

TOWN OF FREMONT NH
2015 Deliberative Session Minutes
Wednesday February 4, 2015
Ellis School 7:00 pm

Moderator Rydeen called the first session of the Annual Town Meeting to order at 7:00 pm at the Ellis School in Fremont. It is noted for the record that the Deliberative Session was postponed to its snow date by the Moderator. The Moderator made a decision on Sunday, February 1, 2015 due to the impending snowstorm. Notice was posted on the Town website on Sunday night. Notices were also posted to inform the public at all Town Buildings, the Ellis School, and the Fremont Post Office on Monday February 2nd.

After the Pledge of Allegiance led by Sergeant Laroche, there was an Appreciation Award presentation made by our Selectmen, Gene Cordes, Brett Hunter and Leon Holmes Sr, to the 250th Anniversary Committee acknowledging their efforts. The Appreciation page and photo for the Town Report was presented to Committee members, and one framed photo. It was noted that the Annual Report Appreciation is dedicated to the Committee for 2014.

Moderator Rydeen stated that anyone who has not checked in with Supervisors of Checklist should please do so, and get a yellow voter card.

Moderator Rydeen stated that a modified version of Roberts Rules of Order would be used as a guide to run the meeting. He explained that Articles can be amended at this meeting, but will not be voted on at this time. Voting on Articles will take place on Election Day, Tuesday March 10, 2015 by official ballot. He said the persons who are presenting an Article will be allowed 10 minutes to speak and members of the audience will be allowed 4 minutes to speak. He asked that before speaking, you state your name and address, and everyone wishing to speak must get to the microphone. Only Fremont voters will be allowed to vote or speak, aside from Town Administrative staff and the Town's Attorney who are allowed to speak. Handouts of the Warrant Article Narrative, Town Budget Form, Default Budget Form, and excel spreadsheets of the budget, revenues, and tax rate impacts were available for those in attendance, as well as some other information sheets and a candidate listing and notice of Candidates Night. There were 48 registered voters in attendance, of the 3181 registered voters in town, and a total of 53 persons present.

Seated at the head tables were (right) Budget Committee members: Chairman Michael Nygren, Mark Kidd, Neal Janvrin, and Greg Fraize; (left) Selectmen Leon Holmes Sr, Gene Cordes (also the Representative to the Budget Committee), and Brett Hunter; Town Counsel Dave Sayward; Town Administrator Heidi Carlson and Town Clerk Nicole Cloutier.

Moderator Rydeen explained the procedure for restricting reconsideration of Warrant Articles.

Moderator Rydeen explained that he would not be reading aloud every article, but would instead put it up on the screen, and a second slide would then show a brief and more lay person informational slide of the purpose of the article. Article 1 was reviewed and explained it does not require any action and cannot be amended at this time.

ARTICLE 1: To choose by ballot all necessary Town Officers for the ensuing year.

Selectman: 1 for 3 years
Neal R. Janvrin
Brett A. Hunter

Cemetery Trustee: 1 for 3 years
Richard Pinder

Trustee of Trust Funds: 1 for 3 years
No Candidates Declared

Road Agent: 1 for 3 years
Leon F Holmes Jr

Library Trustee: 1 for 3 years
Cheryl Rowell

Library Trustee: 1 for 1 year
No Candidates Declared

Budget Committee: 1 for 2 years
Mark Kidd

Budget Committee: 2 for 3 years
No Candidates Declared

The Moderator announced that Candidates Night would be held at 6:00 pm on Tuesday February 17, 2015 in this room (Ellis School Gym).

The Moderator stated that Article 1 will go on the ballot as written.

ARTICLE 2: Are you in favor of amending ARTICLE III of the Fremont Zoning Ordinance by adding a new Section 6 to read as follows:

NEW: Article III Section 6

Camper trailer/ Motor Home/ Trailer coach

• *Definitions:*

Camper trailer/ Motor Home/ Trailer coach: Any vehicle used or intended to be used for living and/or sleeping purposes which is or may be equipped with wheel or wheels or similar devices for the purpose of transporting the unit.

• *Use:*

1. A Camper trailer/ Motor Home/Trailer Coach may be stored unoccupied at the owners premises or permanent domicile in any zone in the Town of Fremont for any period of time.

