

**SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
TOWN OF COLUMBIA
FEBRUARY 8, 2012
7:30 PM**

A Special Town Meeting of the electors and citizens qualified to vote in the Town of Columbia, Connecticut was held in the Horace W. Porter Cafetorium, 2 Schoolhouse Road, Columbia on Wednesday February 8, 2012 at 7:30 p.m.

Present were Carmen Vance, First Selectman, Richard J. Szegda, Robert W. Hellstrom, William O'Brien, and Robert J. Bogue, Selectmen, Jonathan Luiz, Town Administrator, Henry Beck, Town Attorney.

The meeting was opened by the Moderator Steve Arntsen at 7:30 p.m. at the Horace W. Porter Cafetorium. Present were First Selectman Carmen Vance, Selectmen Richard Szegda, Town Clerk Robin M. Kenefick and Town Administrator Jonathan Luiz. In consideration of the large crowd that had gathered at the school a motion was made by First Selectman Carmen Vance to move the meeting to the Horace W. Porter Gymnasium. The motion was seconded by R. Szegda. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting adjourned to the Gymnasium.

The meeting was reconvened in the Gymnasium by the Moderator at 7:35 p.m.

MODERATOR:	Steve Arntsen
TOWN CLERK:	Robin M. Kenefick
CITIZENS:	450+/- Present

The Moderator explained the only two clauses to be addressed at this meeting would be those outlined in the agenda.

The Moderator gave the floor to First Selectman Carmen Vance to give some background on the process and how it brought us to this point. On August 7, 2007, the Board of Selectmen appointed the Library Building Committee to look into a library expansion project and report back with their findings to determine if there was enough space in the current location for expansion and renovation. Architects were brought in and have been working with the Library Building Committee for the past four years on this project. Their findings were presented to the Board of Selectmen. In January 2012, the Board of Selectmen met with the Library Building Committee to discuss the project. The Library Building Committee made a recommendation to hold a spring referendum and the Board of Selectmen agreed with this. Following that meeting, town members who were not in

favor of holding a spring referendum circulated a petition, in accordance with the Town Charter, to call for a town meeting and that is how we got here.

CLAUSE 1: Motion was made by Lisa Napolitano:

I move that the following motion, approved by the Board of Selectmen, be overruled: "That a referendum be held in the spring to authorize the Board of Selectmen to borrow money to renovate and expand the existing library building?"

Motion was seconded by Mike Robertson. The floor was opened to Ms. Napolitano who spoke on the motion. She explained that at the January 3, 2012 Board of Selectmen meeting, a spring referendum was approved to vote on the existing library expansion project. After learning of this decision and for several reasons, Ms. Napolitano decided to take out the petition to give everyone the opportunity to be able to vote on this. She noted the average referendum in Columbia has only a 26.5% voter turnout and during past presidential elections, voter turnout has been 86.94%. Ms. Napolitano said that whether or not one wants the library project, everyone should have the right to voice their opinion. The floor was opened to discussion.

Mike Robertson, spoke as a taxpayer and not a member of FIPAC. He urged people to vote Yes on both clauses. He said that maximum voter turnout is necessary and that taxpayers need to be informed and educated on the item at hand and need to make an informed decision. He said that this decision should not be voted on by a handful of people, but everyone should get involved in the process.

Hank Schwartz spoke as a taxpayer and as a member of the Library Building Committee. He explained why the Committee felt spring was the right time for the referendum to be held and why the Committee did not want to wait until the November election. (Point of order was called when discussion moved to the cost of the project).

Others spoke on why they felt Clause 1 should be voted Yes. People started to speak out of turn and off the subject. The Moderator reminded the citizens to stay focused and orderly. The Clause is about the timing of the vote and solely about the timing, not the project.

Paul Kubala called the question. The call was seconded. A voice vote to call the question was made. YES: 400+ NO: 3 to call the question. Motion 1 was re-read and a voice vote was taken. YES: 300 NO: 150. Motion passes.

CLAUSE 2: Motion was made by Lisa Napolitano:

I move that the Special Town Meeting request the Board of Selectmen to take any such actions as may be necessary to schedule a referendum to be held concurrently with the November 2012 general election for the purpose of authorizing the Board

of Selectmen to borrow the funds necessary for the renovation and expansion of the existing library building.”

Motion was seconded by M. Robertson. The floor was opened to discussion. The Moderator explained that this clause is a request to the Board of Selectmen to hold the referendum at the same time as the November election. Selectmen Richard Szegda, encouraged everyone to attend future public hearings that will be held regarding the library project so that everyone can be informed. The floor was opened to citizens speaking out on not having information on this project and not able to get any information on the library. Others spoke to having the referendum stand alone and not be held along with the November election. Others spoke to the cost of having a referendum and voter turnout.

Rebecca Stearns called the question. The call was seconded. Point of order was raised to vote on the call of the question. A voice vote to call the question was made. YES: 400+ NO: 0 to call the question. Motion 2 was re-read and a voice vote was taken. YES: 350: NO: 100. Motion passes.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin M. Kenefick
Town Clerk