



Town Meeting March 18, 2016

The March 18, 2016 annual Town Meeting opened at 4:00 p.m. by Town Clerk at the Whitefield Fire & Rescue Station, then and there to act upon Article 1 and by secret ballot. Jeffrey Frankel was elected 4-0 to serve as moderator. Frankel appointed Sandra Brown to serve as deputy moderator.

Article 1

To elect a moderator by written ballot to preside at said meeting.

Jeffrey Frankel unanimously elected, 4-0

Article 2

To elect by secret ballot municipal officers namely, two Selectmen/Assessors/Overseers of the Poor for a three-year term; one Road Commissioner for a one-year term; one RSU 12 School Board member for a three-year term; one RSU 12 School Board member for a term of one year; and two Planning Board members for a two-year term.

Office	Candidate	Votes	
Selectman	Tony Marple	152	(winner)
Selectman	Frank Ober	133	(winner)
Selectman	Bruce Mathews	130	
Planning Board	James Torbert	155	(winner)
Planning Board	Jake Mathews	123	(winner)
Planning Board	Mike Panosian	104	
School Board	Terri Blair	203	(winner)
Road Commissioner	David Boynton	201	(winner)

Town Meeting reconvened at the Whitefield School in said Town on March, 19 2016, at 10:00 o'clock in the forenoon, then and there to act on Articles 3 through 35 as set out below.

Article 3

To see if the Town will fix dates when taxes shall be due and payable, and to see if the Town will fix an annual interest rate to be charged on unpaid taxes after said dates, and to allow the Tax Collector and Treasurer to accept the prepayment of taxes not yet committed pursuant to 36 MRSA §506.

15/16 budget year interest rate 4%

Selectmen recommend (3-2) November 30, 2016 and April 30, 2017, and an interest rate of 4%.

A motion was made, seconded and carried by a majority vote to set the interest rate of 4%.

Article 4

To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Selectmen, on behalf of the Town, to sell and dispose of any real estate acquired by the Town for non-payment of taxes thereon, for such terms as they deem advisable and execute quitclaim deeds for same.

A motion was made, seconded and carried by a majority vote.

Article 5

To see if the Town will authorize the Treasurer to waive the foreclosure of tax lien mortgages pursuant to 36 MRSA § 944 upon finding by the Selectmen that ownership of the property subject to lien would be contrary to the Town's best interest.

A motion was made, seconded and carried by a majority vote.

Article 6

To see if the Town will vote to appropriate surplus funds to pay for tax abatements and any interest due thereon.

A motion was made, seconded and carried by a majority vote.

Article 7

Shall an ordinance entitled "Floodplain Management Ordinance" be enacted?

A motion was made, seconded and carried by a majority vote.

Article 8

If Article 7 is approved, shall a Resolution for joining the National Flood Insurance Program be adopted?

A motion was made, seconded and carried by a majority vote.

Article 9

Shall the Town enter into an agreement with the Atlantic Salmon Federation (ASF) and the Midcoast Conservancy (MC) to remove the dam in Coopers Mills, to construct three redundant dry hydrants to replace the existing fire department dry hydrant behind the dam, to create a public space at the dam site focused on historical preservation, public access, and watershed education. The proposal also would

establish ASF funded accounts to be managed by the Town for future maintenance of the dry hydrants (\$30,000) and the dam site access and informational features (\$7,500), for improvements in Sheepscot River access at other locations in Town (\$25,000) and to support the replacement of the Vigue Road culvert (\$15,000) on Finn Brook. The work on each project would be fully funded by ASF and MC with no Town investment as stipulated in a contract between ASF, MC, and the Town, the terms and conditions of which will be negotiated between ASF, MC, and the Selectmen in the best interests of the Town.

A motion was made, seconded and carried by a majority vote.

Article 10

Shall an ordinance entitled "Property Tax Deferral for Senior Citizens" be enacted?

Resident Karen Stultz asked how often residents would apply for this program. Peter Froehlich told her that residents must apply every year. Stultz asked if selectmen could deny applications. Selectman Ober said that approval is automatic if residents meet the criteria, adding that his concern is that the town could end up with property that would not benefit Whitefield.