2. A Camper trailer/ Motor Home/ Trailer Coach may be occupied for camping in all zones of the Town of Fremont for up to ninety (90) days of the year providing the Camper trailer/ Motor Home/ Trailer Coach presents no threat to public health and safety.

3. A Camper trailer/ Motor Home/ Trailer Coach shall not be occupied as a permanent dwelling at any time in the Town of Fremont.

Rationale: This Article will allow for regulation of camper trailers used for long term living purposes.

(added text is in *italics*)

The Planning Board recommends this article.

Gene Cordes moved this article and Brett Hunter seconded. Article 2 was then open for discussion.

Roger Barham, Planning Board Chair, explained Article 2 citing that in the past year there was an unsafe scenario where a camper was used for long-term living. This Article is intended to allow use for 90 days and thereafter requiring permission from Selectmen.

With no further discussion, the Moderator stated that Article 2 will go on the ballot as written.

ARTICLE 3: Are you in favor of amending ARTICLE IX of the Fremont Zoning Ordinance by changing Section H 2 to read as follows:

H.2: Wetland and Watershed Protection District

Dredging, filling, drainage in compliance with RSA 485:A:17 or otherwise altering the surface configuration of the land; streets, roads and other access ways and utility rights if essential to the productive use of land if so located and constructed as to minimize any detrimental impact of such uses upon the wetland and watershed protection areas.

Exception: No Special Exception is required for temporary disturbance such as installing a well with associated water lines.

Rationale: This amendment would alleviate the need for a special exception for temporary disturbance within the 100' wetland buffer by adding an exception.

(added text is in *italics*)

The Planning Board recommends this article.

Gene Cordes moved this article and Brett Hunter seconded. Article 3 was then open for discussion.

Planning Board Chair Roger Barham explained that this article will alleviate the need for any special permits when the applicant is doing work that creates a temporary disturbance such as that created by utility of water lines.

With no further discussion, the Moderator stated that Article 3 will go on the ballot as written.

ARTICLE 4: Are you in favor of amending ARTICLE XI of the Fremont Zoning Ordinance by changing Section E 6 to read as follows:

Article XI: Aquifer Protection District Section E 6. Special Exceptions

~~6. Special Exceptions~~ Conditional Use Permit

A. The following uses are permitted as ~~Special Exceptions~~ with a Conditional Use Permit (in compliance with Town Zoning Ordinance):

1. Industrial and commercial uses not otherwise prohibited in Section E.4. of this article.
2. Multi-family residential development. (Minimum lot size to be determined by using Article IV Section 3 and substituting three (3) acres instead of two (2) acres).
3. Sand and gravel excavation and other mining provided that such excavation or mining is not carried out within eight (8) vertical feet of the seasonal high water table and that periodic inspections are made

by the Planning Board or its agent to determine compliance.

B. The ~~Board of Adjustment~~ *Planning Board* may grant a **special exception Conditional Use Permit** for those uses listed above only after written findings of fact are made that all of the following are true:

- the proposed use will not detrimentally affect the quality of the groundwater contained in the aquifer by directly contributing to pollution or by increasing the long-term susceptibility of the aquifer to potential pollutants;
- the proposed use will not cause a significant reduction in the long-term volume of water contained in the aquifer or in the storage capacity of the aquifer;
- the proposed use will discharge no waste water on site other than that typically discharged by domestic waste water disposal systems and will not involve on-site storage or disposal of toxic or hazardous wastes as herein defined;
- the proposed use complies with all other applicable sections of this Article.

~~The Board of Adjustment~~ *Planning Board* may require that the applicant provide data or reports prepared by a professional engineer or hydrologist to assess any potential damage to the aquifer that may result from the proposed use. ~~The Board of Adjustment~~ *Planning Board* shall engage such professional assistance as it requires to adequately evaluate such reports and to evaluate, in general, the proposed use in light of the above criteria. Costs incurred shall be the responsibility of the applicant.

Rationale: This amendment would put businesses, multi-family residential development, and sand and gravel excavation that are not prohibited by the ordinance and that would not be likely to impact the Aquifer Protection District, under the purview of the Planning Board in conjunction with Site Plan Review process rather than the Zoning Board of Adjustment. The same conditions would apply.

