

Town of Middleton
Board of Selectmen Meeting
February 15th, 2022

Called to order at 6:30 pm.

BOS Members Present: Joseph Varga, Michael Boisvert, Lee Britton
Pledge Recited

Public Hearing – Petition Warrant Articles

Selectmen Varga states we are here to discuss two petition warrant articles that were submitted to the board.

Selectmen Varga reads the first petition warrant article – “Shall the Town of Middleton vote to increase the number of members to be elected to the Middleton Board of Selectman from three members to five members, by electing two members at the next town election.” This public hearing is being held in accordance with RSA 41:8-c.

Selectmen Varga reads the next article – “Shall we adopt the provisions of RSA 32:5-b, and implement a tax cap whereby the governing body (or budget committee) shall not submit a recommended budget that increases the amount to be raised by local taxes, based on the prior fiscal year’s actual amount of local taxes raised, by more than the lesser of (a) 2%; or (b) the percentage by which the US Consumer Price Index – All Urban Consumers for the Northeast, published by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (the “index”) as of the month of July of each year increased, if any, over the index for the month of July of the immediately – preceding year.” This public hearing is in accordance with RSA 32:5-c.

Selectmen Varga states those are the ones that require public hearings by NH RSA’s and why we are here.

J. Brown asks in their opinion what is the benefit of having a 5 board selectmen, and have you seen it in other towns. Selectmen Varga states he does not see a value, because he believes the town will see more issues with decision making, and the town will not be able to move forward. R. Tufts-Keegan states that maybe many people don’t understand that a petition warrant article isn’t an article that was presented by the board of selectmen, its by a resident who has asked 25 residents to sign a petition to go on the ballot and the selectmen have to present it to the town. Selectmen Varga states that’s correct, asking my opinion I will give it to you. I always ask the people when they ask me that to look back at the last three years who ran for selectmen and remember 5 of them will be on the board. So remember moving forward when voting people, sometimes its hard to get 1 person to run for selectmen never mind 2 or 3. D. Saliga asks if we did vote for 5 selectmen, we can’t put them on the ballot now.

Selectmen Varga states not. D. Saliga states can’t have a meet the candidates, and asks how they would be selected. Selectmen Varga answers per the RSA, next year the RSA states how you would elect the new selectmen. D. Saliga states this wouldn’t be for this year then. Selectmen Varga answers no not for this year. This question goes on this year’s ballot, will be on the official ballot on Tuesday and you would vote yes or no. J. Bailey asks for the opinions of the other two selectmen on the board. Selectmen Britton answers with what he has read, most towns our size have 3 selectmen and an advisory budget committee. When you get over 10,000 is when you run into having 5 selectmen and an official budget committee. J. Bailey questions that he is not in support of this. Selectmen Britton states no, thinks the town will have a hard time finding the people. Selectmen Boisvert states he hasn’t put much thought into it. K. Buzard asks if any of the residents that proposed this or signed it are in attendance and could give their viewpoint. T. Donovan-Laviolette states she submitted one. States she believes we need more differing opinions on the board, 5 is a better number. When you appoint people that you know or have a group of 3, its 2 against 1. 5 is a bigger board and more opinions. And its put to the people to vote. D.

Dufresne signed the ballot. Agrees 100% with previous statement. Thinks that recently have seen what happens when we do just have 3. If we did have 5, may have had a different outcome and a bigger population happy with that outcome. B. Gagnon states she also signed it. Believes when someone is absent like has been a lot lately, there is two people doing the vote. Feels it is an easy sway. B. Francis asks if the town voted on this last year. Multiple residents answer yes failed by 1 vote. Selectmen Varga reverts back to D. Saliga question on how members get selected. States if the town votes to enlarge the board to 5 members, at the first annual meeting following the meeting when the action is taken, the town shall elect 2 members for 3 year term, 1 member for 1 year term. D. Saliga asks that would be at the next election. Selectmen Varga states next election. J. Kalar states the benefit she see's is if you have 5 on there, we have already lost 2 selectmen and brought in 2 new ones. No one who is on the board knows what happened in the prior years. If you have 5 members there will always be someone there that knows what happened prior. Selectmen Varga states that's the theory with the three, you would always have 2 carrying forward, now you're going to say we're going to have 3 carrying forward. You're not going to guarantee that happening either. B. Gagnon states we hear a lot of we don't have time for this, we can't do that because we don't have the time. Understand that people have jobs besides being selectmen. If there is more members have more people doing the work so that it gets done. B. Francis states he believes that it would make that problem worse, because now you need 5 people that would need to actually have schedules coordinate instead of 3. So trying to have all the board of selectmen together having 5 vs 3 would be more difficult to have happen. Still see 2 of the 3 making decisions or 3 of the 5, and other people being left out. Whether its 3 or 5 I don't think we're actually going to have the selectmen together all of the time on everything anyways. T. Donovan-Laviolette states not for nothing we have 8 members on the budget committee that are very committed and come to all of our meetings, including Mike our selectmen rep. We also have a Zoning board that is very committed, Planning board that are much bigger boards than 3. So again, it was put out there so that the voters could decide, because I think the people of the town should decide, not people that come to even just this public hearing. B. Francis states he believes they did last year. A. Bowden states it would be very beneficial to the town. Its been mentioned to split up the jobs, it's a lot of work being a selectmen. We don't have a business administrator, part time or full time, a lot of towns do that are our size. I know that when we went on the school board side from 3 members to 5 members it was very beneficial. J. Bailey states put it on there and let the people vote on it. Selectmen Varga states it's on there. 3 to 5 member board will be placed on the ballot on Tuesday. So when you vote on Tuesday, March 8, that is when that yes, no question will be on the ballot, just like last year. Selectmen Varga states for any discussion on Article 4. Article 4 will go on at annual town meeting, that will be a secret ballot. Means needs 3/5th majority to pass. Seeing article 2 and 4 that's how they are on the article lay out. Article 4 will be talked about at town meeting as well, we can talk about it here or we can wait until then. D. Saliga asks if we know what article 3 is. Selectmen Varga states article 3 will be another petition article for rescinding RSA 32 official budget committee to an advisory board. That is also voted on at town meeting and will be discussed there but that one does not require a public hearing.

Respectfully Submitted:

Sierra Pawnell, Administrative Assistant