



**TOWN OF MOUNT DESERT
WARRANT COMMITTEE
Minutes of Meeting**

Tuesday, March 7, 2023 / 6:00PM

Northeast Harbor Meeting Hall and via Zoom

Members Present:

Meeting Hall: Phil Lichtenstein, Jerry Miller, Kathy Miller, Katrina Carter, Tim Murphy, Mike Olsen, Jamie Blaine, Allen Kimmerly, Stephanie Reece, Carmen Sanford, Sam McGee, Lauren Kuffler, Rodney Eason

Zoom: Rosemary Matchek, Megan Bailey, Owen Craighead, Craig Roebuck

Excused: Bill Ferm, Jesse Hartson, Tate Bushell

Guests: Brian Henkel, Gloria Delsandro, Nancy Thurlow

Absent: Marina McGarr, Blakeslee Bell

1. Members signed to the meeting in person and zoom.
2. Meeting was called to order at 6:03 P.M. by Chairperson Lichtenstein.
3. Announcements: Chair Lichtenstein asked if there were any comments / suggestions on the Warrant Committee's existing charter circulated the prior week for review? Hearing none, the meeting moved on.
4. Minutes from the 2/28/2023 Warrant Committee were duly motioned and approved.
5. The Mount Desert Elementary School (MDES) budget overview was presented starting at 6:09 P.M. by Principal Gloria Delsandro. Principal Delsandro reminded the public MDES maintains a weekly newsletter on its Facebook page for those interested. She commented on some of the student demographics – student body of 154 students, including 25 eighth graders, and noted 16% of students have special education needs and/or individual learning plans. Overall enrollment is down over the past +/- 5 years from 175 students.

Many extra curriculars have been revived as Covid-19 wanes, including music, skating group, floor hockey and art programs, including an artist in residence program with well-known portrait artist Robert Shetterly in partnership with the

Northeast Harbor Library. The school Parent Teacher Organization is currently very active under the leadership of parents including Katherine Emery.

Highlights from the budget include intentionally addressing deferred maintenance needs for the school postponed during Covid-19. The school recently paid off a prior 20-year bond that funded significant renovations completed at the school circa 2003. The plan is to re-allocate the annual debt service payment of +/- \$285,154 and use that amount towards repairs and maintenance at the building to have as neutral as possible impact on the overall school budget year over year while getting caught up with some maintenance projects. Projects may include replacing bleachers and equipment in the gymnasium, adding more insulation to the building to save on HVAC costs, and fixing leaky windows. Principal Delsandro as well as Nancy Thurlow from the Superintendent's office and Brian Henkel from Public Works answered questions about the anticipated timing and costs of these proposed projects.

Principal Delsandro is projecting stable staffing levels for the coming budget year and is keeping an eye out on enrollment trends. The student to teacher ratio is approximately 9:1 currently. The school has capacity for about 220 students if populations increase.

Warrant Committee members asked if pre-Covid-19 discussions about partnering with the Mt. Desert Nursery School would be revived for nursery / pre-K programs? Principal Delsandro indicated she would welcome recommencing such conversations. It was noted by members of the Warrant Committee the Nursery school is currently facing enrollment and financial headwinds. Possible contributing factors include Jackson Lab and MDI YMCA in Bar Harbor also having childcare programs. Furthermore, the Mt. Desert Nursery School did not receive as much 3rd party funding from the Town of Mount Desert at the recent Selectboard hearings as it requested. The consensus of the room amongst Warrant Committee members was encouraging our community to do what is possible to foster the current and future viability of the Nursery School.

6. Voting on Warrant Articles commenced. The Warrant Committee voted on Articles #3 through #34, except for passing over Article #25 (Short Term Rental Ordinance) until the next scheduled Warrant Committee meeting. The Warrant Committee was not ready to vote on Article #25 and this article and the underlying ordinance may yet be subject to further amendment by the Selectboard before the Warrant is finalized.
7. Round table discussion was curtailed as the Warrant Committee dedicated its efforts to voting on as many warrant articles as possible. The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:45 P.M.

Next meeting planned for Tuesday 3/14/2023. UPDATE NOTE: Due to weather and Covid-19 public health conditions, the Warrant Committee cancelled the planned Annual

Dinner and final meeting at the Neighborhood House. Next meeting for final voting on Warrant articles will now be at 5:30 P.M. on Wednesday March 15, 2023, hybrid meeting at the Northeast Harbor Town Meeting Hall and online via Zoom. Zoom link to follow from Chair Lichtenstein.