

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
TOWN OF MADISON
FEBRUARY 18, 2014
MINUTES**

Selectmen Present: Chairman Michael Brooks, Josh Shackford, and John Arruda.

Others Present: Town Administrator Melissa Arias; Town Clerk/Tax Collector Marcia Shackford; residents Phoebe-Lynn Rand, Phoebe Rand, Fred Ham, Linda & Noel Smith, Ray O'Brien; Madison TV Videographer Emilie Riss.

Where and When Posted: Town Hall upper & lower bulletin boards and Madison & Silver Lake Post Offices on February 3, 2014 and published in the Conway Daily Sun on February 8 & 18, 2014.

Meeting Called to Order: By Brooks at 5:34 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – There were no minutes to approve at this special meeting.

APPROVAL OF MANIFEST – There was no manifest to approve at this special meeting.

PUBLIC HEARING – Brooks said the Selectmen scheduled this special meeting for the sole purpose of conducting a statutory Public Hearing due to the receipt of a petitioned warrant article looking to adopt RSA 40:13 better known as SB2 or Official Ballot voting. Notice of the hearings was posted on February 3, 2014 on the Town Hall upper and lower level bulletin boards and at the Madison and Silver Lake Post Offices. A public notice was also published in the Conway Daily Sun on February 8 & 18, 2014.

Brooks opened the public comment portion of the hearing and read an e-mail from lead petitioner Mark Graffam to Town Administrator Melissa Arias asking that the following be read into the minutes, "A number of the signers of the 2014 SB2 petition, who are also members of the Madison Cabin Fever Bowling League, had lunch Sunday at the Two Black Dogs restaurant in Fryeburg. Good restaurant, but the way. They agreed that they would not be attending the SB2 hearing on the 18th because the point is that they don't want to attend meetings of little value – they just want to vote." Brooks said he isn't clear whether this message also indicates that they won't attend future Town deliberative session if the article passes. Brooks said the petitioned article will be printed on the March 11th ballot and will require a 3/5 majority vote to pass.

Fred Ham said older people have a hard time sitting through the typical 5-hour Town Meeting and some people won't stand up and speak their minds at Town Meeting for fear of offending members of the audience. Ham said certain interest groups have used Town Meeting to rally their supporters during Town Meeting in the hopes of swaying votes in their favor. Ham said voter turnout would be improved with SB2 and voters could be informed through the newspaper, mailings and other publications in advance of the deliberative session and voting day. Marcia Shackford said the School just held their SB2 Deliberative Session and asked School Board Member Ray O'Brien how many people were there. O'Brien said the turnout at the deliberative session is historically lower than the attendance at the Saturday Town Meeting. Brooks said since the Elementary School has been SB2 for a number of years it's safe to say that Town Meeting attendance exceeds the School's deliberative session. The SB2 deliberative session is intended to discuss and amend warrant articles in preparation for ballot voting on Election Day whereas the traditional Town Meeting gives the opportunity to discussion, amendment, and vote on the warrant all at the same

time. O'Brien said the question comes down to the type of democracy and the level of involvement the voters want and expect. Arruda said the general perception is that voters have little effect in making changes to the large school budget where voters tend to feel like they have a say and ability to modify Town warrant articles. Arruda said the School would probably have a better turnout at their deliberative session if it was held during the day instead of at night since people don't like going out at night, especially in February. Ham said the bulk mailing of the School warrant in advance of their deliberative session is most helpful and the Town could do the same without having to go to the expense of mailing the entire Annual Report. O'Brien said the School Board and Advisory Budget Committee has discussed the proposed School budget during a number of meetings leading up to mailing the final warrant. O'Brien said these meetings are open to the public and very informative. O'Brien said having more public involvement during these meetings would be helpful. Phoebe Rand asked how warrant articles would be amended with SB2 and Brooks said all the discussion about the wording of the articles would be discussed and decided upon during the deliberative session. Rand saw this as a drawback to SB2. O'Brien said the warrant article questions have to be finite because they can't be altered once the ballot is printed with only a yes or no option. Rand asked about the default budget clause within the SB2 statute. O'Brien said the operating budget amount can be amended at the deliberative session but the law requires a default budget amount because the Town or School would still need to operate if the operating budget article were to fail. Rand asked if there are any additional costs with SB2 and Brooks was unable to give a definitive answer at this time. Brooks referenced the NH Municipal Association's website where the Town Meeting and SB2 timelines/deadlines can be compared. Brooks said another prospective drawback to SB2 is the Selectmen's inability to amend the operating budget amount on the floor at the March Town Meeting in years when the weather is severe. Brooks said this winter has proven to require more sand and salt than initially anticipated. Brooks said this type of amendment wouldn't be an option with SB2 since changes can only be proposed up until the early February deliberative session. Rand was surprised that the deliberative session is held a whole month prior to the Election Day vote. Marcia sees potential difficulty in processing absentee ballot requests if the Town goes to SB2 with a March date. Marcia said the Town Clerk's Office is still waiting for the School ballots to arrive which could compromise the timing of sending out and receiving the absentee ballots back. Josh Shackford said he talked with members the public about their opinion on SB2 before weighing out the pros and cons. Josh said often times the strongest opinions or most well-spoken individuals have a way of swaying the votes at Town Meeting. Josh said some people said they like to go to Town Meeting just to watch "the show". Josh said either way each voter only has one vote. Josh said the budget starts going together annually in late September or early October so people can still be heard through attending Selectmen and Advisory Budget Committee meetings. Marcia said there are usually around 150 ballots handed out at Town Meeting and around 400 ballots cast on Election Day. O'Brien said giving voters who go away during the winter the ability to vote the entire Town warrant via absentee ballot will make them feel less disenfranchised. Arruda said he read an article recently that gave statistics on whether approved budget amounts were negatively impacted when SB2 was adopted and the consensus was no; Town's with SB2 don't typically approve lower budgets than those with the traditional Town Meeting. Brooks asked O'Brien if petitioned articles can be amended at the deliberative session and O'Brien said he thought so as long as the intent of the article didn't change but that it would be the Moderator's call. The Chairman closed the public comment portion of the Public Hearing and then immediately closed the Public Hearing.

THERE WERE NO PUBLIC COMMENTS

SIGNATURE ITEMS – There were no signature items at this special meeting.

6:12 PM – Brooks made a **motion** to enter non-public session per RSA 91-A:3II(b) to conduct interviews for the full-time Transfer Station attendant position, seconded by Shackford, and so voted. Roll call vote: Arruda – aye, Shackford – aye, Brooks – aye. **7:40 PM** - Brooks made a **motion** to leave non-public session and seal the minutes of the non-public session, seconded by Arruda, and so voted **3-0**.

7:40 PM – Brooks made a **motion** to adjourn, seconded by Shackford, and so voted **3-0**.

NEXT SELECTMEN’S MEETING – The next Selectmen’s meeting will be Tuesday, February 25, 2014 at 5:30 p.m. in the Town Hall meeting room.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa S. Arias, Town Administrator
Recording Secretary