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TOWN OF BURLINGTON

Meeting Minutes

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Minutes need to be posted within 30 days or 2 meetings of the board – Draft minutes can be posted and revised at a later date

DEPT./BOARD: General Bylaw Review Committee

DATE: April 19, 2022

TIME: 6:30 PM

PLACE: Virtual via Zoom

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Chair Scott Martin, Vice chair Phyllis Neufeld, Wendy Guthro, Susan Kadilak, David Miller

Excused: Michelle Huntoon

GUEST: Shari Ellis

Minutes

Chair Scott Martin called the meeting to order at 6:33 PM.

Community Preservation Act Article

Shari Ellis shared information about the Community Preservation Act in a slide presentation which was viewed by the committee members. An article concerning the CPA is on the agenda for the May Town Meeting. The CPA local volunteer group is asking that Town Meeting members vote to allow Town residents to vote on the matter of engaging in the State's Community Preservation Act (CPA), which is focused on supporting quality-of-life issues such as open space, recreation activities, historical preservation, and affordable housing.

Communities who opt in to the Community Preservation Act agree to collect and contribute a surcharge on the property tax rate, and the Town can then draw funds from the State's CPA trust fund. Shari said that although each year may be different, last year for every \$1 communities contributed to the Fund, they received \$1.40 back in support for the focus areas. She said that on a typical home value of \$600,000 in Burlington, the surcharge on the tax rate (on a value of \$500,000 as the first \$100,000 is exempted) would be approximately \$75. There are also options for low-income residents and older residents to opt out of the charge. Committee members suggested to Shari that the surcharge on the tax rate, minus the first \$100,000 of property value, be more clearly explained in the presentation materials.

Shari shared examples of what some towns have done with CPA funds: swimming pools, bike paths, boardwalks, playgrounds, hiking trails, park improvements, historical preservation projects, improvements to affording housing, etc. She said that the Chamber of Commerce is in support of participating in the CPA, and that commercial properties make up 60% of Burlington property taxes.





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The Town Meeting members will be asked to approve the presentation of a ballot initiative for a town-wide vote on participating in the CPA. This ballot initiative approves a CPA committee and a committee charter, which would be created through a bylaw on which Town Meeting members would subsequently vote. The CPA committee would consist of up to 9 members, 5 of whom are mandated. Anyone could submit projects for consideration; projects would have to be approved by Town Meeting.

Wendy noted that Burlington residents, like all State residents, already pay into this State fund (currently the Fund collects fees from any property transaction/sale/refinance), but the Town currently receives no funds in return; participating the CPA would give the Town some funds for CPA projects. However, she questioned whether the CPA article for the May Town Meeting needed this committee's vote, as the deadline was past for any changes the committee might suggest. Shari said that the committee's vote to recommend the article would be important nonetheless, as many TM members "like to see that articles have the support of Town committees." Phyllis said that this committee's vote would indicate that the question should be placed on a town-wide ballot, "not that we agree or disagree." Scott noted that if this article did pass at the May Town Meeting, this committee would be working on a bylaw that met State guidelines for the new CPA Committee's charter, membership, responsibilities, and functioning.

Upon a motion by Wendy, seconded by Phyllis, the committee voted to recommend the CPA article unanimously, 5-0.

Minutes of March meeting

Upon a motion by Dave, seconded by Susan, the committee voted to approve the minutes of the March 15, 2022 meeting 4-0, with one abstention by a member who was not present at that meeting.

Article on Setting Recording Clerk Compensation

Upon a motion by Phyllis, seconded by Wendy, the committee voted unanimously, 5-0, to recommend the article concerning setting the compensation for committee recording clerks. This article was discussed at the previous meeting. Scott said he would prepare the backup material for Town Meeting.

Committee Work in Preparation for the September Town Meeting

Scott noted that Articles for the September Town Meeting are due to the Select Board by June 28. He led a discussion about articles that should be prioritized by the committee for preparation by June 28. Suggestions included: conflict of interest (i.e. town employees on boards and commissions, voting on their own contracts); solar panels on new construction; sidewalk width (accommodation); process for recall of elected officials; change election of Town Moderator to election by Town Meeting members rather than by a town-wide election; gatherings/events in public places, and remote/in-person/hybrid Town Meetings. Committee members also





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mentioned work projects such as making all bylaws gender-neutral, re-numbering the bylaws, developing a style guideline for the bylaws, and creating information for residents about the process of initiating/amending a bylaw. Scott said that the committee would begin work on these priorities, beginning with the next meeting.

Susan said that with the help of computer programs, the bylaws could be searched to highlight, for example, gender terms everywhere they appear, making the committee's work more efficient and accurate. Wendy suggested that the committee begin to utilize some portion of every meeting to go through each section of the bylaws for a general overview, starting with Article I. Phyllis asked that the Recording Clerk research what other towns are doing on the question of who elects the Town Moderator – the Town Meeting members or Town residents via a town-wide vote? The Recording Clerk was also asked to research whether other towns are holding their Town Meetings virtually only, in-person only, or a hybrid arrangement.

Wendy noted that she would not be able to attend the committee's next meeting (May 17), and Phyllis said that she will not be available June 14 – July 22.

Adjournment

The committee members voted unanimously, 5-0, to adjourn the meeting at 7:57 PM.

