

MINUTES

TOWN OF WHITINGHAM ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

The Annual Town Meeting was held on Tuesday, March 3, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. e.s.t. at the Twin Valley Middle High School in the Town of Whitingham, Vermont agreeable to the warning.

Leon Corse, Moderator went through the following announcements:

Benefit dinner for Robin Kingsley on Friday, March 6th at the Whitingham Municipal Center.

Selectboard member Wayne Corse could not attend the meeting as he was in Florida with his ill father-in-law. Carol Millett was at the meeting and was asking voters to complete a Town Hill survey.

Moderator trivia: How many selectboard members have served since the moderator became moderator? Moderator stated he would buy the first individual with the correct answer lunch. After lunch the moderator announced that no one got the correct answer. The correct answer was 30.

At 10:00 a.m. the Cub Scout Troop 461 led the Pledge of Allegiance. Town Clerk, Almira Aekus declared the polls open.

The Moderator asked if there were any objections with dispensing with the reading of the warning. There were none. He asked the Board of Civil Authority to introduce themselves: Wayne Wood, Scott Reed, Craig Hammer, Tyson Dix, Elizabeth McKinley, Dana Homer, Susan Cooke Johnson, Abigail Corse, Seth Boyd, and Almira Aekus. At 10:10 a.m. the moderator declared the meeting open for business.

Article 1

A motion was made by Gregory Brown, seconded by Lise' Barus to accept the reports of the Town Officers. Discussion: None. Motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 2

A motion was made by Wayne Wood and seconded from the floor to authorize general fund expenditures for operating expenses for fiscal year July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021 of **\$608,406.00** of which **\$358,851.00** to be raised in taxes, the balance to be offset by **\$194,893.00** in anticipated revenues and **\$54,662.00** appropriated from prior year's fund balance. Discussion: John Robohm pointed out the Selectboard at their January 29, 2020 meeting addressed how the Selectboard members would be paid in the future to reflect the actual time a board member serves on the board as the members are elected in March and the fiscal year starts in July. He stated the change was very appropriate. Questioned some of the FICA and Medicare entries in the budget as they do not represent the 7.65 percent. Ms. Aekus stated there are some employees that have pre-tax deductions making the FICA and Medicare percentages varied. Questioned why there was a negative expense in a transfer station line item. Ms. Aekus stated the company issues the town a credit so there is no actual revenue. Questioned the workmen's compensation not showing up in the highway budget. Ms. Aekus stated she would look into that. He questioned the inventory as there is no listing for computers. Ms. Aekus stated they are not in there and are almost a disposable asset. Mr. Robohm questioned what the local agreement rate was. Ms. Aekus stated it is a voted exemption which represents the school tax portion for the Unity Lodge 89 as well as \$30,000 exemption for each disabled veteran.

Gregory Brown thanked the board for their time and dedication then questioned why the assessor's budget went up quite a lot, mostly in the clerk's wages as they are up about \$2,000 more than when there were 3 listers. He asked that the board come up with a job description for that position as well as criteria to have the job. He questioned if the job had been posted. He urged that in the future the board should consider the rates of pay for current employees before offering a larger hourly rate to new employees.

Joyce Forebush questioned the medical insurance expense being \$2,000 a month per employee. Ms. Aekus stated the employees pay a portion of their insurance and that the plan the town has includes a high deductible which is mostly paid by the town. Usually the employees do not use all of the deductible and the town saves a considerable amount of money. Mr. Robohm questioned where the savings shows up in the budget. Ms. Aekus stated it shows up in the fund balance. A motion was made by Henry Millett and seconded from the floor to cut off debate. The motion was called and carried by voice vote. The main motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 3

A motion was made by Seth Boyd, seconded from the floor to raise and appropriate **\$18,878.00** for the Parks Committee (formerly known as Town Hill Committee) for fiscal year July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021. Discussion: Sherry Adams asked what the increase was for. Mr. Boyd stated money was put in the budget to replace the stonewall around the war monuments. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 4

A motion was made by Stanley Janovsky, Jr. and seconded from the floor to raise and appropriate **\$76,046.00** for the operation of the Town Fire Department for fiscal year July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021. Discussion: None – The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 5

A motion was made by Stanley Janovsky, Jr. seconded from the floor to raise and appropriate **\$20,000.00** to the Fire Department Equipment Fund for fiscal year July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021. Discussion: None – Motion called and carried by voice vote.

