

**Town of Freedom Annual Town Meeting
4-5-2025**

Approved 4/7/2025

This document should be considered with the Clerk's Attendance Information as well as her notes on each Article.

Walter Whitcomb, Moderator: Opened the meeting at 10 am.

Steve Bennett: Presented the winner of the 2025 Spirit of America Award. Phil Bloomstein is the 2025 recipient. Phil thanked the town for the award and spoke briefly about broadband.

Paul Flynn, State Representative: spoke to the attendees. Spoke about it being an honor to represent such a diverse population of people. He spoke about upcoming legislation.

Jim Waterman: challenged the Select Board to move the town meeting back to the Town of Freedom. He made several suggestions regarding locations. He asked that the citizens make suggestions regarding location and their feelings.

Elaine Higgins: Happy Stitchers, she mentioned that anyone is welcome. Wednesdays 2-4 at the town office, weather permitting. Town Library: is currently located at the town office. She is looking for volunteers to help. She mentioned that the Unity Library is free to Freedom residents.

Walter Whitcomb:

- Election results: 3/28/2025: Article #2 Laura Greeley was voted in as Select Board. Cynthia Abbott was elected to Clerk, Tax Collector and Excise Tax Collector.
- Article #3: Renee Oulette spoke regarding the clarity of the article. He stated the reference was not to a state law but a proposal of a law. He asked what LD1 they were referring to a law that was repealed. He is concerned that this would create a tax cap and that things could not be increased if necessary. He urged the town members to vote against this article. 30/12 passed
- Article #4: A resident asked what state wages are? Laura Greeley stated that there is a state guideline for wages and this is available for reference at the town office. A citizen asked how much the wages would be

decreased. Ryan Willette stated that as far as he knows no rates would be decreased. Passed

- Article #5: passed
- Article #6: Citizen asked for clarification, when are the bills mailed, Cindy Abbott replied typically in June.
- Article #7: Tyler Hadyniak asked that this be amended to say from what source the money would come from. Tyler Hadyniak moved to approve then amend: to see from what source the town will raise and appropriate to pay tax abatements. From what sum to what source of money.
 - Steve Benett stated that the overlay is usually stated.
 - Meredith Coffin: stated that the town asked that this be changed last year.
 - Lynn Hadyniak: asked for wording clarification. "What source of money replaces what sum of money".
 - Ron Price: asked for a clear reading of the amendment.
 - Prentice Grassi: "from what source"
 - "To see from what source of money the town will raise and appropriate to pay the tax abatements granted during the fiscal year."
 - Passed/ passed as amended
- Article 8: passed
- Article 9:
 - Jim Waterman: he spoke about town events and the need for parking. He stated that the town owns lot 20. DEP has looked at the lot and determined what is available for parking. He feels this would be very helpful for public safety.
 - Elaine Higgins who would be doing the cutting?
 - It was asked if they do not know where the boundaries are if there is no survey.
 - Lissa Widdof asked for a description of where the property is. Jim Waterman explained that it is the property next to the fire department. She asked if this had been brought to the planning board?
 - A citizen asked if this was just a vote to look into this as a potential plan. Jim W. responded yes.
 - Rene O. asked how many spaces it would create. Jim W stated about 30 in his estimate. He felt it would benefit the town as a whole.

- Lissa W. said she did not read the article as a plan that she reads it as a move forward.
- Lynn H. suggested modifying the article to reflect what Jim W had intended.
- Ryan Willette asked for an amendment. To see if the town will authorize the fire department to research the formation of a plan for town parking on lots 17 and 20, Map 11.
- Passed amendment, measure passed with objection.
- Article 10:
 - Steve Bennett: questioned line 07-15 page 91, Legal Expenses. He asked how much money was spent on the legal expenses on the Beaver Hill Road. Laura Greeley responded at this time she believes it was about \$20,000. He asked how much money has been spent year to date on Beaver Hill. Laura Greeley responded that not all bills have been received yet.
 - Ron Price: stated that the information was for review only. That the 20,000 can only be taken from the total amount. Steve Bennett made a motion that the town approve a budget of \$275,254.
 - Laura Greeley stated that the town is responding to the litigation not initiating it.
 - Tom Clay asked Mr. Bennett to retract his amendment.
 - Lynn H. Noted the decreases in employee costs and benefits. She asked for clarification.
 - Elaine Higgins moved to push this question forward.
 - Xxx asked about the 22000 and that he is concerned about lower the amount, what happens if we still have to go to court.
 - Kirk: The budget committee went over this line by line and he feels that it is reasonable. How would the town go to court without a lawyer?
 - The amendment failed.
 - Tyler Hadyniak asked if the general recommendation is to approve #10.
 - Prentice Grassi reiterated that they went through all of the line items. He feels that everything was approved by the budget committee.

