



Town Council Special Meeting Minutes



Thursday, February 18, 2021, at 7:00 PM, in the Matthew Thornton Room

Call to Order

Chairman Koenig called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Present at the meeting were Chairman Koenig, Vice Chair Boyd, Councilor Harrington, Councilor Rothhaus, Councilor Woods, and Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Paul T. Micali. Councilor Albert, Councilor Healey and Town Manager Eileen Cabanel were excused.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Koenig led the Pledge of Allegiance

Announcements

- Thursday, February 25, 2021, 7:00 PM Regular meeting is cancelled
- Wednesday, March 10, 2021, 7:00 PM, at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School (JMUES) in the All-purpose Room Deliberative Session
- Thursday, March 11, 2021, 7:00 PM Regular meeting
- Thursday, March 25, 2021, 7:00 PM Regular meeting

Public Hearing

1. Public Hearing – Group Petition to Add a Warrant Article Resolution to the 2021 Town Meeting Warrant

Submitted by Group Petition Signer Mary Beth Raven

The Town Council held a public hearing to receive public input on a Group Petition received, pursuant to Charter Article 10-1, B. The petition is to add a Warrant Article Resolution to the 2021 Town Meeting Warrant to see if the Town will vote to urge that the New Hampshire General Court, which is obligated to redraw the maps of political districts within the state following the federal census, will ensure fair and effective representation of New Hampshire voters without gerrymandering. Additionally, these voters ask the Town of Merrimack to urge the NH General Court to carry out the redistricting in a fair and transparent way through public meetings, not to favor a particular political party, to include communities of interest, and to minimize multi-seat districts.

Assistant Town Manager / Finance Director Paul Micali advised the Town Council that the group petition received the signatures of 79 registered voters. He stated that the Town Council must make a decision tonight on this item because the warrant must be posted Monday February 22, 2021. He explained the three actions the Town Council could take; first would be take no action, second is to move the petition to the ballot and the third is to create an ordinance. Mary Beth Raven stated that this is a non-binding resolution to be sent to state officials. She stated that the resolution asks for fairness, transparency and without political favoritism. She stated the resolution requests that the mapping process be done in public meetings. The request states that towns larger than 3,300 citizens be given their own state representative districts. Mary Beth Raven explained that resolution requests that the governing body communicate the Town's wishes in writing to state and federal delegations. Mary Beth Raven informed the Town Council that the warrant article is volunteer driven and can be found in 103 town meeting and SB2 towns around the state. She stressed that the key to inclusion is transparency.

Chairman Koenig opened the public hearing at 7:12 pm

No public input was given.

Chairman Koenig closed the public hearing at 7:13 pm

Councilor Harrington asked the other members of the Town Council what would be a reason that they would not move this article to the warrant. Councilor Rothhaus explained that in the past petition warrant articles have come the Town Council. He stated that when it moved by the Town Council to the warrant it lends to the credibility of the warrant article. He is hesitant to support an article that could have a political agenda. He spoke in favor of the process where 500 or more citizens support the article moving the article to the warrant. Vice Chair Boyd stated that in reading the ordinance it is the Town Council's responsibility to decide the merit of the article that warrants the consideration of the voters. He believes this article does have merit and should be considered by the voters. Assistant Town Manager / Finance Director Paul Micali advised the Town Council that there would not be a Town Council recommendation on this article. He stated that the warrant article has language that informs the voters that it is a citizens petition warrant article. Chairman Koenig questioned why the Town Council would send the letter since it is the voters of Merrimack who will decide. He asked for clarification on the language that refers to minimizing multi-seat districts. Mary Beth Raven agreed that the language could be better phrased as Merrimack is a multi-seat district. She stated that the language was referring to districts that cross or combine towns. Vice Chair Boyd stated that it should reflect floterial and not multi-seat. Councilor Harrington agrees that the letter should not come from the Town Council. Assistant Town Manager / Finance Director Paul Micali advised the Town Council that adjustments as mentioned can be done only at the deliberative session. He suggested that Mary Beth Raven contact the Town Moderator Lynn Christenson for guidance on amending the petition warrant article.

MOTION made by Councilor Harrington and seconded by Vice Chair Boyd to move Warrant Article Resolution to the 2021 Town Meeting Warrant. MOTION CARRIES 3-1-0 Councilor Rothhaus voted in the negative and Councilor Woods present

Discussion on the motion

Chairman Koenig reiterated his concerns about the appearance of a partisan effort. He explained why he does not automatically accept that something should be put to the voters.

New Business

1. 2021 Deliberative Session

Submitted by Town Council Chair Tom Koenig and Vice Chair Bill Boyd

Town Council discussed the details and motions of the upcoming 2021 Deliberative Session being held on Wednesday, March 10, 2021.

MOTION made by Councilor Woods and seconded by Vice Chair Boyd to move six warrant articles to the Deliberative Session. MOTION CARRIES 5-0-0

The Council determined who would make motion articles 2-5 at Deliberative Session

Article 2 Operating Budget will be introduced to the voters by Chairman Koenig, Councilor Harrington will move and Vice Chair Boyd will second the motion.

Article 3: Capital Reserve Deposit Councilor Rothhaus will move and Councilor Woods will second

Article 4: Wastewater Capital Reserve Councilor Healey will move and Councilor Albert will second

Article 5: Pine Knoll Shores – Roadway and Drainage Improvements Engineering Study Councilor Harrington will move and Vice Chair Boyd will second

Article 6: Petition warrant article will be presented by the petitioner

Comments from the Press

None

Approved: March 25, 2021

Posted: March 26, 2021

Comments from the Public

None

Comments from the Council

Vice Chair Boyd advised the Town Council that SB117 regarding the removal of exit 10 was presented to the Transportation Committee. The D.O.T. suggested an amendment that would make the Town of Merrimack responsible for Continental Blvd from Industrial Drive to 101A. He stated that he voiced the Town's opposition.

Chairman Koenig reiterated that we all must stay vigilant against Covid-19.

Adjourn

**MOTION made by Vice Chair Boyd and seconded by Councilor Harrington to adjourn the meeting.
MOTION CARRIES 5-0-0**

Respectfully submitted by Tracy Doherty