

**Minutes of the Mount Ascutney School District
Annual District Meeting - Virtual by Google Meet
Thursday, February 24, 2022
7:00 p.m.**

Precursors to the meeting:

1. No votes will be taken tonight
2. All voting will be done by Australian Ballot on Tuesday, March 1, 2022
3. All questions have to go through the moderator

Present that I could attest to:

David Baker

Jenifer Aldrich

Elizabeth Burrows, Chair

Justin Burrows, Moderator

Nancy Pedrick

Davis McGraw

William Yates

MaryAnn Boyce

Ed Connors

Rebecca Roisman

Amy McMullen

Asha Plausteiner

Linda Ley

Amy Yates

(?...13 others...)

Started Recording the meeting at 7:06 p.m.

Elizabeth Burrows:

Welcome. This is an informational meeting about the annual budget and warning the articles, and explanation of the ballot for Tuesday's town meeting by Australian ballot. Would like to introduce the Moderator, Justin Burrows.

Also, some housekeeping points re: virtual meeting – Please remain muted, any questions raise hand, unmute when called on – speak at least once on a question, but no opportunity to speak three or four times –

Chat function has been disabled for this meeting – any questions, raise your hand and ask it

Moderator Justin Burrows:
Called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m.
Moderator read the beginning of the warning:

The legal voters of the Mount Ascutney School District are hereby notified and warned to meet virtually on Thursday, February 24, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. to transact the following business that does not involve voting by Australian Ballot.

Such meeting shall be adjourned to Tuesday, March 1, 2022, in the forenoon at the Windsor Municipal Building on Union Street and the Story Memorial Hall, West Windsor, Vermont, to transact any business involving voting by Australian Ballot.

Moderator reads Article 1: To appoint a Moderator, Clerk, and Treasurer for the ensuing year.

Moderator:
Does anybody have a question about Article 1?

Amy McMullen (on the Board):
Not a question, but a comment – if we were holding this meeting in person, we would be appointing these people from the floor for the moderator, clerk and treasurer. However, because this is a full virtual meeting, it will be done by Australian Ballot because no one had put their name in to be on the ballot. These are write in.

Elizabeth Burrows:
One more ground rule for being in a remote meeting – say your name and introduce yourself for the notetaker, Amy Yates, our clerk tonight, so she can record who's asking the questions.

MaryAnn Boyce from West Windsor:
Wondering who is running? Who to vote for or who to write in? How is that being resolved?

Moderator:
Anyone to address this?

Amy McMullen:
When you see the ballot for moderator, clerk and treasurer, they will be individual items, they are write in on the ballot, so if there's someone you are aware of that is interested in filling any of those positions you would write their name in.
For the school district directors, there are two people running – Bill Yates from West Windsor – his name does not appear on the ballot, but he is running a write-in campaign, and for Windsor you will see the name of Davis McGraw, and his name is on the ballot. But this is also an item

on the warning, that Justin will read off, and that will be an opportunity for people to introduce themselves if they like and to say why they want to run for the Board. Thank you.

David Baker:

Question for Amy McMullen – Is there a certain number of votes required for a write in candidate to be elected? Or if a person gets one write in vote and no one else gets written in, are they automatically elected? Do we know the answer to that question?

Amy McMullen:

If we were one town, it would be 30 names. Because we are two towns, it is 60 names. If one person does not receive 60 write ins, then the board will appoint, following reorganization.

David Baker:

Thank you, Amy, and I'm glad you clarified because there is a mechanism it is my understanding, if we don't get enough write in votes, then the board does have the authority to appoint a moderator, clerk and treasurer.

Moderator reads Article 2: To act on the reports of the School District Officers for the past year. (By Australian Ballot)

Moderator:

Any questions? Hearing none. Move on.

Moderator reads Article 3: To see if the Mount Ascutney School District will vote to pay taxes to the Town Treasurer, such taxes to be collected on the same schedule voted at the Town Meeting. (By Australian Ballot)

Moderator:

Any questions? Hearing none. Move on.

