

TOWN OF HANCOCK
MINUTES OF ANNUAL MEETING
MARCH 10 AND MARCH 14, 2020

On March 10 at 8:00 a.m., Moderator Richard Haskins opened the Town of Hancock's annual Town Meeting by reading from the Town Warrant:

Town of Hancock
New Hampshire
Warrant
2020

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 Office Building on Tuesday the 10th day of March 2020 at eight o'clock in the forenoon until seven of the clock in the afternoon 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 14th day of March 2020 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.

The voters present voted to forego reading the balance of the Warrant at that time and the polls were declared open until 7:00 p.m. At 7:00 p.m., Moderator Haskins declared the polls closed. A motion was made and seconded to adjourn until 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, March 14, 2020 at the Hancock Meeting House. The motion carried by voice vote and the meeting was adjourned to Saturday March 14th at 9am at the Hancock Meeting House.

Pursuant to RSA:40:4, on March 14, 2020, at 7:30 a.m. in the lobby of the Hancock Meeting House, Moderator Haskins consulted with the Selectboard, department heads and the emergency management director with the regard to the COVID-19 circumstances. The decision was made not to postpone the Town Meeting, and to hold it in the upper level of the Meeting House where additional social-distancing could be better exercised.

Moderator Haskins called the reconvened meeting to order in the upper level of the Hancock Meeting House on Saturday, March 14, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. At Moderator Haskins' request, Selectboard member John Jordan led the assembly in reciting the "Pledge of Allegiance."

Moderator Haskins then announced that he would attempt to conduct the meeting as quickly as possible, but assured that he would not step on anyone's right to be heard. He also acknowledged concerns expressed by some townspeople about the COVID-19 virus and that although the meeting was being held, the location was purposefully moved into the upper level of the building in order to provide the opportunity for more separation between attendees, and all attempts were being made to limit personal, face-to-face contact.

Moderator Haskins announced that the Ballot Clerks for the Meeting would be Bob and Marie Fogg and Linda Coughlan. He introduced Selectboard members John Jordan, Laurie Bryan, and Kurt Grassett; Town Administrator Jonathan Coyne; Town Clerk and Clerk of the Meeting Carolyn Boland; Supervisors of the Checklist Roberta Bell, Robin Mose, and Kathy Anderson. Also Department Heads Fire Chief Tom Bates; Police Chief Andrew Wood; Director of Public Works Tyler Howe; Town Administrative Assistant Linda Coughlan; Library Director Amy Markus, Representative to the CONVAL School Board, Tim Theberge; and Jon GrosJean, Director of Emergency Operations.

Moderator Haskins announced the names of those to receive Recognition Certificates, to be given out later:

Deb Sampson	Cemetery Trustee	1 year
Carolyn Boland	Town Clerk	3 years
Robin Mose	Checklist Supervisor	5 years
Sonja Mucha	Common Commission	5 years
Ellena Weston Zimmerman	Planning Board	11 years
Ellena Weston Zimmerman	Conservation Commission	10 years
Henry W. Drury	Memorial Day Committee	13 years
Kenneth H. Davis, Sr.	Memorial Day Committee	35 years
Howard Weston	Memorial Day Committee	28 years

Moderator Haskins took a moment to thank John Jordan for "his generous contribution of his attention and energy to the betterment of this community." On behalf of the Selectboard, Laurie Bryan then presented Jordan with a gift to use in his planned cross country travels: a compass with a magnifying glass so that he could find his way home in case his GPS failed, and a jar of his favorite Peppermint Patties. She also thanked him sincerely for his true caring for the community, evidenced by the number of hours he had put in during his 12 years on the Selectboard.

The Moderator then proposed a set of Rules of the Meeting, which included that all wishing to speak come to the microphone in front of the room and state their name, that all Amendments be put in writing, and that motions to amend an Amendment would not be entertained. The Rules were accepted by voice vote.

Voice-without-Vote privileges were granted by voice vote to Police Chief Andrew Wood, Director of Public Work Tyler Howe, and Jacqueline Roland of the Grapevine Avenue A organization.

Next, he asked Town Clerk Carolyn Boland if the Town Warrant was posted at least seven days before the meeting in the Post Office and the Hancock Town Building. She responded that it was and handed him the original Warrant. He then proceeded to read the following from the Town Warrant

TOWN OF HANCOCK
NEW HAMPSHIRE
WARRANT
2020

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 Office Building on Tuesday the 10th day of March 2020 at eight o'clock in the forenoon until seven of the clock in the afternoon 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 14th day of March 2020 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.

Here are the results of the elections held Tuesday, March 10, 2020:

424 ballots were cast, 6 absentee ballots were counted.

At the start of the day we had 1345 voters on the checklist.

We received and accepted 3 new voter registration forms.

At the end of the day we had 1348 voters on the checklist.

We had 31.4% voter participation.

