

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
MARCH 3, 2015**

The Annual Town Meeting was held on Tuesday, March 3, 2015, at 10:00 a.m. e.s.t. at the Whitingham Municipal Center in the Town of Whitingham, Vermont agreeable to the warning.

At 10:00 a.m. Moderator Leon Corse led the salute to the flag. Town Clerk Almira Aekus declared the polls open. The moderator appointed the Board of Civil Authority as ballot clerks for the duration of the meeting.

A motion was made by Keith Bronson, seconded from the floor to dispense with the reading of the warning. Discussion: None. Motion called and carried voice vote.

Keith Bronson, Selectboard Chair announced there was a ballot box in front of the Moderator for voters to note their preference as to where town meeting should be held.

Article 1

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

Article 2

A motion was made by Keith Bronson, seconded by Gregory Brown to raise and appropriate **\$692,787.00** for the general use of the Town for fiscal year July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016. **\$376,304.00** to be raised in taxes, the balance to be offset by **\$179,429.00** in anticipated revenues, and **\$137,054.00** appropriated from prior year's fund balance. **Discussion:** Johanna Robohm questioned the increase in assistant town clerk wages. Almira Aekus spoke in regards to the scanning, indexing and linking of the land records. John Robohm questioned the difference in the taxes being raised from prior year. Almira explained the difference was in part due to the higher fund balance in the current budget. Mr. Robohm questioned the increase in the treasurer's salary and the fact that FICA figures are inconsistent throughout the report. Gregory Brown stated the books are audited every year and that the figures would match at the end of the year. Sherry Adams questioned the cost of the town report as it is now being done in house. She mentioned the \$15,000 for cleaning the municipal center and the amount of municipal center supplies. Robin Kingsley stated the voters have the option of amending items and that town meeting was that opportunity. Gregory Brown stated the municipal budget is about \$.60 per hundred and the rest of the tax rate is the State of Vermont and how they fund the education of our kids. He urged the electorate to look at their tax bill in its entirety.

A motion was made by John Robohm, seconded by Sherry Adams to amend the article to read "raise and appropriate **\$572,787.00** for the general use of the Town for fiscal year July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016. **\$256,304.00** to be raised in taxes, the balance to be offset by **\$179,429.00** in anticipated revenues, and **\$137,054.00** appropriated from prior year's fund balance. **Discussion:** Gregory Brown stated the article for \$120,000 was for clarification only to show that the town does give the school \$120,000 and that \$10,000 of that money had been for the Wings program. He said that he would like to see the town and school separated financially. He said that next year would be the time to address taking the money out of the town budget. He did not want to jeopardize the school budget and that it would cost more in the long run if it were taken out this year. Seth Boyd stated the user fee was a way to skirt around the education funding and keep Whitingham out of the penalty box and that Wilmington has \$200,000 in their budget for a user fee. He stated he has met with the Selectboard a couple of times and addressed the need to continue to look at the user fee.

He said without the user fee Whitingham would be in the penalty box. He reported the school continues to realize savings from the consolidation. Mr. Robohm said the \$120,000 in less revenues would have no impact on the state penalty box as the money would not be there. Almira Aekus stated the school budget was being voted by Australian ballot and that even if the money was not given to the school it would not reduce the budget. Seth Boyd said the school board had gone through four drafts before they set the budget and they had already cut \$250,000 and it would be very hard to cut another \$120,000 this year. There was some discussion on the maintenance of the old high school in Wilmington. Mr. Boyd stated the school board's goal was to turn the old school over to someone else as of July 1, 2015. Mr. Robohm questioned the \$150,000 for maintenance of the old school as it does nothing for the kids and was of no use to Whitingham. He stated we pay \$110,000 to have a meeting at the municipal center. Dwight Williams stated as a reminder the \$120,000 was an accounting move and would not be subject to the penalty box. If the money were in the school budget the penalty would be 100 percent. The \$120,000 had been excluded from the penalty box and was just a method to avoid penalty from the state. Gregory Brown stated he would like a clear distinction between the town and school at some point and would like an itemized bill from the school when the town uses the school. Currently there is not a good business sense of what we are accomplishing. Superintendent Christopher Pratt asked for and received permission from the electorate to speak. He urged leaving the money in the budget because if the money were cut it would send a red flag to the state. Mr. Robohm asked for clarification of Article 15. Mr. Brown stated the article was not to raise money but to specify that the \$10,000 was for the Wings program. Article 15 does not raise any money.

