

Town of Pittsford SELECT BOARD MEETING – July 30, 2024 - DRAFT

MEMBERS PRESENT: Alicia Malay, David Mills, Mark Winslow, Dan Adams and Thomas Hooker.

OTHERS PRESENT: David Atherton – Town Manager, Ann Reed, Charles “Butch” Shaw, Helen McKinlay

The Select Board was called to order at 4:30 PM by Chair Malay.

Chair Malay asked if there were any need to amend the agenda. D. Mills made the motion to split the vote on the tax rate approvals between the municipal and schools so they could be voted on separately instead of as a whole. This was seconded by T. Hooker. This motion passed 5-0.

Motion by D. Mills and seconded by D. Adams to adopt the agenda as amended. Motion passed unanimously 5– 0.

SELECTBOARD MEMBER REMARKS:

None at this time.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None presented at this time.

OLD BUSINESS

None presented at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

Set Tax Rate FY 2025:

A. Malay asked D. Atherton to explain the tax rates for FY2025. D. Atherton explained the worksheet in front of the selectboard members which was created by Pat. This included the homestead and non-homestead rates for the municipal rates including the village and excluding the village. The total municipal tax rate is \$0.6744 and the total municipal tax rate with village is \$0.7043. It was noted that the municipal tax rate went up approximately \$0.01 FY2025 versus FY2024.

The education tax rate is \$1.7195 for homestead tax rate and the non-homestead tax rate is \$1.9152. This is based off from the numbers given to the Town Clerk/Treasurer’s office from the State of Vermont. The educational homestead tax rate went up approximately \$0.30 for FY2025 versus FY2024 and the non-residential education tax rate went up approximately \$0.278 FY2025 versus FY2024.

This makes it so that the total tax rate for homestead residential is \$2.3939 and the homestead residential with village is \$2.4238. The total non-residential tax rate is \$2.5896 and the total non-residential tax rate with village is \$2.6195.

A. Malay asked what this means per \$100,000 of value on a residence. D. Atherton stated the increase in taxes means that for every \$100,000 in property value, residential rates went up \$307.60 and non-residential rates went up \$285.50. D. Mills and M. Winslow asked how the residential rate could increase greater than the non-residential rate. A. Reed explained that the non-residents are still paying more in taxes, however the education tax rate difference between resident and non-resident was not the same percentage this year, which made it so that the rates went up differently. M. Winslow asked how the non-homestead rate could be a lesser increase amount than the homestead rate. B. Shaw explained it is the way the state did their calculations and their formulas this year. Last year the two rates were almost even. A. Malay asked how much of the \$307.60 was the municipal portion. D. Atherton explained the town portion is about \$1.00 of the \$307.60, with the rest being the education tax. The overall portion of education taxes for the town went up \$1.6 million this year. D. Adams verified this was the additional portion from the town for education. D. Atherton confirmed and stated Pittsford's total education tax is \$6,277,089.70.

D. Adams wanted to know why the education rate went up so much. B. Shaw discussed that the full cost increase for all school districts state-wide was approximately \$47 million. The cost of teachers, insurance, and everything has gone up. The new school in Burlington is approximately \$200 million and this comes out of the education fund as well. This was the same when Otter Valley needed work a few years ago. There is not currently any school construction fund. The education fund is going to be \$6.21 billion in the hole per year with all of the construction needed for school buildings over the next ten years.

D. Mills asked about the lawsuit for the state that legislatures allowed if the state did not meet the greenhouse gas reduction. How much is that for? B. Shaw stated there is no paperwork for that yet. It will likely be January or February before they have anything.

D. Adams asked to verify again how much per \$100,000 the taxes have gone up. D. Mills restated the residential went up \$307.60 and non-resident rate \$285.50. B. Shaw reminded the Board that non-residential includes all of the condos and apartment buildings. A. Malay asked to state again how much of this was municipal portion. After some quick math, it is about \$1.00 per \$100,000 for the municipal increase.

