

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 1, 2016

The legal voters of the Town of Townshend are hereby notified and WARNED to meet at the Town Hall in Townshend, Vermont, on Tuesday, March 1, 2016 at 9:00 a.m. to act on the following articles, viz:

The Assembly recited the Pledge of Allegiance and David Liebow called the meeting to order at 9:06 A.M. Several announcements were made and the location of numerous handouts and surveys was pointed out to the Assembly. The preamble was read and a brief explanation was given of the procedure that would be followed during Town Meeting.

ARTICLE I. To choose a Moderator for the ensuing year:

David Liebow opened nominations for Moderator.

Nominated: David Liebow.

There being no others, nominations were closed and the clerk was instructed to cast one ballot for David Liebow as Moderator for a term of one year. Motion seconded and passed by voice vote.

David Liebow, 1 year term as Moderator

Town Meeting was recessed to reconvene after the Townshend Elementary School District 2016 Annual Meeting:

Motion was made to suspend the rules to allow Rebecca Balint and Emily Long to speak which was passed without objection.

Rebecca Balint (State Senator) spoke to the assembly regarding education and providing the tools to keep the young people here in Vermont. She also addressed the need to provide more affordable housing and better wages to attract more people.

Emily Long (State Representative) addressed the issue of the Townshend Dam.

Questions from the assembly regarding the costs and funding for special education, Act 46(costs and feasibility) and student declination.

The Moderator reconvened the Town Meeting at 10:16 A.M.

ARTICLE II. To approve the July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015 Auditors' Report:

So moved by Craig and seconded by Dale West.

Discussion – Rick Hege mentioned that the Auditors used pictures off the internet that they had not received permission to use.

Carole Melis brought up the fact that she was not the only one on the Howard Legacy Fund. Ted Redfield and Ellen Stratton are also involved.

Charlie Marchant stated that, based on the information he reviewed on page 17 of the Town Report, he recommends that Article 2 be rejected.

Dale West stated that there is no requirement in the State Statutes to accept or reject the Auditor's report.

Craig Hunt advised that the town is only approving the Auditor's Report on page 5. Not the entire Town Report.

Kathy Hege addressed the figures that were in the Town Report. She stated that many of the numbers are either wrong or inaccurate.

There was further discussion about the availability of numbers, difficulty working with other individuals in the Town Hall, absence of the Auditors from March until September and other issues.

No further discussion – Request for paper ballot.

Total Votes - 92

Yes - 31

No - 59

Blank - 2

Article II Failed

ARTICLE III.

To see if the Town will vote for the elimination of the Office of Auditor under 1 V.S.A. §2651b and replace it with a professionally qualified auditing service?

So moved by Kathy Hege and seconded by Irv Stowell.

Discussion: Andrew Snelling asked about Costs of hiring an outside Auditing firm. Richard Lucier spoke to the fact that there have been too many bookkeepers making the job more difficult.

Patrick Kiernan (Auditor) stated that they had a meeting on January 29, 2016 and no one showed up. He also stated that there was a lack of communication between office personal.

Kathy Greve asked about the current responsibilities of Auditors and who does the Town Report.

Kathy Hege stated that if a professional Auditing Firm were hired then the Town Report would be done by the Select Board or a group of volunteers. She also explained that if a CPA were hired that the bookkeeper would do the day to day tasks and the CPA would review at the end of the year.

Additional discussion regarding candidates, Auditor's budget, how a CPA would be chosen, number of professional audits done in the past few years.

Select Board recommended hiring a professional Auditor. Patrick Kiernan recommended keeping the Auditors.

Rick Hege emphasized that people who run for office and are elected accept certain responsibilities. If they do not perform the job there is no recourse.

Kathy Dugrenier asked what elected officials do. Is there any kind of job description for people who get elected to town offices? Henry Martin told her that VLCT provides manuals for all elected officials as well as training for all elected officials.

Warren Beattie called the question. Debate close. Request for paper ballot

Total Votes 109

Yes 59

No 48

Blank 2

Article III passed

ARTICLE IV.

To see what salaries the Town will vote to pay its various officials for the ensuing year:

Motion to drop the “Auditors by Stipend of” made by Gene Kuch and seconded by Craig Hunt.

Gene Kuch – Stated that a Stipend would pay them whether they are there or not. He wants to have the Listers get reimbursed for all mileage. There is a lot of work and time involved in the job.

Motion to Amend the Article to estimate Listers by Stipend of \$6,000.00 to the casual labor rate of \$13.65 per hour and eliminating all mileage reimbursed for training and conferences only made by Gene Kuch and seconded by Carole Melis.

Discussion as to whether or not to allow the amendment. Amendment is allowed.

Would the expense to the town be more or less?

Carole Melis stated that a stipend unfairly penalizes the people who are putting in the hours and rewards the people who are not. The Listers job is very difficult and requires a lot of hours. They are required to do a lot of driving going to view the properties.

