

CHARLOTTE SELECTBOARD SPECIAL MEETING
January 29, 2024
Charlotte Town Hall and via teleconference

SELECTBOARD MEMBERS: James Faulkner, Chair; Frank Tenney, Vice Chair; Louise McCarren; Lewis Mudge; Kelly Devine

ADMINISTRATION: Nate Bareham

OTHERS: Steve Hill, Lori York, Charles Russell, Andrew Thurber, Peter Joslin, Cheryl Sloan, Maura Wygmans, Jerry Hawkins, Rick Lunt, Polly Price, Robert Caldwell, Beta Merritt, Darci Lunt, Moe Harvey, Beth Merritt, Paul Plante, Nancy, Janet Morrison, Mary Mead, Chea Evans, Brandan Tieso

AGENDA ITEMS

7:00 PM Adjustments to the Agenda

7:01 PM Discussion of Australian Ballot Voting for Town Meeting 2024

1. Potential reconsideration of the Motion made on Jan. 22nd , 2024
2. Potential re-vote on Australian ballot voting for Town Meeting 2024

7:15 PM Finalizing the FY-2025 Budget

1. Line-by-line discussion of budget items
2. Review and Approval of any additional changes

7:45 PM Finalizing the Town Meeting Articles and Warning:

1. Setting the Public Informational Hearing Date/Time/Location
2. Finalizing Town Meeting Articles 1-9
3. Vote to approve the Town Meeting Warning for 2024

8:15 PM Selection of Members to Interview Volunteer Coordinator Applicant

8:20 PM Approve Meeting Minutes for January 8, 2024, January 16, 2024, January 22, 2024

8:20 PM Adjournment

James Faulkner Called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

Adjustments to the Agenda

None.

Discussion of Australian Ballot Voting for Town Meeting 2024

1. Potential reconsideration of the Motion made on Jan. 22nd , 2024
2. Potential re-vote on Australian ballot voting for Town Meeting 2024

MOTION by James Faulkner, seconded by Louise McCarren, to reconsider the Motion made on Jan. 22nd, 2024 on the discussion of Australian Ballot Voting for Town Meeting 2024. VOTE: 3 ayes, 2 nays; Motion Carried.

The board had a vote on this last week that ended in a 2-2 tie. This means, keeping the Australian ballot system to vote on the budget and articles as was done during Covid failed. The date for Town Meeting was discussed. The Saturday date is at the end of a school vacation week, making

it difficult for people to participate, Kelly said. Absentee ballots will be available, Mary Mead said. Kelly said she is in favor of the Australian ballot system. Lewis Mudge said the Selectboard made a commitment to return to Town Meeting voting. James Faulkner said his support goes to Australian Ballot voting. Whether Tuesdays or Saturdays are better days to vote was discussed. Mary Mead said what matters most is the number of people who show up to vote. Peter Joslin strongly favors Australian Ballot. Maura Wygmans asked if a vote to move to Australian Ballot could be an article on this years Town Meeting ballot, and the answer is no. Rick Lunt said Town Meeting is taxation without representation since only about 5% of the tax payers get to vote. There is larger representation with an Australian Ballot. Frank Tenney spoke about the extensive nature of public budget discussions and the three years the Saturday date for Town Meeting was publicly discussed.

MOTION by Kelly Devine, seconded by Louise McCarren, that the articles that had been listed to be voted from the floor, at an in-person meeting on Saturday, March 2, 2024 at 9 am. Be moved to be voted on by Australian Ballot. With the voting being in Town Hall on Tuesday March 5, 2024 and those articles 1, 2, 3, and 4. VOTE: 3 ayes, 2 nays; Motion Carried.

Finalizing the FY-2025 Budget

- 1. Line-by-line discussion of budget items**
- 2. Review and Approval of any additional changes**

The budget process is complete, with a minimal tax rate increase. The fuel tank at the Senior Center will be taken care of by their non-profit. It was decided to keep the \$5,000 allocated for the tank in the improvement fund as a contingency for future expenses. The town's estimated municipal tax rate for the upcoming year was projected to be 1.835%, a slight increase from the current rate of 1.804%. Mary Mead said no further cuts to the budget is advised. Mary Mead said the capital improvement budget from 1995 could be useful for reference. An agreement to allocate a specific amount for general repairs, not tied to any particular project, was discussed. Kelly said the Town is currently paying \$30,000 annually for an ambulance and there's an additional payment of \$30,575 for 10 years. The addition of a fourth ambulance would increase these costs. There was a lack of clarity about an agreement between CVFRS and the Town. The conversation touched upon salary increases for Town employees, and the need for fairness and equity in budget decisions. James praised the Selectboard for the flat budget, despite significant capital improvements. The potential impact of a significant increase in the school budget was acknowledged by Lewis. Maura Wygmans asked about funding for recreation projects. The funding is there and the process to access the funds was noted. A volunteer CVFRS responder spoke about the dedication of volunteers and CVFRS.