The results from the ballots cast are as follows:

Moderator - Richard Haskins, 379

Selectman - Jeffrey Brown, 394

Town Clerk - Carolyn Boland, 175/ Joan Joseph, 222

Common Commissioner – Mary Seebart, 394
Library Trustee – Alison Rossiter, 391
Trustee of Trust Funds – David Huntington, 386
Checklist Supervisor – Annemarie Powers Algozzine, 388
Water Commissioner – Jeffrey Wilder, 402

Treasurer- There were 17 names written in. They are all credible. The largest count of votes for those names was 4. That person has been contacted and has declined the opportunity. The next highest count was 2. All have not been contacted yet. The Selectboard will pursue finding a candidate for appointment as best they can.

We will now return to the agenda as adjourned from Tuesday with Article 2.

Article 02 Operating Budget

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$2,687,353 for general municipal operations inclusive of Water Department Operations. This article does not include appropriations contained in special or individual articles addressed separately. The Selectboard recommends this article. (Majority vote required)

The Article was moved as follows by John Jordan and seconded by Laurie Bryan:
I move that the Town of Hancock raise and appropriate the sum of \$2,687,353 for general municipal operations inclusive of Water Department Operations.

Speaker John Jordan said that the proposed budget was an increase of \$127,996 over last year. \$90,617 of this was due to increased debt service for Duncan Road repairs and purchase of a backhoe and new fire truck voted at last year's town meeting. Other items of note were \$40,600 for the resurfacing of Middle Road, Tannery Hill Road, Sargent Camp Road, and School Street, all of which are only in "fair" condition and a \$16,000 increase for the Transfer Station costs, chiefly due to an increase in hauling fees.

Revenues from the sale of town property are up due to the expected sale of the ten-wheeler and Building and Grounds van, but revenues from other sources are down about \$109,000.

Jordan said that no money had been used from the unassigned fund balance to reduce the tax impact because the fund balance does not allow it at this time. He added that there was a reduction in utility assessments of \$1.8 million as a result of a State-wide lawsuit, and the town was expecting an increase in assessment of \$1,000,000 due to new construction and a new town-wide re-assessments this next year.

Dave Carney asked about the impact of the loss of \$1.8 million on utility assessments on the tax rate, and how much the law suit cost the town in legal fees. He said he felt it was foolish to spend \$94,000 in legal fees to save the town approximately \$2,000.

John Jordan clarified that the \$94,000 in legal fees included \$90,000 in abatements paid to the utility company.

The question was voted by voice vote, and passed unanimously at 9:24 a.m.

Article 03 Highway Equipment Lease

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to authorize the Selectboard to sell the 2019 ten-wheel Kenworth truck and enter into a five (5) year lease agreement in the amount of \$194,000 for the purpose of leasing two (2) 2020 19,500 LB GVW trucks with dump bodies, plows and controls.

This lease agreement contains an escape clause. The first payment of \$42,620 to be paid in 2021. The Selectboard recommends this article. (Majority vote required)

The Article was moved as follows by Kurt Grassett and seconded by John Jordan:
I move that the Town of Hancock authorize the Selectboard to sell the 2019 ten-wheel Kenworth truck and enter into a five year lease agreement in the amount of \$194,000 for the purpose of leasing two 2020 19,500 LB GVW trucks with dump bodies, plows and controls. This lease agreement contains an escape clause. The first payment of \$42,620 to be paid in 2021.

Speaker Kurt Grassett explained that when the ten-wheeler was purchased, it was believed that it would save extra time, particularly in the northwest part of town. It saved some time, but not as much as expected. For example, when spreading gravel on our 25 miles of dirt roads with the dump body extended, it is 20 feet in the air, and most of our trees are not 20 feet in the air. Also, the size and weight makes it take longer to plow. For example, on Prospect Hill, the widest of the roads it was used on, it took 45 minutes to plow, while a 19,000 pound truck only takes 20 minutes. Extra time often means more overtime paid to operators. There is not enough room for it to turn around, so residents have complained about having to back up for it, sometimes long distances in a snowstorm.

Tyler Howe did a review of what is needed and when. Part of the plan is to purchase these two trucks. One will be fitted with a front plow, a wing, and a sander, the other with a front plow and a sander. The rest of the plan includes using the pickup to replace the old white van and selling the van. Going forward, the plan is to work with the Capital Improvement Committee to develop a replacement plan for the future.

He also said that more extensive operator training was being mandated for this type of vehicle, and training could no longer be provided in-house. An operator would have to go to school to get the CDL license required. He said this was an opportune time to maximize the amount received from the sale, as the mileage is still low, and that the price has been set by the Board at \$200,000 to \$210,000.

Moderator Haskins read a letter that he had received from Molly Miller of Old Dublin Road, chair of the Hancock Road Committee. She said that she fully supported use of the smaller trucks, and felt that it would help to preserve the nature of the roads. She approved the purchase of trucks that were the proper size to maintain the existing roads, rather than making the roads larger to suit the trucks.

Ben Billings spoke, saying that he felt the Article would cost the town more money because the smaller trucks have approximately one-half the life-span of the ten-wheeler and he thinks it is premature to make the decision now. He suggested that the ten-wheeler be repaired and we use the equipment we have more effectively.