Richard Lucier spoke to labor costs of \$21,000.00 – \$23,000.00. He stated that viewing properties makes for extra work. He also stated that previous Listers have made \$12,000.00 to \$15,000.00 or more per year.

Questions as to whether or not the mileage amount would apply to all elected officials?

Request to close debate passed by voice vote. Debate is closed.

Motion to Amend the main motion to pay the Listers \$13.65 and allow all mileage for Listers passed by voice vote.

Motion to Amend Article IV. To read:

To see what salaries the Town will vote to pay its various officials for the ensuing year:

made by Kathy Hege and seconded by Rick Hege.

There being no discussion, Article IV passed by voice vote.

Article IV passed

ARTICLE V. To elect all Town Officials for the ensuing year(s):

Town Clerk: 1 – one year term: Nominated: Anita Bean

Motion made to close nominations and have the clerk cast one ballot for Anita Bean for a one year term as Town Clerk; seconded and carried by voice vote.

Anita Bean, 1 year term as Town Clerk

Town Treasurer: 1 – one year term: Nominated: Joseph Daigneault

Motion made to close nominations and have the clerk cast one ballot for Joseph Daigneault for a one year term as Town Treasurer; seconded and carried by voice vote.

Joseph Daigneault, 1 year term as Town Treasurer

Select Board: 1 - three year term: Nominated: Kyle Lapointe

Motion made to close nominations and have the clerk cast one ballot for Kyle Lapointe for a three year term on the Select Board; seconded and carried by voice vote.

Kyle Lapointe, 3 year term on Select Board

1 – one year term: Nominated: Henry Martin

Motion made to close nominations and have the clerk cast one ballot for Henry Martin for a one year term on the Select Board; seconded and carried by voice vote.

Henry Martin, 1 year term on Select Board

1 – one year term: Nominated: Irvin Stowell

Motion made to close nominations and have the clerk cast one ballot for Irvin Stowell for a one year term on the Select Board; seconded and carried by voice vote.

Irvin Stowell, 1 year term on Select Board

Listers: 1 - three 3 year term **Nominated:** Richard Lucier

Motion made to close nominations and have the clerk cast one ballot for Richard Lucier for a three year term as Lister; seconded and carried by voice vote.

Richard Lucier, 3 year term as Lister

PROPERTY TAX COLLECTOR: 1 – one year term: Nominated: Joseph Daigneault

Motion made to close nominations and have the clerk cast one ballot for Joseph Daigneault for a one year term as Town Treasurer; seconded and carried by voice vote.

Joseph Daigneault, 1 year term as Property Tax Collector

DELINQUENT TAX COLLECTOR: 1 – one year term: Nominated: Becky Nystrom

Motion made to close nominations and have the clerk cast one ballot for Becky Nystrom for a one year term as Delinquent Tax Collector; seconded and carried by voice vote.

Becky Nystrom, 1 year term as Delinquent Tax Collector

FIRST CONSTABLE: 1 – one year term: Nominated: Warren Beattie

Motion made to close nominations and have the clerk to cast one ballot for Warren Beattie for a one year term as First Constable; seconded and carried by voice vote.

Warren Beattie, 1 year term as First Constable

SECOND CONSTABLE: 1 – one year term: Nominated: Michael Cutts

Motion made to close nominations and have the clerk to cast one ballot for Mike Cutts for a one year term as Second Constable; seconded and carried by voice vote.

Michael Cutts, 1 year term as Second Constable

TOWN GRAND JUROR: 1 – one year term: Nominated: Margaret Bills

Motion made to close nominations and have the clerk to cast one ballot for Margaret Bills for a one year term as Town Grand Juror; seconded and carried by voice vote.

Margaret Bills, 1 year term as Town Grand Juror

TOWN AGENT: 1 – one year term: Nominated: Carole Melis

Motion made to close nominations and have the clerk to cast one ballot for Carole Melis for a one year term as Town Agent; seconded and carried by voice vote.

Carole Melis, 1 year term as Town Agent

LIBRARY TRUSTEES: 1 – five year term: Nominated: Marilee Attley

Motion made to close nominations and have the clerk to cast one ballot for Marilee Attley for a five year term as Library Trustee; seconded and carried by voice vote.

Marilee Attley, 5 year term as Library Trustee

CEMETERY COMMISSIONER: 1 – five year term: Nominated: Scott Nystrom

Motion made to close nominations and have the clerk to cast one ballot for Scott Nystrom for a five year term as Cemetery Commissioner; seconded and carried by voice vote.

Scott Nystrom, 5 year term as Cemetery Commissioner

Motion to recess for lunch until 1:00 P.M. made by Craig Hunt and seconded by Gene Kuch

Town Meeting Reconvened at 1:00 pm

ARTICLE VI. To see if the Town will authorize its Property Tax Collector to receive its Real Property Taxes quarterly, August 31, 2016; November 30, 2016; February 28, 2017; and May 31, 2017? Monthly interest will be charged at the rate of one-half percent (1/2%) or fraction thereof; interest of one percent (1%) or fraction thereof plus penalties will commence on June 1, 2016.

