

Town of Haverhill
Select Board
SB2 Public Hearing
MINUTES
Monday, February 14, 2023, at 6:00 PM
R. E. Clifford Memorial Building
65 South Court St.
Woodsville, NH 03785
Or on ZOOM

CALL TO ORDER: Vice Chair Steve Robbins called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM.

Select Board Attendance: Kevin Knapp (Here), Katie Williams (Here), Mike Graham (Here; online), and Vice Chair Steve Robbins (Here). A quorum was met.

Town Employees Present:

Town Manager (TM): Brigitte Codling

Assistant Town Manager (ATM): Jennifer Boucher

Recording Clerk: Joanna Bligh

Members of the Public Present

In Person:

Donna Clark

Dean Clark

Ron Willoughby

Vickie Wyman

Tom Mangels

Russ Brady

Jim McKinnon

Mike and Dawn Lavoie

Jay Holden

David Joslin

Matt and Marie Bjelobrk

Regis Roy

Rick Henson

Margo Longacre

Gary and Tina Hebert

Online: Heather Bryant, David Robinson, Paul Hayes (Caledonian), & Greg Mathieson

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

AGENDA APPROVAL

MOTION #1: Williams made the motion and Knapp seconded the motion to approve the AGENDA as written.

Voice Vote: All approved, none opposed, none abstained. The motion passed unanimously.

MOTION #2: Williams made the motion and Vice Chair Robbins seconded the motion to close the public meeting at 6:02 PM and enter the Public Hearing.

Voice Vote: All approved, none opposed, none abstained. The motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING

Vice Chair Robbins announced that the Board is open for public comments on the SB2 process, and that the Board will vote on whether this SB2 Warrant Article will go to the voters. Vice Chair Robbins listed the materials related to SB2 that are available for public review, including the following Flow Sheet.



- Three major difference between Traditional Town Meeting & SB2 Town Meeting:
- The deliberative session (Town Meeting) would occur prior to Election Day (voting)
 - Voting would be for both the Warrant and election of officers, and would occur on Election Day
 - The entire Warrant as well as the election of officers would be voted on by paper ballot

- Cons to becoming an SB2 Town:
- Some events occur earlier in the process (*change can be hard*)
 - Less people may attend the deliberative session
 - People may be less informed about the articles on the warrant before voting on them

- Pros to becoming an SB2 Town:
- Provides a forum to discuss without pressure, giving voters time to contemplate before voting
 - Residents would be able to vote on warrant & election of officers by absentee ballot
 - Opportunity for more residents to participate in the democratic process to vote

Vice Chair Robbins commented that with SB2, the budget process occurs earlier with the Advisory Budget Committee finishing in January, the petitioned warrant articles due on January 10, and the Town warrant completed by January 30.

Public Discussion:

Joslin: Joslin commented that the Advisory Budget Committee will not have the year-end figures. Joslin continued that in 2004 the Town vote defeated the SB2 process at Town Meeting.

Hebert: Hebert stated that he is against SB2 for Haverhill because the traditional Town Meeting is a group gathering for discussion and debate. Hebert noted that SB2 will result in reduced attendance, especially the older voter who are used to the traditional Town Meeting. Hebert continued that the voters often use the recommendations of the Select Board to vote and, with SB2, the ballot will become three or more pages. Hebert commented that traditional Town Meeting is a better choice for Haverhill.

Willoughby: Willoughby noted that he is in favor of SB2 because of the intimidation factor at Town Meeting, and with SB2 the vote is in private and absentee ballots are available.

M. Lavoie: M. Lavoie stated that he approves of SB2 that allows people to vote and because there is not proper representation of voters at Town Meeting. TM Codling stated when asked that in 2022 there were 740 ballot voters and approximately 200 at Town Meeting.

Brady: Brady noted that he respects all the speakers, but SB2 does away with Town Meeting, may prevent amendments being added, will further inflame divisions in Town, and had a resounding defeat on the ballot in the past. TM Codling replied that during the SB2 Deliberative Session, amendments are considered, and discussion is open.

Robinson: Robinson commented that he is not in support of SB2 and spoke of an NHPR Podcast about SB2 (www.nhpr.org/the-exchange/2019/03/05; Town Meeting: Traditional vs. SB2 And Big Issues This Year). Robinson noted that from the podcast he learned that SB2 is best for large towns that have difficulty having a Town Meeting, there is a lot of lobbying, yard signs are seen everywhere, and most voters do not attend the deliberative session. Robinson concluded that Haverhill is just the right size town for a Town Meeting and not SB2, but more discussion and more hearings are needed.

Bjelobrk: Bjelobrk commented that there were more voters at the polls last year than at Town Meeting, and at Town Meeting voter can be manipulated. The SB2 voting reduces undue pressure as seen at Town Meeting.

Roy: Roy stated that she cannot understand the SB2 process and more information is needed. At this point, Roy stated she cannot make an informed vote.

D. Lavoie: D. Lavoie noted that at the Select Board meeting no one spoke about SB2. At the March 28, 2022, meeting, M. Lavoie brought it up, and the Select Board agreed that it should be up to voters.

Vice Chair Robbins: Vice Chair Robbins asked if the Board should keep SB2 on the warrant for Town vote now or for next year.