A motion was made by Henry Millett, seconded by David Allen to cut off debate. The motion was called and Moderator declared there was a two-thirds majority in favor. Motion carried by voice vote.

Mr. Robohm asked to withdraw his motion to amend. Sherry Adams who had seconded the motion to amend asked to withdraw her second.

Phil Edelstein spoke of the school as being an asset to the community and the user fee was just a funding mechanism to save the town money. He wondered if the town could find more user fees. The main motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 3

A motion was made by Keith Bronson, seconded from the floor to raise and appropriate **\$7,509.00** for the upkeep and improvement of the Town Hill Common for fiscal year July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016. Discussion: None. Motion called and carried voice vote.

Article 4

A motion was made by Stanley Janovsky, seconded by Gregory Brown to raise and appropriate **\$70,335.00** for the operation of the Town Fire Department for fiscal year July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016. Discussion: None. Motion called and carried by voice vote.

Article 5

A motion was made by Stanley Janovsky, seconded by Gregory Brown to raise and appropriate **\$20,000.00** for the Fire Department Equipment Fund for fiscal year July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016. Discussion: None. Motion called and carried by voice vote.

Article 6

A motion was made by Stanley Janovsky, seconded by Gregory Brown to raise and appropriate **\$1,243,512.00** for the maintenance and repair of Town Highways for fiscal year July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016. \$1,080,230.00 to be raised in taxes, offset by \$114,800.00 in anticipated revenues and

previous year balance of \$48,482.00. Discussion: James Walker questioned what the revenues were. Mr. Janovsky stated the revenues were from the state for state aid for the Class 2 and 3 highways in the town. John Robohm questioned the fund balance. Almira Aekus stated there was \$200,000 appropriated from the fiscal year 2014 tax year that was a revenue from FEMA and that part of it took care of the deficit and the remaining amount was fund balance. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Moderator asked for and received the permission of the electorate to allow State Representatives Laura Sibilila and Ann Manwaring along with State Treasurer Beth Pierce to address the electorate. There was no objection.

Laura Sibilila gave an update on issues and concerns she has. Of particular concern to her was the budget challenges, education funding and economic development.

Ann Manwaring who is serving on the education committee gave an update on what they have been working on.

Beth Pierce gave an update on the 100 million dollar gap in the budget. She reported that the difference between Vermont and other states is that people work for progress. Vermont is very special and finds solutions. She reported there are unclaimed monies at the state and urged people to go the State Treasurer's Unclaimed Money list on the web. She reported the state is looking to invest 25 million in home, energy and transportation.

Concerns and comments from electorate: Broadband Service – majority of households in Whitingham do not have it. Ann reported fiber optic does go up Route 100 and that VTel, a private organization is in the process of installing public wireless and when they get it up and running it will increase speeds in Whitingham and Halifax. She does not have a timeframe as to when that will happen.

Keith Bronson questioned the fact the 15 years ago the town withheld the payment to the state in civil disobedience and that the education fund was not sustainable and that the state was taking away local control, taxing the town without representation and other towns did not join in. The education system will not work without rewinding the clock and letting the chips fall where they may. Need to start over as it is not sustainable. Ann Manwaring stated the legislature is spending too much and that when education funding started 20 towns were sending towns (gold towns) now there are 150 which are now called sending towns. She stated it needs to be more effective.

Article 7

A motion was made by Stanley Janovsky, seconded by Gregory Brown to raise and appropriate **\$85,000.00** for the Highway Equipment Fund for fiscal year July 1, 2015 - June 30, 2016. A motion by Stanley Janovsky, seconded by Gregory Brown to amend the amount to \$80,000.00.