MOTION by Kelly Devine, seconded by Frank Tenney, to approve the budget for the FY-2025 fiscal year starting July 1, 2024 and ending on June 30, 2025 for a total of \$4,241,234.00. VOTE: 5 ayes, 0 nays; Motion Carried.

Finalizing the Town Meeting Articles and Warning:

- 1. Setting the Public Informational Hearing Date/Time/Location**

2. Finalizing Town Meeting Articles 1-9**3. Vote to approve the Town Meeting Warning for 2024**

Total funding and allocations to Charlotte Volunteer Fire and Rescue Services and highlighted uncertainties about the impact of a potential budget shortfall on articles was discussed. There were debates about the accuracy of revenue projections and the potential consequences of altering contractual commitments. The importance of transparency and clear communication with voters about potential tax implications was emphasized.

MOTION by Louise McCarren, seconded by Kelly Devine, to approve the Article 1: Shall the voters authorize the payment of property taxes, with the payment due on or before Friday, November 15, 2024, and to have payments made to the Town Treasurer as provided in 32 VSA §4773(b)? VOTE: 5 ayes, 0 nays; Motion Carried.

MOTION by Lewis Mudge, seconded by Kelly Devine, to approve the Article 2: Shall the voters approve total fund expenditures, as set forth in the Selectboard's budget, of \$3,252,147 for the fiscal year July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025, of which an anticipated sum of \$1,540,380 will be raised by property taxes and an anticipated sum of \$1,711,767 will be raised by non-tax revenues. VOTE: 5 ayes, 0 nays; Motion Carried.

On a straw poll, who would like to separate the Town and CVFRS budgets, James Faulkner asked. VOTE: 5 ayes, 0 nays; Motion Carried.

MOTION by Kelly Devine, seconded by Louise McCarren, to approve the Article 3: Will the voters of the Town approve an allocation of \$989,087 to Charlotte Volunteer Fire and Rescue Services, Inc. for the fiscal year July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025, to be raised by property taxes? Straw Poll on separating CVFRS from the Town Budget: VOTE: 5 ayes, 0 nays; Motion Carried.

Andrew Thurber asked a series of questions. He made clear with the Selectboard that there will not be a Town Meeting but that there will be an informational meeting to prepare for the Australian Ballot vote.

MOTION by Kelly Devine, seconded by Lewis Mudge, to approve the Article 4: To elect Town Officials. VOTE: 5 ayes, 0 nays; Motion Carried.

MOTION by Kelly Devine, seconded by James Faulkner, to approve the Article 5: To elect Champlain Valley School District Officials. VOTE: 5 ayes, 0 nays; Motion Carried.

MOTION by Lewis Mudge, seconded by Louise McCarren, to approve the Article 6: Shall the voters authorize the Town to submit to the General Assembly of the State of Vermont a proposal to adopt a municipal charter which contains the following sections:

Section 1: Corporate Existence

Section 2: General Provisions

Section 3: Town Manager/Road Commissioner

Section 4: Separability

Section 5: Amendment**Section 6: Effective Date**

The official copy of the Charter proposal, in its entirety, is on file and available for public inspection at the Charlotte Town Clerk's Office, 159 Ferry Road in said Town, during regular office hours, Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Copies thereof are available to members of the public upon request. VOTE: 5 ayes, 0 nays; Motion Carried.

MOTION by Lewis Mudge, seconded by Louise McCarren, to approve the Article 7 Shall the voters authorize the Town to issue general obligation bonds or notes in an amount not to exceed Three Hundred Sixty-Five Thousand Dollars and 00/100 (\$365,000.00) to purchase a new ambulance to be financed over a period not to exceed 10 years? VOTE: 4 ayes, 1 nays; Motion Carried.

MOTION by Kelly Devine, seconded by James Faulkner, to adopt the language of the Town Meeting warning as written and removing the word amended. VOTE: 5 ayes, 0 nays; Motion Carried.

Selection of Members to Interview Volunteer Coordinator Applicant

Louise and James will conduct the interviews.

MOTION by Kelly Devine, seconded by Louise McCarren, to appoint Selectboard members Louise McCarren and James Faulkner to the Interview Committee for the Volunteer Coordinator Applicant for the Charlotte Senior Center. VOTE: 3 ayes, 0 nays; Motion Carried.

Approve Meeting Minutes for January 8, 2024, January 16, 2024, January 22, 2024

To be approved at a later date.

Adjournment

MOTION by Frank Tenney, seconded by Louise McCarren, to adjourn at 8:30 pm. VOTE: 5 ayes, 0 nays; Motion Carried.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Lynn Monty, Minute Taker.
Edits by Nathaniel Bareham, Town Administrator