

MINUTES  
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING  
March 7, 2017

Pursuant to notice the inhabitants of the Town of Halifax, Vermont, who are legal voters in the Town Meeting met at the West Halifax Elementary School multi-purpose room in West Halifax, Vermont, on Tuesday, March 7, 2017 for the 240<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Town of Halifax.

Moderator Paul G. Blais called the meeting to order at 10:05 A.M. and announced that the polls would be open from 10:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M. for voting by Australian Ballot for Town and Town School District Officers.

Moderator Blais called for a moment of silence in memory of those who had passed away.

The Board of Selectmen led the voters in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

The town officers were introduced: Town Clerk - Patricia Dow and Patricia Pusey, former Moderator Selectmen – Lewis Sumner, Chairman; Mitch Green and Bradley Rafus and Robbin Gabriel as Selectboard Assistant. Moderator Blais asked if there were any objections to appoint Patricia Pusey as Parliamentarian. Seeing no objections, Patricia Pusey was appointed Parliamentarian. Moderator Blais stated that the meeting would be run by Roberts Rules of Order except where state law overrules and gave a brief explanation of parliamentary procedure.

A Brief Recess was taken to allow Representative John Gannon to speak. Representative Gannon spoke about being assigned to the Committee of Government Operations which has oversight of State Government, compensation of State employees, retirement pension laws, law enforcement, public safety, elections, professional license and the laws that affect local county and regional governments. Representative Gannon focused on three topics. First: PFOA's, second: education and three: Act 250.

PFOA: There are a couple of bills in the Senate to help with expenses and liabilities related to PFOA.

Education: The Governors' budget proposal puts a lot of pressure on the education fund to tack on three new costs, being Higher education, childcare and teachers' retirement. A number of bills have been introduced regarding to school mergers.

ACT 250: This is a well-intentioned law. Administratively it has caused a lot of problems, it is cumbersome and a lengthy process.

Town Meeting was reconvened at 10:29 am. Moderator Blais read the Warning in its entirety.

ARTICLE 1: The following Town Offices were elected by Australian Ballot:

|   |                |
|---|----------------|
| TOWN MODERATOR - one year.....                | Paul G. Blais  |
| SELECTMAN - three years.....                  | Lewis Sumner   |
| TOWN CLERK – three years .....                | Patricia Dow   |
| TREASURER – three years.....                  | Patricia Dow   |
| LISTER – three years.....                     | Tina Blais     |
| AUDITOR – three years.....                    | Sarah Barnett  |
| COLLECTOR OF DELINQUENT TAXES – one year..... | Laura Sumner   |
| GRAND JUROR – one year.....                   | Joe Tamburrino |
| TOWN AGENT – one year.....                    | Tina Blais     |
| TRUSTEE OF PUBLIC FUNDS – three years.....    | Howard Smith   |
| CEMETERY COMMISSIONER – three years.....      | Clifton Inman  |

ARTICLE 2: Mary Brewster moved that the Town hear the reports of the Town Officers and to accept the Town Report as printed for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2016. Marilou Parkhurst seconded the motion. Reports were heard from town officers as follows:

Patricia Dow spoke about this year starting same day voter registrations during meetings and elections. The My Voter Page from the voter registration program introduced last year has been working really well with lots of online registrations. The Secretary of State gives out Service Awards every five years for anyone who has served the town for 20 years or more. The honorees this year in the 25-29 years of service: Alan Ashcraft, William Pusey, Roy Richardson and David Wright. 35-39 Years of Service: Timothy Putnam, Craig Stone. 40-44 years of service: Homer Sumner. 45-49 years of service: Jerry Fairbanks, Frank Maltese, Andrew Rice, Malcolm Sumner and Laura Sumner. 50-54 years of service: Lewis Sumner. 55+ years of service: Wayne Courser.

Andy Rice, First Constable: spoke about scams targeted toward senior citizens. Remember to get a signed contract if you are having work done, ie logging, signed contracts protect your rights. Pushing snow across the road, makes it difficult for the Highway Crew to do their job. Mud season is upon us, make sure you get permission to leave your car on the side of the road.

Laura Sumner, Collector of Delinquent Taxes reports that the uncollected balance is \$14,166.08.

Howard Smith, Trustee of Public Funds spoke about the Scott Fund. Our purpose is to raise money for the Town of Halifax. Several years ago the New Town Garage was constructed and the Scott Fund has paid over half of the bond. The Scott Fund started with a Halifax resident who left property to the Town which the town then sold in the 1950's and the money was invested earning a great deal of return. Recently a townspeople, Janice Nelson, passed away and left money to the Scott Fund. We have over 300K in the current fund.

