

Town of Washington

Annual Town Budget Meeting

May 19, 2022 at 7:30 p.m.

Moderator: Hank Martin

Clerk: Mary Anne Greene

MINUTES & TRANSCRIPT

First Selectman, James Brinton, opened with request for nominations for moderator. Dean Sarjeant nominated Hank Martin with second by Jay Hubelbank and subsequent unanimous approval.

Moderator: Welcomed everyone and honored Cindy Brisset as Washington's Animal Control Officer for 42 years. Noted three different types of town meetings and called Annual Town Budget meeting to order requesting Clerk to read the Warning.

Clerk: Warning, Town of Washington, Annual Town Budget Meeting

The voters and electors of the Town of Washington are hereby warned that the Annual Town Budget Meeting will be held on Thursday, May 19, 2022 at 7:30 p.m. at Bryan Memorial Town Hall, Washington Depot, Connecticut to consider and act upon the following:

1. To consider and act upon the proposed General Fund Expenses and Transfers for the 2022-2023 fiscal year.
2. To consider and act upon the proposed Nonrecurring Capital Expenses for the 2022-2023 fiscal year.
3. To approve and adopt the proposed Delay of Demolition Ordinance.

Dated at Washington, Connecticut this 28th day of April 2022.
James L. Brinton, Jay Hubelbank, Dean Sarjeant - Board of Selectmen

Moderator: Thank you. As you can see, we have three items tonight which means there will be three resolutions. For each resolution, there'll be a second, discussion for questions or comments. Then vote and move on to next resolution. If you'd like to speak, please raise your hand to be recognized and state name and address for the clerk. We'll bring microphone to you to speak so everyone can hear. Discussion continues until no further comments or vote to stop it. Jim, please make first resolution.

J. Brinton: Resolved to consider and act [to approve an amount not to exceed \$6,056,295] for the proposed General Fund Expenses and Transfers for the 2022-2023 fiscal year.

Moderator: Could I have a second for that resolution?

T. Bent: Second.

Moderator: Thank you, and explanation before discussion?

J. Brinton: Starting in January the Board of Selectmen along with Finance Department starts to solicit the departments to get their budgets in. For the next several months, we go through, listen to everyone's requests, go back to board to review the budget. This year we had to make roughly \$900,000 in cuts. Our goal was to continue services, to continue infrastructure improvements, and to maintain the mill rate. That was our goal.

Moderator: Thank you, any questions?

E. Hochberg: Edward Hochberg, 15 Couch Road. My question is have you been able to maintain the mill rate with this budget?

Moderator: Let me answer that, I think I know what the answer's going to be. I'm sure there are people from Board of Finance here. Typically, the mill rate is not determined until after the town meeting. I don't know if Michael [Board of Finance] usually says anything more than that.

E. Hochberg: He just said they tried. They cut \$900,000 to maintain the mill rate.

J. Brinton: I can't say.

Moderator: I'm not saying it's an unreasonable question. I'm just saying that usually the Board of Finance meets after.

E. Hochberg: I know what you're saying, but I can [unintelligible].

J. Brinton: If the budget passes as is tonight, the mill rate will stay the same with Board of Finance approval.

E. Hochberg: Thank you.

Moderator: But that won't be official until the Board of Finance votes on it.

E. Hochberg: [unintelligible]

Moderator: Any other questions? Are we ready to vote? Okay. The first resolution was resolved to approve an amount not to exceed \$6,056,295 for General the Fund Expenses and Transfers for the 2022-2023 fiscal year. All in favor please say aye.

Audience: Aye.

Moderator: Any opposed? Two opposed. Any abstentions? [none] Okay, the motion passes. On to Resolution Two.

J. Brinton: Resolved to approve an amount not to exceed \$3,040,000 for expenditures for the 2022-2023 Nonrecurring Capital Fund to be offset by \$335,500 in anticipated grants for a net expense of \$2,704,500.

Moderator: Thank you, could I have a second to this resolution?

P. Allen: Second.

Moderator: Thank you. Jim, any comments?

J. Brinton: For folks that may not be aware that the Nonrecurring is our capital fund so that's our bridges, vehicle replacement, highway department projects, things of that nature. It's usually big-ticket items. If they don't get done in that year, the money stays. It does not go back to the fund balance. Usually, larger projects that are going on.

Moderator: Anybody like to ask a question or make a comment?