Moderator reads Article 4: To elect the School Directors for the ensuing term. (By Australian Ballot)

- Windsor residents at the Windsor Municipal Building on March 1, 2022 from 9:00 a.m. and close at 7:00 p.m.
- West Windsor residents at Story Memorial Hall on March 1, 2022 from 9:00 a.m. and close at 7:00 p.m.

Moderator:

Are there any questions on Article 4?

David Baker:

Sometimes at this point if there is anybody attending this informational meeting who is running for the school board, the moderator will sometimes ask them to introduce themselves and to give one or two sentences and let people know they are running. That is up to you if you want to do that but I've seen that done many times.

Moderator:

I believe we have two - that are here – I believe it is Messrs Yates and McGraw. Bill? Davis? Do either of you want to make a few comments and introduce yourself?

Bill Yates:

Sure. I don't mind. My name is Bill Yates and I am running for school board and am running a write-in campaign. I have (almost) two masters degrees in education, I have one. Grew up in Windsor, now live in West Windsor. I feel the Ascutney school district has the potential to be an outstanding school district. I believe it is a good school district and this point and I would like to work towards making it the most celebrated school district in the State of Vermont.

Moderator:

Thank you Mr. Yates. Mr. McGraw? Would you care to make any comments?

Davis McGraw:

Hard statement to follow up, Bill, but I am Davis McGraw and I live in Windsor Vermont and grew up in Windsor. And I don't have a masters degree in education but I should have an MBA by about this time next year. I am running for school board because I went to Windsor through 8th grade, and I remember some of my best experiences as a student and as a youth in this community were the result of the adults in this community making the time and effort to facilitate those experiences and I understand from my own background and working as a behaviorist in special education and currently in simulation-based education up at the hospital. And it takes time and it takes effort. It takes a team effort to make those opportunities happen. It can be daunting to be on a team with so many talented and brilliant folks but I relish the opportunity and hope you'll give me your vote on Tuesday. And Thanks.

Moderator:

Are there any other comments?

Nancy Pedrick:

Davis has been on our board - he was appointed and has been working with us and we all very much support him.

Moderator reads Article 5: To establish salaries for School Directors: School Board Chair - \$1250 per year and School Board Members - \$1000 per year. (By Australian Ballot)

Moderator:

Are there any comments or questions? Hearing none. Move on to Article 6.

Moderator reads Article 6: To see if the Mount Ascutney School District will vote to authorize the Board of School Directors to borrow money in anticipation of taxes to meet the requirements of the Mount Ascutney School District for the ensuing year and to authorize the execution and delivery of notes or orders to the Mount Ascutney School District. (By Australian Ballot)

Moderator:

Are there any questions or comments? Hearing none. Move on to Article 7.

Moderator reads Article 7: Shall the voters of the Mount Ascutney School District authorize the school board to apply \$624,526.00 of the FY21 surplus to the Capital Reserve Fund. (By Australian Ballot)

Moderator:

Are there any questions or comments? Ok. So now, I'm going to move on to Article 8.

Moderator reads Article 8: Shall the voters of the Mount Ascutney School District approve the school board to expend \$13,193,639.00 which is the amount the school board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year? It is estimated that this proposed budget, if approved, will result in education spending of \$17,259.25 per equalized pupil. This projected spending per equalized pupil is 7.62% higher than the spending for the current year. (By Australian Ballot)

Moderator:

Are there any comments? I see Davis McGraw.

Davis McGraw:

Clarifying the power point presentation – it needs to move forward. Jenifer Aldrich working on it.

David Baker:

At this point the school district board of directors and Administrators of the MASD have a Power Point presentation to give some more information and background on the \$13,193,639.00.

Moderator:

Mrs. Ley, I see your hand. Nothing said. Move on.