Catherine Bell, Trustee of the Whitingham Library. We had approximately 9,500 visitors coming through the library last year.

Paul Blais, Moderator for the Town and School spoke about being appointed over the summer and attended the Town Meeting Tune Up Conference.

Brad Rafus, Road Commissioner thanks the Road Crew. This year we purchased a 2017 International Tandem Dump Truck and this is the last truck purchase until 2020 we are caught up on the equipment schedule. We purchased a used tractor with a mower. The cost was less than the budget for mowing. We crushed 5,000 yards of gravel from our own gravel pit which cost \$ 35,000 compared to \$ 100,000 from a vendor which includes trucking costs. This years' projects include reclaiming and repaving Branch and Collins Roads.

Andy Rice, Loan Review Committee spoke about giving loans for housing rehabilitation. We still have the original \$300,000. Applications can be obtained from any of the three Town Clerks and you can contact a representative in any of the 3 towns to apply for a loan. There is one person that handles the income eligibility and it is not public knowledge.

Malcolm Sumner, Fire Warden spoke about contacting him to get a burn permit.

Article 2 was so voted and Moderator Blais declared Article 2 so passed.

- ARTICLE 3: Linda Combs moved that the Town collect taxes for the Town and Town School District as follows: Taxes will be due on or before September 30, 2017 payable to the Town Treasurer. Taxes will become delinquent after September 30, 2017 and payable with penalties and interest to the Collector of Delinquent Taxes. Mary Brewster seconded the motion and it was so voted. Moderator Blais declared Article 3 so passed.
- ARTICLE 4: Linda Combs moved that the Town apply any budget surplus from the current fiscal year (FY17) to reduce taxes in the next fiscal year (FY18). Mary Brewster seconded the motion.  
Stephan Chait asked if there is any idea on what that amount will be? Lewis Sumner stated not until after June 30, 2017. Article 4 was so voted and Moderator Blais declared Article 4 so passed.
- ARTICLE 5: Margo Avakian moved that the Town will vote to approve Selectboard and Highway expenditures of \$1,374,562 of which \$1,175,062 shall be raised by taxes and \$199,500 by non-tax revenues to care for the expenses and liabilities of the Town for FY18. Mary Brewster seconded the motion. Article 5 was so voted and Moderator Blais declared Article 5 so passed.
- ARTICLE 6: Linda Combs moved that the Town will vote to set the Treasurer's budget for salary and collection of current taxes at \$15,000 plus \$4,000 for expenses for the FY18. Mary Brewster seconded the motion.  
Cara Cheyette asked if this is a change up or down? Patricia Dow replied that it is a change up from \$ 13,000 to \$ 15,000 an increase of \$ 2,000 and there has not been an increase since 2008. Article 6 was so voted and Moderator Blais declared Article 6 so passed.

ARTICLE 7: Linda Combs moved that the Town will vote to eliminate the mailing of postcards advising voters when the yearly Town Report is available. Alice Aldrich seconded the motion.

Linda Lyon mentioned a few years ago we voted not to send the books out which saved money on postage. I appreciate getting the postcard it is very helpful and informational. A question was asked about the savings. Sarah Barnett told us the cost to purchase the postcards is about \$ 100.00 for 400 and the postage is approximately \$ 200.

Rachelle Ackerman said that \$ 300 is a low price to encourage democracy.

Alice Aldrich asked if there is a cost associated with the Town Clerk.

Patricia Dow commented that it would save money if we didn't send out the postcards, but we have decreased the number of books printed which saves money. Last year the postcards generated a lot of phone calls and questions. This year the phone calls decreased to three. The number of cards were decreased to one per household, about 160 postcards were eliminated saving money there too.

Sarah Barnett: spoke as auditor, currently we are the only town that sends out postcards. Whitingham, Readsboro and Wilmington no longer send postcards nor mails the Town Report. We have the Town Report on our website, but there are towns that do a lot less. Craig wells stated that not everyone has access to the internet.

It was moved and seconded to move the question. Article 7 was so voted and Moderator Blais declared Article 7 Defeated, Postcards will continue to be mailed.

ARTICLE 8: Cara Cheyette moved that the voters of Halifax vote on changes to the size of the Selectboard by Australian ballot rather than by voice or floor vote. Alice Aldrich seconded the motion.

Cara Cheyette initiated the article and my goal is to open up the question of the size of the board to everyone who has the ballot. A lot of folks cannot attend the Town Meeting and I think the size should be voted on by Australian ballot.

