

**TOWN OF GREAT BARRINGTON
SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
MONUMENT MOUNTAIN REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL
AUDITORIUM
600 STOCKBRIDGE ROAD, GREAT BARRINGTON, MA
OCTOBER 23, 2023 AT 6:00 PM
MINUTES**

In pursuance of the foregoing warrant the inhabitants of the Town of Great Barrington qualified to vote in Town Meetings proceeded to vote at the above named meeting place with the following results. The meeting was duly called to order at 6:01 P.M. by Moderator Michael Wise who welcomed everyone to the Town Meeting. He stated that there was a quorum present and noted the return and service of the warrant. Mr. Wise requested that everyone stand and join him in the Pledge of Allegiance. The Moderator also stated that there was an overflow room ready to go should the auditorium go over capacity. Mr. Wise announced that the meeting is being taped for broadcast at a later date and any use of social media during the meeting is prohibited. He also asked that cell phones be silenced as well.

Mr. Wise introduced the Town Officials seated on the stage; Town Clerk Jennifer Messina, Town Counsel David Doneski and Town Manager Mark Pruhenski. He also announced the Selectboard members on stage which were Stephen Bannon, Leigh Davis, Eric Gabriel, Garfield Reed and Benjamin Elliott.

The rules of the meeting were explained by Mr. Wise. The meeting will be governed by the Constitution, General Laws of Massachusetts, the Town Charter & Town Bylaws of the Town of Great Barrington and Town Meeting Time. Only registered voters of the town may participate in the meeting unless permission is granted otherwise by the moderator. All motions and amendments must be made in writing to the Moderator and the Clerk. Before anyone addresses the Town Meeting, he/she must proceed to the microphone and state their name and voting address and wait to be recognized by the moderator. All voters may speak only once per motion and limit their comments to three minutes. The Moderator will be keeping track of the time with a timer on his phone. Comments should be limited to the merits of the motion and should not be repeated. All questions are to be addressed to the moderator who will ask the appropriate person to respond. He explained that there is an overflow room set up in case the space is needed and he stated that a vote will be needed to appoint Steve McAlister as Assistant Moderator for that room. He explained there is video feed in the room but if a voter wished to speak they would need to do so in the auditorium. He also explained the procedure to call the question in case it should come up. Each voter has received a warrant, a neon green card and a packet of yes/no cards. Mr. Wise will instruct voters if and when these cards are to be used and what color to use if needed. A teller has been assigned to each section of the auditorium and to the overflow room and if hand counts are taken on any vote, they will report their numbers to the microphone when ready. For the vote on Article 1, the school merger, there is a ballot. When it is time to vote, the ballot should be marked on the bottom with a yes or no and placed in one of the two large black boxes. The overflow room will also have a box as well. He explained the procedures of votes and amendments. He noted that he hoped to conclude all business this evening.

A motion was made by Stephen Bannon, seconded by someone in the audience to dispense with the reading of the warrant.

VOTED AT 6:07 PM

The Moderator stated that the voters needed to appoint an Assistant Moderator to oversee the overflow room and he asked that the voters make a motion to appoint Stephen McAlister. A motion was made by someone in the audience and seconded by someone in the audience to appoint Steve McAlister Assistant Moderator.

VOTED AT 6:07 PM

The Moderator also wanted take care of a procedural motion that he be allowed to declare a 2/3rds vote which is authorized by Massachusetts General Law. A motion was made by Karen

Smith and seconded by someone in the audience.

VOTED AT 6:08 PM

John Breasted went to the microphone and addressed the Moderator to say that there was a procedural item that needed attention at this point. He said that he has never heard the term “legislative assembly” used at any town meetings. He never heard that term used by prior Town Moderator McCormick and he was hoping that he would tonight.

ARTICLE 1: (majority)

On a motion by Stephen Bannon and seconded by Karen Smith, that the Town vote to accept the provisions of sections sixteen to sixteen I, inclusive, of chapter seventy-one of the General Laws providing for the establishment of an eight town regional school district, together with the towns of Alford, Egremont, Monterey, New Marlborough, Sheffield, Stockbridge, West Stockbridge, to be known as the Southern Berkshire Hills Regional School District in accordance with and subject to the provisions set forth in Article 1 of the warrant for this Town Meeting.

Mr. Wise stated that Stephen Bannon, Deborah Phillips and Peter Taylor were the Great Barrington representatives on the 8 Town Regional School District Planning Board and that they were appointed by him.

A presentation was made by Deborah Phillips and Peter Taylor.

The following people spoke on the article:

- Stephen Bannon
Philip Orenstein
John Breasted
Noah Goble
- Lindsey Berkowitz Brown
David Lippman
Anne Alquist
Charles Williamson
- Richard Dohoney
Stephanie Boszko
Amal Hussein

VOTED by BALLOT AT 7:04 PM
YES – 374 NO – 88

ARTICLE 2: (majority)

On a motion by Karen Smith and seconded by Christopher Rembold, that the Town appropriate from the Community Preservation Fund FY24 revenues and from the fund balance the following amounts recommended by the Community Preservation Committee, with each item to be considered a separate appropriation:

		Source of Appropriation		
Project		FY24 Revenues	Fund Balance	Total Appropriation
1	Construct, Inc.: Emergency family housing	92,400		\$92,400
2	Town, Ramsdell Library	\$50,000		\$50,000
3	Community Land Trust: River Run Farm		\$300,000	\$300,000
TOTAL				\$442,400

Assistant Town Manager/ Director of Planning & Community Development Christopher Rembold made a presentation on each project.

The Moderator stated that he would proceed with each project one at a time in order with discussion and then a vote.

#1: Charles Williamson spoke on this project. The Moderator then asked for a vote.

VOTED AT 7:17 PM

#2: Robert Braddick, Christopher Rembold, Patrick Hollenbeck and Joseph Aberdale spoke on this project. The Moderator then asked for a vote on this project.

VOTED AT 7:21 PM

#3: Nobody spoke on this project so the Moderator then asked for a vote on this project.

VOTED AT 7:21 PM

ARTICLE 3: (by citizen petition)

On a motion by Karen Johnson and seconded by someone in the audience, that the changes currently proposed on a project by a special interest group should not take place at the Mason Public Library.

Karen Johnson spoke on her petition.

DuBois Thomas spoke on this article.

Robert Beusman moves to call the question. The Moderator then explained that this calls for a 2/3rds vote and that it is not debatable. In the middle of the vote Karen Johnson tried to request a secret ballot vote but the Moderator explained that she was not able to because it was too late.

VOTED 2/3rds MAJORITY AT 7:26 PM

Mr. Wise then proceeded to explain to the voters what a yes vote would mean and what a no vote would mean for this article. He then asked for a vote on this article.

MOTION FAILED AT 7:27 PM

Motion to adjourn by someone in the audience and seconded by someone in the audience.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 7:28 PM

Respectfully submitted,



Jennifer L. Messina
Town Clerk

Total Registered Voters: 5,025

Total Voters: 470 (10.7%)