Article 6

A motion was made by Stanley Janovsky, Jr., seconded by Tyson Dix to authorize **\$1,369,882.00** for the maintenance and repair of Town Highways for fiscal year July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021 of which **\$1,250,726.00** to be raised in taxes, the balance to be offset by **\$119,156.00** in anticipated revenues. Discussion: Mr. Robohm questioned the \$25,000 for tires. Mr. Janovsky stated the grader tires are in need of replacement and they are about \$2,500 each. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 7

A motion was made by Stanley Janovsky, Jr. and seconded by Henry Millett to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$85,000.00** to the Highway Equipment Fund for fiscal year July 1, 2020 -June 30, 2021. Discussion: None – Motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 8

A motion was made by Stanley Janovsky, Jr., and seconded by Henry Millett to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$25,000.00** to the Hazard Mitigation Fund for fiscal year July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021. Discussion: Mr. Robohm questioned what the money would be used for. Mr. Janovsky stated the money would be used to cover costs of hazard mitigation projects such as the removal of bridge at the municipal center, flood plain work to try to prevent disasters from floods and matching grant monies. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

The moderator asked for and received permission to allow State Representative John Gannon to address the electorate. Mr. Gannon reported on current issues of the legislature and urged the electorate to participate in the census. He spoke in regards to the pupil weighting and the possible impact it will have in the area school. There will be a public hearing on the pupil weighting on March 11th. He stated individuals should submit testimony to senators Becca Balint and/or Jeanette White. Abigail Corse encouraged the electorate to attend the hearing if they could as the issue is very important to our school district. She stated we are the “forgotten kingdom.”

Article 9

A motion was made by Richard Lemaire, seconded from the floor to establish a reserve fund to be called the Town Highway Garage Renovation and/or Replacement Fund to be used to address the renovation or replacement of the Town Highway Garage in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 2804. Discussion: None – Motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 10

A motion was made by Richard Lemaire, seconded by Allan Twitchell to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$50,000.00** to fund the Town Highway Garage Renovation and/or Replacement Fund. Discussion: Gregory Brown stated the town has a municipal facilities fund and questioned why the town wouldn't use that fund. Scott Reed stated the selectboard wanted to make sure the money was set aside for the garage. David Farrington stated the taxpayers are currently paying for a school bond and thought this was a bit much. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 11

A motion was made by Tyler Colford, seconded by Henry Millett to authorize **\$82,596.00** for the operation of the Whitingham Free Public Library for fiscal year July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021 with **\$69,271.00** to be raised in taxes, and the balance to be offset by **\$13,325.00** in anticipated grants and donations. Discussion: None – Motion called and carried by voice vote.

Article 12

A motion was made by Craig Hammer, seconded from the floor to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$10,000.00** to the Municipal Facilities Fund for fiscal year July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021 for continued maintenance. Discussion: None – Motion called and carried by voice vote.

Article 13

A motion was made by Dennis Pike, seconded from the floor to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$15,000.00** for continuing support of Deerfield Valley Rescue for fiscal year July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021. Discussion: None – Motion called and carried by voice vote.

Article 14

A motion was made by Scott Reed, seconded from the floor to authorize payment of real estate taxes on or before November 1, 2020 with ninety-days' notice; to be made by physical delivery to the tax collector before 2pm on that date or with a first-class postmark on or before that date. Discussion: None - Motion called and carried by voice vote.

Article 15

A motion was made by Scott Reed, seconded from the floor to make overdue taxes bear interest at a rate of one percent (1%) per month or fraction thereof for the first three (3) months and thereafter one and one-half percent (1 ½%) per month or fraction thereof from the due date of such tax pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 5136. Discussion: None – Motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 16

A motion was made by Dana Dix, seconded from the floor to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$20,550.00** for the operation of Town Cemeteries for fiscal year July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021 with **\$19,550.00** to be raised in taxes, and the balance to be offset by **\$1,000.00** in anticipated revenue. Discussion: None – Motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 17

