

TOWN OF WOODBURY, VERMONT

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN AND SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING

TUESDAY, MARCH 5, 2019

The legal voters of the Town and School District of Woodbury, Vermont met at the Woodbury Elementary School on Tuesday, March 5, 2019 at 10:00 a.m. and took action on the warned articles.

The meeting was called to order by Steven Freihofner, Moderator, who first invited the voters to join in the Pledge of Allegiance. He then explained the rules and procedures that would govern the meeting. He asked that any guests who were not registered voters raise their hands to identify themselves, and explained that those people could only speak with the approval of two-thirds of the voters present.

The meeting proceeded with the following articles:

Article 1: Election of a moderator to govern the Town meetings for the ensuing year – Steven Freihofner was elected.

Article 2: What action will the Town take in regard to the printed report of the Town Officials for the year ending December 31, 2018?

Paul Cerutti moved to accept the report as written, and the motion was seconded by Ron Wells.

Eric Wallace-Senft, who had identified himself as not a registered voter, asked to speak and was allowed to do so by a majority of the voters present. He questioned the meaning of the article, and the moderator explained that by accepting as written, the report was not being challenged as to its accuracy or correctness. The motion was approved.

Article 3: Election of Town Officers:

Town Clerk – Diana Peduzzi was elected to serve as town clerk for three years.

Select Board Member – Paul Cerutti was elected to serve on the Select Board for three years.

Lister – Michael McGlynn and Merry Gangemi were nominated for the 3-year lister position. Paper ballots were distributed. The final vote was 45 for Gangemi and 23 for McGlynn. Gangemi was elected to serve as a lister for three years.

Delinquent Tax Collector – Ronald Wells was elected to serve in this position for one year.

Grand Juror - Retta Dunlap was elected to serve in this position for one year.

Town Law Agent – Retta Dunlap was elected to serve in this position for one year.

Cemetery Commissioner – Lee Seidenberg was nominated and elected to serve as Cemetery Commissioner for five years.

Library Trustee – Ann Peltz was elected to serve as Library Trustee for 1 year.

Library Trustee – Jack Travelstead was elected to serve as Library Trustee for 2 years.

Agent to Transfer Real Estate – Diana Peduzzi was elected to this position for 1 year

Article 4: Voters agreed to have property taxes payable to the Town Treasurer 60 days after tax bills are mailed (estimated due date to be Oct. 24, 2019). Taxes which become delinquent will then be turned over to the Collector of Delinquent Taxes for collection with a penalty that increases by ½ % per month of delinquency to a maximum of 6% for one full year or more of delinquency, and interest of 6% per year or ½% per month.

Paul Cerutti moved to accept the article, with a second from Skip Marchessani. Eric Wallace-Senft asked to speak on the article. A vote of the electorate was taken, 31 voted in favor and 28 were opposed, a two-thirds majority was not reached and he was not allowed to speak. The article was approved on a voice vote.

Article 5: Voters agreed to authorize and empower the Select Board to borrow money on the credit of the Town.

Article 6: Voters agreed to authorize and empower the Select Board to borrow money to pay current expenses in anticipation of taxes raised and uncollected.

Article 7: To appropriate \$17,850.00 to the Woodbury Volunteer Fire Department, to be added to the truck replacement fund. Susan Martin moved the article and Dave Barnowski seconded it. Eric Wallace-Senft again asked for permission to speak. Ginger Etkind, check-in clerk at the meeting entrance desk, offered that Eric is in fact registered as a voter in Woodbury even though he chose not to “check in” as such. The moderator confirmed that Eric is a registered voter and would be allowed to speak.

Eric asked whether the amount in the dollar sign indicates legal tender or lawful money. The moderator declined to offer legal advice on that question. Eric clarified that he is not opposed to any expenditure for services that the public needs, but he wishes we could develop a local system for paying for services instead of property taxes. The motion passed on a voice vote.

Article 8: To appropriate \$73,727.00 to fund the operations of the Woodbury Volunteer Fire Department for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2019. Moved by Dave Barnowski, seconded by Ron Wells.

Eric Wallace-Senft asked why so much money (in three articles) is being allocated to one group, suggesting that the money could be used to alleviate immediate hardships in the community rather than projecting out to possible needs for emergency services in the future.

Retta Dunlap pointed out that the Fire Chief’s Report noted 44 emergency medical calls the Fire Dept. or First responders were called to in 2018. She suggested that people watch a video recently produced which describes the hardships experienced by first responders and how it affects them. She thanked the WVFD for their work and the voters agreed with a round of applause.

Mike McGlynn noted that the three funding requests from WVFD total \$122,000 and he wonders how long the town can be expected to keep up this level of funding, and whether Calais will continue to contribute as they have in the past. Merry Gangemi spoke of receiving services from the WVFD and Hardwick Rescue, noting that with the federal and state governments continuously cutting back on funding of local services it is important that we continue to self-fund this important function.

Paul Cerutti explained that Calais is continuing to support the department, in fact their portion increased this year by a higher percentage than ours. He also repeated that the successful efforts to improve the department’s “ISO” rating has resulted in lower fire insurance rates for property owners in town. Most of the cost increases are due to increases in fixed costs. This article will not result in an increase in taxes.

