

# Town of Washington

## Special Town Meeting

March 24, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.

Moderator: Hank Martin

Clerk: Mary Anne Greene

### TRANSCRIPT

First Selectman, James Brinton, opened with request for nominations for moderator. Mary Anne Green nominated Hank Martin with second by Ashley Judson. It was unanimously approved.

Moderator: Called the meeting to order and noted the long agenda and need to move along to work way through it. Each resolution to be made with second then discussion. After discussion, the vote, and then move on to next resolution. Requested Mary Anne Greene, Clerk, to read warning

Clerk: Warning - The voters and electors of the Town of Washington are hereby warned that a Special Town Meeting will be held on Thursday, March 24th, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. at Bryan Memorial Town Hall, Washington Depot, Connecticut to consider and act upon the following:

- To adopt a "Placement of Snow in Public Right of Way" Ordinance.
- To amend the "Automatic Police and Fire Alarm" Ordinance
- To approve ARPA Funding not to exceed \$14,000 to purchase and stock a climate controlled mobile trailer for use in the event of a town wide emergency
- To approve ARPA funding not to exceed \$21,000 to purchase and stock a storage container traffic cones, barricades, signs, etc. to be used for community COVID vaccination and testing clinics.
- To adopt the Town of Washington Capital Improvement Plan
- To approve the purchase of property at 92 Bee Brook Road, Washington Depot, CT by the Town of Washington.
- To approve joining the HVHD Health District.
- To amend the Ordinance Establishing an Affordable Housing Fund

Dated at Washington, Connecticut this 3<sup>rd</sup> day of March 2022.

James L. Brinton, Jay Hubelbank, Dean Sarjeant

Board of Selectmen

Moderator: Thank you Mary Anne. Before we start, I'd like to make sure who is eligible or not eligible to vote. Ask Sheila Anson, Town Clerk, to explain state statutes for eligibility.

S. Anson: Eligibility to vote CT State Section 7-6 at any town meeting other than a regular or special, any person who is an elector of such town may vote and any citizen of the United States at the age of 18 years or more jointly or severally who is liable

to the town for taxes assessed him on an assessment of not less than \$1000 (one-thousand dollars). That would have explained if you are a taxpayer, but your property is in a trust or an LLC you are not an individual. So, LLCs and trusts cannot vote as a taxpayer. Thank you.

- Moderator: You have to be a person. Let me just explain it simply. Everything on agenda tonight, any taxpayer of this town with tax liability of more than \$1000 (one-thousand dollars) can vote. The only thing you couldn't vote on are votes for electing people to office. That requires you to be a registered voter in addition to being a taxpayer. There are no votes for office tonight. One more thing to note if interest, Washington Primary School sent its third grade here to have a tour of the building and learn about town government. Ok, the first item.
- J. Brinton: Resolved: To adopt a "Placement of Snow in Public Right of Way" Ordinance.
- Moderator: Is there second?
- S. Anson: [Sheila Anson] Second.
- Moderator: Jim, would you explain?
- J. Brinton: This ordinance is just what it says it is. Essentially in the winter, over the years contractors are plowing private residence and plowing it into the road after town and state crews have gone by making it a hazardous condition. This simply gives us the authority to issue fines for the contractors if they don't cease with that activity. In my opinion, it's overdue on the books and fairly straight forward ordinance.
- Moderator: Any questions? No hands? Ready to vote? All in favor of approving resolution related to snow obstruction, please say aye.
- Audience: Aye.
- Moderator: Any opposed?
- Audience: [silence]
- Moderator: [resolution approved] Jim, would you make the resolution on second item?
- J. Brinton: Resolved: To amend the "Automatic Police and Fire Alarm" Ordinance.
- Moderator: Can I have second on that?
- D. Werkhoven: [David Werkhoven] Second.
- Moderator: Jim, would you explain this matter?

J. Brinton: This is essentially about our first responders. This ordinance requires a commercial entity in town to have a lockbox. Lots of times our first responders are called out at night and there's no one as a keyholder to access the property. So we have to either guess or break in if obvious signs of emergency. This simply allows the fire department to have access to the building in the event there is not a keyholder. Businesses can opt out of this that's a possibility with proper paperwork, but again this is for everyone's safety and the protection of our emergency services. It's pretty straightforward.

Moderator: This ordinance would only apply to commercial properties, not single-family homes?

J. Brinton: Correct, it does not apply to residential properties.

Moderator: Any questions or comments about this item? Are we ready to vote? All in favor of amending the Automatic Police and Fire Alarm Ordinance per verbal resolution and printed documents available, please say aye.

Audience: Aye.

Moderator: Any opposed? Any abstentions? Motion carries unanimously. Jim, item three, the ARPA funding?