A motion was made by Philip Edelstein, seconded by Michael Mandracchia to enter into a communications union district to be known as Deerfield Valley Communications Union District, under the provision of 30 V.S.A. chapter 82. Discussion: Sherry Adams asked Mr. Edelstein to elaborate. Mr. Edelstein stated it was a legislative move to set up the CUD and there would be no financial commitment from the town. He said it was a study group. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 18

A motion was made by Wayne Wood, seconded by Tyson Dix to grant an exemption pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 3840 for a period of five years for the property owned by Unity Lodge 89 Free and Accepted Masons and used exclusively for the purposes of that organization for a five-year period beginning with July 1, 2020 tax year. Discussion: Mr. Wood stated the lodge is a community charity that helps students locally. Mr. Robohm questioned "exclusive use" Mr. Wood stated the use was charitable. Mr. Robohm questioned the church use of the building for their rummage sale. A motion was made by Mr. Robohm and seconded from the floor to remove the word "exclusively" from the original motion. Discussion: Tyler Colford felt that removing the word would allow other uses other than charitable. The amendment was called and defeated by voice vote. Patience Merriman questioned why 5 year. Mr. Wood stated the State of Vermont dictates the terms. Johanna Robohm questioned how much money would be exempted. Ms. Aekus stated less than \$3,000. She stated the lodge was exempt prior to the state taking over the education funding. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 19

A motion was made by Karen Pratt and seconded from the floor to and appropriate the sum of **\$400.00** for Brattleboro Area Hospice for delivery of volunteer hospice care, bereavement care and advance care planning services in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §2691. Discussion: Ms. Pratt stated hospice is non-medical and they do not administer medications. She said it is used to give respite to caregivers, bereavement care, out reach in the community for advance directives. Linda Brown questioned how it is funded. Ms. Pratt stated the majority of funding comes from Experienced Goods thrift store in Brattleboro. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 20

A motion was made by Sherry Adams, seconded from the floor to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$1,000.00** for Deerfield Valley Community Cares, an organization that provides fuel assistance for those not on state aid. Discussion: Ms. Adams stated there was \$17,387 provided to Whitingham residents for fuel assistance. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Moderator asked for and received permission for State Representative Laura Sibilia to address the electorate. Ms. Sibilia spoke in regards to the weighting study and that the current funding is a violation of the constitution. She answered many questions from the electorate.

At 12:25 p.m. Moderator recessed the meeting until 1:30 for lunch.

Meeting reconvened from lunch at 1:30 p.m.

Article 21

A motion was made by Gretchen Havreluk, seconded from the floor to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$2,500.00** for Deerfield Valley Community Partnership, an organization that provides programming and activities for youth and families that promote healthy behaviors and prevent youth drug and alcohol use. Discussion: None – Motion called and carried by voice vote.

Article 22

A motion was made by MaryAnn Cheveralls, seconded from the floor to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$500.00** for Deerfield Valley Food Pantry for the purpose of providing supplemental food assistance to area families in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §2691. Discussion: None - Motion called and carried by voice vote.

Article 23

A motion was made by Teresa Dumaine, seconded by John Doty to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$1,500.00** to offset the cost of providing the community meals, to Dave and Terrie Dumaine, who provide the meals to the senior citizens in the valley. Discussion: Mr. Doty urged seniors to attend the meals. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 24

A motion was made by Elaine Foster, seconded from the floor to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$305.00** for Green Mountain RSVP for support of senior volunteer program with training and support for the volunteers who teach Bone Builder classes and who deliver meals in Whitingham in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §2691. Discussion: Ms. Erinhouse from Green Mountain RSVP stated RSVP provides service for individuals 55 and older to volunteer in their communities. The motion as called and carried by voice vote.

