

## Minutes of the Fall Town Meeting – November 13, 2023

The meeting was called to order by Moderator Edward Goddard at 7:07 PM at the King Philip Regional High School Auditorium. As of November 13, 2023 there were 9,658 registered voters of which 432 were in attendance.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by the Veterans in attendance

The warrant was properly posted and all motions were received in a timely fashion. Selectman Gallo motioned to waive the reading of the Town Meeting Warrant. Tellers appointed were Jeff Hall, Rich O’Leary and Tim Rouse.

The Moderator thanked the school and municipal staff members and volunteers for their service and time. He also congratulated Frank Whitehead on his retirement and thanked him for all he has done for Cable 8.

This years’ Volunteers of the Year were Tristan Cornell and the Wrentham 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee. All were recognized for their exceptional dedication and volunteerism to the community.

Moderator Goddard notified the town meeting voters that he would be stepping down this evening as Moderator for Articles 9 through 14.

Mr. Tim Rouse moved that Mr. Leo Immonen be elected as Temporary Moderator for Articles 9 through 14. No further discussion ensued.

*Motion carries.*

### **TOWN MEETING ARTICLES**

Article 2 – Move that the Town accept the provisions of M.G.L. c.40, §5G to establish a municipal waterways improvement and maintenance fund.

*Motion carries unanimously.*

Article 3 – Move that the Town accept the provisions of M.G.L. c.44, §54(b) to allow trust funds held in the custody of the Town to be invested under the standards of the Massachusetts Prudent Investor Act of Chapter 203C.

*Motion carries unanimously.*

Article 4 – Move that the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$6,561 to fund an unpaid bill from the prior fiscal year.

*Motion carries unanimously.*

Article 5 – Move that the Town transfer from free cash the sum of \$800,000 and to transfer from the Water Retained Earnings the sum of \$800,000 for the purpose of funding the design of the Public Works/Land Use Building Facility.

Engineering firm, Weston & Sampson gave a presentation on the status of the current Department of Public Works building. There were questions on the cost of a new building, once designed, and how the town will pay for the project.

*Motion carries.*

Article 6 – Move that the Town transfer from Free Cash an amount One Million One Hundred Thousand (\$1,100,000) Dollars to be expended under the direction of The Wrentham Elementary School Building Committee for a feasibility study for major renovation or replacement of the Roderick Elementary School, located at 120 Taunton Street in Wrentham, for which feasibility study the Town may be eligible for a grant from the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA). The MSBA's grant program is a non-entitlement, discretionary program based on need, as determined by the MSBA, and any costs the Town incurs in connection with the feasibility study in excess of any grant approved by and received from the MSBA shall be the sole responsibility of the Town.

Dr. Allan Cameron, Elementary School Superintendent gave a presentation on the current status of the Roderick Elementary School and how the funding ties into the Mass. School Board Authority's current application.

*Motion carries unanimously.*

Article 7 – Move that the Town authorize the Board of Selectmen to petition the Legislature to amend the Wrentham Home Rule Charter, Section 116 of the Acts of 2014, by making content changes related to organizational structure, processes, procedures, and assignments related to the following:

Town Administrator, Town Planner, Police Department, Fire Department, Superintendent of Public Works, Finance Department and any others as show in the Draft Proposed Amended Wrentham Home Rule Charter dated 18 October 2023 and which is on file with the Town Clerk.

There was much discussion on the list of the proposed amendments on Article 7 and there were many holds on the 20 content changes in the outline in the Report to Voters.

Move that the Town amend the first sentence in Section 4.1(a) to read:

- (a) The select board shall, by an affirmative vote of the majority of the full boards, appoint or reappoint a town manager for a term of *up to 5 years* and fix the compensation of the town manager within the amount annually appropriate for this purpose.

*Motion carries unanimously.*

Additional questions were asked regarding title changes and *Article 7 was tabled.*

Article 8 - Move that the Town authorize the Board of Selectmen to petition the Legislature to amend the Wrentham Home Rule Charter, Section 116 of the Acts of 2014 by adopting the omnibus changes, typographical error corrections, grammatical corrections, and title changes throughout the Town Charter as shown in the Draft Proposed Amended Wrentham Home Rule Charter dated 18 October 2023 and which is on file with the Town Clerk.

*Motion carries.*

Discussion resumed on Article 7. Voters had several concerns and question on items such as oversight and procurement for the Library and lengthy comments regarding Police and Fire in Civil Service.

*Motion failed – Yes - 60, No – 235*

Mr. Goddard stepped down as Moderator and Town Clerk, Cynthia Thompson swore in Mr. Immonen as Temporary Moderator.

Article 9 - Move that the Town authorize the Board of Selectmen to petition the Legislature to amend the Wrentham Home Rule Charter, Section 116 of the Acts of 2014, by changing the Town Clerk from an elected position to an appointed position. To accomplish this, Section 5.4 of the Charter is to be revised as shown in the Draft Proposed Amended Wrentham Home Rule Charter dated 18 October 2023, and which is on file with the Town Clerk.