So moved by Craig Hunt and seconded by Henry Martin.

Motion to Amend the article to read "interest of one percent (1%) or fraction thereof plus penalties will commence on June 1, 2017 made by Carole Melis and seconded.

There being no discussion, Article VI, as amended, passes by voice vote.

Article VI passed

ARTICLE VII. To see if the Town will vote to appropriate \$ 524,989.00, to pay for the running expenses and liabilities of the Town, of which \$ 436,893.00, to be raised by taxation?

So moved by Henry Martin and seconded by Irv Stowell.

Discussion as to whether or not money allocated for Auditors and Listers is included in the number? It was explained that in 2015 when there were five Listers the budget amount was higher. The amount expended for Lister wages should be less now that there are only three. Additionally, the budget is level funded.

Motion to amend the budget by \$4,500.00 made by Richard Lucier and seconded by Carole Melis.

Motion to amend passes by hand vote.

Main Motion “ To see if the Town will vote to appropriate \$529,489.00, to pay for the running expenses and liabilities of the Town, of which \$ 441,393.00, to be raised by taxation?

Lengthy Discussion ensued regarding the \$4,500.00 increase.

Questions arose about the Administrative Assistant's wages and retirement. Retirement is a State obligation.

There being no further discussion Article VII, as amended, passes by voice vote.

Article VII passed

ARTICLE VIII. To see if the Town will vote to appropriate \$ 674,345.00 for the running expenses and liabilities of maintaining the Town's roads, of which \$ 220,814.00, to be raised by taxation?

So moved by Kathy Hege and seconded by Irv Stowell.

Discussion – Kathy Hege explained revenue, surplus and reserves, the Equipment Fund and how the \$220,814.00 came about.

There being no further discussion Article VIII passes by voice vote.

Article VIII passed

ARTICLE IX. To see if the Town will vote to raise \$46,420.00, by taxation, for the running expenses and liabilities of the Library?

So moved by Maggie Bills and seconded by Carole Melis.

There being no discussion Article IX passes by voice vote.

Article IX passed

ARTICLE X. To see if the Town will vote to raise \$ 10,000.00, by taxation, to be placed in the Capital Expenditure Fund Fire Department Reserve toward a future pumper?

So moved by Irv Stowell and seconded by Charlie Marchant.

There being no discussion Article X passes by voice vote.

Article X passed

ARTICLE XI. To see if the Town will vote to raise \$ 1,500.00, by taxation, for the Old Cemetery Fund?

So moved by Charlie Marchant and seconded by Irv Stowell.

There being no discussion Article XI passes by voice vote.

Article XI passed

ARTICLE XII. To see if the Town will vote to raise \$ 14,625.00, by taxation, for the support of Social Services, as recommended by the Screening Committee?

So moved by Charlie Marchant and seconded by Craig Hunt.

Discussion: Who is the screening committee? No one appointed. It was done by Craig Hunt.

There being no further discussion Article XII passes by voice vote.

Article XII passed

ARTICLE XIII. To see if the Town will authorize the Selectmen to set a tax rate sufficient to cover all monies raised for municipal entities for the period July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017, and to borrow money in anticipation of taxes?

So moved by Kathy Hege and seconded by Irv Stowell.

Discussion: What would happen if Article was voted down? It is an Article that is required to be in the warning by law.

There being no further discussion Article XIII passes by voice vote.

Article XIII passed

ARTICLE XIV. To see if the Town will authorize the Board of Selectmen to acquire, by gift or purchase, land for municipal forest, to promote reforestation, water conservation and good forestry practices?

So moved by Irv Stowell and seconded by Kathy Hege.

Minimal Discussion. It is a Statutory Article.

There being no further discussion Article XIV passes by voice vote.

Article XIV passed

ARTICLE XV. To see if the Town will vote to set the first Tuesday in March 2017, as the date for the 2017 Town of Townshend Annual Meeting at 9:00 A.M.?

So moved by Gene Kuch and seconded by Kathy Hege.

There being no discussion Article XV passes by voice vote.

Article XV passed

ARTICLE XVI. To transact any other non-binding business to properly come before said Meeting?

1. Town Hall Fund – Invest in repairing or replacing windows;
2. Possible uses of Taft Meadows;
3. The change from 1 payment for taxes versus 4;
4. Possibility of a Town Manager;
5. Thanks for the SB service;

6. Committee to look into the position of Town Manager. Volunteers for appointed positions. Handbooks available for job descriptions;
7. Thanks to the Fire Department for providing lunch.

There being no further discussion, Carole Melis made a motion to adjourn at 2:10 P.M. Seconded and unanimously carried.

Anita Bean, Town Clerk

Kathleen Hege, Select Board Chair

David Liebow, Moderator