

**ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
LANCASTER MASSACHUSETTS
Mary Rowlandson Elementary School
May 5, 2014**

Abbreviated Notes

The Annual Town Meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Moderator David I. Spanagel. A total of 146 registered voters and 15 non-voting guests were signed in by Registrars John Ranieri and Mary Perreira, and Kevin Baer. Moderator Spanagel led the audience in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance and then asked for a moment of silence for residents who had died recently. He then turned the mic over to Board of Selectman (BOS) Chair Jean Syria, who talked about the articles on the warrant and announced the members of the newly formed Town Administrator Search Committee: Mark Eaton, Bonnie Smith, Joanne Foster, Peter Stanton, Jay Riley, Sherry Cutler and Steve Hilliger. She then thanked out-going Town Administrator Orlando Pacheco, whose contract was not renewed by the BOS, and out-going Town Clerk Sue Thompson, who is retiring, for their years of service to the town. Moderator Spanagel then introduced the Town Officials sitting on the stage: Board of Selectmen (BOS) members Jean M. Syria, Stanley B. Starr, Jr., and Susan Smiley; Finance Committee (FinCom) Members Jay Riley, Michelle Vasquez and Matthew Carpenter; and Town Administrator Orlando Pacheco, Finance Director Cheryl Gariepy and Town Clerk Sue Thompson.

Moderator Spanagel spent a few minutes explaining Town Meeting procedures, and the meeting got underway.

BOS Member Stanley B. Starr, Jr. moved that Article 19 be brought forward to follow Article 4 so that all of the finance articles would be dealt with in sequence. FinCom chair Jay Riley seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Article 1 – On a motion by Ms. Syria and a second by Ms. Smiley, the town voted unanimously to appropriate \$106,000 from the Renewable Energy Enterprise Fund to finance the operation of the Landfill Solar Array, as detailed in the warrant, for FY 2013. The operating expenses for the Renewable Energy Enterprise Fund are entirely funded by solar array revenue.

Article 2 – On a motion by Mr. Starr and a second by Ms. Syria, the town voted unanimously to appropriate \$105,000 from the Renewable Energy Enterprise Fund to finance the operation of the Landfill Solar Array, as detailed in the warrant, for FY 2014.

Article 3 – On a motion by Ms. Smiley and a second by Ms. Syria, the town voted unanimously to adopt the FY 2015 Operating budget as filed with the Town Clerk and distributed with the warrant, by raising \$15,765,860 by taxation, \$2,304,939 with Local Aid/State Receipts, \$122,049 Offset from the Water Enterprise Fund, and \$73,771 from the Fund Balance Reserved for School Debt.

Article 4 – Article 4 was moved by Ms. Syria and seconded by Ms. Smiley. Fire Chief Mike Hanson explained that the \$50,000 Capital Expenditure for the lease down payment on a fire truck would be followed by \$40,000 per year for ten years, and then the town would own the fire truck. This truck replaces a 1986 truck with a rotting 1976 pump on it. Michael Lukaszevich moved to divide the question, so that the Thayer Field capital request (Item B) could be voted on separately from the two public safety items (A, the fire truck, and C, a new police vehicle). The motion passed by a vote of 68 to 49; Items A and C of the article passed unanimously. Item B, which was \$40,000 to match a grant to develop a master plan for the use of Thayer Field, was then voted separately and also passed by a Moderator-declared two-thirds majority.

Article 19 – Article 19, a Citizens Petition to appropriate \$415,000 from Free Cash to the Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) Trust was discussed next. The article was moved by Mr. Starr and seconded by Jennifer Leone. David Dunn, the author of the article, explained that the money comes from the sale of the lease of the two cell towers in town. Mr. Starr explained that the town's OPEB liability is \$3.6 million because the town has done nothing to fund it to date. The Town's bond rating would improve if OPEB was funded. Mr. Dunn added that money invested returns interest to the Town; he said last year the return was 14%. Jay Riley said the FinCom had tried unsuccessfully to get this item on past Town Meeting warrants and was in favor of the article. Jennifer Leone mentioned that the state would mandate funding OPEB in the near future. The Citizens Petition article passed with only one negative vote.

Article 5 – On a motion by Mr. Starr and a second by Ms. Syria, the town voted unanimously to approve the Fiscal Year 2015 Water Department budget as printed in the Warrant. Mr. Pacheco explained that this budget was level-funded from the previous year.

Article 6 – On a motion by Ms. Smiley and a second by Ms. Syria, the town voted unanimously to approve the Fiscal Year 2015 Water Capital expenditures as printed in the Warrant.

Article 7 – On a motion by Ms. Syria and a second by Ms. Smiley, the town voted unanimously to appropriate \$20,000 from the Fiscal Year 2015 Overlay Account for Abatements to fund the Senior Tax Work-off Abatement Program.

Article 8 – On a motion by Mr. Starr and a second by Ms. Syria, the town voted unanimously, by a moderator-declared 2/3 majority vote, to transfer the care, custody, management and control of the parcel of land located at 800 Main Street, defined as Map 34 Parcel 14 on the Lancaster Assessor's Map, to the Board of Selectmen for general municipal purposes and the purpose of conveyance, and to authorize the Board of Selectmen to convey the property in accordance with Massachusetts general Law Chapter 30B. This property is the site of the old ambulance building, which the town intends to sell.