E. Hochberg: How does that compare to the past year?

J. Brinton: Without the exact numbers in front of me, I believe it's very similar to past years. We did make some cuts, adjustments to our 20-year purchase plan for replacing apparatus. Just again to keep the mill rate flat. It's pretty similar to prior years.

E. Hochberg: Thank you.

Moderator: Any others? Are we ready to vote? Resolved to approve an amount not to exceed \$3,040,000 for expenditures for the 2022-2023 Nonrecurring Capital Fund to be offset by \$335,500 in anticipated grants for a net expense of \$2,704,500. All in favor please say aye.

Audience: Aye.

Moderator: Any opposed? None opposed this time. Any abstentions? [none] Thank you the motion carries. On to Resolution Number Three.

J. Brinton: Resolved to approve and adopt the proposed Delay of Demolition Ordinance.

Moderator: Could I have a second?

T. Bent: Second.

Moderator: Jim, any comments?

J. Brinton: Just a brief background. This came to the Selectmen several months ago from the Historic District Commission. We've all seen in the past that buildings are torn down and replaced and removed. This essentially doesn't stop anyone from doing what they want to do, but just allows a grace period to have it reviewed to make sure that we're not demolishing something that cannot be replaced. There's been some barns and things of that nature. Obviously with the age of Washington there's a lot of historic buildings. This simply allows the Historic District Commission to review. There'll be a panel appointed that will review these applications. At the end of the 120 days, if people so choose, they can do what they want. This doesn't stop anybody from doing what they want.

Female: What's the point?

J. Brinton: Basically educational, if it's discovered to be a historic site. It's to make people aware of it. Try to look for alternatives. It's all spelled out in the ordinance.

Moderator: Any questions, comments about this resolution?

E. Hochberg: My question is how much additional paperwork and details does the property owner have to do because sometimes it becomes a very difficult task? Then it's a burden upon the owner.

J. Brinton: No, I understand. This I believe was version nine. We had several versions go back and forth between the Historic District Commission and the Board of Selectmen. We were cognizant of it being less cumbersome.

E. Hochberg: [unintelligible]

D. Rimsky: When a property owner goes to the building department to request a demolition, they building inspector passes that request on to the appointed review commission. They evaluate the building within a timely fashion, probably less than 30 days. If they deem the building to be of historic note, they then inform the owner that the building of that. They then will review the building with appropriate architectural and historical people. Once that review has been completed which should also be done in a timely fashion, they will then either waive the demolition or they will oppose the demolition and offer owner alternatives to the requested demolition. They have 120 days to hold the demolition while that is decided. There is no additional paperwork other than the normal building inspector's request for details, building plan, and of course zoning, wetlands, health and so forth. The normal process for any property would be followed.

E. Hochberg: [unintelligible]

Moderator: Ed, wait for microphone please.

E. Hochberg: Are you saying they have 30 days plus 120 or does the 120 include the 30 days?

Male: There's a lot of difference there.

D. Rimsky: The 120 days goes into effect if the review commission decides that the building is of historic note. At that that point, the conversation between the owner and the review commission takes place to see if an alternative exists. If an alternative exists that can be agreed upon, the owner can move forward. If an alternative does not exist and the owner does not wish to do that, then the 120 days has to lapse before the building can be destroyed.

E. Hochberg: So, if I understand you, if they have 30 days and they take the 30 days to make a determination, then they another 120 days. That's 150 days. You're now talking about someone who wants to demolish and do a building project they have a half-year delay.

D. Rimsky: They only are delayed if the commission within that 30-day period deems the building to be of sufficient value.

E. Hochberg: I understand.

D. Rimsky: If they don't, then that's the end of the process. As we all know, if you apply to zoning or any other commissions, you very often run into 30, 60, and sometimes longer periods of time to get through the process of those other commissions as well. This is run concurrent to any other process that a normal building application would involve.

Moderator: Thank you both. Question over here to my right.

R. Rebillard: Rebecca Rebillard, 26 Tompkins Hill. What is the estimated cost to the property owner to comply with this including noticing and signage?

D. Rimsky: There is none.

R. Rebillard: It doesn't cost them anything to notice or post a sign?

Moderator: Wait, Chip you want to answer that one? All right, Dimitri go ahead.

D. Rimsky: If they first have to present it to the commission. If the commission deems that it has to be held, then they have to send out like they would do under any number of other ordinances, they have to send out a notice to the abutting property owners and there is some expense to send out those letters. That's the same expense the property owner would have for any other activities requiring abutting owners to be notified. Other than that expense, there is no expense.