Phil Russell asked if a resident owes medical bills, who is paid out first. Froelich explained that someone dies and they owe money the federal government is paid first, then the state and finally the municipality.

Louis Sell asked about the potential long term effect to fiscal position of the town and selectmen's views on the measure.

Sue McKeen said that selectmen don't know how many people might apply for this. "9 percent of population is 70 and over. We are worried about shifting the burden and you don't consider people's assets. We can't make sure the house is insured. We can't make them have insurance."

Tony Marple said that if 50 people applied and met qualification the impact would be an increase of .4 mills. "I would be surprised if it's more than 50," he said. "We do have concerns of long-term implications in terms of administrative burden."

Lester Sheaffer said that he is in favor of the proposal. "I've heard enough people say we don't do enough for the seniors in town," he said. "I think anything we can do to keep people in their homes, we should do it."

Dennis Merrill said that selectmen don't put a senior out of their home under any circumstances. He said with a life expectancy of 80, that could run up to \$30,000 tax bill over ten years. "It would be a shame if the next of kin couldn't come up with the money and put the town in a situation where they couldn't pay for it," he said.

Frank Ober said if residents meet the criteria, "There is no other stream to cross," and the proposal is "putting this off to another board to deal with it."

Dan Joslyn called to move the question, which passed. The Article failed, 53-63.

Article 11

Shall the term of the Road Commissioner be changed from one year to three years, beginning with the elections in March 2017?

One resident asked if people were unhappy with the road commissioner's work, whether the town would be locked that commissioner for three years? Merrill answered yes.

Chuck Vaughan explained that this will allow the road commissioner to invest money in equipment knowing that the position is for three years.

A motion was made, seconded and carried by a majority vote.

David Moskovitz motioned to take Article 33 out of order. The motion was seconded and carried.

Article 33

To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Selectmen to enter into a contract with a private firm for installation of solar panels on the Fire Station to provide electricity for Town buildings under contractual terms and conditions that will provide short and long term financial benefits to the Town, with the potential for Town buyout of the equipment in a future year.

Frankel explained that there was a change from the town report to the actual warrant. Marple said the initial warrant article said there would be no investment by the town, but as selectmen looked at the numbers, it made sense to purchase.

Glenn Angell move the article as written on the handout, which was seconded and carried.

Tony Marple explained that we need a private vendor to install these to be eligible for the tax break. Once installed, the solar panels are expected to have a savings over a 40-year-period. An inverter converts the electricity into \$107,000 in savings at minimum over the 30-year-period. "When we buy out after seven years we have the option to pay cash at year seven," he said. "There are environmental benefits and it benefits town."

Erik Ekholm explained there are moral obligations as well. "2015 warmest year in history before that 2014. There is a trend. The sea level is rising 1 inch a year in Gulf of Maine," he said. "We don't have the shrimp, cod, etc. Our current situation will affect the environment and economy."

"I see this as a real moral reason to do something," he added. "When you look at saving over 100,000 dollars in energy costs. It kind of makes sense that the town be a leader in this approach."

He explained that the Whitefield Fire & Rescue Station on Townhouse Road is in perfect alignment for solar power collection. "The proposal for 27 KW per year would power all the town buildings. It would provide adequate energy, sized with two new heat pumps. The array and whole system would cost today a little over \$78,000. Our annual expenses are bit over \$4,000. Under the Purchase and Plan Agreement, the company would install it, maintain for first 6 years at no cost for the town except for rider on insurance company, which would be quite minimal."

The town would pay one of three rates during the six years, he said.

“One rate we could select would be less than what we pay CMP. On the seventh year we can buy out the system. The reason for the six-year period is the company takes a tax credit. The end result is if we buy out in the seventh year, it's from about half the original cost, but a little over.”

“We will pay about \$43,000 to buy out the system. In any event, if we pay it up front we will save \$120,000 over the life of the system. We are getting cheaper electricity and we are doing the right thing. We are saving about 26,000 lbs of carbon going to the atmosphere.”

A resident asked at the end of six years, who decides to buy out?

“The town,” said Marple.

Dan Joslyn asked if there is a 40-year expectancy?

