

**TOWN OF COLUMBIA  
SPECIAL TOWN MEETING MINUTES  
JANUARY 21, 2020**

A Special Town Meeting of the electors and citizens qualified to vote in the Town of Columbia, Connecticut was held in Yeomans Hall, 323 Route 87, Columbia, CT on Tuesday, January 21, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.

Present were First Selectman Steven Everett; Deputy Selectmen Robert Hellstrom, Lisa Napolitano, William O'Brien and Judy Ortiz; Town Administrator Mark Walter; Town Attorney Henry Beck.

MODERATOR: Millie Ramsey  
TOWN CLERK: Robin M. Kenefick  
CITIZENS: 140 +/- Present

The meeting was called to order by First Selectman Steven Everett at 6:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. The meeting was turned over to the Moderator to explain the procedures and who may vote at this meeting per the Town Charter. The Moderator read the legal notice.

**CLAUSE 1:** Motion was made by Steven Everett.

**I move to endorse the Town's participation in the public-private partnership for the acquisition of approximately 1000 acres of open space in the so-called Wells Woods area as an expansion of the Mono Pond State Park.**

The motion was seconded by Robert Hellstrom who proposed a friendly amendment to **Clause 1**, which provides as follows:

**I move to endorse in principle the Town's participation, subject to appropriate further approvals on a parcel by parcel basis, in the public-private partnership for the acquisition of land parcels aggregating to approximately 1000 acres of open space in the so-called Wells Woods area as an expansion of the Mono Pond State Park.**

The friendly amendment was accepted by Steven Everett. The Moderator reread **Clause 1 with the friendly amendment** and opened the floor to First Selectman Steven Everett.

S. Everett explained that this is an opportunity to acquire a parcel of land that could become a part of a State Park and give Columbia a seat at the table in partnership with the State and with the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP).

The amendment was to help clarify that for each parcel that comes up for purchase in the Wells Woods area that the Town of Columbia could vote on, there is an opportunity to voice their concerns. A portion of the price for the purchase of the Markell Properties would be coming from Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, State bond funds, Audubon Wetland bond

mitigation funds, the Town of Lebanon's portion and the Town of Columbia's portion would be \$15,000. The Moderator offered the floor to Deputy Selectman Robert Hellstrom.

Robert Hellstrom, as a land surveyor, stated he has done a lot of work in the Wells Woods area. It is a very diverse and unique place.

The Moderator turned the floor back over to Steven Everett who invited the Town Administrator Mark Walter to the podium for a power point presentation.

Mark Walter stated that The Trust for Public Land is working to expand Mono Pond State Park by preserving up to 1,000 acres of forestland. It is seizing on an opportunity to protect an area known as Wells Woods, which is located in Columbia, Lebanon and Hebron. Expanding on the State Forest will preserve the diverse ecosystem, protect open space priority wetlands, state forestland and parks and strengthen part of a key greenway for both humans and wildlife. The purchase of the 313 acre Markell Property will connect Mono Pond State Park and the Air Line State Park Trail, a rail trail and linear state park. (A map displayed shows Mono Pond State Park and the Air Line State Park Trail and how the Markell Property connects the two). The State will own the property and Columbia will co-manage the property by actively working along side the State and DEEP.

The Moderator opened the floor to discussion. Discussion highlighted how important it is to protect the forestland and water and the potential for outdoor recreational opportunities as well as the concerns pertaining to parking, traffic and hunting in the Wells Woods area.

Ann Dunnack, 103 Lake Road, motioned to call the question (2/3 voted needed). Richard Szegda, 464 Route 87, seconded the motion. A voice vote to call the question. Yes: 140+ No: 2.

The Moderator re-read the clause. A voice vote on **Clause 1 with friendly amendment**. Yes: 140+ No: 3. Motion passes.

**CLAUSE 2:** Motion was made by Steven Everett.

**With the approval of Clause 1 with friendly amendment, I move to endorse the proposed expenditure of up to \$148,000 from the Town's Land Acquisition Fund for use in conjunction with such acquisitions.**

The motion was seconded by Robert Hellstrom who proposed a friendly amendment to **Clause 2**, which provides as follows:

**Subject to the approval of Clause 1 with friendly amendment, I move to endorse the possible expenditure of up to \$148,000 from the Town's Land Acquisition Fund for use,**

**subject to appropriate further authorizations on a parcel by parcel basis, in conjunction with such acquisitions.**

The friendly amendment was accepted by Steven Everett. The Moderator reread **Clause 2 with the friendly amendment** and opened the floor to First Selectman Steven Everett. Steven Everett stated that the monies are available in the Open Space Land Acquisition fund and we will look at each acquisition on a parcel by parcel basis.

The Moderator opened the floor to discussion. No discussion took place.

Joan Hill, 23 Cards Mill Road, motioned to call the question (2/3 voted needed). Ann Dunnack, 103 Lake Road seconded the motion. A voice vote to call the question. Yes: 140+ No: 1. The Moderator re-read the clause. A voice vote on **Clause 2 with friendly amendment**. Yes: 140+ No: 1. Motion passes.

**CLAUSE 3:** Motion was made by Steven Everett.

**With the approval of Clause 1 with friendly amendment and Clause 2 with friendly amendment, I move to appropriate the sum of \$15,000 from the Town's Land Acquisition Fund as a capital contribution to be applied toward the purchase price of a certain parcel consisting of approximately 313 acres of open space land located in the Towns of Columbia and Lebanon owned by Markell Properties and located at 0 Wells Wood Road (Lot 42 on Assessor's Map 42).**

The motion was seconded by Robert Hellstrom. The Moderator reread the motion and opened the floor to First Selectman Steven Everett. Steven Everett hopes everyone believes in leaving the properties (not just this one) in better shape for the people who follow behind us. This property runs down through and leads to the Salmon River Watershed. We haven't stressed it enough; this is a vital reserve of clean water.

The Moderator opened the floor to Robert Hellstrom, who concurred with everything that Steven Everett stated.

The Moderator opened the floor to discussion. No discussion took place.

Richard Szegda, 464 Route 87, motioned to call the question (2/3 voted needed). Paul Ramsey, 100 Hunt Road, seconded the motion. A voice vote to call the question. A unanimous voice vote to call the question. The Moderator re-read the clause. A voice vote on **Clause 3**. Yes: 140+ No: 0. Motion passes.

**CLAUSE 4:** Motion was made by Steven Everett.

**I move to appropriate the sum of \$25,000 from the General Fund to the Tree Removal Capital Account to cover the estimated costs of tree removal due to tree damage.**

The motion was seconded by Margaret Ewald, 47 Route 87 West. The Moderator reread the motion and opened the floor to First Selectman Steven Everett. Steven Everett stated that there are two tree wardens who are spotting trees that are hazards near roads and powerlines and need to be taken down.

The Moderator opened the floor to Margaret Ewald, who stated she has at least 5-6 trees on her property with damage.

The Moderator opened the floor to discussion. There were several questions pertaining to where the locations of the trees being taken down were, what would happen with the cut down wood, who would identify and prioritize which trees were to be cut down. It was stated that Public Works would handle identifying and prioritizing trees to be taken down and what would be done with the cut down wood. This tree work only applies to Town roads, not State roads.

The Moderator re-read the motion. A voice vote on **Clause 4**. Yes: 140+ No: 0. Motion passes unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin M. Kenefick  
Town Clerk