R. Rebillard: The newspaper? Isn't that different from other ones? Is the town noticing that as well?

D. Rimsky: Yes.

R. Rebillard: Okay.

D. Rimsky: The only cost to the owner would be the specific necessity to inform property owners.

Moderator: Did you all get that?

R. Hackney: It raises another question.

Moderator: Hold on.

R. Hackney: I'm Robert Hackney, 125 West Shore Road. Dimitri, you mentioned in your explanation of the ordinance that there could be architects and advisors involved. Does the commission have the ability or the power to ask the property to hire or pay for those consultants at the property owner's expense?

D. Rimsky: No, the commission would either have on its board an architectural consultant or possibly a contractor, engineer, somebody with historic knowledge of community or historic buildings. The people that the commission works with as a group would come to the owner asking to review request. Then their particular experts would look at the building and the condition and the reason for demolition. That would then become part of the dialog between the owner and the commission. The owner doesn't have to pay for any architect or engineer evaluating beyond what zoning or building department would already require

them to provide for the application period. The review commission does not enforce a penalty on them by having to hire additional expertise.

Moderator: Anybody else that would like to speak?

P. Allen: Phyllis Allen, 40 Quarry Ridge Road. I'd just like to know, Dimitri, about the review board. Is that the people that are on the Historic District or is this a special board that would review this and would it entail other commission members?

D. Rimsky: Good question. The Historic District Commission has nothing to do with the application of this ordinance. The Historic District Commission was charged with providing and vetting an ordinance for the town. This process has gone on for about four years. The Historic District Commission only has specific controls over the historic districts as designated. Once this ordinance is passed, the Selectmen will proceed to appoint a commission and there will be people who volunteer or are requested to join. I think we'll have four to five people as the size of the commission. We're hoping it can consist of people with expertise in architecture, engineering, and historic values.

Moderator: Ed.

E. Hochberg: My question is if the commission decides part of an historical building what rights and how can owners appeal if they disagree?

D. Rimsky: Very simple, the commission will review the building as stated. The owner has already stated reason for application of demolition. There will be a dialog between owner and commission. If the owner decides that the commission has provided valuable or economical ways to maintain the building sufficient to owner's ability to inhabit the building. Everyone comes to an agreement. If the owner disagrees with commission, after 120 days owner can continue with demolition.

E. Hochberg: I understand that. My question is if I don't want to wait 120 days and I think time is right to do something, do I have any recourse or am I forced to wait 120 days?

D. Rimsky: If the commission deems is of historic value and you do not wish to comply with the ordinance or negotiate with commission to retain the historic value, then you are going to have to wait 120 days then continue as you wish.

E. Hochberg: So, the answer is there's no recourse.

D. Rimsky: No.

E. Hochberg: Once they make a determination, I'm locked into the 120 days even if I disagree with the determination.

D. Rimsky: You can always hire a lawyer.

E. Hochberg: Sometimes in writing a bill, there's a provision that could allow appeal immediately to get a decision. But you have no such provision.

D. Rimsky: There is no provision. Once the commission has deemed the building to be historic and you refuse to follow their particular guidelines, then you're under 120-day suspension or subject to fine.

Moderator: Question in back?

C. Adams: Not a question. It's just a comment. My name is Christine Adams. I reside at 19 East Shore Road. One question came from why wait. A lot of buildings have already been demolished in our town and there's no record of them. I've been recently working on research projects where there's no record of historic buildings that have stood for 200 years. This just gives us a chance to record what was there hopefully with pictures. That's the value of the delay.

Moderator: Any other hands? Are we ready to vote? The resolution is to approve and adopt the proposed Delay of Demolition Ordinance. All in favor please say aye.

Audience: Aye.

Moderator: All opposed, please say aye.

Audience: Aye.


Moderator: Any abstentions? [none] The motion carries, and the motion is approved. We have completed the business of the town meeting as defined by the warning. Would you like to adjourn?

Audience: Yes.

Moderator: We are adjourned, thank you very much.

Adjourned: Meeting adjourned at 7:59 p.m.

I, Sheila Silvernail, certify to the best of my ability the foregoing is an accurate record based on provided notes and audio recording of the Town of Washington's Annual Town Budget Meeting on May 19, 2022.

 _____ Dated at Washington, CT this 20th day of May 2022.