A. Malay asked for a motion for municipal tax rate. D. Mills moved to accept the municipal tax rates of \$0.6744 and municipal with village rate of \$0.7043. This was seconded by T. Hooker. Motion passed 5-0.

A. Malay asked to move to the education rates. A. Reed asked if the local agreement rate needs to be approved. It was a consensus that the local agreement is already built into the municipal rate. The homestead education tax rate is \$1.7195 and the non-homestead tax rate is \$1.9152. M. Winslow asked if we had the 2023/2024 tax rate to compare to. It was pointed out on the worksheet to him the columns and the differences. The tax rates for 2023/2024 were \$1.4194 for homestead and \$1.6372 for non-homestead.

D. Mills said someone needs to make the motion. He will not. T. Hooker stated he would not either. A. Malay stated they could make the motion to not adopt the education tax rates. She wants a motion to move forward with discussion. D. Adams asked what happens if they do not do this. A. Malay stated it would be symbolic only. The Town would still print the same tax bills. D. Adams said that at a time when people can't afford to buy their groceries, it seems unfair. He is already getting calls as a realtor and with this tax increase, it is going to eliminate first-time homebuyers due to the taxes. D. Atherton stated those that do not get homestead relief will be the ones that feel it the most. Those that get homestead will get some relief, but will still feel the increase. B. Shaw stated those that get homestead declaration, the funds come out of the education and not general funds at the State level.

M. Winslow stated this shows the government can't rely on property taxes alone to fund the state. B. Shaw stated since 2002, the legislature has done 30 studies on education tax. This has been ignored by legislature. They just started the 31st study. It will be at least two to three years before taxpayers see any relief from rising education tax rates. D. Mills asked how much these studies cost. M. Winslow asked if the legislature is aware they are dismantling the education system with the way this is done. D. Mills stated that the State was irresponsible and despicable. There should have been a compromise. Anyone that voted for this kind of increase on their citizens is beyond reproach and the lowest form of life. There was a way to come to a compromise and this is ridiculous.

D. Atherton stated the first call taxpayers are going to make is to the municipalities. Municipalities need to follow these new open meeting laws and codes of ethics, but our portion is one penny increase in this overall rate. B. Shaw stated the school districts are really to blame. School districts send their requests to Montpelier and it has to be paid. M. Winslow said the system is broken when the budget gets turned down again and again until it passes because people stop coming out to vote. B. Shaw stated we are duty bound by the constitution to pay the bill.

A. Malay asked if anyone wanted to make a motion. It can be a motion to not adopt. It would be symbolic only. M. Winslow asked what position it would leave the town in. A. Malay stated again it would be symbolic only. The Town would still be on the hook for the education tax. D. Adams asked if this tax rate would go into effect whether they approved or not. A. Malay stated it would. T. Hooker stated we would need to send out tax bills anyways with these rates. M. Winslow stated they might as well vote the way we feel. D. Atherton stated another town nearby has done the same thing and split their vote between the municipal and education rates.

D. Adams asked if we vote no, is there are chance it will come back and make it worse for us? D. Atherton stated the public has already voted for these budgets. This is a technicality.

D. Mills stated everyone will get the tax bills for the weekend. People may receive them before Pittsford Day on Saturday. T. Hooker stated he wished a reporter was there to report this. D. Atherton stated that we can pass on the minutes of the meeting on to the Reporter. The

Reporter last week ran a report about the town being under budget. H. McKinlay said The Reporter was waiting to hear what happened tonight.

D. Mills made the motion to not accept the education tax rates. M. Winslow seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0. A. Malay reiterated that this is symbolic only. D. Atherton stated tax bills will still be printed tomorrow with these education tax rates on them. The total education tax for this year for the town is \$6,227,089.70.

Motion by T. Hooker and seconded by D. Mills to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed 5-0.

The meeting adjourned at 5:04PM.

The next Select Board meeting will be held on August 7, 2024.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ann Reed
Assistant to the Town Manager

Alicia Malay, Chair

David Mills, Vice Chair

Thomas Hooker, Selectman

Dan Adams, Selectman

Mark Winslow, Selectman