Kurt Grassett explained that the days of holding on to a six or ten-wheeler for a long time are gone. The electronics now used aren't sealed up against salt and sand, and in general the life spans are shorter, with the electronics needing to be replaced after 7 or 8 years.

David Bedard of Prospect Hill said that we "hired Tyler Howe, an excellent Road Agent," and he had watched him plow Prospect Hill with a smaller truck in "record time." He said Tyler is a "hands on guy" who has done extensive work on what trucks are appropriate for our roads and that he fully supports Tyler.

Dave Carney said that he fully supports the Selectboard and their choice, and thanked them for choosing an excellent Road Agent. He also said that the town needs a Budget Advisory Committee, and that there was still not one this year. He suggested that a future Town Meeting consider voting for a Budget Committee that would be independent of the Selectmen for three

years, and that would allow anyone who wants to serve.

Moderator Haskins responded, saying that he accepted that the fact that a Budget Advisory Committee didn't get appointed was his fault. He admitted that he didn't get to it until late when many people were not available to serve but that he now had a long list of people who are willing to serve.

David Bedard spoke, saying that Haskins made the same statement last year and that the ten-wheeler wouldn't have been purchased if there was a Budget Advisory Committee.

Jon GrosJean spoke, saying that he was at the meeting where the purchase of the ten-wheeler was discussed, and thought the purchase seemed like a good idea at the time, but it hasn't worked out as expected, so he thought we should let the Road Agent decide what he needs.

The question was voted by voice vote, and passed at 9:50am.

Article 04 Salt and Sand Mix Building

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$25,000 for the purpose of constructing a salt and sand mix building at the Department of Public Works. The Selectboard recommends this article. (Majority vote required)

The article was moved as follows by Laurie Bryan and seconded by Kurt Grasset:
I move that the Town of Hancock raise and appropriate the sum of \$25,000 for the purpose of constructing a salt and sand mix building at the Department of Public Works

Speaker Laurie Bryan described this as the Highway Department building that was in the back against the tree line, and said it had been condemned and cannot be used. The proposal is to rebuild the structure, which is used to keep the winter sand dry so that no clumps form to clog up the spreader. The building work will be done in-house.

The question was voted by voice vote and passed unanimously at 9:53am.

Article 05 Bridge Capital Reserve

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$7,000 to be added to the Bridge Capital Reserve Fund previously established. The Selectboard recommends this article. (Majority vote required.)

The Article was moved as follows by John Jordan and seconded by Laurie Bryan:
I move that the Town of Hancock vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$7,000 to be added to the Bridge Capital Reserve Fund previously established.

Speaker John Jordan said that the fund currently contains \$3,000.00 and that it is one of the most useful of the town's Capital Reserve funds, allowing the town to rebuild the Hunt's Pond Bridge and the Longview Road Bridge when it was needed without having to borrow or wait for funds from the State Bridge Program. We now need to build it back up. We'd like to add more than \$7,000 this year, but the budget doesn't allow it at this time.

Dave Carney said that the Capital Reserve Funds are one of the most important things presented at Town Meeting, and asked why we don't build it back up because all bridges will fail at some time and it would be excellent fiscal management.

John Jordan said the Selectboard felt we didn't have the money right now, but hoped to add \$10,000 to \$20,000 next year.

Dave Carney moved an Amendment to the Article to increase the amount to \$15,000, and Sharon Gordon seconded the Amendment.

Laurie Bryan said that the Selectboard was trying to wait for the Capital Improvement Committee, which is coming together to try to better balance the long-term funding. She agreed that there should be \$15,000 to \$20,000 or more in the account, but it was a matter of how to get there in terms of the tax rate and the overall Town needs.

Kurt agreed with Laurie, saying that as a Department Head he's had the benefit of using the funds for repairs, giving the example of being able to get the Hunt's Pond bridge up and running quickly. He thought our only red-listed bridge, on Middle Road, could be made passable with \$20,000 if necessary.

Tim Theberge said he is a big fan of Capital Reserve Funds as a way to manage both funds and risk. He said he had recently learned that the town, not the Army Corps of Engineers, owns the "massive structure that crosses Windy Row" and was "terrified by" the thought the Town might have to pay to replace it at some time.

Moderator Haskins then read the proposal to amend the Article, such that it would read: To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$15,000 to be added to the Bridge Capital Reserve Fund previously established.

The Amendment was voted by voice vote and passed.

Discussion turned to the Article as amended. As there were no further comments, Moderator Haskins asked if the body was ready for the question, and hearing no objection, read the Amended Article as follows:

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$15,000 to be added to the Bridge Capital Reserve Fund previously established.

The Amended Article was voted by voice vote and passed at 10:00am.

Article 06 Meetinghouse Capital Reserve

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$6,000 to be added to the Meetinghouse Capital Reserve Fund previously established. The Selectboard recommends this article. (Majority vote required.)

The Article was moved as follows by Kurt Grassett and seconded by Laurie Bryan:
To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$6,000 to be added to the Meetinghouse Capital Reserve Fund previously established.

