FURTHER INFORMATION CONCERNING
THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

There has been some misinformation circulating among certain members of the public that sufficient consideration was not given to conducting the upcoming Annual Town Meeting/Special Town Meeting (ATM/STM) at an outdoor forum instead of indoors at Marshfield High School.

Please rest assured that the Marshfield High School football field was considered, but certain logistical issues arose, not the least of which was inclement weather. Accompanied by other town officials, I also personally met with a representative of Thistle Communications of Pelham, New Hampshire, and discussed whether the ATM/STM could be conducted at the upper parking lot of the Marshfield Fairgrounds. Accompanying this explanation is (1) a proposal dated June 4, 2020, from Thistle Communications, (2) a parking map of the fairgrounds dated June 5, 2020, for 165 cars, and (3) a proposal from DMSE Sports for parking lot equipment and parking labor. As everyone will soon realize after thoroughly reading these materials, conducting Town Meeting at the fairgrounds would definitely not be as easy as walking onto the parking lot with a lawn chair to listen to an outdoor concert.

Those attending an ATM/STM at the fairgrounds would have to arrive by car and would be expected to remain in their cars during the course of the meeting, which would be broadcast to each vehicle over an FM radio channel. Only one entrance and one exit to the fairgrounds would be permitted, which would create some delay as people waited in their cars to be checked in electronically by the Town Clerk and her personnel. Each registered voter in each car would then be issued two colored paddles—one to indicate a “yes” vote and another to indicate a “no” vote. Two wireless microphones would be placed in the parking lot for attendees to speak with respect to the warrant articles. However, a tent with adequate seating and an adequate sound system would have to be erected to accommodate Town Meeting members who do not drive or who do not have access to a car. A bus system would have to transport them from a central location(s) to the fairgrounds if they were unable to ride in someone else’s car. A second tent with seating and sound would also have to be in place for non-Marshfield citizens who are not permitted to vote.

Construction of a large temporary stage (32 feet wide by 22 feet deep by 4 inches high) with an integrated roof covering and two sets of stairs would be necessary, as would the use of two large (17 feet wide by 10 feet high) outdoor LED video screens on either side of the stage to allow display of the video program to the attendees in their cars. The bottom of each screen would be 12 feet off the ground. A complete HD camera/switch package would be necessary to provide video coverage of the proceedings on the stage as well as the display of the town laptops. One manned camera would be positioned in front of the stage on a riser for “head-on” coverage of the stage participants. Two additional cameras would be set up at a “reverse angle” to capture
people at the microphones in the parking lot. Additional portable lighting units around the perimeter of the parking lot would be necessary to sufficiently illuminate the area.

Thistle Communications would provide all labor to install, operate, and remove the above equipment, including a video director/switcher, 3 camera operators, a video engineer/shader, a screen technician, an audio engineer, and a stage technician. The price for all of Thistle’s services for June 22, 2020, would be $19,065.00. To hold all of the equipment in place for a rain date of June 23, 2020, would cost an additional $7,850.00.

As shown on the parking diagram, upon their arrival, cars would be parked in rows, which would mean that paid labor would be necessary to direct the cars as they arrived. To maintain and create a desired traffic flow, DMSE Sports would furnish 100 traffic cones, 6 directional signage on A-Frame boards, 20 steel barricades, and 8 two-way radios. DMSE Sports would also provide a senior event manager and 6 other individuals to assist in the parking of the cars. Their charge for their services would be $2,949.99.

Once the meeting began, tellers would have to be assigned to each row of cars to document and record the votes taken whenever I could not clearly see from the stage all of the paddles being displayed. Allowing boards and committees to park together next to each other would be extremely difficult. While there are nearby bathrooms, human monitors would also have to be in place to make certain that social distancing was being observed as people entered and exited the bathroom building. Preventing walk-ons from accessing the parking area from another portion of the grounds (e.g. climbing a fence) could threaten the integrity of the meeting. Inclement weather could also become a concern for those persons on the stage, even with a roof and for those exposed tellers in the parking lot recording votes.

After considerable discussion and reflection, I have decided that holding the ATM/STM indoors is the better option. While conducting Town Meeting indoors at the high school will obviously involve some risk, steps will be taken to minimize that risk as much as we can. **Masks, face coverings or scarves will be mandatory, unless you have a medical condition that prevents you from wearing one. With that one exception, you will not be admitted inside without a mask or face covering of some kind.** Extra masks will be on hand for those who do not have one.

The Marshfield Fire Department will also be testing each person before entering the high school for signs of fever. Any such person exhibiting a fever will be turned away and not allowed to enter the building. Sanitizer will be readily available. The gym will be thoroughly disinfected before the meeting, as will be the adjacent bathrooms and hallways, the high school entrance, and check-in area. Adequate social distancing can be achieved for Town Meeting members once seated. Each attendee will be given a six-foot-long piece of string so that they can maintain a distance of six feet in any direction from the person nearest them. Antiseptic wipes will be provided to clean the microphones after the person in front of you uses it.

Working together, we can accomplish the work we have to do in one night. We must for all of our sakes. For this reason, I strongly urge all persons attending the ATM/STM to begin arriving at 6:15 p.m. as I intend to start promptly at 7:00 p.m.
I look forward to seeing you there.

Don Gibson
Town Moderator