Discussion: Mr. Janovsky stated about 10 years earlier a capital improvement plan was put in place to have the money needed to purchase equipment. The plan had been to put \$75,000 per year in the fund and because of emission requirements the cost of the equipment increased. Having the appropriation at \$80,000.00 per year would put the fund back on track. The amendment was called and carried voice vote. The amended article was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 8

A motion was made by Tyler Colford and seconded from the floor to raise and appropriate **\$73,531.00** for the operation of the Whitingham Free Public Library for fiscal year July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016 with **\$62,278.00** to be raised in taxes, and the balance to be offset by **\$12,265.00** in anticipated donations. A motion was made by Tyler Colford, seconded from the floor to amend the

amount to raise and appropriate **\$74,543.00** for the operation of the Whitingham Free Public Library for fiscal year July 1, 2015 –June 30, 2016 with **\$62,278.00** to be raised in taxes, and the balance to be offset by **\$12,265.00** in anticipated donations. Discussion: None.

Amended article discussion: John Robohm inquired about the reduction in cleaning. Kristine Sweeter stated the library had decided to do cleaning in house as they had purchased a color copier that can fax, scan and print. Mr. Robohm questioned where the revenues for the copier are reported in the report. Ms. Sweeter and Mrs. Aekus stated the money was deposited in a money market and used for operation of the library. Mrs. Aekus stated the money market was listed in the town funds. Sherry Adams commended the library for doing their own cleaning and questioned the cleaning amount in the municipal budget when the people who use the hall clean up after themselves. Ms. Adams asked if there was a count for library patrons. Ms. Sweeter stated the patron counter was not accurate and they were waiting for the new hardwired one to be installed. Karen Hein spoke to the importance of the library in town. The motion was called and carried voice vote.

A motion was made by Karl Twitchell, seconded from the floor to raise and appropriate **\$10,000.00** for the Municipal Facilities Fund for fiscal year July 1, 2015– June 30, 2016 for continued maintenance. Discussion: None. Motion called and carried by voice vote.

Article 10

A motion was made by Stanley Janovsky, seconded from the floor to raise and appropriate **\$10,000.00** for the continuing support of Deerfield Valley Rescue for fiscal year July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016. Discussion: None. Motion called and carried by voice vote.

Article 11

A motion was made by Almira Aekus, seconded by Earle Holland to make taxes due and payable on or before November 2, 2016 with ninety-day' notice. Discussion: None. Motion called and carried by voice vote.

Article 12

A motion was made by Almira Aekus, seconded by Earle Holland to charge interest on delinquent taxes at a rate of one percent (1%) per month for the first three (3) months and one and one-half percent (1 ½%) per month thereafter for fiscal year taxes. Discussion: None. Motion called and carried by voice vote.

Article 13

A motion was made by Gregory Brown, seconded by Karl Twitchell to raise and appropriate **\$16,400.00** for the operation of Town Cemeteries for fiscal year July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016. Discussion: Sharon Berry asked about the flower in the budget. Almira Aekus stated the money was used to purchase flowers for the Veteran's graves. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Meeting recessed for lunch from 12:00 p.m. until 1:00 p.m. Ladies Benevolent Society provided a lasagna lunch for \$7.00 per person. Moderator reconvened the meeting at 1:00 p.m.