Kurt Grassett said that the Fund was set up after the renovations to the building and provides funds for repairs as items come up. Dave Drasba, who did an incredible amount of work for the building on behalf of the Town, did a 15 year cost analysis of the building needs considering inflation and the needs of the Town. Grassett said that if we increase the amount added to the Reserve in slow steps, we should be in good shape for the next 10-15 years.

David Bedard said we did good job years ago and it looks lovely. He asked for clarification on who owns the building, the Town or the Church, and do we get any money in terms of rental fees, insurance, etc.

Kurt Grasset replied that it was joint ownership between the Town and the Church, neither has a majority. There is a committee that represents both Town and Church, and there is a guiding document that determines who pays what percent of the maintenance to ensure that the Town is not burdened by caring for space that it doesn't use. The documents are available for review.

Neil Cass, the Church Council Chair for the Hancock Congregational Church, said there is an 1852 agreement stating how things are to be shared. This Agreement was amended during the renovations to make it very clear who is responsible for what. There is a joint committee that meets regularly to address issues, and the Church includes money for its share in its budget. He used the cracked plaster currently being repaired as an example of items paid for by the Church.

The question was voted by voice vote and passed unanimously at 10:07am.

Pause

Moderator Haskins announced that there would be a 15 minute pause while the newly elected Town Officials who were present would be sworn in by Town Clerk Carolyn Boland.

When the Meeting continued, Moderator Haskins announced that the town was in need of volunteers for a variety of committees, and asked that people with an interest stop by the town office or send an e-mail or call to Jon Coyne.

He also said that he had received a written Maple Syrup Report provided by Mark Thompson. He read a portion of it aloud in the interest of time, but indicated that the full version would be included in the minutes and published in the upcoming Hancock Happenings.

The full Maple Syrup Report is included below:

Maple Syrup Report 2020, as received from Mark Thompson:

It's year two without Bill (Eva), and his guidance was missed very much last year. We tried to do things like before, but somehow it was not the same. However, I'd like to think I learned a lot more than sugaring from him. For instance, he was always trying new ideas. So, we made some minor changes and survived our first year. This year we are continuing where we left off. Weather is always the biggest factor when it comes to sugaring. Sixty degrees in January was a little more than the normal January thaw. Combined with lower than normal snow cover in the woods and little frost in the ground, the stage was set for an earlier season.

We tapped the first weekend in February, probably two weeks after the "sweetest sap run" (again). Oh well, we weren't ready anyway. We've spent many days looking for leaks and repairing our sap lines. Squirrels, deer, coyotes and bear create all sorts of problems. There have been many sunny days, with bright blue skies overhead and bearable temperatures making working in the woods very enjoyable. Even with temps in the low 20's in February, the sun felt warm.

Our first boil was February 24th this year (3-1/2 weeks earlier than last year) and we have collected and boiled a number of times since. So far, our total is about 220 gallons of syrup. By comparison, last year we totaled 260 gallons. Sap sugar content has been below 2% since the first run. Fairly low, but consistent with what other sugar makers are saying. Most say they've made between half and 2/3's of their average crop, although Bascom's (the state's largest producer) is reporting a little over a third of their normal crop (17,000 gallons made so far).

Without the help of friends and family, making maple syrup would be difficult and a lot less fun.

We have achieved most of the goals we set for ourselves this year. The support and help from my brother-in-law Don Eva, friend John Pirkey, and my wife have again made this year possible. Others stop by to lend a hand, and community support over the past year has been heartwarming.

We are now about 3-weeks into our "official" sugaring season. Old timers say the season usually runs about 6 weeks. I'm keeping an eye on the tell-tale signs--buds swelling and the presence of moths are said to be signs that the season is winding down. Moths have been out for a couple of weeks now and some birds (like red-winged blackbirds) have been near my feeders earlier than I can remember. Bud's on the lilacs are just starting to show signs of expanding, but fortunately the maples don't seem to be changing yet.

Meteorologists are predicting conditions favorable to sap runs this weekend and into next week, so I'm optimistic we'll be making a fair amount more syrup. The season has been good so far, and even if we just make a few more gallons I'm proud of our effort and syrup produced and will call this year another success.

Moderator Haskins then proceeded to Article 7 at 10:26am.

Article 07 Grapevine Community Resource Center

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$5,000 for the purpose of funding The Grapevine Family & Community Resource Center programs and services. This amount represents the Town of Hancock's portion of the funds needed to support The Grapevine, a nonprofit service organization; or take any other action relating thereto. This amount to be raised by general taxation. The Selectboard recommends this article. (Majority vote required)

The Article was moved as follows by Laurie Bryan and seconded by Kurt Grasset: I move that the Town of Hancock vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$5,000 for the purpose of funding The Grapevine Family & Community Resource Center programs and services. This amount represents the Town of Hancock's portion of the funds needed to support The Grapevine, a nonprofit service organization; or take any other action relating thereto. This amount to be raised by general taxation.

