

## **CORINTH TOWN MEETING MINUTES: MARCH 4, 2024**

The meeting was called to order at 10:03 AM by Gary Apfel, town moderator. Robert Fortunati led with the Pledge of Allegiance, and Marian Cawley led us in America the Beautiful. Linda Weiss gave a reading on civics and allowed for a moment of reflection. Gary Apfel explained Robert's Rules of Order.

Nick Kramer gave opening remarks before Jeff Spiegel called for recognition of the Budget Committee's hard work and Holly Groschner gave recognition of Nick Kramer's Selectboard service.

**Article 1:** To elect the following by Australian ballot. For the purposes of this article the polls will be open from 8:30 AM to 7:00 PM.

Moderator for 1 year

Selectboard Member for 3 years

Selectboard Member for 1 year

Lister for 3 years

Lister for 2 years

Collector of Delinquent Taxes for 1 year

Cemetery Commissioner for 3 years

Constable for 1 year

Waits River Valley School Director for 3 years

No action necessary.

**Article 2:** To see if the voters will accept the various Officers' Reports as presented in the Town Report

Linda Weiss moved this article. Joyce McKeeman seconded.

Irene Mann asked about the timing of the independent audits, and Nick Kramer explained delays are due to staff turnover and a change in our audit firm, stating the Selectboard expects the audits to be back on schedule by next year's town meeting.

There were several typos pointed out in the budget report including:

Page 7 Budget Rev Current Tax Levy, Town, which should show as \$277,849

Page 12 Health – Supplies, Health Office, which included a duplicate section with erroneous information that shouldn't have been included

Page 16 Better Back Roads, which included an incorrect total. Negative numbers were explained by Joe Blodgett as being due to timing of payments received.

Nick Kramer explained these were most likely copy and paste errors when formatting the report and did not impact the totals presented in the Articles.

Jeff Spiegel asked about the Animal Control Safety Service budget of \$750, pointing out we do not currently have an Animal Control Officer, and the Selectboard stated they are handling those responsibilities while they look for a replacement.

No action necessary.

**Article 3:** To see if the voters will vote \$952,850, of which \$682,850 to be raised by taxes, to support the Highway Fund.

Linda Weiss moved this article. Marian Cawley seconded.

Lee Porter and Joe Blodgett spoke on the highway budget and explained current challenges due to recent flood events.

Lisa Locke called for recognition of the road crew's hard work.

Gary Apfel called for a vote, the ayes have it.

**Article 4:** To see if the voters will vote \$129,700, of which \$129,700 to be raised by taxes, to support the Highway Capital Equipment Fund.

Jeff Spiegel moved this article. Kerry DeWolfe seconded.

Joe Blodgett spoke about the fund and the current replacement schedule for equipment.

Joyce McKeeman expressed appreciation for the use of such capital funds to which Joe Blodgett thanked Susan Fortunati for her help setting them up in prior years.

Gary Apfel called for a vote, the ayes have it.

**Article 5:** To see if the voters will vote \$15,000, of which \$15,000 to be raised by taxes, to support the Bridge Reserve Fund.

Joyce McKeeman moved this article. Chris Groschner seconded.

Joyce McKeeman expressed appreciation for the fund and the regular bridge maintenance carried out by the town.

Jeremy Goodridge and Dan Wing asked about FEMA funding, and Joe Blodgett explained what he expects to receive and how it will cover various repair plans.

Nick Kramer expressed appreciation for Joe Blodgett's diligent efforts in obtaining grant funding to help offset a lot of our road costs.

Gary Apfel called for a vote, the ayes have it.

**Article 6:** To see if the voters will authorize the town to use funds received from the Better Back Roads grant program

Linda Weiss moved this article. Jeff Spiegel seconded.  
Joe Blodgett explained the way the program is used.  
Gary Apfel called for a vote, the ayes have it.

**Article 7:** To see, in the case of unanticipated State funds not included in the budget for specific highway and bridge projects applied for and received during the fiscal year, if the voters will authorize the expenditure of such funds for those projects.

Linda Weiss moved this article. Irene Mann seconded.  
Nick Kramer explained the various grant processes.  
Gary Apfel called for a vote, the ayes have it.

**Article 8:** To see if the voters will vote \$1,000, of which \$1,000 to be raised by taxes, for the Emerald Ash Borer Fund.

Joyce McKeeman moved this article. KellyAnn Donahue seconded.