Article 14

A motion was made by Allan Twitchell, seconded by Karl Twitchell to raise and appropriate **\$10,000.00** for support of Old Home Week activities for 2016. Discussion: Sherry Adams asked what the status was. Allan Twitchell stated they are working on forming a committee. He said the library has agreed to do the parade and that they were still looking for a general chair. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 15

A motion was made by Robin Kingsley, seconded by Karl Twitchell to continue to allow the Selectboard to utilize the **\$120,000.00** user fee allocated for use of the school property as in the past, in the following manner: **\$110,000.00** for Town use of school property and **\$10,000.00** for Wings for fiscal year July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016. Discussion: Elizabeth Fournier questioned why the issue was an article. Mr. Kingsley stated there were two different entities and that it used to be Whitingham School and now is Twin Valley. It was just a breakdown of the \$120,000. Dwight Williams stated he was curious as to why the town would need to specify as the town has entrusted the school board on how the school spends the money and asked why it exists. Gregory Brown stated the board was not trying to suggest how the school spends money as it was the selectboard's intention that when the user fee was increased from the \$110,000 to \$120,000 it was for the Wings Program at their request. John Robohm questioned \$10,000 for Wings as Article 17 is asking for \$1,795 for Wings. Moderator clarification of Article 17 being a petitioned article. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 16

A motion was made by Chris Walling, seconded by Robin Kingsley to raise and appropriate **\$4,700.00** for Valley Youth Sports programming for the fiscal year July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016. Discussion: Sherry Adams asked for an explanation. Mr. Walling stated Valley Youth Sports was Wilmington funded and other towns are invited to join at a higher rate. The two towns would join and the name would be changed to Twin Valley Youth Sports. He said hopefully having the program would get more tuition students at the school. He stated Whitingham students currently pay a higher rate. Aimee Reed stated the program does not only involve Twin Valley students and was open to Whitingham residents. Dwight Williams stated the program provides some gap programs for timing and ages of students. Phil Edelstein questioned if there was grant money involved in the program. Mr. Walling said there was not grant money. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 17

A motion was by John Doty, seconded by Dwight Williams to raise and appropriate **\$1,795.00** for Wings for the fiscal year July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016. Discussion: Mr. Doty stated the money would be used for a separate program that is a four week summer program. The proportion of Whitingham students that participate in the program. Currently Wilmington students pay \$2.00 per day and Whitingham students pay \$5.00 per day. It would even the fee out for both towns. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 18

Terry Highland from Visiting Nurse Association asked if he could speak on behalf of the article as Vanda Warner was going to present the article and was not at the meeting. There was no objection. Mr. Highland stated there was \$41,000 in service provided to Whitingham residents that was unreimbursed and that they are asking for \$3,750.00. Caroline Blake asked if they provide hospice care. He stated they provide full hospice service and that there were three patients treated in the last year. A motion was made by Henry Millett, seconded by Robin Kingsley to raise and appropriate **\$3,750.00** to support the work of the Visiting Nurse Association for the fiscal year July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016. Discussion: None. Motion called and carried by voice vote.

Article 19

A motion was made by Angelique Colford, seconded by Peter Barus to raise and appropriate **\$3,000.00** for the operation of the Pool Learning Center, for the fiscal year July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016. Discussion: None. Motion called and carried by voice vote.

Article 20

A motion was made by Caroline Blake, seconded from the floor to raise and appropriate **\$2,500.00** for the Deerfield Valley Community Partnerships to assist with the cost of providing programming and activities to prevent youth drug and alcohol abuse, for the fiscal year July 1, 2015– June 30, 2016. Discussion: None. Motion called and carried by voice vote.

Article 21

A motion was made by Karl Twitchell and seconded from the floor to raise and appropriate **\$2,100.00** to support Economic Development in Whitingham for the fiscal year July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016. Discussion: None. Motion called and carried by voice vote.

A motion was made by Allan Twitchell, seconded by Henry Millett to combine Articles 22 – 27 and raise and appropriate \$4,605.00. Stanley Janovsky asked that Article 22 be taken out for discussion.

Article 22

A motion was made by Sarah Axtell, seconded by Caroline Blake to raise and appropriate **\$1,200.00** for Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA) for the fiscal year July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016. Discussion: Stanley Janovsky stated he was in support of helping people but noted that some of the people who received the services did not appear to qualify and it was an insult to a number of low income people. It was pointed out that SEVCA will do work for people who do not meet the guidelines and charge them. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

A motion was made by Allan Twitchell, seconded by Robin Kingsley to combine Article 23 – 27 and raise and appropriate **\$3,405.00**. Discussion: None. Motion called and carried by voice vote.