Speaker and Hancock resident Melissa Gallagher, Director of the Grapevine, said that the Grapevine had been serving the community for 23 years, and provided services to 170 residents of Hancock in the last year. Some of the services provided were:

- Early childhood enrichment and parent support
- Case management and intensive support
- Tax preparation and financial counseling
- Community wood bank
- Avenue A
- Home visits
- Service exchange and tool lending
- Support group for grandparents raising grandchildren

Moderator Haskins also mentioned a letter he had received from Hancock resident who wrote to say how much she appreciated the services provided by the Grapevine.

The question was voted by voice vote and passed unanimously at 10:31am

Article 08 Grapevine Avenue A Program

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of one thousand dollars (\$1,000) for the purpose of funding The Grapevine Family and Community Resource Center Avenue A programs and services. This amount represents the Town of Hancock's portion of funds needed to support The Grapevine Ave A program, a nonprofit service organization; or take any other action relating thereto. This amount to be raised by general taxation. The Selectboard recommends this article. (Majority vote required)

The Article was moved as follows by Laurie Bryan and seconded by Kurt Grasset: I move that the Town of Hancock vote to raise and appropriate the sum of one thousand dollars (\$1,000) for the purpose of funding The Grapevine Family and Community Resource Center Avenue A programs and services. This amount represents the Town of Hancock's portion of funds needed to support The Grapevine Ave A program, a nonprofit service organization; or take any other action relating thereto. This amount to be raised by general taxation.

Jacqueline Roland, Coordinator of Avenue A said that last year Hancock residents, 25 of them teens, participated in all Avenue A programs, which focus on Creative Expression, Social Development, and Career and Life Skills. Avenue A also coordinated with the Hancock Library and participated in the Martin Luther King Celebration.

Tim Theberge read a letter from his daughter Abby describing how the Teen Writers' Group Avenue A has helped her with her growth as an author and in finding friends, how it provided support during a recent tragedy in the community, and provides year round a place where teens can feel safe and comfortable, as well as help year-round with things like food if they need it, hygiene products, and warm clothes if needed. She said that Avenue A provides a second home for many students and perhaps a first home for even more. She asked that the Town support the request for funds.

The question was voted by voice vote and passed unanimously at 10:35am

Article 09 Community Volunteer Transportation Company

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$500 for the purpose of funding The Community Volunteer Transportation Company programs and services for the people of Hancock and the Greater Contoocook Valley area. This amount represents the Town of Hancock's portion of the funds needed to support Contoocook Valley Transportation Company, a nonprofit service organization; or take any other action relating thereto. This amount to be raised from general taxation. The Selectboard recommends this article. (Majority vote required)

The Article was moved as follows by Kurt Grasset and seconded by John Jordan: I move that the Town of Hancock vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$500 for the purpose of funding The Community Volunteer Transportation Company programs and services for the people of Hancock and the Greater Contoocook Valley area. This amount represents the Town of Hancock's portion of the funds needed to support Contoocook Valley Transportation Company, a nonprofit service organization; or take any other action relating thereto.

Jeff Reder of Hancock, a volunteer driver for the Community Volunteer Transportation Company for four years, said that they provide rides for those who can't drive themselves. He said there is no Uber or Lyft here to take people to a doctor's appointment or the supermarket.

Sharon Gordon said that going forward, Community Volunteer Transportation Company would likely get little or no support from the Monadnock United Way, and so next year they should ask

for what they need.

Jeff said he appreciated the support, but they were aware that they weren't the only ones coming before the towns.

Melissa Gallagher said that the most requests for help they get at the Grapevine are for housing and rides, and CVTC is the only organization filling this need that is really important in this rural area.

Gallagher moved to amend the Article's request to \$1,000.00. The motion was seconded by Jeff Reder.

Dave Carney asked if there was a website where people could sign up for rides, and Reder said yes, it was CVTC.org.

Erik Spitzbarth said that the people were operating on emotionality level and were more generous with taxpayer money than on a personal level. He said he thought it must go to admin expenses because the drivers are volunteers.

Reder explained that it does go for administrative expenses and that drivers are volunteers except for a stipend (approximately \$0.41 per mile) for mileage.

The question of the amendment was moved and voted upon by voice vote and passed.

Moderator Haskins then read the Amended article as follows:

I move that the Town of Hancock vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$1,000.00 for the purpose of funding The Community Volunteer Transportation Company programs and services for the people of Hancock and the Greater Contoocook Valley area. This amount represents the Town of Hancock's portion of the funds needed to support Contoocook Valley Transportation Company, a nonprofit service organization; or take any other action relating thereto.

The question was voted by voice vote and the Moderator ruled that it passed, although not unanimously, at 10:50.

Article 10 Independence Day Fireworks Display

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$7625.00 for the purpose of funding a fireworks display on or about July 3, 2020 and authorize the withdrawal of \$7625.00 from the Fireworks Expendable Trust Fund created for that purpose. The Selectboard recommends this article. (Majority vote required)

The Article was moved as follows by John Jordan and seconded by Laurie Bryan:

I move that the Town of Hancock raise and appropriate the sum of \$7625.00 for the purpose of funding a fireworks display on or about July 3, 2020 and authorize the withdrawal of \$7625.00 from the Fireworks Expendable Trust Fund created for that purpose.