Article 9 – On a motion by Ms. Smiley and a second by Ms. Syria, the town voted unanimously to approve the Fiscal Year 2015 revolving funds as printed in the warrant. Mr. Starr moved to replace the Community Center "Board of Directors" with "Board of Selectmen" since the Community Center Board of Directors was defunct. The amendment passed unanimously.

Article 10 – On a motion by Ms. Syria and a second by Ms. Smiley, the town voted unanimously to authorize the Town to accept any public funds and authorize the Treasurer/Collector to borrow in anticipation of those funds if needed.

Article 11 – On a motion by Mr. Starr and a second by Lancaster Land Trust President Bob Lidstone, the town voted unanimously to appropriate \$60,000 from free cash to purchase a conservation restriction on a 17.85 acre tract of land as outlined in the warrant, provided that no expenditure be made unless the Lancaster Land Trust receives a Conservation Partnership Grant as specified in the warrant. Mr. Lidstone explained that the state will pay for half of local land purchased by a non-profit (which the Land Trust is) if the land was protected. Ken Rapoza, Chair of the Conservation Commission, stated that the Conservation Commission and the Town Forest Committee will be holding hearings over the next few months to find ways to protect land in perpetuity.

Article 12 – On a motion by Ms. Smiley and a second by Ms. Syria, the town voted unanimously to establish a Conservation Fund authorized under Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40 Section 8C, with the Conservation Commission to have the sole authorization to make expenditures from the Fund for any purpose authorized by G.L. Ch. 40 §8C. Mr. Rapoza explained that this is the mechanism to receive funds from contractors and companies who are required to provide mitigation money in exchange for permits.

Article 13 – On a motion by Ms. Syria and a second by Mr. Starr, the town voted unanimously and by a moderator-declared 2/3 majority vote, to transfer the care, custody and control of Map 28 Parcel 13, Map 29 Parcel 15 and Map 29 Parcel 16 to the Lancaster Conservation Commission, provided that such parcels be managed by the Town Forest Committee in conjunction with the Town's Forest Management Plan and under the direction of the Conservation Commission. Mr. Rapoza explained that the town already owns this land; it is being conveyed to the Conservation Commission so that is protected in perpetuity.

Article 14 – On a motion by Mr. Star and a second by Ms. Smiley, the town voted unanimously and by a moderator-declared 2/3 majority vote, to amend the Zoning Bylaw and Official Zoning Map as outlined in the warrant. Planning Board Chair Jeanne Rich read the Planning Board report on this article, and Planning Director Noreen Piazza presented a slide show depicting the areas affected by the zoning classification change.

Article 15 – On a motion by Ms. Smiley and a second by Jeanne Rich, the town voted unanimously and by a moderator-declared 2/3 majority vote, to amend the Use Regulation Schedule of the Lancaster Zoning By-Law as printed in the Warrant. Again, Planning Board Chair Jeanne Rich read the Planning Board's report on this article.

Article 16 – On a motion by Ms. Syria and a second by Ms. Rich, the town voted unanimously and by a moderator-declared 2/3 majority vote, to amend the "Lancaster, MA: Official Zoning Map" and Section 220-5 of the Zoning Bylaw as printed in the Warrant. Ms. Rich read the Planning Board report recommending passage of this article.

Article 17 – On a motion by Mr. Starr and a second by Ms. Rich, the town voted unanimously and by a moderator-declared 2/3 majority vote, to amend the Lancaster Zoning Bylaw to create a Medical Marijuana Overlay District in the existing Light Industry 2 (LI2) district. Ms. Rich read the Planning Board’s report, and Ms. Piazza presented a slide show depicting the area under discussion. Jeanne Rich moved to amend Section 22-8.4 (E) of the Use Regulation Schedule to replace the hash mark with PB, to signify that Planning Board approval would be required to put a Registered Marijuana Dispensary in the LI2 zoning district. The motion was seconded by resident John McGarity and passed unanimously

Article 18 – On a motion by Ms. Smiley and a second by Ms. Syria, the town voted unanimously to accept amendments to Section VII of the existing “Agreement with Respect to the Establishment of a Technical and Vocational Regional School District” for the Minuteman Regional Vocational School District, as on file with the Town Clerk. MRVSD Superintendent Ed Bouquillon summarized the proposed amendments, which included changing each town’s assessment to be based on a rolling 4-year enrollment average; changing conditions and procedures for withdrawing from the district; introducing weighted school committee member voting, and others. Resident Pete Farmer, who was once on the MRVSD school committee and has a son who recently graduated from MRVSD, said these amendments were good for Lancaster. He explained that the one thing that kept more parents from enrolling their children in MRVSD was the fact that they would have to be on a bus for three hours a day. Mr. Farmer praised the school, but stated that there are three other good vocational schools closer to Lancaster.

At the end of the meeting resident Eugene Christoph, who had recently presented a lecture on Lancaster’s noted native son Luther Burbank, reported that one of his students was looking into having Luther Burbank’s birthday be declared a holiday in Massachusetts. Voters at Town Meeting agreed with this pursuit.

Moderator Spanagel urged residents to vote in the May 12 annual town election and, there being no further business, adjourned the meeting at 9:00 p.m.