

**TOWN OF SOUTH THOMASTON
PUBLIC INFORMATION SESSION REGARDING 2023 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
MINUTES**

Rev 0

Note: A listing as present does not denote attendance for the entire meeting.

South Thomaston Selectboard Present: John Spear, Jeff Northgraves, Sue Snow

Others Present: Terri-Lynn Baines, Pennie Alley, Don Protheroe, Ray Martin, Maureen Spencer, Henry Spencer, Sally Merchant, Margaret and Ronnie Anderson, Rich Norman, Sondra Wallace, Denise Rzeznikiewicz, Lynn Tootill, Catherine Lerme, Ervin Curtis, Donna Fifield, Anne Norman, Moira Paddock, John McCrea, Linda Palmer, Ruth Rinklin, Rhonda Nordstrom, Nancy Goslin, Jeff Smith

Via Zoom: Lori B, Walter Reitz, Merle Rockwell, Chad, Zoom User, Bonnie Lunt, Anna, RST

Spear called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm.

He led the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance

Spear announced to the gathered residents that the 2022-2023 Annual Town Report was dedicated to Donna Fifield. Donna attended the meeting and was presented a Town Report.

Discussion on the following articles on the draft Annual Town Meeting Warrant:

1. The proposed purchase of approximately 129 acres of undeveloped land that abuts land the Town currently owns on Route 73 where the Town Office and Fire Station are located.

Article 6 & 7. Catherine Lerme presented a power point showing the layout of the land, a google earth map of the properties, a drone shot and several pictures of the properties. The Conservation Commission has walked the properties with Jeff Smith. The Cline property is densely forested.

This is an opportunity for development of a recreation complex and also conservation of habitat and land.

Ralph Cline's offer to sell his properties came to the Selectboard in March 2023.

The Smith properties have been under consideration by the Conservation Commission since 2022.

There needs to be a commitment to buy the land before the Town could apply for grants. Grants are available to help develop and maintain the property.

As conditions of the sale, Smith is requesting no ATVs be allowed on the property, and the property be put in conservation. Hunting will be allowed.

Sondra Wallace, vice chair of the Conservation Commission, was available to answer questions regarding the land purchase. She had also prepared a Q & A fact sheet in preparation for the meeting.

There was a suggestion some of the land out back be used for a business park/ housing to raise tax revenue.

Other questions included how much money is in surplus if the money to purchase the properties is to come from surplus, does “forever wild” allow forest management and will hunting be banned.

Don Protheroe owns property which is between the Town’s property and Smith’s property. He stated there is a discrepancy between his survey map and the tax map. He believes it’s a tax map issue and is meeting with the assessor to clear it up.

Protheroe’s property is in tree growth. He is concerned about the easement that goes across his land to access the Smith property. It is the Selectboard’s intent to extinguish the right of way as soon as possible.

2. A proposed Local Food Sovereignty Ordinance.

Article 25. The Selectboard was requested to add this article to the Town Warrant. Ray Martin explained the ordinance would enable providers to sell food directly to customers at the site of production without state licenses. This ordinance excludes meat, poultry and shellfish.

There was a brief discussion regarding if there is a liability for the Town.

3. A proposed change in the method of voting for elected officials and referendums.

Article 4. This was put on the Warrant last year as an advisory article. It passed at last year’s town meeting so this year it will be on the warrant to be voted on.

If this passes Selectboard members and RSU #13 Representatives will be elected at the polls. There were questions from the residents asking if there would have to be more meetings if this article was passed. There was also a brief discussion on writing a candidate in.

4. An advisory article concerning the statutory town manager form of government.

Article 5. Town manager form of government can be a statutory plan or charter commission. The Town Manager would be responsible for hiring and firing and discipline. The Town Manager is the executive officer in the sense that the Selectboard would no longer be in the chain of command. That is the biggest change. As time goes on Town business gets more complicated. HR rules are more complicated and the ability for the Selectboard to handle a large amount of employees is more difficult.

Discussion questions:

If you have a town manager do you have a town administrator also?

How would having a Town Manager affect the budget?

Is our town is large enough to have a Town Manager?

Would the Town Manager be required to live in Town?

Who would make the budget decisions?

There was also a discussion on the process of hiring a Town Manager.

5. Any other questions regarding the draft warrant.

With no objection the meeting adjourned at 8:05 pm.

Approved June 6, 2023