Jon Coyne spoke to the Article, saying that the intent is to fund the fireworks this year from the Fireworks Expendable Trust Fund, which was funded by donations. In the past, the Fireworks display has been funded through general taxation or from the Fund Balance. The Selectboard felt that was not appropriate this year, or moving forward. The amount available in the Fireworks Fund will be used this year, and the amount received from donations this year will determine if we have a fireworks display going forward.

There were no other comments or suggestions.

The question was voted by voice vote and passed unanimously at 10:53am.

Article 11 Moderator Haskins announced that Article 11 was a petition article, and that the Selectboard was required to put it on the Warrant as they received it. They did that, but would be reading a motion that is different, which will be discussed after that. Moderator Haskins proceeded to read the Warrant Article as published:

Article 11. Adopt Solar Exemption (Petition)

To see if the Town will vote to adopt the provisions of RSA 72:61, RSA 72:62 and RSA 72:64 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 site. Such property tax exemption shall be in the amount equal to 100% of the assessed value of qualifying equipment under these statutes. (Majority vote required)

The following was read by John Jordan and seconded by Laurie Bryan:

I move that the Town vote to adopt the provisions of RSA 72:61, RSA 72:62 and RSA 72:64 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 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. (*Jordan emphasized the bold words and said they were the change for the Article as originally published*)

Speaker Michelle Russell introduced herself as a former member of HEAT, the Hancock Energy Advisory Team, whose goal was to conserve energy and further energy efficiency and renewable energy in Hancock. At that time they discussed a solar exemption, but the Selectboard didn't feel it was necessary because they didn't assess solar at all. In NH there are no formal guidelines for Realtors® or assessors. One hundred thirty-six towns have adopted a policy to assess but not tax solar energy systems, and eighty-six, including Peterborough, have no formal policy and neither assesses nor taxes them.

Dave Carney said he thinks the Article is well-intentioned but limited as most solar systems now make enough energy to sell it back to the grid and the wording needs to be thought out more.

Michelle Russell said the wording, provided by the Office of Strategic Initiatives, agrees with a net metering system that produces the amount of energy to be used on the site. It may produce more in the summer and send it back to the grid, to be used at a later date. It was meant to include residents, homeowners and small business owners, not supply a commercial power plant as a whole.

Neil Cass proposed an amendment that might help clarify. He moved to amend the wording to read, "equal to 100% of the assessed value up to \$50,000 of qualifying solar energy system under these statutes. The motion was seconded by David Bedard. Cass explained that RSA 72.61 as amended Jan 1, 2020 includes both net metering and group metering. That brings up the question of whether it opens it up to larger facilities, such as commercial or big neighborhood facilities. His proposal would limit that.

Moderator Haskins asked the Selectboard and Jonathan Coyne how residential vs. commercial would be limited. Coyne replied that RSA 72.61 through 64 inclusive have references that limit net metering to 3 vendors or less.

Cass said that attorneys have advised that that might not be adequate, and suggested a limit

on the amount of assessed value.

Erik Spitzbarth said that as people using a net metering system receive subsidies and then sell power to the grid, the people who don't have those systems will have to pay more,

Tom Faber said that he feels the original article as recommended by the State contains all that is needed, and that solar represents a way to take the load off power plants which use natural gas and fossil fuels. He also said he has solar power.

Hunt Dowse said he has solar power and doesn't think we need the Amendment. He feels the RSAs cover the issue.

Neil Cass said the RSAs may protect, but he spoke with municipal attorneys who felt it may not, and Dowse withdrew his objection to the \$50,000 limit.

Betsy Villaume asked for clarification that the tax exemption applied only to equipment owned by the home owners, not to leased equipment.

Moderator Haskins said he did not know how the assessor would know that, and that his understanding was that it was the intent of previous Selectboards that these systems were not to be taxed. There is a different assessor now who does assess them, and they are now showing up on the tax rolls. He believes the assessor is assessing them at \$500 per panel.

Neal Cass said that the owner of the property that a system sits on is completely responsible for the taxes.

David Bedard said that we all don't have homes that can benefit from solar, just as all don't have a view that is taxed. He said that if you are fortunate enough to be able to have solar power and get extra income from net metering, a tax on \$500 per panel is negligible.

The Moderator then read the proposed amended article as follows:

All those in favor of amending the Article to include the words "up to \$50,000" in the position before the words, "solar energy system" signify by saying "Aye".

The voice vote being unclear, he asked the ballot clerks to review a show of hands, and they indicated that the Amendment passed.

Mary Covington said she felt the subject was too complex to make a decision at this time and should be postponed to next year and a committee should take it up.

Dave Carney asked about the impact on the tax rate and Jon Coyne replied that it was approximately \$350,000 of valuation, or about one-quarter of a penny per thousand on the overall tax rate. He also said that the subject was very complex and people needed more information, and he submitted a "Move to Table" motion. David Bedard seconded the motion.