Moderator:

I believe Jennifer, Kate, Colleen, Elizabeth are going to– present some information to clarify this. Who is going to start?

Colleen DeSchamp: one of the principals at Windsor School and one of the administrators of the MASD.

Slide: Budget Goals Presentation - Colleen DeSchamp

Slide: Budget Goals

Slide: Goal 1: Student Success & Engagement

Slide: Goal 2: Culture & Student Wellness

Slide: Goal 3: Information & Communication

Colleen DeSchamp passes on to Jenifer Aldrich:

Jenifer Aldrich: principal at Albert Bridge School

Research for Recovery Presentation – Jenifer Aldrich

Slide: with 10 areas to cover

Slide: Priorities for Recovery - At the School Level

7 bullets and Jenifer stating how and why she supports this initiative

Slide: Where We've Been - pre-2020 March

Slide: What We've Learned - Focus:

Slide: Where We Need to Go - Bridges to close gaps:

Slide: Budget Goals

Slide: Building Capacity

Slide: Hopes for Sharing

Jenifer passing on to Elizabeth Burrows, then to Kate

Colleen DeSchamp:

Building Capacity Slide – revisit so people can see it (it was blank before in the presentation)

Elizabeth Burrows:

Slide: Stop for a Minute

Take a moment to consider the amount of hard work that has already been done on supporting our students in their ability to bring their whole selves to the class. And that's been done through extraordinary efforts on the parts of all of our administrators and all of our teachers.

And Jenifer talked about the fact that we already had laid the groundwork but that work started 8 years ago and it hasn't been easy but we were all ready. We haven't come through this pandemic unscathed - we didn't. The fact that we did Portrait of a graduate at the hands of the

school educational community and the community picking what wound up being the perfect set of priorities for a strategic plan that further laid the groundwork for us to be able to get through the pandemic together was remarkable not luck it's through talent and exceptional work and in certain areas genius and on top of that, just take a moment and think about how hard teachers staff, principals, and administrators and have worked under extreme duress in the last year and they haven't just been treading water – they have been pulling us forward. Plug for all of us to put our faith in these people who have shown that they're worthy of it. Thank you all. Let's move to the numbers...

Kate Ryan:

Principal in MASD and located in Windsor

Lives in Windsor, kids go to Windsor.

Taking us through the numbers:

Slide: FY20 FY21 FY22 FY23

WAGES

Wages and Benefits are up this year

Slide: Contracted Services

Slide: Maintenance and Repair

Slide: Transportation

Slide: Communication/Postage

Slide: Tuition (tuition rates drop)

Slide: Travel

Slide: Assessments

Slide: Books and Supplies

Slide: Energy

Slide: Equipment – ...Question for Ed Connors: Why is the equipment cost up? Ed will have to get back to you on that. David Baker thinks that the cafeteria renovations, which did include some furniture and equipment into the actual operating budget so I really think that's what's driving it, but if Ed finds anything out, we can go back to it.

Slide: Dues and Fees

Slide: Debt Services

Slide: Total Assessments by District - Estimate

Slide: Totals

Budget is up, adding staff to help create our vision

David Baker:

One of the things we need to realize is that when I arrived ten years ago we had just over 500 kids (around 525) and I know years ago there were much more than that, sometimes in the 700's.....over the last 10 years Windsor has been growing in population. So right now we have 575-580 students, we are anticipating numbers as high as 600 next year. Building capacity can serve that many kids, and also to meet all those individual needs that Jenifer and Kate and Colleen mentioned, and it's also the wonderful efforts of the merger of both communities because now over the last three years we've had all of the West Windsor, all those graduates come to Windsor, so that's increasing those numbers but we're also finding people moving into our town. Windsor is appearing to be an attractive place to live and to find affordable housing and to have great recreation programs and great school programs, so I think we'll continue to see our numbers go up, which is not the pattern in every single town in Vermont.

