

**GEORGIA ANNUAL TOWN & TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING
MARCH 3, 2020
10:00 AM**

Unapproved

Moderator Carolyn Branagan opened the 2020 Annual Town and School District Meeting with the following announcements.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Several hand-outs available on the stage which included a flyer from GIDC and Vermont Department of Health.
2. Eighth Grade Bake Sale and Silent Auction will be going on throughout the day.
3. Babysitting is available in the Library.
4. Lots of lost and found in the middle school. Please check the table on the way out.
5. There are a couple of error in the town report. On page 5 the article should read, to elect school moderator by Australian ballot, and on page 27, Selectboard highlights should read, this is a tax increase by 5.3 percent and not budget increase.

PRESENTATIONS

1. Kim Asch presented David Juairé with the Citizens of the Year Award from the Historical Society.
2. Carl Rosenquist presented a resolution to Ric Nye from the Senate. Carl also presented one for Peter Mallett, which Peter's son Pierre Mallett accepted and H. Edmond Wilcox, which his grandson Logan Grimm accepted.

2020 Annual Town Meeting

Board Members Present: Matt Crawford, Chair; Steve Lamos Vice-Chair; and Tara Wright, Jason Burt and Scott St. Onge.

Moderator Carolyn Branagan read the Town Meeting Warning.

Article 1 To Elect all town officers as required by Australian ballot

- 1 Town Moderator for one year**
- 1 Town Clerk for three years**
- 1 Town & School Treasurer for three years**
- 1 Selectboard member for three years**
- 2 Selectboard members for one year**

- 1 First Constable for one year**
- 1 Second Constable for one year**
- 1 Auditor for three years**
- 2 Auditor for one year**
- 1 Library Trustee for three years**
- 3 Library Trustees for one year**
- 1 Grand Juror**
- 1 Town Agent**
- 1 Planning Commissioner for four years**

Article 2 **To see if the Town will set October 15, 2020 (Thursday) as the date for the payment of taxes.**

Suzanna Brown made the motion to accept, seconded by Dan Harvey, motion carried.

Article 3 **To vote a budget to meet the expenses and liabilities of the Town. By Ballot**

Matt Crawford, Chair of the board read a speech he prepared explaining the tax increase, (see attachment for a copy of the speech).

Diane Duranleau questioned why the town needs to purchase a hook and ladder truck, when the town does not have buildings that require the use of this truck. Chief Baker explained that the town does have a need for the ladder truck and with the new buildings coming into town there will be a greater need. The Fire Department will be purchasing this truck from St. Albans Town. The truck is a 2006, 75ft ladder truck that holds extra ladders and 500 gallon water storage. The Fire Department will be selling another truck to offset the cost of the new truck. The money for the purchase of this truck was already built into the budget and it not part of the tax increase. Fred Grimm wanted to know why we need a truck if we can get mutual aid from other towns? The need for the mutual aid is getting greater in all towns.

Carolyn also clarified the amount of money to be raised by taxes is \$1,934,395.00.

The safety and repair of Mill River Bridge was also discussed. Matt Crawford explained the town had planned to fix the bridge and then the state engineers got involved and we could no longer afford the repairs at this time. The bridge is being monitored for safety by the Road Commissioner, Todd Cadieux. Todd informed everyone that town had a chance at a grant if they could match it money wise, at this time the town could not do that, so other options are being considered. The bridge is still on the towns agenda. Dian Duranleau asked how much money the town has towards the bridge. The balance at this time is \$144, 642.75 as of December 31st, 2019

Fred Grimm wanted to know about the repairs on other bridges in town. Todd Cadieux is aware of the other bridges. These bridge repairs will have to come out of the bridge fund.

Steve Hamblett wanted to know what the dollar amount was going to be with the school and town tax being raised. Amber Baker gave a total of a combined increase of \$1, 216,347.00; \$733.024.00 of this amount will be raised by taxes.

Discussion was also had regarding Fire Department training funds and the hiring of a 5th road crew employee.

Voters checked in to vote:	137
Voters who voted:	121
Yes	98
No	23

The motion was voted, the budget of \$1,934,395.00 was passed for the ensuing year (2020).

Article 4 **To see if the Town will eliminate the office of town auditor. The Selectboard shall contract with a public accountant, licensed in Vermont to perform an annual financial audit of all funds of the Town. By Ballot**

Kris Senna made motion to accept, seconded by Patrick Warn. All in favor

Voters checked in to vote:	137
Voters who voted:	104
Yes	92
No	12

Article 5 **To elect one Director to the Georgia Industrial Development Corporations, for a period of three years.**

Carl Rosenquist nominated Kent Henderson for a three year term. Hearing no other nominations, Kent Henderson was elected to the Georgia Industrial Development Corporation to a three year term.

Article 6 **To do any other non-binding business that may come before said meeting.**

There was much discussion regarding the condition of Ethan Allen Highway (RT 7), and when repairs would take place. Representative Carl Rosenquist recommended that everyone contact the governor and voice their concerns. The phone number is (802)828-3333.

Sarah Savich informed the community of group that has been started called Neighbors for Georgia, this group is to welcome all new families to Georgia, and welcomed any anyone that would like to join.

Representative Carl Rosenquist gave a brief overview of what was happening in the town and house.

Carol Branagan read letters from Senator Cory Parent and Senator Randy Brock. Please see attached letters.

Suzanna Brown welcomed the new community members to the town meeting for the 1st time and also thanks George Bilodeau for his service on the Planning Commission and Kent Henderson for his on the Conservation Committee.

Emily Grimes ask if the town would consider moving the town meeting to an evening time. This must go through a warning and be voted on at the next town meeting in 2021.