Eric Wallace-Senft suggested that we could fund this service by requesting donations from corporations instead of using the existing monetary system.

The motion passed.

Article 9: To appropriate \$31,000.00 to the Woodbury Volunteer Fire Department to fund the capital replacement fund. Moved by Gary Smith with a second from Susan Martin.

Paul Cerutti explained that the last couple of new vehicles for the FD have been leased, not purchased, which has incurred significant interest costs. Also, other expensive equipment such as breathing apparatus and air cylinders will need replacement soon. Because of the types of materials in home materials and furnishings, they produce toxic fumes when burning and firefighters cannot enter a home without breathing packs. The FD hopes to phase out the "Truck Fund" after the current leases are paid off in five years and use the capital equipment fund instead. The motion passed.

At 11:00 AM Susan Martin made a motion that the meeting take a brief recess to hear from State Representatives Avram Patt and David Yacovone, who summarized their committee work during the first part of the legislative session and answered questions.

The lunch break began shortly before noon with lunch was provided as a fundraiser by the Friends of Woodbury Elementary School.

The meeting re-convened at 12:30 PM.

Article 10: Paul Cerutti made a motion to consolidate Articles 10-34. The motion was seconded by David Barnowski.

The moderator explained that amendments to the motion are acceptable if someone wants to separate out any particular articles. Merry Gangemi offered an amendment to separate out Article 14 (Sylvia Jackson Fund – to approve an additional \$500) and Article 22 (Family Center of Washington County – increase from \$100 to \$250). Merry explained that the Sylvia Jackson Fund is a local fund which is in a position to help town residents having emergency needs, when the outside agencies are not in a position to provide help. It was pointed out that the town has a policy for appropriation requests from outside agencies, which has been strictly enforced. Agencies asking for increased funding over the prior year must submit a petition signed by 5% of registered voters. Susan Martin spoke of the value of services provided by the Washington County Family Center.

Article 10: Approved - \$12,000 for the support of the Woodbury Community Library.

Article 11: Approved - \$7,000 for the support of the Woodbury Cemeteries.

Article 12: Approved - \$1,000 for the "Friends of Woodbury Elementary School".

Article 13: Approved - \$540 to the Woodbury/ Calais Food Shelf.

Article 14: Approved as amended - \$1,500 to the Sylvia Jackson fund.

Article 15: Approved - \$750 to Aid to Women, Men and Children in Abuse and Rape Emergencies.

Article 16: Approved - \$250 to the American Red Cross of NH/VT.

Article 17: Approved - \$600 to Central Vermont Adult Basic Education.

Article 18: Approved - \$750 to the Central Vermont Council on Aging.

Article 19: Approved - \$300 to the Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation.

Article 20: Approved - \$2,000 to Central Vermont Home Health & Hospice Inc.

Article 21: Approved - \$650 to CIRCLE (Battered Women's Services).

Article 22: Approved - \$100 to the Family Center of Washington County (not amended)

Article 23: Approved - \$484 to Green Mountain Transit.

Article 24: Approved - \$50 to Green Up Vermont.

Article 25: Approved - \$300 to the Hardwick Area Community Justice Center.

Article 26: Approved - \$750 to Hardwick Community Television.

Article 27: Approved - \$200 to Our House of Central Vermont.

Article 28: Approved - \$100 to the People's Health and Wellness Clinic.

Article 29: Approved - \$200 to the Sexual Assault Crisis Team.

Article 30: Approved - \$1000 to the Twin Valley Senior Center.

Article 31: Approved - \$210 to the Vermont Center for Independent Living.

Article 32: Approved - \$100 to the VT Rural Fire Protection Task Force for the Dry Hydrant Program.

Article 33: Approved - \$1,000 to Washington County Mental Health Services.

Article 34: Approved - \$500 to the Washington County Youth Service Bureau.

Article 35: Voters were asked to approve an amount to meet the expenses and liabilities of the Town for general purposes for the period from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020, and to authorize the Select Board to set a tax rate sufficient to provide the same. There was some confusion about whether voter approval was required for total anticipated spending, or just for the amount of taxes to be raised. Final approval was granted as follows: for general purposes, a budget for expenditures of \$462,489.03, with \$260,189.03 needed to be raised in taxes.

Article 36: Voters were asked to approve an amount to meet the expenses and liabilities of the Town for highway purposes for the period from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020 and to authorize the Select Board to set a tax rate sufficient to provide the same. Approval was granted for expenditures of \$520,062.74, and to set a tax rate sufficient to raise \$428,962.74 toward those expenditures.

Peter Peltz complimented the road crew on their fine work during the difficult winter we have just experienced.

Article 37: To adjourn the town portion of the meeting. Roy Demers moved to adjourn.

