



MINUTES OF SPECIAL TOWN MEETING, June 17, 2019.

At the Bernardston Elementary School Cafeteria.

Moderator: Geoffrey A. Wilson
Town Clerk: Paul Luther
Assistant Town Clerk: Christina Slocum-Wysk
Check-in Clerks: Joyce Roberts, Donna Newton, Kristina Costello, Linda Raymond
Constable: Kathleen Montiglio

The Moderator called the meeting to order at: 7:06pm 104 voters checked in at 7:06pm.
110 voters checked in by close of the meeting.
1611 registered voters.

Town Officials Present:

Selectboard: Robert Raymond, Chair; Brian Keir, Stan Garland.
Finance Committee: Jane Dutcher, Chair, Stephen Nestanpower, Brian Hervieux, Jody Coleman.
Town Coordinator: Louis Bordeaux.

Non-Resident / Unregister Voters Known to be Present: Val Luther, Paul Luther

- *The Moderator called the meeting to order at 7:06pm by reading the notice of the warrant and confirming the proper posting thereof and then led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.*
- *The Moderator then recognized The Town Clerk who reminded those present about the reason for the wristbands and secret ballots distributed when people checked in and verified everyone who had checked in had their wristband and one secret ballot to use if a secret ballot was required.*
- *The Moderator then recognized Robert Raymond, Chair of the Selectboard who then spoke to what the Selectboard considered to be the three most important issues facing Bernardston which the Special meeting attempts to address. In summary he said that those three issues are the closing of Pearl Rhodes Elementary School and the appropriate way to distribute the savings among the four district towns from that closing, the mistake of granting a five year contract to the Superintendent, and the need to find better ways to reduce the cost of educating our children especially in response to a reduced and diminishing student population. For his full remarks see Appendix 1 to these minutes.*

Article 1: The Town vote to NOT raise and appropriate \$47,282.40 to the Pioneer Valley Regional School District FY20 assessment for the first year of a five year contract for the Superintendent of Schools.

The Article was moved and seconded followed by a lengthy period of about 50 minutes of comments during which everyone who wanted to speak had at least one or more opportunity to speak. In summary, the majority of comments related to whether or not the new 5 year superintendent's contract was appropriate and not about the performance of Jonathan Scagel the holder of the contract. It became clear that a vote for the article aside from the substance of providing the funding for the first year of the contract, would also be a vote in favor of a 5 year contract. A vote against the article would be a vote against a 5 year contract and would reduce the amount of the town's district assessment by the amount of \$47,282.40 proposed in the article.

*After the Moderator was satisfied that no new opinions or points of view were going to emerge and everyone who wanted to speak had an ample opportunity to speak, the Moderator put the article to a Voice Vote and being uncertain about the result called for a standing count and **the article was then declared NOT passed by 47 in favor to 57 against.***

Article 2: The Town voted to raise and appropriate the amount of \$2,947,599.60 for Bernardston's share of the PVRs Operating Budget.

*The Article was moved and seconded. Jane Dutcher, Chair of the Finance Committee then moved to amend the article to read “the amount of \$ 2,944,151.” instead of “the amount of \$2,947,599.60.” This was to take into consideration a larger share of the savings from the closing of Leyden’s Pearl Rhodes School being distributed to the member towns than the School Committee had approved. The amendment was seconded and after everyone had the opportunity to ask questions or make comments the Moderator put it to a Voice Vote and being uncertain about the result, called for a standing count and **the amendment was then declared NOT passed by 47 in favor to 51 against.***

*Frank Ribeiro then moved to amend the article to read “the amount of \$2,994,882” instead of “the amount of \$2,947,599.60.” This would have brought the amount back up to the amount requested by the School Committee. The amendment was seconded and after everyone had the opportunity to ask questions or make comments, the Moderator put it to a Voice Vote and being uncertain about the result, called for a standing count and **the amendment was then declared NOT passed by 40 in favor to 58 against.***

*It was noted that the amount of money being raised and appropriated in this article as printed would be \$47,282.40 less than the amount the District had requested therefore passing the article as printed would be considered a rejection of the School Committees budget. The Article as originally printed was then put to a Voice Vote and **the Moderator declared it approved by a Majority (with no call for a standing count).***

Article 3: The town voted to create a regional school district planning committee in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 71, Section 14.

*The Article was moved and seconded and after a few questions of clarification indicating that the purpose of the committee would be to consider regional options in addition to the current district, it was put to a Voice Vote and the **Moderator declared it approved by a Majority (with no call for a standing count).***

Article 4: The Town voted to raise and appropriate the amount of \$20,500 to have a full interconnection application prepared and submitted for a 2,665 kilowatt (+/-) solar installation at the Town Landfill.

*The Article was moved and seconded and after a few questions of clarification, it was put to a Voice Vote and the **Moderator declared it approved Unanimously.***

Article 5: *The Town voted to adopt the Resolution in Support of Changing the State Flag and Seal of Massachusetts, as printed here:*

Now, therefore, **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Town of Bernardston hereby adopts this resolution in support of H.2776 and S.1877, a **“Resolve Providing for the creation of a Special Commission relative to the Seal and Motto of the Commonwealth,”** and requests that Representative Paul Mark and Senator Jo Comerford continue their strong advocacy and support for the aforementioned Resolve (H.2776 and S.1877) in the General Court, and that the Joint Committee on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight, after holding a public hearing on the Resolve report it out favorably, and if the legislation shall pass that the governor shall sign it and work with members of the General Court to ensure its enactment.

*The Article was moved and seconded. The Moderator reminded those present that the full details of this article were included separately with the warrant labeled “Article 5. Resolution to Support . . .” Sheila Damkoehler, the sponsor of the petition to place the article on the warrant, introduced Rawn Fulton who read a letter from State Senator Jo Comerford supporting passage of the article. The complete text of the letter can be found in Appendix 2 to these minutes. After no one else asked to speak, it was put to a Voice Vote and the **Moderator declared it approved by a majority (with no call for a standing count).***

Meeting Adjourned at 9:15pm

Respectfully Submitted, June 30, 2019



Paul W. Luther, Bernardston Town Clerk