J. Brinton: Resolved: To approve ARPA Funding not to exceed \$14,000 to purchase and stock a climate controlled mobile trailer for use in the event of a town wide emergency.

Moderator: Could I have a second?

J. Criollo [Jorge Criollo] Second.

Moderator: It would be good to identify yourselves. Jim, would you like to explain that one?

J. Brinton: One of the things we realized throughout the pandemic was with the emergency services and the provisions from the state national guard and the federal government, we've got a lot of equipment to deal with at the time of emergency. The problem is having a place to store it properly from cots to dry goods, all kinds of thing of that nature. With the coming of an emergency shelter that we're preparing with the food, the cots, the ability to house people, that's when this will be absolutely critical.

Moderator: Any questions, comments, concerns about that one? Ok, we have a couple of hands. State your name and street address please.

M. Gorra: Michelle Gorra, School Street. I'm just wondering where the trailer will go.

J. Brinton: Again, it's a mobile trailer. My sense is it would be at the public works or the fire department. Is that correct Ethan? Ethan's our emergency management director.

Moderator: I saw another hand up?

S. Jenkins: Sarah Jenkins at 18 Curtis Road. How big is this trailer and you're saying it's just for storing stuff, it's not for having people use it to lie on a cot or whatever or be treated?

J. Brinton: That's correct. This would be for the equipment during an actual emergency. Is it a 20-foot trailer, Ethan? An 18-foot trailer and it would be housing what would stock our shelter and keep it replenished.

S. Jenkins: And it needs to be climate controlled?

J. Brinton: It does. One of the things we found out as example, the cots, the mice get in them. That's the rationale. To keep everything especially the dry goods, any of that, the climate control is going to make a big difference.

Moderator: Anybody else? Are we ready to vote? All in favor of the motion to approve ARPA funding not to exceed \$14,000 (fourteen thousand dollars) for the mobile trailer, please say aye.

Audience: Aye.

Moderator: Any opposed? Any abstentions? One opposed and one abstention. The motion carries, but not unanimously. The fourth item also involves ARPA funding issue, Jim?

J. Brinton: Resolved: To approve ARPA Funding not to exceed \$21,000 to purchase and stock a storage container for traffic cones, barricades, signs, etc. to be used for community COVID vaccination and testing clinics.

Moderator: Could I have a second on that resolution please?

J. Criollo: [Jorge Criollo] Second.

Moderator: Thank you. Jim?

J. Brinton: This is a similar request for the ARPA funding that would allow us to do essentially just what it says in the event of an emergency. We've never had enough of this type of material to make sure that roads are kept safe. This is going to go a long way in doing that. I failed to mention that all these ARPA funds like what we did a year ago have been vetted by the town attorney, the auditor, the

Board of Selectmen, and the Board of Finance. This is the last step, a town meeting for approval.

Moderator: Questions? Comments?

V. Andersen: Valerie Anderson, Blackville Road. Are we getting any funds from the State of Connecticut or from the feds for this, and shouldn't we?

J. Brinton: These are ARPA funds, Valerie, so they're federal funds.

V. Andersen: This isn't out of our operating or capital budget?

J. Brinton: Correct.

V. Andersen: Great!

Moderator: Any other questions?

S. Jenkins: Sarah Jenkins again. Is there no other place that you have to store this stuff and is it necessary to have a COVID testing place here in Washington?

J. Brinton: The COVID testing and vaccination clinics could be necessary in Washington, but this is a multi-use. It's all about emergency, having this equipment. We don't have any other place to store this kind of equipment.

S. Jenkins: You don't store traffic cones anywhere else?

J. Brinton: We do, but not to the level. We have some, but not enough to cover the town.

S. Jenkins: The ARPA funding, is that a large sum and that is just part of it? Do you have to a project and then apply?

J. Brinton: So currently we have four out of five volunteers that we're trying to get an ARPA advisory committee to vet these and bring them before the Board of Selectmen. The ARPA funds have come to the Town of Washington in two parts, \$507,000 this past June and another \$507,000 this coming June.

S. Jenkins: So we're getting that money no matter what?

J. Brinton: Correct.

Moderator: Any other questions? Ready to vote? All in favor of this resolution to approve ARPA funding not to exceed \$21,000 for stocking a storage container for traffic cones etcetera, please say aye.

Audience: Aye.

Moderator: Any opposed? Any abstentions? Are you opposed or abstaining?

Audience: Opposed.

Moderator: Motion carries and on to the next one.

J. Brinton: Resolved: To adopt the Town of Washington Capital Improvement Plan.

Moderator: Second to that resolution?

T. Bent: [Ted Bent] Second.

Moderator: Jim?