David Barnowski made a resolution that, next year, a black or white board be available so that the names of candidates can be presented and visible to the voters. Norman Etkind noticed that the usual article to allow discussion of other relevant (but non-binding) town business, was not included in the warning. The moderator called for a 2/3 vote to allow Dave's motion, it was allowed, and the resolution was approved and duly noted to be placed in the minutes as a reminder for next year. Also under other business, Peter Peltz asked the Fire Department to disclose their plans for the Aronson property which they recently acquired. Paul Cerutti explained that since the property was gifted to the WVFD, they have been doing site analysis to determine the possibilities for use of the site, and a committee is being formed to assess their next steps. Susan Martin thanked the town for investing in the flashing

speed signs which are helping to reduce speeding near Woodbury Lake. Brandy Smith thanked Skip Lindsay for his three years of service on the Select Board.

The motion to adjourn was approved.

Dated at Woodbury, Vermont this 7th day of May, 2019.

\_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
Steven Freihofner, Moderator

\_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
Michael Gray, Select Board Chair

Attest: \_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
Diana Peduzzi, Town Clerk



*Photo by Michael Gray*

## MINUTES OF THE WOODBURY TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING FOR 2019

The legal voters of the Woodbury Town School District met at the Woodbury Elementary School on Tuesday, March 5, 2019 upon conclusion of the Town Meeting to act upon the following articles:

Article 1: To elect the following school district officers for the ensuing year:

School District Meeting Moderator: Steven Freihofner was elected.

School District Clerk: Diana Peduzzi was elected.

One Woodbury Town School District Director for a term of three years: Kim Silk was elected.

One Woodbury Town School District Director for a term of two years: Phoebe Slater was elected.

One Woodbury Town School District Director for a term of two years remaining on a three year term: Stephen Murphy was elected.

One Hazen Union School Director for a term of three years: Chris Casey was elected.

Article 3: The following salaries were proposed and approved for the officers and directors of the school district: School Board Chair - \$0; School Board Member - \$0; School District Treasurer - \$1,500.00; School District Alternate Treasurer – \$25.00 per incident as needed; School District Clerk - \$0.

Eric Wallace-Senft asked why the Treasurer is paid and the others are not. Upon explanation of the responsibilities held by the treasurer, Eric suggested that there should be more liability protection for the treasurer.

Article 4: To hear and act upon the reports of the Woodbury Town School District officers and directors.

The floor was ceded to Patrick Flood, Woodbury School Board Chair, who “attempted to give a concise summary” of Act 46 and what’s happening and may happen in the run-up to the effective date of the forced merger. He thanked the other School Board members, the Friends of WES, and the Select Board, for additional work to help the town school district survive.

Through Act 46, the state legislature gave the State Board of Education authority to mandate mergers between and among school districts in the state. Up until November 2018, Woodbury School board was told that a merger would not be required for Woodbury, our district having shown the Secretary of Education that schools in the OSSU district had a plan that would meet the goals of Act 46 without a merger. When that secretary left her position, things changed. Late in November, the state board mandated that Woodbury, Hardwick, Greensboro and Stannard must merge into one district for K-6 education. This gave very little time to iron out any details or complexities that might arise. Meanwhile, lawsuits were filed by many school districts, including some in our proposed merger area, and the legislature began to consider taking action on many requests for one-year extensions to the merger mandate. The merger order came with many deadlines for completing the many steps necessary for a merger. Because of the possibility that an extension may be granted, the WES Board is continuing to work on its separate budget instead of working on a merged budget.

Patrick doubts that this forced merger is going to result in any cost savings unless schools are closed, and he does not anticipate any positive results despite all of the work that is going on to make the merger happen in a constructive way. The WES students have the best results on standardized tests in the district. They are getting a good education here.

There will be a board with members from all four towns. The make-up of that board still must be determined. Then there is the issue of the property. The new rules mandate that schools owned by town school districts must be deeded over to the new union school district. However, since the Town of Woodbury has owned its school building and land since 1914, and the property was never deeded over to the School District. The Board is attempting to negotiate a lease with the new district, as an alternative to giving the school and land over to the new district, which locals don't seem to want to do.

The School Board is working on a budget which they will present to the voters within the next month or so. This will not be easy. For example, the school is looking at a \$29,000 health insurance increase. The roof replacement, approved by voters in a ballot vote one year ago, has also become a conundrum, how to access the School District's building reserve money, which some believe is the school district's money, to finance repair work on a building does not belong to the school district.

Patrick offered three questions of the voters:

1. Do you want the WES to continue to operate as an elementary school? Show of hands, yes.
2. Do you want the Town to take over ownership of the 14-acre wetland owned by the School District? Show of hands, yes.
3. Do you prefer voting for the unified budget by Australian ballot, or by a floor vote? By a show of hands, not counted, there were slightly more who favored a floor vote.
4. Do you prefer voting for school board members by Australian ballot, or by a floor vote? Australian ballot would mean that candidates must present petitions and be placed on a written ballot to be voted on by the entire (district-wide) electorate. By a show of hands, elections from the floor were favored.

More comments and discussion followed.

Article 5: To transact any other business that may legally come before the meeting – No other business was offered.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:00 PM.

Dated at Woodbury, Vermont this 7th day of May, 2019.

\_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
Steven Freihofner, Moderator

\_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
Patrick Flood, School Board Chair

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
Diana Peduzzi, District Clerk