Article 25

A motion was made by Elaine Foster and seconded by John Doty to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$1,203.00** for Health Care and Rehabilitation Services, Inc. to help support outpatient mental health and substance abuse services, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §2691. Discussion: Kelly Brown from HCRS stated they provide substance, family and children services. She stated there are currently 11 residents in Whitingham that are getting services. Sarah Axtell asked if HCRS was public or private. Ms. Brown stated they are non-profit. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 26

A motion was made by Abigail Corse, seconded by Craig Aekus to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$750.00** for Senior Solutions - The Council on Aging for Southeastern VT, Inc. to serve elders and assist with funding the community meal, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §2691. Discussion: Erinhouse stated they provide social workers, adaptive equipment, tai chi, and dementia respite grants benefits for residents over 60. No questions go unanswered. The contact number is 802-885-2669. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 27

A motion was made by John Doty, seconded by Henry Millett to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$4,071.00** to Southeastern Vermont Economic Development Strategies (SeVEDS) to provide workforce and economic coordination services to the Windham Region. Discussion: John Doty stated they have been in operation for 8 - 10 years. The money will be used as seed money mandates to government and state funding implementation of programs and projects. The latest one is called Pipelines to Pathways which Christy Betit from Whitingham works with four Windham County schools to promote skills and trades for the fifty percent of students that do not go to college. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 28

A motion was made by Christopher Walling and seconded by Henry Millett to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$6,000.00** for Twin Valley Youth Sports, an organization that provides all students in Whitingham, grades pre-k through 6th, the opportunity to play the organized sports of soccer, basketball, baseball, and softball. Discussion: None – Motion called and carried by voice vote.

Article 29

A motion was made by Abigail Corse, seconded by Henry Millett to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$4,000.00** for Visiting Nurse and Hospice for VT and NH to help support the home health, maternal and child health, and hospice care provided in patients' homes and in community settings. Discussion: None – Motion called and carried by voice vote.

Article 30

A motion was made by Lori Scime` and seconded from the floor to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$250.00** for the Windham County Disaster Animal Response Team ("WinDART") in order to assist in the care and sheltering of pets in the event of a local emergency. Ms. Scime` stated the report from WinDart was on page 69 of the annual report. She said they are not funded by anyone, there are no paid positions and they are working in conjunction with the Red Cross. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 31

A motion was made by Seth Boyd, seconded by Abigail Corse to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$1,795.00** for Wings Community Program's summer programming providing four weeks of academic, enrichment, and physical activity for students entering grades K-8 in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 2691. Discussion: None – Motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 32

A motion was made by John Doty, seconded from the floor to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$10,000.00** for Wings Community Programs that provide after school programs for Whitingham students Kindergarten through 12th grade. Discussion: None – Motion carried by voice vote.

Article 33

A motion was made by Susan Johnson, seconded by Abigail Corse to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$850.00** for the Women's Freedom Center for general operating support to provide services to domestic and sexual assault survivors and their children who are experiencing emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse and are residents of the town, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §2691. Discussion: None – Motion carried by voice vote.

Article 34

A motion was made by Gretchen Havreluk and seconded from the floor to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$10,000.00** to support Economic Development in Whitingham for the fiscal year July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021. Discussion: The committee meets monthly, implemented the town website and plan on creating digital adverting on facebook and instagram for out of state people to promote their moving to the area. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 35

A motion was made by Allan Twitchell and seconded by Vanda Warner to raise and appropriate **\$2,000.00** for support of Old Home Week activities for 2026. Discussion: None – Motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 36

A motion was made by Maryann Cheveralls, seconded by Tyler Colford to allow the Whitingham Free Public Library to spend grant monies and donations at the discretion of the Board of Trustees and Library Director. Discussion: None – Motion carried by voice vote.

Article 37

To transact any other business that may legally come before this meeting.

A motion was made by Abigail Corse and seconded from the floor to suggest the town offer free childcare during future Town Meetings to encourage young parents, who may not have the ability to find and/or fund childcare, to attend and participate in town meeting. Discussion: Kristy Corey questioned who would be organizing that. Ms. Corse thought maybe the school or selectboard could get the ball rolling. She suggested the care could possibly be done by high school students that need community service. Mary Lemaire questioned if the service would need to be provided by a qualified daycare. Elaine Foster stated she works with the regulating agency for childcare and as long as the parents are onsite there would be not regulations required. She agreed to help with support of the service. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

