

SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
March 1, 2010
MINUTES

A special town meeting of the electors and those qualified to vote at the town meetings of the Town of Lebanon was held on Monday, March 1, 2010 in the Lyman Memorial High School Auditorium, 917 Exeter Road (Route 207), Lebanon, Connecticut. Audience: 160

First Selectman Joyce Okonuk called the meeting to order at 7:30 P.M.

First Selectman Okonuk announced that a protocol for all Town Meetings will be followed. (A copy of Town Meeting Protocol follows these minutes.)

The meeting was opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

First Selectman Okonuk then called for nominations for moderator.

Moved by Liz Charron, seconded by Daniel McGuire, to appoint Albert Vertefeuille as moderator. Vote called - Motion passed

Moved by Jan Van Woerkem, seconded by Nick Poppiti, to wave the reading of the call of the meeting. Vote called – Motion passed

Moderator Vertefeuille reviewed the Town Meeting Protocol with the audience.

Moderator Vertefeuille called on Liz Charron, Chairman of the Board of Finance, to speak on the background of the proposed ordinance.

Charron spoke as follows. This ordinance has been brought to Town Meeting by the Board of Selectmen per the request of the Board of Finance. An advisory question on implementing an ordinance to split the budget was placed on the ballot of the November 2009 Municipal Election, with results showing an overwhelming “yes” to the question. The Board of Finance researched other towns with split budgets, and consulted legal counsel. Legal Counsel recommended the Board draft an administrative policy which will allow them to make changes to the budget without changing the ordinance. (A copy of the Administrative Policy follows these minutes.) It will also allow the Board to make changes to the approved budget, if the failed budget is rejected numerous times. The main advantage to splitting the budget will be informational, giving the electors more choices. The proposed ordinance will affect the FY 2010-2011 budget. If the ordinance passes, and if time allows, an informational flyer regarding the split budget will be sent to every household. A mil rate will not be set until both budgets are approved. If only one budget is approved, the unapproved budget, after modifications have been made, will be brought back to the town. The Board of Finance reserves the right to modify the budget that was approved, and bring both budgets back to the town.

Moved by Jan VanWoerkem, seconded by Keith Wentworth, to bring item 1 to the floor.
“Consider and act upon an Ordinance providing for the separate consideration of the General Town Budget and the Board of Education Budget.”

PROPOSED ORDINANCE

AN ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR THE SEPARATE CONSIDERATION
OF THE GENERAL TOWN BUDGET AND THE BOARD OF EDUCATION BUDGET
Be it ORDAINED by the electors of the Town of Lebanon at a duly warned Special Town Meeting held on March 1, 2010:

The Town of Lebanon shall be required to separate the Board of Education and Town Government budgets whenever the combined Annual Budget is sent to a town vote for approval.

This ordinance shall become effective fifteen (15) days after publication as provided by Connecticut General Statutes, §7-157.

Discussion:

The following questions/concerns were brought forward.

- When asked if the Board of Finance could change the Board of Education budget before it goes to vote, Liz Charron stated that after the budget is presented at public hearing, the Board of Finance looks at the total budget and can/will make changes to the whole, not line items, before bringing it to town meeting.
- Robert's Rules of Order states that only electors can speak at town meetings, and all that are in attendance must remain seated.
- The split would allow electors to demand more budget cuts.
- The education budget would be unfavorably targeted.
- A split budget would give voters the option of supporting any part of the budget.
- Separate budgets would give voters the option to demand cuts to the government side of the budget in support of the education budget.
- The town government budget has always taken the biggest cuts.
- Separating the budget creates more transparency, and allows voters to voice which budgets they want changed.
- Advisory questions would allow the Board of Finance to see the opinion of the voters.
- Separating the budget could lead to multiple referendums, which would be costly to the town, at approximately \$2,600 per referendum.
- In October 2009, the Board of Finance voted to oppose a split budget.

Moved by Marisa Haralson, seconded by Tim Slate to call the question.
Vote called-motion passed

Ron Cowles called for point of order, stating that only electors are allowed to vote. Moderator Vertefeuille addressed Mr. Cowles point by stating that it will be taken care of.

Moved by John Bendoraitis, seconded by Linda Finelli to vote by paper ballot.
Vote called-motion passed

The Registrars of Voters and the Town Clerk verified registered voters and/or those with \$1,000 and more in property assessment on the last completed Grand List before they were allowed to vote.

Paper ballot vote results were as follows: **101 NO 49 YES**

Item 1 failed.

Moderator Albert Vertefeuille declared the meeting adjourned at 9:25 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan C. Coutu
Town Clerk