(added text is in *italics*, deleted text lined out)

The Planning Board recommends this article.

Gene Cordes moved this article and Brett Hunter seconded. Article 4 was then open for discussion.

Planning Board Chair Roger Barham explained that this Article will allow for applicants already working with the Planning Board for on business, multi-family residential development and excavation operations, to have their Special Use reviewed at the Planning Board level instead of having to make an additional application to the Zoning Board of Adjustment.

With no further discussion, the Moderator stated that Article 4 will go on the ballot as written.

ARTICLE 5: Shall the Town of Fremont raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling \$2,548,921? Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$2,494,498 which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous

action of the Town of Fremont or by law or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only.

Note: This operating budget warrant article does not include appropriations contained in ANY other warrant articles.

The Selectmen recommend this appropriation 3-0.
The Budget Committee recommends this appropriation 8-0.
(Majority vote required)

Michael Nygren moved Article 5 and Gene Cordes seconded. Article 5 was then open for discussion.

Budget Committee Chair Michael Nygren thanked the Board of Selectmen stating that the Committee met with them every 2-3 weeks to get information. Michael Nygren offered his approval that this is a good budget for the needs of the Town and hopes that the Town can support it. Gene Cordes said it was a good process and that the Board of Selectmen worked with the Police Chief, examining other communities and supported an additional full-time position, assuming that some part-time hours will be converted to full-time hours. The Selectmen feel they need to be ready for what comes. The Selectmen worked hard to keep this budget down and hope that the community understands and supports it.

Michael Rydeen asked if this budget will cover recent and upcoming snow removal. Gene Cordes remarked that there is no projection at this point in the year to know what will come or how we could cover it.

Margie Diggins wanted to know why we need another position for the Police Department.

Chief of Police Jon Twiss said that he had assessed the needs of the Police Department and cited Fremont's first homicide, suicides and that domestic violence averages 1.5 calls per week. Chief Twiss also cited that the heroin epidemic is present in Fremont. He did a survey of other towns in the county citing numbers and that Fremont had on average ½ the number of police officers of nearby towns of the same size. Twiss said that part-time employees just do not have the same amount of training, and he would like to see Fremont have additional full-time officers. The FBI recommends 2.4 officers per thousand. The NH standard is 2.2 officers per thousand and Fremont has 0.93 officers per thousand of population. Chief Twiss stated that it affects training and competency of officers when they are only able to work part-time.

Margie Diggins said she appreciated the comments and asked how Fremont compares with crime rates from previous years.

Chief Twiss remarked again about the heroin epidemic, noting a resident has overdosed 12 times. Chief Twiss did a survey of comparable towns and cited we are in a similar situation. He cited domestic instances, homicide, suicide and that crime rates are up in Fremont and other areas.

Ida Keane said she supports the Budget Committee and thanked the Road Agent and Highway crews for snow removal and the Police and Fire Departments for service.

With no further discussion, the Moderator stated that Article 5 will go on the ballot as written.

ARTICLE 6: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of four hundred seventy thousand four hundred fifty-five dollars (\$470,455) for the purchase of a fire truck, and further to authorize the withdrawal of one hundred seventy-five thousand dollars (\$175,000) from the Fire Truck Capital Reserve Fund for this purchase. The balance of \$295,455 to be raised by taxation.

The Selectmen recommend this appropriation 3-0.
The Budget Committee recommends this appropriation 6-0.
(Majority vote required)

Gene Cordes moved Article 6 and Leon Holmes Sr seconded. Article 6 was then open for discussion.

Gene Cordes remarked that the Department has been trying for the past several years to get a new fire truck. The need has not gone away and this year the Board of Selectmen decided to put it on as a one-year purchase, thus a simple majority will pass the article.