Hunt Dowse spoke to the "Move to Table" motion, saying that in the past Moderator Dick Amidon did not allow a motion to table, but said that the body should either vote something up or vote something down and then move on. Dowse said that we should defeat the motion to table and he thought that we could talk it through and he thought it could be resolved.

Neal Cass also spoke against tabling the motion.

Kenyon MacLeod said we should put aside the motion to table in order to allow him and others the opportunity to speak to the Article.

The Motion to Table was voted by voice vote and failed to pass.

Discussion returned to the Article. Kenyon Macleod said he thought the Article was premature and that he thought it should wait a year until we could make an informed decision.

Melody Russell said she felt it was time to be brave and make a contribution to encourage solar for us and our children. She said that her daughter, Michelle Russell, had researched the issue thoroughly both for the Town and the Hancock School Board and asked that we go forward with

this.

Peri Chickering spoke as someone who has solar power and drives a 2003 Prius and takes these issues seriously, but is not in favor of the Article. She said it warranted a lot more thought, particularly as a community so we could make a clear decision about what is best for everybody.

George Kidd called the question and a majority agreed to move the amendment.

A voice vote was taken and the amendment passed.

Moderator Haskins read the amended motion as:

Move that the Town vote to adopt the provisions of RSA 72:61, RSA 72:62 and RSA 72:64 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 site. Such property tax exemption shall be in the amount equal to 100% of the assessed value up to \$50,000 of qualifying **solar energy system** equipment under these statutes.

The Article as Amended was voted with a show of hands. The ballot clerks counted and determined that it passed: 41 Yeas to 37 Nays at 11:36 a.m.

Article 12 Martin Luther King Day Celebration (Petition)

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to sponsor an annual Martin Luther King Day celebration.

The Article was moved as follows by Laurie Bryan and seconded by John Jordan:
I move that the Town of Hancock vote to sponsor an annual Martin Luther King Day celebration.

Moderator Haskins said he had received letters from a number of people, and read a letter from one of them, Harriet DiCicco, of 55 Old Hancock Road. The contents of her letter is as follows:
This warrant is at the request of the Hancock Community Conversations about Race Group which started 18 months ago. As a member of this group, I support this warrant.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is a nationwide holiday honoring Dr. King and his life long commitment to those essential American values which we all hold dear - freedom, equality, justice, dignity. He worked tirelessly to make those values a reality for all people no matter their race, creed or color.

As with two other events which the Town of Hancock sponsors - Memorial Day and Old Home Days - this is another opportunity for us to come together as a community, as a town and affirm our beliefs and values in what we feel is important and what we want our children to know is important.

The town sponsorship does not result in any additional town expenditures. As a sponsored event, the MLK Jr event falls under the general insurance umbrella which is already in the town budget.

The event is organized by members of the Community Conversations about Race Group. This past January was our second annual event and we had an estimated 90 persons there. It was truly a community event with participants of all ages, including our elementary school students and teenagers from Avenue A. The feedback from the community was extremely positive.
Signed - Harriet DiCicco, 55 Old Hancock Road.

Steve Schuch said he was present at the Hancock Community Conversation About Race

program for Martin Luther King Day in January and saw the way the community came together. He said they wanted the Town to sponsor the event so that the Town's (insurance) umbrella would cover it and they wouldn't have to buy another policy.

Moderator Haskins then read a portion of the letter from Robin Gregg supporting the Article. The contents of her letter is as follows:

I write in support of the warrant article requesting that the Town of Hancock sponsor the Hancock Martin Luther King, Jr. Day event next year, January 2021.

I have lived in Hancock for over twenty years, and participating in the planning of this event and attending it for the past two years has made me feel so happy about our town and the people who live here. It has been so satisfying to see our townspeople supporting the recognition of an individual such as Dr. King as well as supporting the ideals of racial equality and social justice that King and many other civil rights activists fought for with nonviolent resistance and brave, strong collective action.

I hope that the voters at Town Meeting will support our request for town sponsorship of this event. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is a national holiday, like July 4 and Memorial Day, two other national holidays supported by the town.

In addition, our town has always seemed to me like a place where people feel a strong sense of belonging. The town's sponsorship of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day would send an important message about the kind of town we live in. It would send the message that we in Hancock believe in American ideals such as "liberty and justice for all."

I hope that you will vote to support this request. ...
Signed, Robin Gregg, 8 Pickering Farm Road

John Jordan advised that if the town sponsored the event, it would become subject to the provisions of RSA 91:A, the Right to Know Law. All meetings would have to be in public places, posted publicly ahead, and minutes publicly available.

Erik Spitzbarth said he agrees with John and that he needed clarification of what the word "sponsor" means and what liabilities and costs might be incurred.

Moderator Haskins asked how much the Insurance Rider cost, and Steve Schuch answered \$120.00.

Moderator Haskins then read a portion of a letter from Mary Meyers:
I am not attending Town Meeting as I have a cold and because of COVID-19. I want to voice my support for the article asking the town to sponsor Martin Luther King Day.
Signed, Mary Meyers

David Bedard moved to Amend the Article to include Columbus Day, Labor Day and President's Day as well as Martin Luther King Day and Erik Spitzbarth seconded.