“We don't know 40 years out,” Ekholm said. “It's improving every year. It's the best estimate it will work for 40 years and inverter would have to be replaced in 20 years. We will be in the black after about 12 years of owning the panels.”

Louie Sell asked several questions including if net metering is modified would the town be protected? Does the estimate come from the vendor or independent estimates, what are the annual maintenance costs and what is the selectmen's position.

Ekholm explained that at the end of six years, the town has the option to buy out and it “doesn't make sense not to buy it out.”

“I suggest we go into this with our eyes open. In terms of net metering we spent time in Augusta and went to the public hearing and talked to people in state office and various organizations. The PUC and the state advocate people in Maine have gotten together with the solar industry and they came up with a bill that everyone agreed on. The governor doesn't believe in solar and put our faith in natural gas and hydro.

“The bill, if it passes, would grandfather net metering as we know it. It would also give option to accept new plan or not if we got an agreement with CMP the first half of this year before anything changes.”

Tony Marple explained that if the Town signs a contract before June 30, then we are grandfathered

Lester Sheaffer said that he didn't know how to vote on this.

“When we had the presentation by this company I asked how they make money. We are just looking to break even, they said. That worries me... I don't understand all the stuff in Augusta and if don't understand it, I hesitate to vote for this.”

Sue McKeen agreed, “I echo what Lester said. I'm not as well educated as I should really be.”

Dennis Merrill said that he thinks it's great environmentally, but cautioned the town to be prepared to do the buyout.

Frank Ober said he favors the measure.

Fred Fagin asked if there is more than one company the town will seek bids from?

"We have made clear that we would put it out to bid," Ekholm said. "There won't be a lot of companies that do what Revision does. Revision is largest installer of solar in the state. They have a business plan that includes in addition to making money to do project which is for the public good."

Brian Ross expressed concerns about mounting the panels to the fire station roof and whether anyone thought about potential damage to roof.

"The roof we have on the fire station is standing seam. This is the best roof to put a solar system on," Ekholm said. "The racks clamp on standing seam and no holes put in. The panels are attached to the racks. When you have a roof guaranteed for 40 years and a system for 40 years, you can't get much better."

He added there is no maintenance on solar panels.

Marlene Sullivan asked to move the question, which was seconded and carried.

Article 33 was moved, seconded and carried by a majority vote.

Article 12

To see if the Town will vote to modify warrant article 43 passed March 6, 1954, that reads, "To see if the Town will vote to instruct the Selectmen to notify by mail all voters on record, of calling of each Special Town Meeting within 48 hours of such calling" to read, "To instruct the Selectmen to notify by mail each residence of record of each Special Town Meeting in advance of such meeting in accordance with law."

A resident asked how the recent mailing regarding this particular town meeting is an example of how resident would be notified and Frank Ober confirmed that. Ober added that the change in the 1954 warrant article would save the town money by notifying residences instead of each voter.

Article 12 carried by a majority vote.

Article 13

To see if the Town will authorize the Selectmen to dispose of town-owned personal property with a value of \$1,000 or less under such terms and conditions as they deem advisable.

A motion was made, seconded and carried by a majority vote.

Article 14

To see if the Town will authorize the Selectmen to dispose of one 1977 John Deere 670 road grader under such terms and conditions as they deem advisable.

A motion was made, seconded and carried by a majority vote.

Article 15

To see what sum the Town will appropriate from unassigned surplus for the purpose of purchasing a road grader on terms and conditions the Selectmen and Road Commissioner deem advisable to adequately meet the Town's needs at the best price.

15/16 budget \$0

Selectmen (4-1) recommend \$95,000

Budget Committee (6-0) recommends same.

A motion was made, seconded and carried by a majority vote.

Article 16

To see what sum the Town will vote to raise and appropriate for Town Officials' salaries and benefits for the ensuing year.

15/16 budget \$152,431

Selectmen recommend (4-1) \$155,742

Budget Committee (6-0) recommends same.

Dennis Merrill made an amendment to add \$6,000 and reduce \$12,000 in another area. Tony Marple explained that Town Attorney recommends the town to contract assessing rather than pay as an employee of the town. The motion to increase \$161,742 was seconded.

The motion to raise and appropriate \$161,742 for town officials' salaries passed by a majority vote.