Deputy Chief and resident Joseph Nichols discussed the need for a new fire truck in Fremont. He explained that in 2014, Fremont had 89 fire calls and 163 EMS calls. Already in 2015, they have responded to 39 fire calls and 43 EMS calls. He explained that mutual aid has to be reciprocated and we are not capable. There is a delay in travel time asking other towns for help in an emergency and it is unsafe to do so. Nichols explained that the Fire Department got rid of Tank 5 and that other trucks are in need of repairs. He cited that one tank holds only ½ its capacity with an un-repairable leak. The Fire Department has sent fliers, made signs, and hosted open houses so the residents can see the need. He also said that they meet every Monday at 7pm at the Safety Complex and invite people to look at the fire trucks and to ask questions. Fremont's 1979 fire truck has a 2 person capacity and is rusted. Nichols encouraged people to come to the Fire Department, look at the trucks and ask questions.

Jennifer Brown supports the Town's need for a fire truck. She stated that it is important to be proactive and that 7 years ago her family needed to call the Fire Department since a vehicle had caught fire in her driveway. Brown said that one pump wasn't working on the truck and that since the responders were skilled, they fixed the crisis but noted that it could have gone wrong. She remarked that the fire was a vehicle near her house, which had her 2 children inside of it. She encouraged people to support this article.

Matthew Thomas asked if we are going to be reevaluated this year. Thomas stated that taxes are already ridiculous and that something has to give, taxes are too high. His only concern with purchase is raising taxes.

Heidi Carlson, Town Administrator explained that as values go up, the tax rate proportionally, goes down. It is too early to tell what the values will look like in the April 1, 2015 revaluation, but there is some increase with new construction throughout town.

Thomas was concerned for how much taxes will be affected.

Nichols said that every year we ask for \$50,000 in Capital Reserve to save toward the needed equipment. That request is not on the Warrant this year so that the Town could just be looking at the cost of the new truck.

Michael Nygren said he supported the need for a fire truck. He explained that without it, it may cause us to become part of another town's fire department. Nygren said that Fremont can't continue to vote down something so needed and we may not get a chance again if it is voted down.

With no further discussion, the Moderator stated that Article 6 will go on the ballot as written.

ARTICLE 7: To see if the Town will vote to establish an expendable trust fund under the provisions of RSA 31:19-a, to be known as the Fremont Public Library Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund for the purpose of funding needed repairs and maintenance to the Fremont Public Library and to raise and appropriate three thousand five hundred dollars (\$3,500) to be placed in this fund and further to name the Library Trustees as agents to expend.

The Selectmen recommend this article 3-0.
The Budget Committee recommends this article 8-0.
(Majority vote required)

Gene Cordes moved Article 7 and Brett Hunter seconded. Article 7 was open for discussion.

Gene Cordes explained that the library has repair needs as it ages and that we need to establish a reserve fund for repairs.

Library Trustee Cheryl Rowell reported that the library needs extensive roof repairs and that the Trustees hope to establish this fund with the Town's support.

With no further discussion, the Moderator stated that Article 7 will go on the ballot as written.

ARTICLE 8: To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Board of Selectmen to accept and hold in trust gifts, legacies and devises made to the Town for any legal public purpose. This authorization, in accordance with RSA 31:19 shall remain in effect indefinitely.

The Selectmen recommend this article 3-0.
The Budget Committee recommends this article 6-0.
(Majority vote required)

Leon Holmes Sr moved this article and Brett Hunter seconded. Article 8 was open for discussion.

Heidi Carlson stated that this is a generic article to accept any donated money to the Town. It does not allow the Town to spend any such money. Spending any trust fund created by this article would be voted on next year or in the future. Carlson explained that this article is just authority to save donated funds aside in a trust fund.

With no discussion, the Moderator stated that Article 8 will go on the ballot as written.

ARTICLE 9: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) to be placed in the Bridge Construction and Reconstruction Capital Reserve Fund.

The Selectmen recommend this article 3-0.
The Budget Committee recommends this article 8-0.
(Majority vote required)

Brett Hunter moved Article 9 and Gene Cordes seconded. Article 9 was then open for discussion.

Gene Cordes stated that there is an existing Capital Reserve Fund for bridge repair/replacement and that this is a continuation of setting funds aside for future need. The repair/replacements are expected to be expensive and this will allow the Town to save for them.

Phil Coombs asked if the Town gets any money from other sources, such as the Grass Drags, since that is a large percent of the traffic on Martin Road. Heidi Carlson stated that we will be eligible for NH Bridge funding. She explained that the Town gets 80% back of funds expended for approved projects. She stated that we do not get money from the Grass Drags toward the Martin Road work.