Marilou Parkhurst stated that this has come up a number of times. The Australian Ballot will finally say the actual vote.

Wayne Courser said this should be brought up at Town Meeting on the floor to be able to discuss the question. Australian Ballot does not give a chance to discuss the article. Linda Lyon stated most voters are not here today, every voter should have an opportunity to vote on this matter.

Mary Brewster in favor to expand the democratic process. The informational meeting is a place to ask questions.

Joe Tamburrino says the problem is that this has been voted on 5-6 times and shot down. We have 3 people that make up a very efficient Selectboard, the assistant is there to assist the Selectboard. Not many people volunteer their services, 3 people from a small town is great. It will be hard to find 2 other people to run for Selectboard.

Rachelle Ackerman stated that there is something to be said of the sensitivity of that kind of vote and people should be able to cast their vote without any hurt feelings and it is too sensitive an issue.

A Paper ballot was requested by Lewis Sumner and 7 people stood for a paper ballot.

|  |             |    |
|--|-------------|----|
| Results of the paper ballot were as follows: | YES         | 38 |
|  | NO          | 36 |
|  | TOTAL VOTES | 74 |

Moderator Blais declared Article 8 so passed.

ARTICLE 9: Mary Brewster moved that the Town will vote to contract with a private vendor to provide recycling service to the Town. Marilou Parkhurst seconded the motion. Lewis Sumner stated that WSWMD will close the facility on June 30. We have prices with 3 different private companies to pick up the recycling.

Linda Rice asked if this doesn't pass what are our options? Sumner stated you are on your own.

Craig Wells Stated that if we are on our own, means dropping off recycling in Brattleboro at Old Ferry Road other bins will be eliminated in surrounding towns.

Joe Tamburrino stated it will cost us to travel to Brattleboro, some people don't have a lot of recycling it will cost us money in whatever way we look at it. This benefits the townspeople as a good service.

Sue Kelly stated that the more convenient recycle is, the more people do it.

Matt Salinsky pays for recycling pickup at his house and would gladly pay for town recycling for ease and convenience.

Rachelle Ackerman would be happy to have taxes pay for recycling.

Article 9 was so voted and Moderator Blais declared Article 9 so passed.

ARTICLE 10: Marilou Parkhurst moved that the Town will vote to approve the sum of \$7,000 for recycling service to the town. Alice Aldrich seconded the motion.  
Dave Moore asked if the \$7000 was a set amount for one year or does it extend out beyond this year? Sumner stated it was for FY 18. We don't know what future years will cost.  
Stephan Chait asked what is currently paid to WSWMD? Sumner stated it is almost \$11,000 next year it will be \$ 6,500, but is putting the recycling facility in mothballs. Hopefully the following year it will go down more.  
Ray White stated from a business perspective they want our business so we should ask for a 5 year contract. White amended the article to add "with the longest contract possible", the amendment was seconded.  
Rachelle Ackerman asks if we can vote on an amendment that effects multiple years? Sumner stated that we hope in the future to be able to go out for a multiple year bid.  
Craig Wells stated the intent of the amendment is good to negotiate to get the best term and dollar value we can get. There are questions as to what will happen with recycling in the future years. I would rather place trust with Selectboard to negotiate the best rate.  
Sue Kelly recommends not accepting this amendment because we may not be satisfied with the services we are getting.  
Linda Rice stated that if we lock ourselves into a contract, we don't know the future of recycling, the prices may drop in the future.  
The question was called and seconded.  
The amendment was so voted and Moderator Blais declared the amendment defeated.  
Ray Combs asked if the \$7,000 is a starting point? Sumner stated that is a hard quote, we have 3 different companies that gave us prices.  
Article 10 was so voted and Moderator Blais declared Article 10 so passed.

