

**TOWN OF
TEMPLE, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING

Board of Selectmen

SB2 Hearing held on the 26th day of February 2019

Board members present: G. Cromwell, B. Ezell, and K. Caisse

Call to Order by: Ezell at 6:00 pm

Approximately 12 Members of the public in attendance

- Ezell dispensed with a review of RSA 40:13 (known as SB2), Official Ballot Voting, 2019 Petition Warrant Article, given the number of times it has appeared on the ballot in the last decade plus.
- Public comments in support of and in opposition of SB2

John Kieley spoke against SB2 and noted that Temple has had a long history with SB2 with the ConVal School District and he has attended dozen of those sessions where a special interest group dominates. Any attempt by others to make suggestions to act otherwise have been voted down by the special interest group. SB2 doesn't work unless you're a special interest group. He added that special interest groups can reduce warrant articles to \$1 at the deliberative session, which equates to basically tabling an item. This tactic by as few as 10 people can counter hundreds of hours on a warrant article by a department head, budget advisory committee and Select board.

Mary Beth Ayvazian said that there are some valid points made for adoption of SB2, but her research indicates that turnout at deliberative sessions across the state have seen just 3-4% of voters come out.

Charlene Eddy spoke in favor of adoption of SB2 and noted that only about 130 people turn out to Town Meeting in Temple, of the approximately 1,030 registered voters. So Town Meeting doesn't generate a large turnout.

Mary Beth Ayvazian countered that she'd rather have fewer informed voters at Town Meeting than more less-informed voters going to the polls to decide an item.

Ezell said the critical part of the SB2 deliberative session is where the dollar amount gets set.

John Kieley said deliberative sessions can manipulate dollar items and explained that in 2003-04 a group of voters came out to oppose the restoration of the old Town Hall and when they failed at Town Meeting they pushed for a special Town Meeting to stop that project involving more than \$700,000 raised that didn't involve taxpayer money. He noted that the push for SB2 started at the same time this group arose to stop the Town Hall project.

Beverly Edwards noted that the town lost a proposal to expand the town library in the years before she came to town.

A woman who identified herself as a "new" resident who has lived in town for just 18 years said Town Meetings she has attended in town and other places have taught her much about people's interests and expertise. And at least twice she was convinced by someone else to vote differently than she had initially planned. She said there should be a way to encourage people to attend Town Meeting.

Connie Kieley said turnout at Town Meeting has tended to skew higher when a controversial project is on the warrant; and when people are feeling good about town matters, they don't turn out.

Another resident said the discourse at Town Meeting is its best feature, and that budgets can be adjusted with input from department heads at Town Meeting.

Several people commented on the lack of SB2 proponents at the hearing.

Cromwell said a SB2 deliberative session could lead to a budget on the ballot that is actually lower than the default budget, which is established by the state under strict criteria. She admitted that SB2 is popular in school districts, and that teachers often turnout then to support administrative proposals.

Hearing Closed: 6:30 pm

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Paul Clifton-Waite, Assistant to the Select Board.