Mark Pitkin, Road Agent stated that the Martin Road Bridge is busy daily, there is a lot of traffic all day long and that the Grass Drags are not the reason repairs are needed.

Michael Rydeen as a resident asked if there is an order of bridges are worked on. Heidi Carlson replied that the Town has chosen to work on the Martin Road Bridge first and secondly to handle the Scribner Road Bridge. These two bridges are red-listed. Martin Road was done first because it is less costly and thought to be a simpler project than Scribner Road at the Dam.

Mark Pitkin explained that the Scribner Road Bridge will also turn into Federal permitting.

Matthew Thomas asked when the bridges are intended to be worked on. Carlson replied that we are waiting for the NH DOT to send a letter guaranteeing our place on the Bridge Aid schedule, to secure the 80% reimbursement.

With no further discussion, the Moderator stated that Article 9 will go on the ballot as written.

ARTICLE 10: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) to be placed in the Town Hall Renovations Capital Reserve Fund.

The Selectmen recommend this article 3-0.
The Budget Committee recommends this article 8-0.
(Majority vote required)

Gene Cordes moved Article 10 and Leon Holmes Sr seconded. Article 10 was then open for discussion.

Gene Cordes explained that this is an existing Capital Reserve Fund. The Town Hall needs renovations in the basement, to the heating system, and there is no bathroom in the lower-level where many meetings are held. Cordes explained that Selectmen are trying to put money aside for future need.

With no discussion, the Moderator stated that Article 10 will go on the ballot as written.

ARTICLE 11: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) to be placed in the Property Reassessment Capital Reserve Fund.

The Selectmen recommend this article 3-0.
The Budget Committee recommends this article 8-0.
(Majority vote required)

Leon Holmes Sr moved Article 11 and Brett Hunter seconded. Article 11 was then open for discussion.

Heidi Carlson explained that the Selectmen have just signed a contract with Vision Appraisal for a planned statistical revaluation totaling \$39,500, and we will also have to have the utilities done. That will all be removed from money currently in the Reserve Fund. If we continue to set aside money each year, we won't have to appropriate any extra in the every fifth year revaluation cycle.

With no discussion, the Moderator stated that Article 11 will go on the ballot as written.

ARTICLE 12: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) to be placed in the Highway Equipment Capital Reserve Fund.

The Selectmen recommend this article 3-0.
The Budget Committee recommends this article 7-1.
(Majority vote required)

Brett Hunter moved Article 12 and Leon Holmes Sr seconded. Article 12 was then open for discussion.

Mark Pitkin, Road Agent stated that only about \$6,000 is left in this Capital Reserve Fund. He urged to keep saving to replace trucks and equipment as needed. He noted that the Town owns a backhoe and one ton truck that will need replacement at some point.

Leanne Miner of South Road asked Pitkin if he compared prices to renting equipment. Pitkin replied that the work of the Highway Study Committee showed it is more efficient to purchase these pieces of equipment. He stated that we need a backhoe all the time and that it would be too costly to rent. He explained that there is no reason to rent now that town owns equipment. The Town does rent winter equipment.

Mary Kaltenbach referenced the recent fire in Henniker and asked about our coverage for such scenarios. Is there vandalism/burglary protection? Pitkin replied that there is a lot of subcontracted work, and that everything is built to code in our new shed with fire extinguishers etc.

With no further discussion, the Moderator stated that Article 12 will go on the ballot as written.

ARTICLE 13: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) to be placed in the Emergency Management Equipment Capital Reserve Fund.

The Selectmen recommend this article 3-0.
The Budget Committee recommends this article 8-0.
(Majority vote required)

Gene Cordes moved Article 13 and Brett Hunter seconded. Article 13 was open for discussion.

Gene Cordes stated that in emergency situations, Fremont is often on generator power. He explained that the generator at the Safety Complex died in the November snow storm and that we had to get rental equipment and fund repairs. We have old equipment and this fund needs to be planned for future need.

With no discussion, the Moderator stated that Article 13 will go on the ballot as written.