Article 17

To see what sum the Town will vote to raise and appropriate for insurance for the ensuing year.

15/16 budget \$13,400

Selectmen recommend (5-0) \$14,070

Budget Committee (6-0) recommends same.

A motion was made, seconded and carried by a majority vote.

Article 18

To see what sum the Town will vote to raise and appropriate for cutting brush, grading, surfacing, paving, and repairing Town roads for the ensuing year.

15/16 budget \$412,968 (\$334,700 raised plus \$78,268 in carryover)

Selectmen recommend (4-1) \$393,375

Budget Committee (6-0) recommends same.

A motion was made, seconded and carried by a majority vote.

Article 19

To see what sum the Town will vote to raise and appropriate for snowplowing and sanding roads and salt shed maintenance for the ensuing year.

15/16 budget \$252,700

Selectmen recommend (5-0) \$246,500

Budget Committee (6-0) recommends same.

A motion was made, seconded and carried by a majority vote.

Article 20

To see what sum the Town will vote to raise and appropriate for General Government for the ensuing year.

15/16 budget \$50,600

Selectmen recommend (5-0) \$53,212

Budget Committee (6-0) recommends same.

A motion was made, seconded and carried by a majority vote.

Article 21

To see what sum the Town will vote to raise and appropriate for Town Office operations for the ensuing year.

15/16 budget \$21,335

Selectmen recommend (5-0) \$20,304

Budget Committee (6-0) recommends same.

A motion was made, seconded and carried by a majority vote.

Article 22

To see what sum the Town will vote to raise and appropriate for Townhouse heating fuel and maintenance for the ensuing year.

15/16 budget \$900.

Selectmen recommend (5-0) \$900

Budget Committee (6-0) recommends same.

A motion was made, seconded and carried by a majority vote.

Article 23

To see what sum the Town will vote to raise and appropriate for municipal fire and rescue services operating budget for the ensuing year.

15/16 budget \$91,000.

Selectmen recommend (5-0) \$91,000

Budget Committee (6-0) recommends same.

A motion was made, seconded and carried by a majority vote.

Article 24

To see what sum the Town will vote to raise and appropriate for the General Assistance Program for the ensuing year.

15/16 budget \$5,000.

Selectmen recommend (5-0) \$5,000

Budget Committee (6-0) recommends same.

A motion was made, seconded and carried by a majority vote.

Article 25

To see what sum the Town will vote to raise and appropriate for miscellaneous expenses for the ensuing year as indicated below:

To be voted on as a group after individual discussion and or amendment as needed.

	14-15 Budget	Selectmen recommendation (vote)	Budget Comm. recommendation (vote)
Cemeteries	\$3,500	\$3,500 (5-0)	\$3,500 (6-0)
Soldiers Graves	\$500	\$300 (5-0)	\$300 (6-0)
Solid Waste (Hatch Hill)	\$34,500	\$35,000 (5-0)	\$35,000 (6-0)
Recycling Program	\$2,500	\$2,500 (5-0)	\$2,500 (6-0)
Recycling Building	\$1,000	\$1,000 (5-0)	\$1,000 (6-0)
Legal Services	\$5,000	\$5,000 (5-0)	\$5,000 (6-0)
Maine Municipal Association Dues	\$2,870	\$2,931 (5-0)	\$2,931(6-0)
Animal Shelter Service	\$2,300	\$2,300 (5-0)	\$2,300 (6-0)
Planning Board	\$2,000	\$2,000 (5-0)	\$2,000 (6-0)
Tax Map Updates	\$1,000	\$0 (5-0)	\$0 (6-0)
Whitefield Cemetery	\$2,000	\$3,000 (5-0)	\$3,000 (6-0)
Parking lot	\$9,500		
TOTAL	\$66,670	\$57,531	\$57,531

Dennis Merrill moved that the article be amended to reduce the overall amount by \$12,000 under Solid Waste (Hatch Hill). The motion was seconded and carried. The motion to raise and appropriate \$45,531 under Article 25 was seconded and carried by a majority.

Article 26

To see what sums the Town will vote to raise and appropriate for the following organizations for the ensuing year:

To be voted on as a group after individual discussion and or amendment as needed.