J. Brinton: A couple of things with the Capital Improvement Plan. We haven't had one in town in roughly eight or ten years. There are two fundamental reasons for having a plan. One is that it's a road map to make sure the town continues to take care of our buildings, emergency service apparatus, bridges, roads. It's a plan that goes out anywhere between five and fifteen years. Nobody has a crystal ball. It's a fluid plan to be changes as often as we choose to change it. It is not an appropriation of monies. The dollar amounts listed in the Capital Plan that can go out to five to ten years are estimates. What's critical about this plan is we need this adopted as a town to access state grant monies that are ours. They're not matching funds. They're our money. So currently our local capital improvement grant has been accumulating year after year. As of March 1st of this year, it's over \$500,000. This is a simple road map. It's fluid. It can be changes, but we need that plan in place to access these grants.

Moderator: Is it true that the State of Connecticut is requiring from all towns?

J. Brinton: Correct, we cannot access those grants without it.

Moderator: As I understand it, if we approve this plan tonight, the plan could change tomorrow and that would be fine. There's no appropriation of money and there's no authorization to spend here. It's a plan, a guideline. Any questions, comments, concerns about this?

D. Arturi: Denise Arturi, Shearer Road. Does every plan change have to get approved again?

J. Brinton: That's correct, Denise. The Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, no one else can change it, but the town legislative body.

Moderator: Yes?

S. Jenkins: Can you explain what the different categories refer to? They're not all on one thing? Are those different?

J. Brinton: Yes, they are. Every ten years you're going to pave a road, but every five years you're going to chip seal. That's maintenance. Paving and drainage is reclaiming the road, repaving. Chip sealing is simply laying down oil and chip seal.

Moderator: Other questions? Are we ready to vote? All in favor of the resolution to adopt the Town of Washington Capital Improvement Plan please say aye.

Audience: Aye.

Moderator: Any opposed? Any abstentions? Carries unanimously. On to the next one, Jim.

J. Brinton: Resolved: To approve the purchase of 92 Bee Brook Road, Washington Depot, CT by the Town of Washington.

Moderator: Could I have a second on that resolution?

S. Anson: [Sheila Anson] Second.

Moderator: Jim?

J. Brinton: Last year when we came to the town to gain access to ARPA funds to help us fund the purchase of this building, the idea was to build a new ambulance headquarters for our EMS. We've gone through the process of the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, town meeting, vetted it with town attorney, with our auditor. We had a small group of residents about eight months ago. The purchase price is \$1,000,000 (one million dollars). To date we've raised 1.35 million dollars, so we have more than enough for the purchase with zero impact to the taxpayer. There still more work to be done, but essentially this is the authorization to purchase that building.

Moderator: Some of you were here at the annual town meeting on Oct 4<sup>th</sup> of this past year. If you were here, you'll remember we did vote to authorize the \$250,000 from ARPA funds which was needed to allow the Board of Selectmen to start negotiating an actual specific deal. But we said back then, this will come to a town meeting again when everything in place. That's what this is tonight as promised last October. Valerie, you have your hand raised.

V. Andersen: Valerie Andersen, Blackville Road. I'm just trying to find where else in this document there are costs associated with this purchase. I see the million dollars. I see the private funding. Amazing generosity to do this. Further on in the capital plan you have a \$500,000 estimate for renovation. Could you explain that because sixty percent of it is granted and is there anything else to be done after that planned renovation?

J. Brinton: After the renovation, no. The renovation will be complete to get it to the specs that the ambulance needs. The fundraising as I said is ongoing. After the purchase we still have \$350,000 so we're continuing to raise funds. That capital plan is fluid, but if it's not in that capital plan, you have no access to that state money. What was the rest of your question?

V. Andersen: This is state money for renovation?

J. Brinton: Right now, it's all private donors for renovation. If we can continue to raise funds the way we have, it will all be by private donor.

V. Andersen: On the line where it says 93 Bee Brook renovation, it talks about LCIP sixty percent \$200,000.

J. Brinton: That's the LoCip [Local Capital Improvement] grant.

V. Andersen: So, we're doing private donations to purchase, grants to renovate, ongoing fundraising, and no impact on the town capital plan budget?

J. Brinton: Correct.

V. Andersen: Super!

Moderator: Any other questions? Any comments? Ready to vote? All in favor of approving the purchase of property at 92 Bee Brook Road in Washington Depot by the Town of Washington, please say aye.

Audience: Aye.

Moderator: Any opposition? Any abstentions? It carries unanimously.

Audience: [clapping]

Moderator: Jim, on to the next one. Two more to go.

J. Brinton: Resolved: To approve joining the Housatonic Valley Health District.

Moderator: Could I have a second on that?

A. Judson: [Ashley Judson] Second.

Moderator: Thank you. Jim?