ARTICLE 14: To see if the Town will authorize an increase in the Road Agent's annual administrative salary to fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000).

The Selectmen recommend this article 3-0.
The Budget Committee recommends this article 6-0.
(Majority vote required)

Gene Cordes moved Article 14 and Brett Hunter seconded. Article 14 was open for discussion.

Gene Cordes stated that during the budget cycle, the Road Agent made it clear that he was not intending to run again. After talking with the Road Agent, Article 14 was viewed as an administrative stipend for a person who may not have their own equipment, and takes an administrative role in running the Town's Highway operations. In recent weeks, a person has stepped in to run for Road Agent, and is aware of the conditions of the position, and is not looking for that increase.

Cordes made a motion to amend this article to read, " To see if the Town will authorize an increase in the Road Agent's annual administrative salary by \$300 to be a total to \$4,500" and Leon Holmes Jr seconded. Article 14 as amended was then open for discussion.

Joseph Nichols remarked that he recently did a project in Fremont, saw what the Road Agent had to deal with for projects and thinks the salary is well justified.

Jennifer Brown asked if this amount would be increased from now on. She asked if we would be challenged to find someone interested in this position in 3 years if this position is still under-paid. Moderator Rydeen replied that this article could be put forth next year if needed. The salary will remain in effect as voted until it is changed at some future point.

Greg Fraize asked if we would lose the salary for the Road Agent if this does not pass? Attorney Sayward replied that a negative vote would only vote down the increase and could have been designated as well by the Board of Selectmen, but is being presented to the Town for consideration.

This Amendment passed by card vote. With no further discussion, the Moderator stated that Article 14 will go on the ballot as amended.

ARTICLE 15: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of forty-nine thousand five hundred fifty dollars (\$49,550) to continue the Public Health Mosquito Control Program.

The Selectmen recommend this article 3-0.
The Budget Committee recommends this article 8-0.

(Majority vote required)

Gene Cordes moved Article 15 and Brett Hunter seconded. Article 15 was open for discussion.

Heidi Carlson described this town-wide mosquito program as primarily treating larvae. She said the price has not increased and is the same as the past three years. This also includes money for further spraying if a positive test for EEE or WNV is found.

Margie Diggins asked if this program actually works. She asked if there is a decrease in mosquitoes or can anyone attest to whether it's working? No statistics were available on the number of mosquitoes over time. Carlson did state that there were no positive tests in Fremont in 2014.

Leanne Miner asked if the Town knows how much of that amount is for spraying. Carlson replied that almost all of it is larval treatment and that approximately \$2,000 is dedicated to spraying the fields at Ellis School and Memorial Fields, and the Complex and Library parking lots.

Phil Coombs stated that he has a problem with this program and that he raises bees. He doesn't think it is effective. We have no verifiable way to know this is working.

With no further discussion, the Moderator stated that Article 15 will go on the ballot as written.

ARTICLE 16: Resolved that the State of New Hampshire provide a comprehensive meaningful system of funding for State Education needs. To see if the Town will vote to ask our Governor and our State Legislators to reform state funding for education with that reform to be directed to significant reduction of property taxes. The record of the vote approving this article shall be transmitted by written notice from the Select Board to the Governor and State Legislators informing them of the instructions from their constituents within 30 days of the vote.

The Selectmen recommend this article 3-0.

The Budget Committee does not recommend this article 7-1.

(Majority vote required)

Gene Cordes moved Article 16 and Brett Hunter seconded. Article 16 was open for discussion.

Cordes explained that this article is recommending we look for another way of funding public education aside from raising property tax.

Michael Rydeen asked why the Budget Committee didn't recommend this. Michael Nygren replied that education in the state is broken, trying to equalize. He speculated that politicians will only support if this program if it is popular vote. He said he doesn't know if it's a good idea, just needs much more information on the ideas of the person who wrote this.

With no further discussion, the Moderator stated that Article 16 will go on the ballot as written.

ARTICLE 17: By Petition: Shall the Town of Fremont NH vote to rescind the authority granted to the Fremont Conservation Commission and the Fremont Board of Selectmen, at the 2006 Fremont Annual Town Meeting, (Article #5) to "raise & spend up to one million dollars (\$1,000,000) to purchase land

and other property interests,” so that the Town is no longer liable for this “indebtedness” and the financial liability that the town incurred when it was passed in 2006?