ARTICLE 11: Andy Rice moved that the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$5,000 to support a summer celebration of community life in the Town of Halifax. Marilou Parkhurst seconded the motion.  
Patricia Dow explained the intent of the celebration of community life. We have had holiday celebrations in December for the past few years which was a big success. This would be a one day event. Events could include musical entertainment in the evening, a dinner, a tractor pull and various other entertainment throughout the day possibly including competitions. All of these things require funding. Old Home Day will be coming up in 2020. This would be to come together as a town. It is the hope to replenish the funds to be able to use this money year after year. Volunteers are needed.  
Cara Cheyette said this would be a great idea with competitions maybe a bake sale, axe throwing, etc. Moved to amend the article to be \$500, the amendment was seconded by Sue Kelly.  
Laura Gerdes suggested leaving the dollar amount at \$5000. There are so many costs upfront we always had an old home day every year. This is something this town needs.  
Peggy Rafus said this money is to be used for this event and hopefully for future years.  
The amendment was so voted and Moderator Blais declared the amendment defeated.  
Sue Kelly stated that most event money usually goes to rent a hall and amended the article by 50% to \$ 2,500. The amendment was seconded.  
Paul Taylor stated with two sides not that far apart it is reasonable to have a middle ground at \$ 2,500.  
The vote on the amendment was too close, a show of hands was asked for by the Moderator. The Board of Civil Authority was called to the stage to count a show of hands. The hand count resulted in:

|          |    |
|----------|----|
| IN FAVOR | 26 |
| OPPOSED  | 31 |

The amendment was so voted and Moderator Blais declared the amendment defeated.  
Article 11 was so voted and Moderator Blais declared Article 11 so passed.

ARTICLE 12: Stephan Chait moved that the Town vote to exempt the Trust for Wildlife from property taxation for the ensuing five years pursuant to Title 32 V.S.A. 3840. Sue Kelly seconded the motion.  
Ray Combs what does the trust do? Marshall Case is a non-voter in Halifax and wanted to speak on behalf of this article. The assembly was asked if anyone was opposed to Marshall Case speaking. Mr. Case is a volunteer for the piece of property on Woodard Hill. It is a 115 acre piece which includes a small cabin. We are a non-profit and a 501c3 we started when Bill Ackerman nineteen years ago started a summer camp. The camp is run by volunteers. We do the best we can to give the kids the best experience. We had 17 kids last year participate in the summer activity.  
Article 12 was so voted and Moderator Blais declared Article 12 so passed.

ARTICLE 13: Alice Aldrich moved that the Town will vote to exempt the Halifax Volunteer Fire Company from property taxation for the ensuing five years pursuant to Title 32 V.S.A. 3840. Stephan Chait seconded the motion. Article 13 was so voted and Moderator Blais declared Article 13 so passed.

ARTICLE 14: Penfield Chester moved that the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of:

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| \$ 200   | Brattleboro Area Hospice  |
| \$ 550   | Senior Solutions (Council on Aging for Southern Vermont)        |
| \$ 700   | Woman's Freedom Center  |
| \$ 190   | RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program) of Windham County       |
| \$ 750   | HCRS (Health Care and Rehabilitative Services)                  |
| \$ 200   | Youth Services  |
| \$ 50    | Green Up Vermont  |
| \$ 250   | American Red Cross  |
| \$ 790   | Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA)                   |
| \$ 500   | The Gathering Place Adult Day Program                           |
| \$ 1,900 | Visiting Nurse Assn. & Hospice of Vermont & New Hampshire, Inc. |
| \$ 4,000 | Whitingham Free Public Library                                  |
| \$ 4,000 | Halifax EMS   |
| \$ 2,500 | Wings Community Programs  |
| \$ 500   | Deerfield Valley Community Partnership                          |
| \$ 2,000 | Halifax Community Club  |
| \$ 500   | Deerfield Valley Food Pantry                                    |

Marilou Parkhust seconded the motion. Article 14 was so voted and Moderator Blais declared Article 14 so passed.

ARTICLE 15: To transact any other non-binding business that may legally come before the meeting.

Frank Maltese asked if there are any plans for the Old Town Garage? Brad Rafus stated we plan to dismantle it this spring/summer.  
 Mary Brewster announced you may have noticed there are items in the entrance area to the town office that are there free for the taking. These items came from my non-profit called Healing Arts Institute. We sponsor 2 programs one which is Kids Space which works with special needs children and the other is a Stewardship Project which I have been doing this for 30 years. Donations are given through memberships that we have with Home Depot, Pottery Barn and Williams Sonoma, we are incorporated in VT, MA, CT, FL, if you need something give us a wish list, contact me or the Listers' office. Home Depot gives us about \$ 5,000 worth of merchandise a month.

Andy Rice moved and it was seconded that the meeting be adjourned and it was so voted. The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 P.M.

Attest: Patricia [Signature]  
 Town Clerk

We, the undersigned, approve and attest that the record of the Annual Town Meeting of the Town of Halifax held at the West Halifax Elementary School multi-purpose room on Tuesday, March 7, 2017 is a true record of all action taken at the meeting.

Attest: Paul S. Blais  
 Moderator

Attest: [Signature]  
 Other Election Official