Article 23

Voted to raise and appropriate **\$1,000.00** for Deerfield Valley Community Cares for the fiscal year July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016.

Article 24

Voted to raise and appropriate **\$850.00** to the Women's Crisis Center.

Article 25

Voted to raise and appropriate **\$750.00** to support the Council on Aging now known as Senior Solutions.

Article 26

Voted to raise and appropriate **\$500.00** to support the work of the Deerfield Valley Food Pantry.

Article 27

Voted to raise and appropriate **\$305.00** to the Green Mountain Retired Senior Volunteer Program for general budget support.

Article 28

A motion was made by Tyler Colford, seconded by Henry Millett 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 was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 29

To elect all officer and fill all vacancies. Australian ballot polls were open from 10:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m.

Moderator, 1 year			
Leon L. Corse	124	Karen Hein	2
Lyman Tefft	1	Blank	6
Spoiled	0		
Treasurer, 1 year			
Almira L. Aekus	127	Karen Hein	2
Blank	4	Spoiled	0
Selectboard, 2 years			
Karl P. Twitchell	124	Dwight Williams	1
Howard Dix	1	Blank	7
Spoiled	0		
Selectboard, 3 years			
Robin W. Kingsley	120	Dwight Williams	2
Karen Hein	1	Brian Betit	1
Howard Dix	1	Blank	8
Spoiled	0		
Lister, 3 years			
Howard Dix	22	Kenneth Bernard	1
Matthew Myska	1	Dwight Williams	3
Peter Bernard	2	Sherry Adams	2
Earle Holland	2	Lise Barus	1
David Farrington	1	Judith Carrier	2
Brian Betit	1	Elizabeth Fournier	1
Blank	93	Spoiled	1
Grand Juror, 1 year			
Susan Cooke Johnson	123	Sherry Adams	1
Blank	9	Spoiled	0
Town Agent, 1 year			
Susan Cooke Johnson	122	Sherry Adams	1
Linda Corse	1	Blank	9
Spoiled	0		
Collector of Taxes, 1 year			
Almira L. Aekus	120	Karen Hein	2
Blank	10	Spoiled	1
Library Trustee, 3 years (2 trustees)			
Christina Clough	109	Tyler Colford	103
Karen Hein	1	Doris Steinhardt	1
Susan Johnson	1	Blank	51
Spoiled	0		
Cemetery Commissioner, 3 years			
Dana Dix	126	Blank	7
Spoiled	0		

Article 30


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

Discussions included: Donald McKinley spoke in regards to available money for low income loans from the Halifax-Marlboro-Whitingham Housing Rehabilitation Committee. Leon Corse reminded the electorate of the box for the suggestion of where town meeting should be next year and his support of having it back at the school. Dave Allen gave everyone a little history by saying that in 1946 Old Home there was a circus at the municipal center which was a school at the time.


A motion was made and seconded from the floor to adjourn.

Meeting adjourned 01:40 p.m.

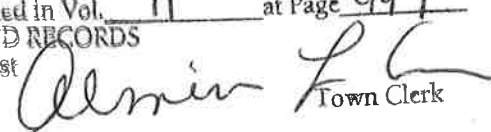
Dated at Whitingham, Vermont this 4th day of March 2015.

Attest: 
Almira L. Aekus, Town Clerk


Elizabeth McKinley, B.C.A


Leon L. Corse, Moderator

NUMBER OF VOTERS ON THE CHECKLIST -860
NUMBER WHO VOTED AUSTRALIAN BALLOT - 133
HIGHEST NUMBER VOTED FROM THE FLOOR -100-ESTIMATE

WHITINGHAM, VERMONT
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
RECEIVED FOR RECORD
this 24 day of MAR A.D. 2015 at
01 o'clock 00 minutes P M. and
Recorded in Vol. 11 at Page 447
of LAND RECORDS
Attest 
Town Clerk