Ed Shamy would like to have board members phone numbers listed so they can get in touch with them when needed. Right now all the numbers have them calling the town office.

Scott St. Onge gave an overview of the plans for the new town garage.

Article 7 **To adjourn Meeting**
2020 Town Meeting was adjourned at 12:23

2020 Annual Town School District Meeting

Board Members Present: Carl Laroe, Sr., Chair; Kate Barnes, Ben Chiappinelli, Fred Grimm and Andrea Milne.

Meeting called to order: 12:25 p.m.

Moderator Branagan read the Town School District Meeting Warning.

Article 1 **To elect a Moderator for the School District Annual Meeting**
By Australian ballot

Article 2 **To elect from the legal voters of said school district the following School Directors.**

School Director for the three year term

By Australian ballot

School director for one year term

By Australian ballot

School director for one year term

By Australian ballot

Article 3 **Shall the voter of said school district approve the school board to expend \$13,509,550.00, which is the amount the school board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing education spending of \$15,228.50 per equalized pupil. This projected spending per equalized pupil is 4.75% higher than spending for the current year.**

By Australian ballot

Article 4 **Shall the voters of said school district authorize the School Directors to borrow money for school expenses in anticipation of revenue for the ensuing year?**

Ben Chiappinelli made motion to accept, seconded by Nancy Volatile-Wood, motion carried.

Article 5 **To conduct any other legal business to come before said meeting.**

Article 6 **To Adjourn.**

The 2020 School meeting was adjourned at 12:34

Good morning and thanks for coming to Town Meeting 2020.

I need to start with a few words of thanks to everybody who helps keep the town of Georgia moving along. That's employees in the town office, road crew and parks.

That's folks like our Georgia Fire Department and First Response. That's volunteers who serve on the historical society, planning and zoning commissions, the school board, conservation and recreations commissions and a whole host of other amazing volunteers.

I'm here before you to give a quick overview of the proposed budget. But I also want to talk briefly about two other issues. First, if we can get our logistical ducks in a row, we should be transforming into a Development Review Board rather than separate planning and zoning commissions. That should happen by mid-summer.

Also, it is the intent of the selectboard to be back in front of you next year with a proposal to put the town budget out to Australian ballot, like the school budget is now. If passed, this will not go into effect until 2022, but there

are number of advantages to having the town budget voted on in this manner rather than from floor.

But since currently we do vote the budget from the floor, here's a few highlights of the proposed budget.

Overall, the amount to be raised by taxes in the budget is up by about five percent. But because Georgia's grand list continues to grow, the effects of that increase are negligible. The 2019 municipal tax rate was .2970 per hundred, while the 2020 proposed municipal tax rate .3048 per hundred.

What does this mean in the real world? The 2020 estimated tax increase translates into an increase of \$19.50 for a property valued at \$250,000. \$19.50. That's a yearly tax increase of, well, one large pizza.

The biggest new expense in the budget is the addition of a fifth member of our road crew. Our road crew has been at four members for more than three decades. Adding a fifth full-time person allows us to provide snow-removal to the school, bring buildings and grounds in-house and

allow us to up our game on really dedicate more time and effort into our roads that are growing increasingly busy.

There are other increases beyond our control. Contracted services, for instance. Dispatch, law enforcement, insurance, the Franklin County tax and other items come to mind.

In building this budget, the selectboard said "no" to virtually all aspects of town government. We declined a proposal from the town clerk to add additional part-time hours. We ruled against a proposal from the fire chief to create one full-time fire/rescue officer in town. We begrudgingly cut back reserve fund requests from the library board and the conservation commission.

We instructed our employees to look for less expensive health insurance options.

We did, however, say "yes" to adding a small amount of money that allows Georgia residents to take part in St. Albans Rec programs at the "resident rate."

So...we essentially have rec department programming.

What the selectboard, along with treasurer Amber Baker built is a responsible budget that balances the demands of the taxpayers with the fiscal reality of Georgia in the 21st century. I urge you to approve the proposed budget.

Senator Corey Parent

Thank you for the opportunity to pass this message along to the people of Georgia. I am out of town this week attended a conference on Health Care.

The first half of the legislative session is coming to an end, and there are a few issues that I wanted to update the voters of Georgia on explicitly. The Senate Education Committee is discussing a new way to weigh student populations to determine tax rates across the state. The committee is currently using a study that was commissioned by the legislature and completed by UVM. In that study, many towns see tax decreases, but the Town of Georgia would see the second-highest tax increase according to the study, based on the town's low level of free and reduced lunch students. The proposed increase would be 52 cents. This is something that I cannot support and have been vocal in my opposition to it.

The other topic is infrastructure. The new interstate culvert that is in the middle of being repaired should be entirely done by summer. The cost to the state for this project is \$4.5

million. After the exit repair this fall, we hope that this gets the interstate issues around the Georgia exit completed and fixed for another generation of users.

I won't go on too long as I know you all have a lot of work ahead of you today. Please feel free to reach out to me anytime. I will always do my best to help you out. My phone number is 802-370-0494 and my email is cparent@leg.state.vt.us.

Senator Randy Brock

"I know that Senator Parent has updated you on some of the issues that affect Georgia in particular.

I'd like bring you up to date on how the Vermont is preparing for and monitoring the rapid developments in the outbreak of the new coronavirus ("COVID-19").

As of March 2, 2020 there are no cases of this coronavirus in Vermont.

While the immediate risk of this new virus to the American public is believed to be low at this time, Vermont has been preparing in the likely event that the virus reaches our state. At the direction of Governor Scott, Vermont Emergency Management has assembled an interagency task force to develop a comprehensive response plan.