	15-16 Budget	16-17 Request	Selectmen recommendation (vote)	Budget Comm. recommendation (vote)
Red Cross	\$250	\$250	\$250 (4-1)	\$250 (6-0)
Midcoast Maine Community Action	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000 (4-1)	\$1,000 (6-0)
Coastal Transportation	\$100	\$1,000	\$0 (5-0)	\$0 (6-0)
Maine General Hospice	\$1,137	\$1,137	\$1,000 (4-1)	\$1,000 (6-0)
Kennebec Behavioral Health	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000 (4-1)	\$1,000 (6-0)
New Hope for Women	\$580	\$580	\$580 (4-1)	\$580 (6-0)
Spectrum Generations	\$500	\$500	\$500 (4-1)	\$500 (6-0)
Young at Heart	\$150	\$150	\$150 (4-1)	\$150 (6-0)
Children's Center	\$0	\$1,150	\$1,150 (4-1)	\$1,150 (6-0)
Gardiner Public Library	\$0	\$4,500	\$0 (5-0)	\$0 (6-0)
TOTAL	\$10,717	\$14,317	\$5,630	\$5,630

A representative from Maine General Hospice explained they are asking for \$1,137, which was received by the town in the past. The representative said she missed the budget meeting due to family emergency. She also explained some of the services offered by the hospice program. Hillary Holm moved a total of \$5,767 that would include a total of \$1,137 for Maine General Hospice. The motioned was seconded and carried by a majority vote.

Article 27

To see what sum the Town will vote to raise and appropriate for the Whitefield Food Bank for the ensuing year.

15/16 budget \$4,000; 16/17 request \$4,500.

Selectmen recommend (5-0) to raise \$2,000 and to appropriate \$2,500 from the Worthy Poor Fund.

Budget Committee (6-0) recommends same.

A resident asked about details regarding the food bank. Earl Lemieux explained that the food bank helps 82 families. Marlene Sullivan motioned to increase the amount to \$4,800 which was seconded. After discussion, the amendment failed and the motion to raise and appropriate \$4,500 was seconded, and carried by a majority vote.

Article 28

To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Selectmen to move funds in the municipal budget from categories with balances to those with deficits.

A motion was made, seconded and carried by a majority vote.

Article 29

To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Selectmen to accept grants, donations and/or gifts of personal property, services or money for the benefit of the Town and to use non-lapsing accounts to administer funds for their intended purposes.

A motion was made, seconded and carried by a majority vote.

Article 30

To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Selectmen to carry forward the balances of the Roads, Townhouse and Coopers Mills Dam accounts on June 30, 2015 to fiscal year 2016.

A motion was made, seconded and carried by a majority vote.

Article 31

To see what sums the Town will vote to appropriate from the following sources to be applied toward the 2016 property tax commitment in order to reduce taxes.

Selectmen recommend the following

Excise Tax Revenue	\$320,000
State Road Grant (LRAP)	\$46,444
Unassigned surplus	\$155,000

Article 32 *To be decided by written ballot*

To see if the Town will vote to increase the property tax levy limit established for the Town of Whitefield by State Law in the event that the municipal budget approved under the preceding articles will result in a tax commitment that is greater than that property tax levy limit.

This was not voted on, as there was no need as explained by the board.

Article 33

To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Selectmen to enter into a contract with a private firm for installation of solar panels on the Fire Station to provide electricity for Town buildings under contractual terms and conditions that will provide short and long term financial benefits to the Town, with the potential for Town buyout of the equipment in a future year.

A motion was made, seconded and carried by a majority vote.

Article 34

To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Selectmen to secure liability, bond insurance, and public officials' liability insurance, and workers compensation by joining Maine Municipal Association's programs for these services or from other sources as they deem most advantageous.

A motion was made, seconded and carried by a majority vote.

Article 35

To see if the Town will vote to earmark all funds received from the Snowmobile Registration Refund Program, to be used to maintain trails and bridges within the Town of Whitefield.

A motion was made, seconded and carried by a majority vote.

The preceding is a true and accurate account of the actions taken by the Town of Whitefield at the Annual Town Meeting March 18 & 19, 2016.

Aaron C. Miller

Town Clerk