The Selectmen do not recommend this article 3-0.

The Budget Committee does not recommend this article 4-2.

(3/5 Majority vote required)

Keith Stanton moved Article 17 and Leon Holmes Sr seconded. Article 17 was then open for discussion.

Keith Stanton explained that this article is all about letting tax payers decide how they want money spent. He recited the definition of “appropriate” versus the definition of “spending”. He suggested that if someone wants to purchase something, to bring it up as a warrant article. He would like to see voters able to vote on where to appropriate money.

Michael Rydeen asked where money has been spent with this. Heidi Carlson answered that of the \$1,000,000, authorization, \$65,000 has been used to purchase the former Smith land, 76 acres of land adjacent to Spruce swamp.

Keith Stanton remarked that he can’t find this in any Town Report and that he had contacted the Town’s Auditor Plodzik and Sanderson who told him this could be a legal issue.

Heidi Carlson stated that this is an authorized but unissued debt. Carlson stated that auditors are due back to review Town materials this month, and this will be discussed with them again.

Stanton replied that it is about letting the whole town decide. Margie Diggins said that she thinks voters should have full disclosure for property retention. Property taxes keep going up and the town is putting some of us in a squeeze.

Bill Knee addressed Stanton’s question by stating that buying a piece of land is not the same as buying a home, fire truck or police cruiser. When a landowner is ready to make a sale, they will negotiate if there is hope that land may go into conservation. Conservation Commission member Pat deBeer has written and successfully received \$150,000 in grant money for the Town. It didn’t cost the Town as much because we were able to use this grant funding. Knee stated that he felt rescinding this article would NOT save the town money.

Janice O’Brien explained that when this bond was put forth it stated that should a purchase come to Town for consideration, we would be able to take available money to use for leverage to get additional grant funding. We were able to leverage \$84,000 in grant funds to put into purchase of the Smith Land. Anything coming forward for purchase consideration would go through the Open Space Committee screening process, the Conservation Commission, a Public Hearing process, and the Board of Selectmen.

Discussion returned to the legality of the 2006 bond issue vote. Michael Nygren stated that he got different opinions from multiple sources, and that the Warrant Article was written to never expire. The balance of \$965,000 can sit forever and will not expire; it is available to buy land.

Ida Keane asked for someone to explain how the Conservation Commission gets current use funding, and what is the balance in that account right now?

Heidi Carlson replied that the Conservation Commission is a land-use board. In 2014, there was \$1,523 raised as part of the Town's operating budget. Carlson estimated that \$50,000 or \$60,000 was left in the Conservation Commission's Land Use Change Tax Fund. She stated that 2014 Land Use Change Taxes turned over almost \$12,000 to the Conservation Commission. She explained that Land Use Change Tax revenue is shared between the general fund and the Conservation Commission.

Keane asked if money in that account could be used for matching funds, to which Carlson answered yes.

Diggins stated that grant money isn't free and that we all pay for it in some way. Pat deBeer replied that some money came from private foundations, and that the Town didn't have to match.

O'Brien stated that most properties considered for purchase are in Current Use, and that taxes are minimal. If that land had been developed, the cost of one student is estimated at \$14,000. With one house with just one student, you are losing \$4,000 on average. She urged that when voting on this, to consider all factors.

Matthew Thomas remarked that a few people voted for this in 2006, and that until 2009 that's how Town Meeting was run. To use SB2 as an excuse, people voted that the Town wanted to preserve this land back then and should be respected.

With no further discussion, the Moderator announced that Article 17 would go on the ballot as written.

Heidi Carlson thanked everyone for attending and stated that as voters further review the information for March 10th voting, and the Deliberative Session is broadcast, to please come forward and ask any residual questions about the items on the Warrant.

The Moderator stated that no motion to adjourn the meeting was necessary and urged everyone to get out and spread the word on the Warrant information, and be sure to vote on March 10. Polling will be held at Ellis School and will be open from 7:00 am to 8:00 pm.

The meeting ended at approximately 9:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole E Cloutier
Town Clerk