

TOWN OF BARRE - SPECIAL TOWN MEETING MINUTES

MARCH 15, 2022

Pursuant to the foregoing warrant 62 of the 3,948 qualified voters (35 from Prec. 1 and 27 from Prec. 2) gathered at the Quabbin Regional High School's Pather Gymnasium, located at 800 South St., Barre, to act on the Articles in said warrant. A total of 5 guests (non-voters) were also in attendance. A quorum of 50 voters or more were present at all times.

The meeting was called to order at 6:38 p.m. with 52 voters in attendance.

The Moderator opened the meeting by welcoming everyone followed with a pledge of allegiance to the Flag.

He then announced that everyone should have copies of the two sided page that includes the warrant on one side and the Select Board and Finance Committee, AKA FINCOM, recommendations on the articles to be acted upon on the other side.

He then made the following 4 motions which were all favorably voted by the Selectmen and Finance Committee, duly seconded and voted unanimously:

MODERATOR'S MOTIONS

MOTION 1

On a motion made and duly seconded it was **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** to approve that this meeting dispense with the reading of the warrant and of the Constable's return of service of that warrant and that the Moderator not be required to read warrant articles verbatim, but may refer to them by number and/or subject matter.

MOTION 2

On a motion made and duly seconded it was **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** to approve that the moderator may extend the floor to Town management and staff and other non-voters provided that they must first be recognized by the Moderator.

MOTION 3

On a motion made and duly seconded it was **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** to approve that the Moderator, pursuant to G.L. c. 39 § 15, be allowed to declare a two-thirds vote rather than taking a standing count.

At 6:47 p.m. there were 59 voters in attendance.

D.P.W. Director Jason Pimental, read the main motion for Article 1 which was duly seconded. At the request of Mr. Pimental the Moderator then allowed Tom George, WWTF (Waste Water Treatment Facility) Chief Operator and Barre Resident, Lauren Hertel, Woodard & Curran Project Manager and Sue Guswa, Woodard & Curran Wastewater Practice Leader to give a presentation on the background, need, proposed improvements, cost, funding and timing of the article.

Tom George explained the current system was constructed in 1985 with 0.3 million gallon per day treatment capacity flowing from septage and collection system. He explained that treated effluent discharges to the Ware River which requires a permit from EPA (National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit and Biosolids are dewatered and landfilled.

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He stated the aging and failing infrastructure has lining degrading in oxidation ditches and secondary clarifier mechanisms are original to the plant and failing with additional concrete and structural failures throughout the facility.

Permit limits have become more stringent and requires reliable process control. They now include numerical limits for phosphorus, copper and aluminum, nitrogen removal optimization and has a higher risk of violation with the failing infrastructure.

Ms. Hertel & Ms. Guswa explained the need for the project is due to the following:

- Wipes affecting both Treatment Facility and Collection System and grit removal process is frequently clogged by wipes and rags.
- Collection System Pump Stations are experiencing frequent clogging and requires operator access to confined spaces.
- Increased risk of sanitary sewer overflows (SSO) and more maintenance.
- Operator Safety

They explained the project overview was built on past studies that were completed, visual observation, alternatives analysis, recommended upgrades and funding strategy. A study to address identified needs was undertaken. An investigation on accepting flow from the Town of Hardwick was done in 2019 and found to be of high cost and not pursued. Goals of recommended upgrades were to restore reliability to be able to consistently meet NPDES permit limits. Modify treatment processes and practices to reduce operator contact of solids and wastewater. Reduce risk of sanitary sewer overflows in the collection system due to wipes clogging pumps and pipes.

Proposed improvements in phase 1 were listed as a secondary clarifier mechanism rehabilitation, oxidation ditch rehabilitation, headworks improvements, operations building improvements, new sludge storage tank, solids handling improvements and effluent flow monitoring improvements at a cost \$5,371,875.00.

Phase 2 improvements were listed as intermediate flow monitoring improvements, anoxic/equalization tank mixers and pump station improvements at a cost of \$1,102,500.00. The grand total for the project cost which includes construction, engineering and legal with 10% contingency is \$6,474,375.00.

The proposed schedule was listed with the following project task's start and end dates:

Submit Funding Application – completed October 2021

Conduct Public Outreach & Project Approval – January 2022 thru June 2022

Preliminary Design – June 2022 thru September 2022

90% Design – September 2022 thru December 2022

Final 100% Design – January 2023 thru– February 2023

Bid and Award – March 2023 thru April 2023

Construction – May 2023 thru May 2024

Startup / Closeout – June 2024 thru August 2024

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Grant funding is available through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development (RD). Eligible applicants include town with populations of 10,000 or less for which Barre qualifies. Long-term, low-interest loans with up to 40 year payback periods are available with current interest rates of 1.75% and a potential 20% to 40% grant reimbursement. Debt repayment scheduled projected FY24 and rate analysis completed for loan repayment.

