the Meetinghouse Capital Reserve Fund previously established. This sum to come from unassigned fund balance. No amount to be raised from taxation.

Laurie Bryan spoke and explained that it is the same amount we have been putting into the Capital Reserve Fund. The committee has a really detailed schedule as to what is being done.

Tom Shevenell said the committee has listed out a 20 year plan in terms of work to be done and following articles of agreement with the Church in terms of maintaining the building.

The motion was voted by a show of cards, and passed unanimously.

Article # 16. Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund.

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$28,000 to be added to the Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund previously established. This sum to come from unassigned fund balance. No amount to be raised from taxation. (Selectboard recommends this article). (Majority vote required)

The Article was moved as follows by Laurie Bryan and seconded by Jeff Brown.

I move that the Town of Hancock raise and appropriate the sum of \$28,000 to be added to the Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund previously established. This sum to come from unassigned fund balance. No amount to be raised from taxation.

Jonathan Coyne explained that the intent of this article is to make sure we have enough funds to cover our next revaluation in 2026 with no tax impact. Estimates have gone up considerably from last year, so we decided to add a little bit more this year.

The motion was voted by a show of cards, and passed unanimously.

Ginger Smith took a moment to pay tribute to Laurie Bryan for 12 years, 4 terms as Selectman starting in 1999. I can't thank her enough for all the time she put into this town. She is going to be a tough act to

follow. No more Monday meetings, no more reading all these statutes, no more Hancock Happening Articles. Thank-you very much. Laurie received a long standing ovation..

Maple Syrup Report 2024 as submitted by Mark Thompson.

Well...every year presents different challenges. Last year we had made 290 gallons by Town Meeting, and we made a total of 480 gallons for the year. The year before that, we had not made a drop of syrup by this time. And this year we are at 370 gallons. It's always a guess as to the best time to start tapping, since it is so weather dependent. This year, instead of a January thaw, we had 1-week of a "January freeze" and 3 weeks of mild weather. I know several sugar makers who began tapping in January and they made some syrup early on. But I felt that, as usual, we would miss some of the early runs and we'd make it up at the other end of the season. Most years, we have a few days of sap run as a sort of "trial run," then we have a freeze up for a week or two. The freeze up allows the roots to recharge sap with sugars. That didn't really happen this year. January being like it was, I'm sure sap ran most of the month. We began tapping on February 2nd and the sap ran most days, so we made syrup throughout the month. Sugars in sap are affected by temperatures, and the sugar content is usually better during the early runs. This year, the sugar content started out at normal levels for us but dropped relatively quickly. Reports from other sugar makers where their sugar content started low and has stayed there (They reported tapping around the time I tapped). The later the season gets, the fewer opportunities for cold nights and warm days. And without a short cold spell to recharge, sugar content is lower than normal. Lower sugar content means we must boil the sap longer to get to the correct density for syrup. During the boiling process, the sugars begin to caramelize. The longer it cooks, the darker the syrup. We made some Amber syrup early on this year, but with the warmer temperatures the grade changed to dark, and I expect it will stay there. Every week, I look at the long-range forecast. Next week's temperatures look promising and we're optimistic that we'll get another good run. However, time may not be on our side. Tap holes dry out with the warmer temperatures. And as Bill used to say, the sugar season usually lasts about 6 weeks. So, I think we may be getting close to the end. And even though it doesn't look good to reach last year's 480-gallon total, we are hoping for a couple more boils next week to get us closer to the 400-gallon mark. Every year I think back to all the help we receive from family and friends. Everyone has a busy schedule and yet the season happens, many thanks to them. Our son Spencer and granddaughter Maddie, daughter Ryan, her husband Paul and our grandson James, Don Eva, John Pirkey and several others make time to help in the woods and dedicate many evenings to boiling sap. Without them the season would not be possible (and certainly would not be as much fun). All in all, I'm remaining optimistic for this season. However, if we're done for the year, just like with the Red Sox, I always look forward to next season.

