

**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
TOWN OF PITTSFIELD**

Moderator Stephen Adams called the 2013 Special Town Meeting to order at 6:00pm on Tuesday, June 4, 2013 in the Pittsfield Elementary School Gymnasium.

Moderator Adams pointed out emergency exits and asked that cell phones be silenced. He read through the rules of order. He stated there will be a single article addressed at this meeting and all amendments must pertain to this article and submitted in writing. All discussion was to pertain to this article, and no other business would be considered.

Moderator Adams read the introduction to the posted 2013 Town Meeting Warrant:

To the inhabitants of the Town of Pittsfield, Merrimack County and State of New Hampshire, qualified to vote in Town affairs:

You are hereby notified to meet on Tuesday June 4, 2013, at 6:00 PM at the Pittsfield Elementary School Gymnasium, to act upon the subject herein mentioned.

Article 1: To see if the Town will vote to establish the position of full-time fire chief, with a term of 3 years, and rescind all previous warrant articles regarding this subject. If this article passes, the position of part-time fire chief shall be eliminated.

Moderator Adams read the Article as written and asked for a motion to accept. Chairman of the Board of Selectmen Larry Konopka (hereafter referred to as Chairman Konopka) made a motion to accept the Article as written and Eric Nilsson seconded the motion.

Chairman Konopka submitted an amendment inserting the phrase "to be appointed by the Board of Selectmen" after the word "years". The amendment would reaffirm the Board of Selectmen as the appointing authority. Selectman Gerard LeDuc seconded the motion to accept the amendment.

Moderator Adams re-read the Article with the amendment included:

"To see if the Town will vote to establish the position of full-time fire chief, with a term of 3 years, to be appointed by the Board of Selectmen, and rescind all previous warrant articles regarding this subject. If this article passes, the position of part-time fire chief shall be eliminated.

Moderator Adams announced that a secret ballot had been requested in writing with the required number of signatures.

Chairman Konopka stated Town Counsel had suggested adding the amendment to provide clarification.

Art Morse asked if the Article was left as originally written, who would have had authority to appoint a Fire Chief.

Moderator Adams responded that RSA 154:1 lists the options of who could appoint a Fire Chief.

Merrill Vaughan asked why copies of the warrant were not made available to the public and why did we not have the "Pledge of Allegiance".

Moderator Adams apologized for the oversight of the "Pledge of Allegiance", and asked the public to stand. After the "Pledge" Moderator Adams announced copies of the warrant would be copied and handed to all those who desired a copy.

Fred Hast stated the Select Board had always had final say in the appointment of the Fire Chief. He asked if there would be a selection committee or if the Select Board would decide on their own.

Chairman Konopka responded the Select Board had discussed creating a committee involving the Fire Department and possibly outside consultants.

Lenny Deane encouraged support of the amendment.

Moderator Adams re-read the Article with the amendment and called for the vote whether or not to accept the Article as amended.

Card vote passed accepting the amended Article.

Art Morse asked why was the body voting on an issue that had already been established in 2005.

Chairman Konopka explained there had been some confusion as to the will of the people during the 2013 March Town Meeting, and the Select Board asked for a Special Town Meeting to clarify the will of the body.

Art Morse stated the 2013 March Town Meeting did not rescind the decision in the 2005 Town Meeting and that this current meeting was confusing.

Dan Schroth stated the townspeople could not afford an additional tax increase after the decisions made during the 2013 March School District and Town meetings. He asked what was the difference in cost between a part time Fire Chief and a full time Fire Chief.

Chairman Konopka replied the difference would be approximately \$45,000.00

John Topouzoglou stated we need to provide security for the senior citizens and families.

Lenny Deane encouraged everyone to support the Article as amended. He has been involved with the Fire Department for thirty-one years in various capacities, and stated we have grown to have one of the largest departments in the area with a substantial increase in call volume. In his opinion a Fire Chief could not take care of all the responsibilities effectively on a part time basis.