Virginia Barlow gave an update to explain that, while the infestation is moving more slowly than previously expected, there is still a significant anticipated need in the future. It was explained that the funding request dropped year-over-year due to a need to balance the budget with other town costs that have increased. It was also explained that if funds end up not being used in the future for this infestation, they can be transferred to cover other town expenses. Patricia Duffy expressed opposition.

Margaret Loftus called to move the question and Ed Childs seconded. A hand vote was called (42 aye and 27 nay). The motion failed and discussion was allowed to continue.

Dan Wing explained the survey that was done to assess the town risk, which included ranking individual tree risk along town roads within the right-of-way. There was question about potential wood value and Virginia Barlow explained that, while the town would be required to cover the cost of removal, the trees are the property of the land owner. There was various discussion both in support of and opposition of the funding.

Dick Kelly called to move the question and Marian Cawley seconded. Gary Apfel called a 2/3 vote to close discussion, the ayes have it. Gary Apfel called for a vote, the ayes have it.

**Article 9:** To see if the voters will vote \$500, of which \$500 to be raised by taxes, to support the Planning Commission.

Stephen Devoto moved this article. Kerry DeWolfe seconded.

Stephen Devoto spoke in favor of the article, and Kerry DeWolfe explained that the request is a nominal amount because town funding is required for many grants.

Jeremy Goodridge asked about the cost of the recent town survey, and Kerry DeWolfe said \$1,300 and explained what that cost covered. There were concerns raised about the survey process.

Patricia Duffy asked about the current Planning Commission fund balance, which Nick Kramer explained. Nick Kramer also explained how the budget is created and how individual expenses are then approved by the Selectboard.

Judy Tharinger called to move the question and Jeff Spiegel seconded. Gary Apfel called a 2/3 hand vote to close discussion, the ayes have it. Gary Apfel called for a vote, the ayes have it.

**Article 10:** To see if the voters will vote \$600, of which \$600 to be raised by taxes, to support the Conservation Commission.

Kerry DeWolfe moved this article. Joyce McKeeman seconded.

Glynn Pellagrino explained that \$400 of the request is for Green Up Day, further explaining that most of the Commission's budget is raised by bottle redemptions. Lisa Locke reminded folks to please use the bottle redemption containers at the transfer station to aid this funding. Anne McKinsey spoke about Green Up Day plans, and Jeff Spiegel discussed Community Coalition plans to add a mural to the transfer station.

Glynn Pellagrino made a motion to amend the article as follows: To see if the voters will vote \$700, of which \$700 to be raised by taxes, to support the Conservation Commission.  
Linda Weiss seconded.

Glynn Pellagrino explained the increase is due to the anticipated higher cost of disposal for Green Up Day.

Gary Apfel called for a vote for the amendment, the ayes have it. Gary Apfel called for a vote, the ayes have it.

**Article 11:** To see if the voters will vote \$5,000, of which \$5,000 to be raised by taxes, to support the Town Hall Capital Improvement Fund.

Chris Groschner moved this article. Joyce McKeeman seconded.

Chris Groschner spoke in support of maintaining the town hall. He moved to amend the article as follows: To see if the voters will vote \$12,550, of which \$12,550 to be raised by taxes, to support the Town Hall Capital Improvement Fund.  
TR Jackson seconded.

Chris Groschner explained the increase was needed for various repair projects that had been costed out. Carl Demrow explained that much of the current fund balance is going to repair the Town Hall roof. Nick Kramer explained the history of the fund and how legally this fund can only

be used for long-term capital improvements, not regular maintenance/repairs, and recommended the increase instead be added to the Property Repairs and Maintenance line item of the General Fund budget.

Gary Apfel called for a vote on the amendment, the nays have it. The amendment did not pass and the article remained as warned. Gary Apfel called for a vote, the ayes have it.

Before lunch recess, Carl Demrow read a VT House Resolution to recognize Rick Cawley's many years of service to the Town of Corinth.

At 12:06 PM, Amy Peberdy made a motion to recess the meeting for 45 minutes for lunch. Lisa Locke seconded. Gary Apfel called for a vote, the ayes have it.

At 12:53 PM, Carl Demrow gave a State Representative update.

At 1:22 PM, Gary Apfel called the meeting back to order.

**Article 12:** To see if the voters will vote \$493,205, of which \$241,005 to be raised by taxes, to support the General Fund.