- Steven Bennett said his point was that the town focuses on the amount of money that is being spent on legal expenses. He discussed abandoned roads.
 - Ron Price: said we need to vote on this article. He asked to move the question.
 - approved/passed
- Article 11: approved/passed
- Article 12: Ryan Willette asked to amend the article to state: To see if the town will raise and appropriate \$60,801 to fund ambulance service for the town with a preference to Unity Ambulance service for the fiscal year 2025.
 - Elaine Higgins asked for clarification. Ryan Willette clarified.
 - Steve Benett spoke about the need for the ambulance.
 - Brian Murphy asked about the status of the town of Unity versus Unity Ambulance.
 - Ryan Willette clarified.
 - Amendment: passed
 - Article 12 as amended: passed
- Article 13:
 - Renee O. asked what is in the capital reserve account currently.
 - \$15,000 currently
 - Article passed.
- Article 14:
 - Tyler Hadyniak asked for clarification as he feels that the first part of the article conflicts with the second. Laura Greeley and Ryan Willette clarified.
 - Steve Bennett was concerned that it was too much money to dedicate only to the paving and summer road funds.
 - Laura Greeley clarified.
 - Renee O. asked how much is currently in the paving account. Ryan Willette stated that is was approximately \$155K "ish".
 - Lynn H asked where the paving budget is in the town report. Page 40 was the response.
 - Passed
- Article 15: passed
- Article 16:

- Ron Price asked about summer roads. He asked about the removal of the paving and moving to crushed stone base. He wonders about tearing it up and where is it going to be put. He asked what the plan is. Ryan Willette responded. He suggested leaving it as crushed stone base for at least a year. Ron Price suggested amending to reduce it by 16000. Elaine Higgins seconded.
 - Lissa W. discussed the ongoing issues with Pleasant Street and trusts the judgement of the Public Works Department.
 - Passed
- Article 17: passed
- Article 18: passed
- Article 19: passed
- Article 20:
 - Tyler Hadyniak asked for clarification why this article was cut in half from 2024.
 - Laura Greeley clarified. The budget committee felt that money should be asked for and those asking should be looked at to see if these actually serve Freedom residents and the financial health of each charity.
 - Xxx made a motion to reduce the bottom line by 50%. There were comments in favor of this as it puts us more in line with surrounding towns for charitable donations.
 - Xxx spoke and asked which of these do we remove?
 - Clarification revealed that it is not a line budget and that we do not vote on specific lines, just the overall budget.
 - Xxx asked about which services are most visible in our community.
 - Laura Greeley responded.
 - Amendment to reduce by half, the amendment failed.
 - The Article was Approved
- Article 21:
 - Tyler Hadyniak asked if there was a budget recommendation for this article.
 - Laura Greeley responded.
 - Approved
- Article 22:

- Steve Bennett: stated that the post office is owned by the town. He spoke about projects that are needed in the town. He suggested reducing it to \$25,000 and save it for projects that come up during the year.
- Laura Greeley responded that it would be great to have a fund for these projects. Laura reported that we could have a \$50,000 IRS bill and that this money would be necessary to pay the federal government.
- Lynn Hadyniak asked if we could add the word federal taxes.
- Laura Greeley stated that it is taxes in general and that it will be in the tax grouping.
- Amendment: failed
- Article as originally written passed.
- Article 23:
 - Approved
- Article 24:
 - Jim Waterman asked if there was a date regarding Spring Clean Up. It will be set Monday night.
 - Renee Oulet asked about the increase.
 - Laura Greeley responded that last year was an error and this is the correction so now there is a capital reserve budget for solid waste.
 - Elaine Higgins asked about the garbage truck
 - Ryan Willette responded.
 - Passed
- Article 25:
 - Steve Bennett asked about the wording of the article.
 - Renee Oulet asked to express our appreciation for Jim Waterman.
- Article 26:
 - Approved
- Article 27:
 - Lynn Hadyniak asked why the town of Knox is paying Freedom. Jim Waterman clarified as did Ryan Willett. Knox does not have their own fire dept.
 - Passed
- Article 28:
 - Passed

- Article 29:
 - Renee Oulet asked what the money would be used for.
 - Jim Waterman clarified and said that the money would be used primarily for the maintenance of the trucks.
 - Passed
- Article 30:
 - Elaine Higgins asked when the repairs would take place.
 - Ryan Willette stated that it would happen this year.
 - Lissa W. asked for further clarification.
 - Passed
- Article 31:
 - Approved
- Article 32:
 - Rene O. asked if there were any properties entering foreclosure or needing maintenance. The response was none this year but possible next year. The Fisher lot is being leveled and put up for sale.
 - Passed
- Article 33:
 - Tyler Hadyniak stated that it allows for a lot of discretion on the part of the select board. He would like to know what defines an emergency.
 - Laura Greeley responded with an example of the ARPA funds.
 - Ryan Willette defined an emergency as a lack of a crucial service of natural disaster, vehicle failure at the fire department. Something that would affect the citizens in an urgent way.
 - Heather Donahue: affect the citizens in an adverse and urgent way.
 - Approved
- Article 34:
 - Approved
- Article 35:
 - Approved
- Article 36:
 - Lynn Hadyniak asked what types of third-party contracts.
 - Ryan Willette clarified. He provided some examples.

- Tyler Hadyniak asked the difference between a third party and lease agreement.
- Approved
- Article 37:
 - Renee O. asked about lease agreements. He asked if a large agreement should come before the town and not just be the purview of the Select Board.
 - Laura Greeley stated that she has had similar concerns.
 - Renee O said that it is his understanding that any money spent from a capital reserve account should be at the permission of the town.
 - Ryan Willette asked if capital reserve accounts could be used by the select account.
 - Ron Price shared his understanding of Capital reserve accounts versus other capital accounts.
 - Elaine Higgins further clarified based on her understanding.
 - Passed.
- Article 38:
 - Elaine Higgins asked if they anticipated needing a tax anticipation note. The response was no.
 - Approved.
- Article 39:
 - Approved.

Recording information:

https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/share/Iy2mpHOCN65iUR_iXOuuxo1HWpAP7ymXKPaoyR36sHdVNi-O6HSb8wvVTe8LUCLb.jfX7eir7UygFZoYs?startTime=1743861341000

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