A motion was made by Tyler Colford and seconded by Theresa Dumaine to recommend the selectmen uphold the right to bear arms as outlined in Chapter 1, Article 16 of the Vermont Constitution. Discussion: Wayne Wood stated a group of concerned citizen brought the issue before the Selectboard and the board felt it would be better if it was voted on by the electorate. The article is non-binding. He stated that Vermont is the third safest state

out of 50 states. Mr. Robohm was unsure what the selectboard would do that isn't already in place. Mr. Wood stated it would be a statement of support for the 2nd amendment without any changes. He said it would be to not change any state or federal laws. Johanna Robohm questioned if the Selectboard was in favor of automatic weapons. Mr. Colford stated the motion was to send a message to Montpelier as they are proposing more gun laws. Linda Farrington questioned what magazines with larger than 10 rounds would be needed for. Lori Scime` questioned if a person were to buy a gun at gun show if there would be a waiting period. Mr. Wood stated there would not be as they do a full background check of the purchaser before they sell them the gun just like they would do at a gun shop. The background check can be done by computer or phone. A motion was made by Henry Millett to cut off debate. The motion was called and carried. The article was called and Moderator ruled the motion carried but there were 7 people who asked for a paper ballot. The results of the ballot were: 64 votes cast; 43 yes and 21 no, the article passed.

A motion was made by Henry Millett and seconded from the floor to adjourn. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 38

To elect all Town Officers required by law. Polls were open from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Twin Valley Middle High School Auditorium, 4299 VT Route 100, Whitingham, Vermont with the following results:

Moderator, 1 year

Leon L. Corse	362	Seth Boyd	1
Abigail Corse	1	Steven Morse	1
David Dumaine	1	Blank	23
Spoiled	3		

Treasurer, 1 year

Almira L. Aekus	359	Tanya Bernard	2
Jenepher Burnell	1	Blank	27
Spoiled	3		

Selectboard, 1 year

Phil Edelstein	264	Tyler Colford	1
Gregory Brown	64	Wayne Wood	1
Peter Bernard	1	Steven Morse	1
Howard Bemis	1	Jeffrey Trowt	1
Blank	58	Spoiled	5

Selectboard, 2 years

David Dumaine	141	Craig Hammer	206
Peter Bernard	1	Gregory Brown	2
Blank	37	Spoiled	5

Selectboard, 3 year

Scott Reed	338	Gregory Brown	3
Blank	49	Spoiled	2

Town Grand Juror, 1 year

Susan Cooke Johnson	328	Lese Barus	1
Sherry Adams	1	Linda Corse	1
Blank	55	Spoiled	6

Town Agent, 1 year

Tanya Bernard	343	Blank	48
Spoiled	1		

Delinquent Tax Collector, 1 year

Almira L. Aekus 357
Jenepher Burnell 1
Spoiled 4

Howard Dix 1
Blank 29

Road Commissioner, 3 years

Stanley A. Janovsky, Jr. 360
Peter Bernard 2
Dennis Pike 1
Spoiled 0

Marshall Dix 2
Donald Boyd 1
Blank 26

Library Trustee, 3 years

Maryann Cheveralls 345
Blank 45

Linda Donaghue 1
Spoiled 1

Cemetery Commissioner, 3 years

Bradford S. Lackey 354
Blank 36

Ryan Sweeter 1
Spoiled 1

School Director, 1 year

Trevor Berry 78
Blank 55

Lesla Trowt 257
Spoiled 2

School Director, 2 years

Kristy Corey 336
Blank 54

Lesla Trowt 1
Spoiled 1

School Director, 3 years


Sharon K. Berry 69
Lesla Trowt 1
Spoiled 3

Christy Ann Betit 275
Blank 44

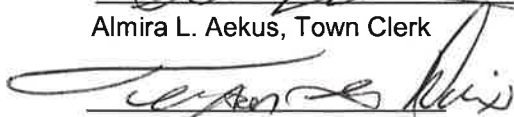
Meeting adjourned at 2:44 p.m.

Dated at Whitingham, Vermont this 4th day of March 2020

Attest:


Almira L. Aekus, Town Clerk


Leon L. Corse, Moderator


Tyson G. Dix, BCA – Chair

NUMBER OF VOTERS ON THE CHECKLIST – 890
NUMBER WHO VOTED BY AUSTRALIAN BALLOT – 386
HIGHEST NUMBER VOTED FROM THE FLOOR - 105

WHITINGHAM, VERMONT
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
RECEIVED FOR RECORD
This 17 day of JUNE A.D. 2020 at
09 o'clock 09 minutes A.M. and
Recorded in Vol. 02 at Page 215
of LAND RECORDS

Attest 
Town Clerk