Kate Ryan:

One other thing that has been consistent this year is our numbers have been steady – our lowest point was 568, and they're up to 576 as of today. That's been a change since I came here 15 years ago when we had a more transient population, which is common living on the border of New Hampshire. Very consistent numbers of 568 and above all year, so I am anticipating that we will hit 600 next year, which is exciting.

Slide: Projected Tax Rates, West Windsor makes for a 3 cent difference, Windsor a 2 cent difference.

Elizabeth Burrows:

Slide: Budget Surplus of \$1.249 million dollars in part because of the tuition savings which they said they would reinvest, and also because they had a budget surplus last year and because they didn't spend a lot last year because of the pandemic.

Divided between the two towns – split the budget surplus in half – \$624,526 back to taxpayers – ½ to Windsor and W. Windsor back to taxpayers – will mitigate the tax increase 0.0291% (West Windsor), and 0.0161% (Windsor). The other ½ goes to Capital Reserves \$624,526.

Moderator:

Recognizes Amy McMullen raised hand:

Amy McMullen:

Clarification – when people vote, what they'll be voting for is the amount that's going to Capital Reserves. When people vote to approve our budget, that is when they will be accepting the \$624,526 that is going to relieve taxes.

Elizabeth Burrows:

Yes, that's right – \$1.249 million divided by 2

Proposed to send ½ of that to capital reserves (\$624,526) and the other ½ to Windsor and W. Windsor (\$624,526) split between Windsor and W. Windsor to relieve the tax

David Baker:

Mathematics per thousand is: Clarifying what the increase in \$ would be per \$1,000/house value

0.0291 rounded to .03 = \$30 per hundred thousand (West Windsor) - about \$90 increase for a \$300,000 valued home

0.0161 rounded to .02 = an increase of about \$58 for a \$300,000 valued home (Windsor)

The surplus rolls back into tax relief – that's what we're voting for – that's what you would be doing if you vote yes on Article 8.

Elizabeth Burrows:

Clarifying tax rate – local CLA (common level of appraisal) has to do with the estimated value of a home compared to the fair market value of a home. The state has a formula for it – done over a three year rolling average and our taxes are adjusted according to this and in West Windsor we had a very unfavorable CLA at 88.95% and our taxes are higher to make up the difference of the CLA, and it was more favorable for Windsor (close to 98.67% – a little closer to 100% which is more balanced).

Jenifer Aldrich:

Talking about the past year – a thank you to all the school board members and our teachers – what an incredible job the teachers have done heroic things through really tough times. A real testament to their belief and the work we are doing and their integrity in the job. Any teachers you see give them a heartfelt thank you. Back to Elizabeth.

Elizabeth Burrows:

Slide: Cultivate a Sense of belong with and within community

Slide: Community:
Community:

Slide: Community:
Community:

Slide: Community:
Community:

Slide: Questions/Comments

Moderator:

Are there any comments or questions on Article 8? Having none, go to Article 9.

Moderator reads Article 9: To transact any other business which may properly come before the meeting.

Moderator:

Are there any other comments or questions? Hearing none. Move on.

Moderator:

Stating not to close the meeting, but adjourn, until Tuesday, March 1st, 2022.

David Baker:

Confirming - adjourning until Tuesday, March 1, at the polling places,.

Elizabeth Burrows:

Please remind us of the hours of the polling places – the hours they'll be open.

Amy McMullen:

Official voting places and times: both polling places –

Windsor – at the Rec Center and Town Hall - 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m

West Windsor – at the Story Memorial Hall Town Hall - 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

David Baker:
Get out and vote.

David Baker:
Thank you again Justin. No formal motion to adjourn, because we're not adjourning – we're just moving to the vote on Tuesday. We are stopping the recording of the meeting now: 8:23 p.m.

David Baker:
Power Point Presentation posted on the Website, and the next day the recording is posted on the website

Thank you.
Good night.