The Motion to Amend was voted by voice vote and failed to pass.

Dave Carney asked if the Selectmen were willing to take on the responsibility for training the committee for RSA:91:A. Laurie Bryan said that if the town voted for the Article, the Selectboard would appoint a committee and go over the Right to Know parts that go with it.

Tim Theberge said that he is the local Cub Scout Master for 35 scouts in Cub Scout Pack 8, and if the real question was the need for an insurance rider, he proposed that the event be held in cooperation with the Cub Scouts. It would engage the scouts in a civic event, which is a

requirement for them, and the event would be covered by the B.S.A. insurance rider.

The question was voted by a show of cards. The ballot clerks counted and determined that the question failed with a count of 38 Yeas to 42 Nays.

Article 13 Baseball Special Revenue Fund

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$435 for the purpose of purchasing baseball equipment and doing maintenance to the baseball fields; with said funds to come from the Baseball Special Revenue Fund established for this purpose at the 1997 Town Meeting. The Selectboard recommends this article. (Majority vote required)

The Article was moved as read by Kurt Grasset and seconded by Laurie Bryan.

The question was voted by voice vote and passed unanimously at 11:56 a.m.

Article 14 Recreation Special Revenue Fund

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$1,887 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. The Selectboard recommends this article. (Majority vote required)

The Article was moved as read by Laurie Bryan and seconded by Kurt Grasset.

The question was voted by voice vote and passed unanimously at 11:59 p.m.

Article 15 Highway Special Revenue Fund

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$1,574 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. The Selectboard Recommends this article. (Majority vote required)

The Article was moved as read by John Jordan and seconded by Laurie Bryan.

The question was voted by voice vote and passed unanimously at 12:00 p.m.

Article 16 History Special Revenue Fund

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$3,144 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. The Selectboard Recommends this article. (Majority vote required)

The Article was moved as read by John Jordan and seconded by Laurie Bryan.

The question was voted by voice vote and passed unanimously at 12:01 p.m.

Article 17 Police Special Revenue Fund

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$5,403 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. The Selectboard Recommends this article. (Majority vote required)

The Article was moved as read by Laurie Bryan and seconded by John Jordan.

The question was voted by voice vote and passed unanimously at 12:02 p.m.

Article 18 To Accept Town Reports

To see if the Town of Hancock will vote to accept the 2019 reports of the Town Officials, agents and committees, and to accept the 2018 auditor's report. The Selectboard recommends this Article.

The Article was moved as follows by John Jordan and seconded by Laurie Bryan:
I move that the Town of Hancock vote to accept the 2019 reports of the Town Officials, agents and committees, and to accept the 2018 auditor's report.

John said that there was a note in the Auditors Report about determining the Town's obligation under the State Retirement Fund. There is only one person retired from the Town under this program, and determining the future obligation would require an Actuarial Report which would cost \$5750 to prepare. The Selectboard did not feel that it was worth the investment in that report.

The question was voted by voice vote and passed unanimously at 12:05 p.m.

Article 19 Transact any other business

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

Tim Theberge gave a brief update from the Telecommunications Committee - approximately 75% of the town already has access to high speed internet - but they are still working with Consolidated and COMCAST to improve access for the rest of the town.

Alisha Davis was concerned that there is no Recreation Committee currently in place and asked how that may impact the upcoming summer season. Laurie Bryan from the Selectboard explained that some of summer activities have been setup thanks to some of last year's volunteers. They will be advertising in the Hancock Happenings for the committee vacancies and employment opportunities.

Mary Covington - Showed some slides from the Telecommunications Committee and said that she would be arranging with Jonathan Coyne's help to put them the Town's website.

Sarah Laeng-Gilliatt spoke about maintaining the wonderful community fabric that is present in our town and as such wanted to point out the positive things that can come from the COVID-19 crisis about to befall us. She explained that there is a sign-up list available for people to identify resources or concerns that can be shared with our Welfare Officer, Linda Coughlan. Her concern is to be sure that all people's needs are met in the coming months. Linda expressed her gratitude for any assistance and volunteers.

Bog Fogg explained why the town clock's bell strikes before the hour. Bob served as the Agent of the Town Clock for 50 years, starting in 1965. He explained that many years ago, he received a request from Bill Hanson asking if he could make the clock strike just a little bit before the hour so that he could turn on

his radio or TV in time to hear the news on the hour. Bob said that he had been making the clock strike early ever since. Bob also shared that now that his son Bobby Fogg Jr. is the Agent of the Town Clock, and is also following that tradition. A warm round of applause followed.

Mary Covington moved to adjourn the 2020 Town of Hancock Annual Town Meeting and Lauren Carney seconded the motion.

The motion was voted by voice vote and passed unanimously!

Moderator Haskins then declared the 2020 Town of Hancock Annual Town Meeting adjourned at 12:15:p.m.

Respectfully submitted

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Carolyn G. Boland".

Carolyn G. Boland
Town Clerk