Several residents spoke in opposition to this change from elected Town Clerk to appointed Town Clerk.

*Motion failed.*

Article 10 - Move that the Town authorize the Board of Selectmen to petition the Legislature to amend the Wrentham Home Rule Charter, Section 116 of the Acts of 2014, by changing the position of Town Constable from an elected position to an appointed position. To accomplish this, Section 3.9 of the Charter is to be deleted and Section 5.14 of the Charter is to be inserted as shown in the Draft Proposed Amended Wrentham Home Rule Charter dated 18 October 2023, and which is on file with the Town Clerk

Motion to indefinitely postpone Article 10.

*Motion carries.*

Article 11 - Move that the Town authorize the Board of Selectmen to petition the Legislature to amend the Wrentham Home Rule Charter, Section 116 of the Acts of 2014, by changing the Board of Assessors from an elected position to an appointed position. To accomplish this, Section 3.5 of the Charter is to be deleted and Section 5.5 of the Charter is to be inserted as shown in the Draft Proposed Amended Wrentham Home Rule Charter dated 18 October 2023, and which is on file with the Town Clerk.

Motion to indefinitely postpone Article 11.

*Motion carries.*

Article 12 - Move that the Town authorize the Board of Selectmen to petition the Legislature to amend the Wrentham Home Rule Charter, Section 116 of the Acts of 2014, by changing the Board of Health from an elected position to an appointed position. To accomplish this, Section 3.6 of the Charter is to be deleted and Section 5.6 of the Charter is to be inserted as shown in the Draft Proposed Amended Wrentham Home Rule Charter dated 18 October 2023, and which is on file with the Town Clerk.

Motion to indefinitely postpone Article 12.

*Motion carries.*

Article 13 - Move that the Town authorize the Board of Selectmen to petition the Legislature to amend the Wrentham Home Rule Charter, Section 116 of the Acts of 2014, by changing the Board of Library Trustees from an elected position to an appointed position. To accomplish this, Section 3.8 of the Charter is to be deleted and Section 5.7 of the Charter is to be inserted as shown in the Draft Proposed Amended Wrentham Home Rule Charter dated 18 October 2023, and which is on file with the Town Clerk.

Motion to indefinitely postpone Article 13.

*Motion carries.*

Article 14 - Move that the Town authorize the Board of Selectmen to petition the Legislature to change the Wrentham Home Rule Charter as voted at this 2023 Annual Fall Annual Town Meeting and submit same in its entirety and including Article I through Article VII accordingly that notwithstanding any other general or special law to the contrary, this shall be the Wrentham Home Rule Charter which is on file with the Town Clerk dated 18 October 2023.

Motion to indefinitely postpone Article 14.

*Motion carries.*

Article 15 - Move that the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$189,600 from the Budgeted Reserve account and the sum of \$10,400 from the Undesignated Fund Balance of the Community Preservation Fund, for the purpose of further funding the Conservation and Recreation Land Acquisition Fund that was established in 2022. Acquisitions must adhere to CPA land acquisition rules at the time of the acquisition, and a conservation restriction will need to be put in place for the acquired land. Funds appropriated must be used by December 31, 2035 or will be returned to their source, and no longer be available for expenditure on this project.

Alan Selling of the Open Space Committee gave a brief power point presentation.

*Motion carries unanimously.*

Article 16 - Move that the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$27,600 from the Historical Reserve account of the Community Preservation Fund, for the purpose of funding a part time archivist position and the purchase of supplies to be used by that archivist to catalog and preserve significant artifacts in the Historical Commission's possession. Funds appropriated must be used by December 31, 2025 or will be returned to their source, and no longer be available for expenditure on this project.

Library Director, Kim Shipala gave an update on this ongoing project.

*Motion carries unanimously.*

Article 17 - Move that the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$33,200 from the Open Space and Recreation Reserve account and the sum of \$4,800 from the Budgeted Reserve account of the Community Preservation Fund, for the purpose of funding weed mitigation, and prevention at Mirror Lake in an effort to preserve this open space in town. Funds appropriated must be used by December 31, 2025 or will be returned to their source, and no longer be available for expenditure on this project.

There was a presentation on Mirror Lake.

*Motion carries unanimously.*

Article 18 - Move that the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$40,000 from the Open Space and Recreation Reserve of the Community Preservation Fund, for the purpose of funding weed mitigation, and prevention at Lake Archer in an effort to preserve this open space in town. Funds appropriated must be used by December 31, 2025 or will be returned to their source, and no longer be available for expenditure on this project.

There were several questions regarding Lake Archer being a private lake with no resident access. Voters had concerns on a long term approach and ongoing funding.

*Motion carries.*

Motion by Selectmen Rouse to adjourn sin die at 11:03 p.m. *Motion carries.*

A True Copy, Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Cynthia L. Thompson, Town Clerk