Mark Thompson, March 15 2024

Article # 17. Highway Special Revenue Fund.

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$2,118 for the purpose of repairs and replacement of town highway equipment with said funds to come from the Highway Special Revenue Fund established for this purpose at the 1999 town meeting. (Recommended by Selectboard). (Majority vote required)

The Article was "Moved as Read" by Ginger Smith and seconded by Laurie Bryan.

The motion was voted by voice vote and passed unanimously.

Article # 18. History Special Revenue Fund.

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$600 for the purpose of preservation and storage of the town's archival records with said funds to come from the History Special Revenue Fund established for this purpose at the 1993 town meeting. (Recommended by Selectboard). (Majority vote required)

The Article was "Moved as Read" by Laurie Bryan and seconded by Jeff Brown.

The motion was voted by voice vote and passed unanimously.

Article # 19. Police Special Revenue Fund.

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$4,542 for the purpose of repairs and replacement of police equipment with said funds to come from the Police Special Revenue Fund established for this purpose at the 1993 town meeting. (Recommended by Selectboard). (Majority vote required)

The Article was "Moved as Read" by Jeff Brown and seconded by Ginger Smith.

The motion was voted by voice vote and passed unanimously.

Article # 20. Recreation Special Revenue Fund.

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$6,350 for the purpose of repairs and replacement of recreational facilities with said funds to come from the Recreation Special Revenue Fund established for this purpose at the 1997 Town meeting. (Recommended by Selectboard). (Majority vote required)

The Article was "Moved as Read" by Ginger Smith and seconded by Jeff Brown.

The motion was voted by voice vote and passed unanimously.

Article # 21. To Accept Town Reports.

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to accept the 2023 reports of the Town Officials, agents and committees, and to accept the 2022 auditor's report. (Recommended by Selectboard).

The Article was moved as follows by Laurie Bryan and seconded by Ginger Smith.

I move that the Town of Hancock to accept the 2023 reports of the Town Officials, agents and committees, and to accept the 2022 auditor's report.

David Carney noticed that the Police Department report was put in twice and wondered if there was some other report that was supposed to be in its place.

Laurie Bryan responded that it was an Administrative mistake that it was put in twice and No, there are no missing reports.

David Carney questioned a discrepancy in the Water Report. He pointed out that CIP report shows a value of our water asset \$12,000,000 and the Audit report shows a value of \$250,000.

Tom Shevenell reported that neither were correct. Explained that we just had a asset management plan done by the Frame Group, the \$12.9 million estimate is a 2017 estimate and has been upgraded to \$16 million dollars. Not sure where the Auditors got their number.

Besty Villaume, stated the auditors are limited to reporting cost and CIP report is looking at replacement value. What's reported in the Audit report is the original cost not replacement cost.

The motion was voted by a show of cards, and passed unanimously.

Moderator Haskins stated that the Checklist Supervisors have reported that 120 voters checked-in. He further stated, I should like to thank you for your participation in this very important institution and tradition, namely, The Town Meeting. As you leave today, please pass your stack of voting tickets back to the Checklist Supervisors, Thank you!

Article # 22. Transact Any Other Business.

To transact any other business that may legally come before said meeting.

Moderator Haskins asked, Is there any such business to be transacted at this time?

Hearing none, Seeing none, At this time, I will entertain a motion to adjourn the 2024 Town of Hancock Annual Town Meeting.

It was so moved by David Carney and was seconded by Des Ford.

All those in favor signify by saying "Yes, Please", All those opposed?

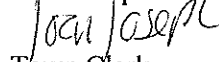
The Motion carries / fails and I so Declare it and in doing so I hereby declare the 2024 Town of Hancock Annual Town Meeting to be adjourned.

The Meeting Closed at: 11:05 am

Swearing -In of newly elected officials by Laurie Bryan occurred after the meeting.

Sincerely submitted,

Joan Joseph


Town Clerk

April 1, 2024