

MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF OLD LYME
SPECIAL TOWN MEETING OF APRIL 30, 2024

Approximately twenty-five electors and citizens attended the Town of Old Lyme Special Town Meeting on Tuesday, April 30, 2024, at 7:00 p.m. at the Meeting Hall of the Memorial Town Hall, 52 Lyme Street, Old Lyme, Connecticut.

First Selectwoman, Martha Shoemaker, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., and she called for nominations for a moderator for the meeting.

A motion was made by Kimberly Russell Thompson and seconded by Christina Gotowka, to nominate Attorney Vicki Lanier to serve as moderator. There were no other nominations for moderator. All were in favor.

Attorney Lanier asked Vicki Urbowicz, Town clerk, to read the call of the meeting.

1. To consider and discuss (but not vote on) the following resolution:

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF BONDS AND NOTES IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$6,143,541 TO FINANCE AN EXISTING APPROPRIATION FOR THE PLANNING, DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF AN EXPANDED JOINT OLD LYME/LYME SENIOR CENTER

Further notification is hereby provided that at its special meeting on April 23, 2024, the Board of Selectmen, pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. § 7-7, voted to remove the vote on said Resolution to a vote of the electors and persons eligible to vote at town meetings of the Town by paper ballots to be held on May 7, 2024, between the hours of 12:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m., at the Lyme/Old Lyme Middle School, 53 Lyme Street, Old Lyme, Connecticut, at which the following question shall be submitted to the voters:

“Shall the resolution entitled, ‘RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF BONDS AND NOTES IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$6,143,541 TO FINANCE AN EXISTING APPROPRIATION FOR THE PLANNING, DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF AN EXPANDED JOINT OLD LYME/LYME SENIOR CENTER’ be approved?

Yes _____ No _____”

The ballot label for said question shall read as follows:

“Shall the Town of Old Lyme authorize the issuance of bonds and notes in an amount not to exceed \$6,143,541 to finance an existing appropriation for the Old Lyme/Lyme Senior Center renovation project?

Yes _____ No _____”

Voters approving the question will vote “Yes” and voters opposing the question will vote “No.

Copies of the full text of the proposed Resolution are available on the Town website at www.oldlyme-ct.gov, and in the Town Clerk’s office at Town Hall during normal business hours for the use or inspection of any interested person.

After reading the call of the meeting, Attorney Lanier asked for a vote to open Item 1 up for discussion. Denise Linderman motioned to open the discussion, and it was seconded by Kimberly Russell Thompson. Discussion was open to the public.

Attorney Lanier first asked First Selectwoman Shoemaker to start off the discussion. First Selectwoman Shoemaker started with an overview. In June of 2023, the initial money (\$5,263,541) was approved by Town Referendum for the Old Lyme/Lyme Senior Center. In February 2024 the bids were received. The bids came in 1.3 million higher than anticipated. They went back and reviewed the plan to reduce the costs. One of the changes was to the fire suppression system that changed after a few design changes which significantly reduced the cost. While looking at the plan, the issue of the inefficient kitchen appliances and the need to renovate the kitchen was reviewed and added to the project. On April 15, 2024, a Special Town Meeting took place to approve an additional \$880,000 to cover the adjusted plan in addition to the kitchen renovation. The electors approved the additional money. The total approved money is \$6,143,541. The Town of Lyme will pay 25% of the costs leaving Old Lyme's share of \$4,607,588. There is a \$500,000 Steap Grant that reduces Old Lyme's share to \$4,107,656. First Selectwoman Shoemaker explained that the State requires us (the Town) to include the total cost of the project when bonding. She further explained that as of June 30, 2023, the Town had approximately 13.1 million in reserve (a little less according to our finance director Anita Mancini). The vote coming up on May 7, 2024, if passed, allots the Town the option to explore bonding and give the Town "the best bang for our buck." Currently there are sign-on premiums that the Town can earn with bonding.

First Selectwoman Shoemaker then called upon Bennett Bernblum, Chair of the Town's Board of Finance, to answer questions.

Fred Verillo, 58 Browns Lane, said that Martha's overview cleared up a lot of questions for him. He reiterated that the vote on May 7th is for the voters to chose whether we bond for the money or use the Town's surplus funds. Mr. Bernblum explained that the surplus money is in an undesignated fund that the Town can use as they wish. He indicated that Regional School District 18 had some expenses coming up over the next few years that the Town needs to prepare for which the Town will possibly need to budget for 2-3 million a year for 3 years. It is wise for the Town to keep at least 6.5 million in its reserve as well as prepare for unanticipated expenses that may occur.

William Folland, 6 Dunns Lane, asked "will we know the affect of our mill rate prior to bonding?" First Selectwoman Shoemaker responded that after the budget has passed, and we will consider all options. Mr. Folland also "wants to understand what things/projects as costing us."

Kimberly Russell Thompson, 2 Littlefield Lane, reiterated this (vote of approval of bonding) will give the Board of Finance the permission to explore our options with the bonding agency and the money in reserve can be used to mitigate the "bubble" to keep our taxes as steady as possible.

Selectwoman Jude Read stated that the bonding rates are so low right now, and we could also choose to do a combination of unreserved funds and bonding.

Betsy Grant, 9 Lee Drive, asked for clarification on this. Selectwoman Read clarified.

Marion McCourt, 103 Buttonball Road, asked "will others understand what we are talking about?" Mr. Bernblum stated that tonight was their opportunity to understand this. First Selectwoman Shoemaker encouraged folks to come to the Board of Finance meetings.

Karen Geisler, 5 Queen Anne's Court, thought that the vote at the Middle School was the "bee and end all of this." She was reassured that the Town does not know where the money is coming from (surplus or bonding) but it will not delay the construction.

Christina Gotowka, 25 Library Lane, asked "has the Town ever made mistakes in financial decisions?"

Marion McCourt, 103 Buttonball Road, reiterated that the vote is only asking the Town to look at Bonding.

2. To consider and vote upon a resolution to adjourn the Special Town Meeting.

Attorney Lanier asked for a motion to adjourn the Town Meeting to a vote on May 7, 2024, from 12 p.m. to 8 p.m. Mary Jo Nosal made a motion to adjourn to a vote. Peter Lucchesse seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned to Town Vote on May 7, 2024, from 12 p.m. to 8 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Vicki Urbowicz
Town Clerk