



Town Moderator, Dawn Fernald opening the 2023 Town Deliberative Session

2023 Town Deliberative Session

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At 9 AM, on a historically cold Saturday, February 4, 2023, in the gymnasium of Nottingham School. Dawn Fernald commenced Nottingham's third [Town Deliberative Session \(TDS\)](#). She began by displaying and reading the Moderator's Rules. This was followed by the Pledge of Alliance and an introduction of those at the head table. They included the Select Board, the Budget Committee, the town's attorneys, the Town Clerk, and the Interim Town Administrator. Fernald did a great job of thoughtfully moving the meeting along and with command managing it.

She started by reading this. "First Session: You are hereby notified to meet at the Nottingham School, located at 245 Stage Road in Nottingham, at 9:00 a.m. on February 4, 2023. This session shall consist of an explanation, discussion, and deliberation of the Warrant Articles (WA) numbers six through twenty. These warrant Articles may be amended subject to the following limitations: (a) Warrant Articles whose wording is prescribed by law may not be amended; and (b) Warrant Articles that are amended shall be placed on the official ballot for final vote on the main motion as amended. If the meeting needs to be postponed, the alternate date is at the same location at 5 PM on February 6, 2023."

She noted that WA #2-5, which had been Approved By The Nottingham Planning Board, were not subject to amendment. She then went through all the WAs. This article will focus on only those WA which were amended at the TDS. Next, she read Article #6: "Shall the Town raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling \$4,842,866 (Four million, eight hundred forty-two thousand eight hundred sixty-six dollars). Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$4,541,263 (Four million five hundred forty-one thousand, two hundred and sixty-three dollars) which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Town or by law; or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to

take up the issue of a revised operating budget only. The estimated tax impact is \$3.08 per \$1,000 of property valuation.

The Board of Selectmen recommended this article (5-0)

The Budget Committee recommended this article. (7-0-2)

This WA was amended two times successfully. First, Lorie Anderson, the Town Clerk, proposed \$1,000 be added to line item 23 for the pay in the Town Clerk's office salary. And second, Eduard Viel, Chairman of the Planning Board, introduced changing line item 113 from \$1 to \$6500 to pay dues to the [Strafford Reginal Planning Commission \(SRPC\)](#). This gave Nottingham a vote as well as a seat at the SRPC.

Warrant Articles 7- 17 were introduced and presented by various members of the Select Board. Some led to discussions but all were moved to the March 14 election ballot without change. What was impressive at TDS was the neat and helpful visual displays of the various WAs. Here is an example of WA # 14, "vote to establish a Police Technology Equipment Expendable Trust Fund".



Some of the police equipment that WA 14 would cover

It was also noted at the TDS that WAs represented a method to deal with the 4% Tax Cap. It was pointed out that voting on WA would supersede the tax limits.

WA # 18, to appropriate \$40,000 for the calendar year of 2023 in order to contract with a property management firm to make repairs to facilities was amended by its author Gary Anderson. This WA touched off a major discussion on how a person to make repairs to town properties both internally and externally should be line items in the Town Budget. Many at the TDS cited concerns of everyday maintenance areas had been neglected.

WA # 19 was written, "Shall we rescind the provisions of RSA 32:5-b, known as the tax cap, as adopted by the town of Nottingham, NH on March 14, 2023, so that there will no longer be a limit on increases to the recommended budget in the amount to be raised by local taxes?" By Petition, 3/5ths (60%) vote required". It was amended to the date read March 8, 2022. It also led to another significant debate. Some argued that 4% tax cap hurt many programs; others saw it as a way for the town to keep within its budget. The discussion was so heated that the Moderator had to suggest one speaker be escorted off by the police. In the end, it was agreed like all WAs, the voters would decide on them on March 14, 2023.

It was a good, well-ran, productive, and civilized TDS.