Proposed rate increase for sewer user's were listed as follows:

	FY2017	FY2022	FY2023-ESTIMATED
Residential	\$0.10	\$0.11	\$0.12
Commercial	\$0.11	\$0.12	\$0.13
Industrial	\$0.15	\$0.17	\$0.19
Unmetered	\$150.00	\$165.00	\$182.00
Septage In-Town	\$75.00	\$80.00	\$80.00
Septage Out of Town	\$85.00	\$90.00	\$90.00

They stated the reasons for bringing this before the Town now, at this time, is to initiate the review process with the USDA which runs from January to June. This will allow the town to secure a low interest loan option and maximize the potential of the grant funding, as available, and address the aging infrastructure and make necessary process improvements.

Some discussion/questions – On a questioned raised it was affirmed by a member of the DPW that the hearing for the Rate increase was posted. Resident Doug Martin stated he was not aware of any public outreach and was disheartened that a better effort was not made to alert residents. It was stated that the USDA grant would require the town to vote the full amount but town does not have to use full amount and the amount can be changed at any time. Another question was asked if there would be another loan on top of this loan with no response. It was asked if the loan would be longer than the estimated useful life of the system. It was answered that the useful life of the system was estimated at 30-40 years.

Resident Sam Lipson made **a motion that was seconded, and defeated by a majority negative voice vote**, to amend the main motion by “adding to the original motion placed on the 5th line after the word (town):

That the Selectboard, Treasurer and Finance Committee agree to stipulate the term of the 6.5 Million dollar Bond documents to reflect the term of the useful Life of this project which has been determined to be no more than 30 Years. (Delete – As the Treasurer and Select Board shall determine) After the addition of the above amendment to Article ONE the article can continue as written beginning with the Word “AND” located sixth Line (6th Line) and that any premium received.....”

Mr. Lipson then stated that “Fiscal responsibility is something required and necessary for a well run town... which Barre Hopes to be.”

The Moderator asked for the recommendations of the FINCOM and Select Board. The FINCOM stated they did not feel as though they had ample time and knowledge of the project to make a recommendation at this time. The Select Board agreed the project was needed and considering the town has an opportunity to take advantage of a potentially substantial grant opportunity and low interest loan, they voted to recommend Favorable Action.

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At 6:59 p.m. with 60 voters in attendance, and with no further discussion, Moderator Smith called for a vote on the following main motion as presented by Jason Pimental, DPW Superintendent, duly seconded, reminding voters that a 2/3rd vote was required for this article.

The first vote was called by voice which was not unanimous and indecisive. The Moderator then ask for a Standing Vote.

Article 1

WASTEWATER TREATMENT FACILITY

Sponsor: Sewer Commission [*2/3rd Majority Vote Required*]

Voted by a 2/3rd Majority Standing Vote (Yes 43 No 6) that the Town will vote to borrow \$6,500,000 to pay costs of upgrading the Barre Wastewater Treatment Facility and appurtenances thereto, including, but not limited to, planning, bidding and construction, as well as all other costs incidental and related thereto, and to meet this appropriation to authorize the Treasurer, with the approval of the Selectboard, to borrow said sum under General Laws Chapter 44, or any other enabling authority and issue bonds or notes of the Town upon such terms as the Treasurer and the Selectboard shall determine and that any premium received by the Town upon the sale of any bonds or notes, may be applied to the payment of costs approved by this vote in accordance with M.G.L. c.44 section 20, thereby reducing the amount authorized to be borrowed to pay such costs by like amount.

Fire Chief Robert Rogowski made a motion that was duly seconded to transfer from the Capital Stabilization Account \$20,000 to pay for mechanical services to repair fire apparatus Ladder 1.

He explained the repairs were needed to have the apparatus safe for use, fully functionable and in service to respond to calls as there is a shortage of apparatus.

Both the FINCOM and Select Board recommended favorable action be taken on the article.

With a total of 62 voters checked in the moderator reminded voters again, that a 2/3rd vote would be required for this article.

ARTICLE 2

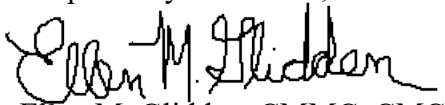
MECHANICAL SERVICES FOR FIRE APPARATUS LADDER 1

Sponsor: Fire Department [*Majority Vote Required*]

Voted by a Unanimous Affirmative Voice Vote to transfer from Capital Stabilization Account \$20,000 to pay for mechanical services to repair Fire Apparatus Ladder 1.

With there being no further business and on a motion made and duly seconded it was unanimously voted to dissolve the meeting at 7:29 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Ellen M. Glidden, CMMC, CMC
Barre Town Clerk