

ADDENDUM TO MINUTES OF APRIL 27, 2016 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING, JANE DUTCHER OPENING REMARKS

Good evening. I promise to be very brief.

The budget process this year has at times been excruciating. At one point we thought we would have to ask you for a 2 ½ % override vote, but we were able to overcome that moment by finding some unused funds, some creative thinking, and by suggesting the use of loans for 2 specific projects thus spreading costs over several years.

Article 6 – the schools – particularly PVRs. The Finance Committee recommends (and the Selectmen also recommend) an increase of 1.55%. This amount represents what the PVRs budget Committee recommended to the full school committee. Those numbers were arrived at by PVRs Budget Committee after strenuous work of the school administration and thoughtful deliberations with the Budget Committee. We sat in on most of those meetings and strongly concur with the findings and thus recommend the 1.55% increase to you.

The Entrance Road request is not recommended in Article 6 because the Towns and their respective highway departments have agreed to take over this project. Article 10 includes Bernardston's share of the greatly reduced cost. We appreciate all of the cooperation this entails and especially the savings of over \$11,000. Additionally, we chose not to recommend support for the Central Office site work. Instead your Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen initiated a process that MAY result in a No Cost remedy to this challenge. Also in the school article is a request for 5,500 dollars for the bleachers, 3,250 for a convection oven and \$100,000 to repave the roads and parking areas at BES. The convection oven has already been purchased from this year's funds – and a big thank you to Stan Garland for tracking down and finding the oven that met BES Cafeteria needs. The paving is found in Article 10 as a loan request. We hope you see the wisdom of all of these items. Certainly any questions you have can be entertained when the article is introduced.

Articles 5, 7 and 9 are fairly obvious. Article 8 totals are missing from the Finance Committee Worksheet, but are on page 9 of the warrant. I apologize for that omission.

In article 8 under the Transfer Station is a request for repairing Landfill Wells at a cost of \$25,000. The state has advised the Town that we need to do this to come into compliance with landfill testing regulations and they have set a deadline for completion. The Selectmen are working with the State on this, and we are hoping that the requirement might be reduced. However, rather than having to call a Special Town Meeting we thought it prudent to ask you to fund this now.

Articles 26 and 27 ask you to vote the use of Overlay Surplus and Free Cash to reduce the tax rate. We hope this will help all of us.

The remaining financial articles seem to be self-explanatory – or maybe I've just seen them too often – at any rate you know you can always ask questions when articles are introduced.

Somewhere along the line of working this budget, I got curious about Bernardston's tax rate history. So, let me share a little – I was able to go back to 1983 with the help of some state historical tables. In 1983 our tax rate was \$19.50 – 4 cents more than we're paying this year. The lowest rate I found was in 1989 and it was listed as \$10.15 while the highest was in 2002 at \$21.00. The only other years that were higher than we have now were 1984 and 1985 when the rate was \$20.00. One of these days I will go and find the assessed valuations for those years. Anyway, history is interesting.

I promised to be brief so let me remind everyone that members of this body are free to offer amendments to any line item in the tables as well as to any article without tables.

Should an amendment be offered and prevail, we are prepared to make the appropriate calculations and changes.

Thank you all so much.

A True Copy: Attest: June 1, 2016

