



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS TOWN OF HUBBARDSTON

MINUTES SPECIAL TOWN MEETING

Monday, August 22, 2022

CENTER SCHOOL

STABILIZATION: \$541,391

FREE CASH: \$0

MUNICIPAL CAPITAL STABILIZATION: \$159,732

Pursuant to the foregoing warrant, the voters of the Town of Hubbardston assembled at the Center School to act on the articles in said warrant. Present were Moderator René Lafayette, Select Board members Jeffrey Williams (Chair), Kris Pareago, Kathryn (Katie) Young, Heather Munroe and Peter Walker; Town Clerk Laurie Reed; Finance Committee members Joshua Lerner and Peter Russell; Acting Town Administrator Sandra Nason; prior Town Administrator Ryan McLane. Finance Committee members Susan Rayne and Charles Reed were absent. A total of 118 registered voters were checked in by Shonna Larson and Lynn Wilkinson. A quorum of 50 voters was present throughout the meeting.

Moderator René Lafayette declared a quorum present and called the Special Town Meeting to order at 7:09pm followed by the pledge of allegiance.

ARTICLE 1. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate or transfer from available funds the sum of \$5,424,928.65, or such other sum, to pay its share of the Quabbin Regional School District budget for FY 2023; or take any action relative thereto.

Motion, Jeffrey Williams, to see if the Town will raise and appropriate **\$5,241,649.00** to pay the Town of Hubbardston's share of the Quabbin Regional School District budget for FY 2023.

Recommended by: Select Board

Finance Committee unable to make recommendation as quorum was not present

Second: Kathryn Young

Discussion: Ryan McLane spoke in regards to the amended motion made by Jeffrey Williams. Ryan explained the approval process, the budget process and advised of the budget constraints the town would be facing if the budget was approved as requested by Quabbin Regional School District.

Joshua Lerner spoke on behalf of the Finance Committee and explained the ongoing financial concerns of the town. Joshua stated the town would soon need to consider an over-ride to help fund the schools and what the additional annual cost would be to the average home in Hubbardston.

Superintendent Sheila Muir spoke on behalf of Quabbin Regional School District in regards to the increase in budget. Sheila explained the budget process and the expectations of the school to plan their budget a year in advance. Sheila advised the budget changes are made once additional information becomes available as far as enrollment, staffing and State funding. Impacts to the budget were addressed to include; aging buildings, supplies, utilities and services.

Motion, Timothy Hawley, to amend the motion and appropriate the amended amount of \$5,424,928.65 to pay the Town of Hubbardston's share of the Quabbin Regional School District budget for FY 2023.

Second: Mark Wigler

Discussion: Timothy Hawley advised he has reviewed the school district budget and has even called the district to get clarification on some of the requests. Timothy advised he believes their requests are valid and necessary stating they are asking for a 2% increase which is lower than surrounding communities. Timothy noted the school was able to reduce the budget in 2020 and 2021 due to covid and incorporated those savings into the budget for the following years. He advised the increase since 2020 has been 4% overall even with inflation around 12% stating education is one of the most important investments we can make.

Moderator René Lafayette advised Town Meeting the motion made by Timothy Hawley is considered a subsidiary motion according to Section 15 of the town's general bylaws. In a subsidiary motion, debates are limited to 10 minutes with no person speaking for more than 3 minutes, nor more than twice.

Kristofer Munroe spoke about the efficiency of the town and advised employees are paid in the bottom ¼ percentile compared to other towns. Kristofer expressed concern about the salary amount for a new Town Administrator with the salary range being well below average and advised good people are needed in town just as they are needed in the schools. It was advised that 43% of the land in Hubbardston is owned by the State with minimal tax revenue paid.

Mark Wigler stated he is proud of Quabbin Regional School District and advised the increase is 2.05% over last years budget. Mark advised this is a state wide problem due to funding in state aid, transportation and per pupil cost. Mark discussed the increases in supplies as well as supply chain problems. Mark spoke about the higher budget increases in local surrounding towns as well as the high number of school choice students to Quabbin due to the school reputation. From recent school committee meetings and parental feedback, the school committee acknowledges the role of public schools has expanded to also address the social/emotional needs of children in the district. Due to the added needs, additional staff is needed to include; counselors, psychologists and aids especially with concern of the loss of learning with covid.

Heather Munroe advised town meeting is to provide input and ultimately vote on how the town budget will be spent. Heather acknowledged the importance of education and the needs of students however advised the increase in funds would result in cuts to the town budget. With an increase in the school funding, the town would need to reduce the budget which would reduce services and staff to the town. Heather said this is an ongoing issue and it will continue on a yearly basis with a new process needed moving forward. The budget will need to be voted on again regardless of which way the vote is approved. The school will either need to review their budget or the town will need to review theirs to make a balanced budget.

Joshua Lerner asked if due to the increased number of zoom meetings from covid if there could be a reduction of the \$51,215 conference/travel budget line item by QRSD.

With no other discussion on the amendment, Moderator René Lafayette moved the question, motion seconded.

Vote on the motion made by Timothy Hawley to amend the motion and appropriate the amended amount of \$5,424,928.65 to pay the Town of Hubbardston's share of the Quabbin Regional School District budget for FY 2023. Chair in doubt on visual vote. A recorded vote counted by Bella Kaldera and Laurie Reed was taken.

Vote: Motion Passes; Yes-66, No-51

Further Discussion on motion as amended: Peter Walker asked where the town would get the money to pay the school budget difference.

Michael Stauder advised that he was a Select Board member for a decade plus and advised the town was doing the best they could and confirmed there is no money in town. He stated the budget was lean and the school is doing a good job however the problem lies due to a structural deficit between the revenue and expected expenses. He advised that a study was done years ago, and this was foreseen. Michael stated the only way to move forward would be to approve a 2.5 percent over-ride or massive growth.

Vote: Article 1 as amended: With confusion on town meeting floor as to what was being voted on the following discussion took place.

Discussion: Mark Wigler asked for clarification on the motion/vote.

Moderator René Lafayette explained the motions made up to the current point at special town meeting and advised this would be to approve the original amount requested by QRSD in Article 1.

Timothy Hawley clarified the amount voted on was the revised amount given by Quabbin Regional School District after the budget was voted down at the annual town meeting.

Vote: Majority Affirmative Vote

ARTICLE 2. Motion, Kathryn Young, to see if the Town will vote to authorize payment of a prior fiscal year invoice as follows:

Vendor	Description	Invoice Number	Amount
Brittany Blaney-Anderson	Technology Consultant	Invoice #H-99	\$5,180.00

And to meet that appropriation, that the sum of **\$5,180** be transferred from the PEG Access Reserve Fund, or take any action relative thereof.

Recommended by: Select Board

Finance Committee unable to make recommendation as quorum was not present

Second: Heather Munroe

Motion Passes: Unanimous Affirmative Vote

Jeffrey Williams addressed town meeting and thanked Ryan McLane for his years of service to the Town. Jeffrey spoke about his accomplishments and dedication to the town and residents over his 4 years of employment.

Ryan McLane thanked the town for giving him the opportunity to serve as Town Administrator and feels honored to be able to share his time and family with the town and residents. Ryan advised the town employees in Hubbardston are second to none and asked the town continue to support the staff moving forward.

Having completed the business of the evening, the Chair declared Town Meeting adjourned at 8:15pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Laurie J. Reed
Town Clerk

(Town Seal)