Dan Schroth reiterated his point that the town could not afford a full time person with benefits.

Moderator Adams asked the body to stay on topic and reminded them the budget was not relevant to this Article as there would be no additional money appropriated to the budget approved at the March Town Meeting.

Lyn Ward asked how many hours were considered part time.

Chairman Konopka replied the position was currently twenty hours, but could be up to thirty-two hours.

Merrill Vaughan stressed his concern with a lack of information. He was not happy with the way the Article was written.

Chairman Konopka explained the Select Board and the Fire Department worked together to create the Article.

Noreen Rollins asked for confirmation that the budget was already fixed.

Chairman Konopka confirmed it was.

Noreen Rollins asked where would the additional funds come from to support a full time Fire Chief. Would it result in layoffs?

Chairman Konopka responded that the Board would have to discuss their options after the vote.

Chris Ward asked when the position would be filled if the Article passed.

Chairman Konopka replied the plan was to have the position filled by October 1, 2013.

Interim Fire Chief Nick Abell stated he works an average of twenty hours a week and does not feel thirty to thirty-two hours is enough to do an effective job. He supports full time.

Louie Houle asked where within the budget would the additional funds come if it was decided to go with a full time Fire Chief.

Town Administrator Paul Skowron responded the Select Board would have to review the full budget. A transfer of funds would only occur if warranted.

Louie Houle recommended a study of call volume, transactions and other statistics to see if a full time Fire Chief was truly warranted. He recommended the decision should be postponed until the March 2014 Town meeting allowing enough time to review the findings.

George Bachelder stated there was not any extra in the Highway budget to move toward a full time Fire Chief position. He did not believe the taxpayers had any more to give and encouraged the body to vote against a full time Chief and take the issue up again in March 2014.

Clayton Wood agreed the Article was not clear as written. He didn't believe there was enough information to vote. He suggested the decision should wait until March 2014. He stated it was not realistic to think this decision would not affect the budget.

Mike Wolfe asked what would happen if the acting Fire Chief stepped down.

Chairman Konopka responded the Select Board would probably have to consider hiring another interim Chief.

Mike Wolfe asked if the town wasn't already saving money by currently having a Fire Chief working only 20 hours per week. He believed this issue had already been thoroughly researched when the position of Fire Chief was voted for during the 2005 Town Meeting.

Laura Okrent asked for the results of the study to go from full time Chief to part time Chief.

Chairman Konopka responded there had not been a study.

Louie Houle stated in response to Mike Wolfe's question that he believed other employees within the Fire Department received raises, absorbing the savings resulting from the 20 hour per week part time Fire Chief position.

Art Morse asked what would happen if the Article was tabled. Would we have a part time or full time Fire Chief?

Moderator Adams responded the position would be part time.

Chairman Konopka clarified that the legal outcome from the 2013 March Town meeting was a part time Fire Chief.

Louie Houle asked for confirmation that the Town of Barnstead Select Board had invited our Select Board to discuss the possibility of creating a regional Fire Department.

Chairman Konopka confirmed the Board intends to meet with Barnstead, but was waiting until after a decision was made on this Article.

Louie Houle responded we should start looking into regionally organizing both the Fire and Police Departments.

Bill Miskoe made the motion to move the question.

Moderator Adams asked for a card vote to move the question which passed. He then re-read the amended Article.

Louie Houle asked for a point of order asking if the vote could be reconsidered.

Moderator Adams stated a vote to reconsider would be difficult due to the secret ballot, therefore ruling there would be no reconsideration, but if a less than ten vote difference occurred, he would request a recount.

The polls were opened to vote.

Amended Article 1 passed – 46 votes yes and 42 votes no. A recount was done and count was confirmed.

Lea Adams made a motion to adjourn that was seconded.

Meeting was adjourned 7:15pm.

Minutes submitted by Erica B. Anthony, Town Clerk