Joyce McKeeman moved this article. Kerry DeWolfe seconded.

Chris Groschner made a motion to amend the article as follows: To see if the voters will vote \$505,755, of which \$253,555 to be raised by taxes, to support the General Fund.

Chris Groschner explained this related to his previous request in Article 11.

Sue Parmenter seconded.

Gary Apfel called for a vote on the amendment, the ayes have it. The amendment passed.

Jeff Spiegel made a motion to amend the article as follows: To see if the voters will vote \$508,655, of which \$256,455 to be raised by taxes, to support the General Fund.

KellyAnn Donahue seconded.

Jeff Spiegel explained that his motion would increase the Office Supplies budget by \$2,900 to pay for the cost of printing and mailing a quarterly newsletter. There was various discussion both in support and in opposition of the added cost. Lee Porter asked if a survey of the town had been completed, as was suggested in a previous Selectboard meeting, and Jeff explained that he decided to bring the question to vote instead.

Gary Apfel called for a hand vote on the amendment (Ayes 15 and Nays 15). The amendment does not carry.

Gary Apfel called for a vote on the article, the ayes have it.

**Article 13:** To see if the voters will vote to have the taxes collected by the Treasurer and fix the dates of payment for the same on or before the close of business the second Tuesday following

Labor Day each year, and on or before the close of business the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of February each year. Postmarks not accepted.

Susan Fortunati moved this article. Dick Kelly seconded.

Susan Fortunati explained the motion will make it easier for folks to understand and follow the tax deadlines.

Gary Apfel called for a vote on the article, the ayes have it.

**Article 14:** To see if the voters will fix the compensation for the Selectboard members for the coming year at \$2,000 each.

Susan Fortunati moved this article. Jane Conner seconded.

Chris Groschner and Liz Davis both spoke in favor and expressed that it's a great deal.

Gary Apfel called for the vote, the ayes have it.

**Article 15:** To recommend members-at-large for the Budget Committee for 1 Year.

Chris Groschner moved this article. Irene Mann seconded.

Nominations included: Liz Davis, Ray Moulton, Mike Pittman, Nick Kramer, Amy Peberdy, Lee Porter, and John Melquist.

Gary called for a 2/3 vote to close nominations, the ayes have it.

**Article 16:** To transact any other business that may legally come before the meeting.

Jeff Spiegel made a motion for a non-binding vote to institute a new tradition of indigenous land acknowledgment to be included in future meetings. He read the text of a proposed acknowledgement.

Lisa Locke seconded.

Robin Vought spoke in favor of the motion.

Gary Apfel called for a vote, the ayes have it.

Irene Mann suggested moving town meeting day to a Saturday. Chris Groschner, Christiane Carroll, and Gary Apfel all expressed that, in prior research, it has been shown in other towns that this has not increased participation.

Dan Wing asked about the vacant Constable position and whether the town could vote to remove this office, expressing that the VLCT had recently suggested it in a Town Law Enforcement presentation. Holly Groschner explained her understanding of how the position may be removed by town vote.

Holly Groschner made a motion for a non-binding vote as follows: To vote to renew the exemptions granted to certain properties from property tax for a period of five years. To be voted as a block:

East Corinth Fire Dept. Cookeville Station (parcel 081-01407) (\$23,800) (Grandfathered)

Corinth Historical Society: Corliss Prescott & Ag and Trade Museum (parcel 019-00601) (\$49,700)

EC Properties LTD Partnership: Ball Fields (parcel 034-00301) (\$37,500)

Northeast Slopes Inc. (parcel 077-10397) (\$170,500)

KellyAnn Donahue seconded.

Holly Groschner explained the exemptions were accidentally left off the warning a warned vote may be required.

Gary Apfel called for a vote, the ayes have it.

Dina Dubois discussed civic engagement and explained that Sarah Copeland Hanzas, Secretary of State, is willing to come to town to give a related talk. Many folks expressed their interest.

Gary Apfel expressed his appreciation for the Selectboard's efforts over the year, and Nick Kramer thanked the moderator for his work.

Dick Kelly made a motion to end the meeting. Susan Fortunati seconded. Meeting ended at 2:35 PM.

**Respectfully Submitted By**

Marshall Brough Town Clerk

Carl G. An

Approved By

Gary Apfel

Approved By

Selectboard Member

Office Held

Town Moderator

Office Held