J. Brinton: For years we were part of the New Milford Health District. If you look around the district, there's Torrington Area Health, there's Newtown, Naugatuck. We were



always part of New Milford Area Board of Health. New Milford left New Milford Area Health and joined Pomperaug which in turn became Housatonic Valley Health District. Right now, we are under the health supervision of our retired health director, Mike Preston, until the end of this month so we can get in with the Housatonic Valley health District. That District will be made up of Washington, Woodbury, Southbury, Oxford, and New Milford. It gives us additional resources, sanitarians to help expedite things in the health department with inspections. It's roughly eleven hundred dollars to twelve hundred dollars a year less in the contract, but we do lose our fees, our collection of fees which is substantial. It's about ten to twelve thousand dollars a year, so this is a one-year program. I've already spoken to Newtown Area Board of Health. They run the same model so there's no advantage to trying to move to that now, but we will be looking over the course of the next year of making another move to a second health district.

Moderator: Questions, comments, concerns?

D. Tagley: Diana Tagley, Sabbaday Lane. Could you explain what you mean about the fees, reducing fees?

J. Brinton: We collect fees for a lot of the inspections or any of the permits that are issued in the health department that would typically go to the town. They will now go to the district.

K. Gallagher: Karen Gallagher [Findlay Road]. I had a question when we were with the New Milford Health Department. We had a sanitarian in Washington twice a week. Now we have a sanitarian in once a week for half amount of time and we're going to be losing the permitting fees. They're talking about expanded resources. What are the expanded resources?

J. Brinton: We're not in the District right now that's why we have a sanitarian as little as we do. As soon as we're in the district, we'll have availability of two sanitarians a week.

K. Gallagher: According to their website, they only have on registered sanitarian.

J. Brinton: No, I was at the meeting last week. They have two sanitarians in the district.

K. Gallagher: I was on the Housatonic website, that's what I was questioning.

J. Brinton: I don't deny it could be.

K. Gallagher: And is it still going to be servicing the town once a week?

J. Brinton: Yes.

K. Gallagher: What would the permitting time look like?

J. Brinton: I have no idea. It should be much more efficient than what it's been.

K. Gallagher: How about are the fees going to increase?

J. Brinton: No.

K. Gallagher: But we don't get the fees anymore?

J. Brinton: Correct.

K. Gallagher: It will be the Housatonic District?

J. Brinton: They go to the District.

K. Gallagher: The District would be in control of the fees?

J. Brinton: No, they collect the fees.

K. Gallagher: So, it would still be \$20 for permitting?

J. Brinton: Right.

K. Gallagher: Thank you.

Moderator: Yes, right over here.

M. Solomon: Mitchell Solomon, Bell Hill. What are Bridgewater and Roxbury, where are they?

J. Brinton: I believe they are Newtown.

M. Solomon: Is that something we're going to be looking at?

J. Brinton: We are. I've already spoken to the health director in Newtown and I looked at Roxbury's budget. They're actually paying more for a much smaller community than we are for their health district. That had me a little alarmed. When I spoke to the health director there, it's a similar model. But there are other options. We have Torrington Area Health. There are other places to look and that's what we're going to be doing.

M. Solomon: Are there any disadvantages with being hooked up with other towns that are much larger than us?

J. Brinton: No because we're always connected to New Milford and that was always a good relationship.

Moderator: Any other questions? All in favor of approving to join the Housatonic Valley Health District, please say aye.

Audience: Aye.

Moderator: Any opposed? Any abstentions? [motion carries] Thank you. Last one, Jim?

J. Brinton: Resolved: o amend the Ordinance “Establishing an Affordable Housing Fund”.

Moderator: Is there a second?

D. Rimsky: [Dimitri Rimsky] Second.

Moderator: Jim?

J. Brinton: Essentially when this was established some twenty plus years ago, there was a provision to access monies to vett the viability of properties, purchases, and homes. Going back twenty plus years, that allotment was \$5000. In talking with several engineering firms, it’s simply not enough anymore. The Housing Commission met and this is the direction we’d like to go, to increase that to \$10,000 which is more in line with the test we need to have done to make sure a property is viable.

Moderator: Any questions, comments, concerns? Ready to vote? All in favor of amending the Ordinance “Establishing an Affordable Housing Fund” please say aye.


Audience: Aye.

Moderator: Any opposition? Any abstentions? Motion carries unanimously. Our business is over. Adjourned.

Adjourned: 7:34 p.m.

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I, Sheila Silvernail, certify to the best of my ability the foregoing is an accurate record based on audio recording provided of the Town of Washington’s Special Town Meeting on March 24, 2022.

 Dated at Washington, CT this 26<sup>th</sup> day of March 2022.