

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
MARCH 1, 2016**

The Annual Town Meeting was held on Tuesday, March 1, 2016 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.

At 10:00 a.m. Cub Scout Troop 451 led the salute to the flag. Town Clerk Almira Aekus declared the polls open. The moderator, Mr. Leon Corse appointed the Board of Civil Authority as ballot clerks for the duration of the meeting. He thanked Mark Hayes for setting up for town meeting.

Announcements: The school board offered tours of the school. Old Home Week is in need of chorus members and other participants for the variety show, the theme is 1906 and individuals should contact either Leon Corse or Wendy Pratt.

The moderator asked if there were any objections with dispensing with the reading of the warning. There were none.

Article 1

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

Article 2

A motion was made by Karl Twitchell, seconded by Allan Twitchell to transfer the balance of the Act 60 Litigation Fund to the Grand List Reappraisal Fund. Discussion: Johanna Robohm asked for an explanation. Mr. Twitchell said the fund had a balance of approximately \$21,564.39 and that instead of appropriating money for the reappraisal, the board would like to use the money in the fund. John Robohm questioned if the town would need approval from Wilmington to use the money as the fund is listed as the Whitingham/Wilmington Act 60 Litigation Fund. Gregory Brown stated no money was contributed from Wilmington and that the money was set aside by Whitingham. John Robohm questioned what the \$10,863.00 revenue was in the Reappraisal Fund. Almira Aekus stated the state gives the town a per parcel amount annually to be used for reappraisal. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 3

A motion was made Gregory Brown, seconded by Allan Twitchell to raise and appropriate **\$562,592.00** for the general use of the Town for fiscal year July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017. **\$287,221.00** to be raised in taxes, the balance to be offset by **\$187,259.00** in anticipated revenues, and **\$88,112.00** appropriated from prior year's fund balance. Discussion: Johanna Robohm questioned the budget for the Selectboard Assistant as the office is only open 25 hours a week. Gregory Brown stated there are additional hours for meetings and outside training. Ms. Robohm pointed out that it cost \$65,000 with retirement and benefits. She also stated she felt the position should have been posted and that was an error on the board's part. She questioned if positions will be posted after town meeting. Mr. Brown stated they do ask for volunteers. Ms. Robohm said there is not a lot of transparency in the budget. She said there is a beautiful table upstairs for meetings but the meetings are downstairs where it is cramped. Robin Kingsley stated the board asked people to proof read the town report and that the selectboard meeting notices are posted and the door is wide open for people to come. John Robohm asked the board to explain the town budget as there are missing items in the current budget. Gregory Brown stated money was used in different budgets in past years. He went on to say everything is done in-house now and the way they are budgeting is different. Mr. Robohm questioned the way the previous Administrator was paid from different

departments. Mr. Brown stated the prior employee was paid by time spent in each department and wages came from those departments. He said there is more transparency in the current budget and the duties performed by the selectboard assistant are paid out of the selectboard assistant budget. Mr. Robohm questioned the bookkeeper wages in the fiscal year 2015 budget. Mr. Brown stated the wages were for the selectboard assistant and the bookkeeper. Sherry Adams stated she was confused with the previous selectboard assistance being paid from different departments and questioned if there would be more oversight and who would monitor it. Mr. Brown said there would be more oversight and the selectboard would monitor it. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 4

A motion was made by Robin Kingsley, seconded by Henry Millett to raise and appropriate \$110,000.00 for the Town Use of School Property for the fiscal year July 1, 2016-June 30, 2016. Discussion: Gregory Brown stated that at last year's town meeting the board thought the consensus was the school was at a point where the town could try to reduce the user fee, reduce the town budget and still keep the school out of the penalty box. The selectboard drafted a letter in June stating they were going to budget \$55,000 and they didn't hear from the school board. In December the amount needed to stay out of the penalty box was approximately \$70,000.00 so the board put the \$110,000.00 user fee on the warning. He stated for clarification purposes the user fee was implemented when Act 60 (education funding) went in to effect. The town had an agreement with the power company for a side contribution to the Whitingham Fund and money was allocated to the school at no cost to the town. The contribution helped the school stay out of the penalty box. He stated the town no longer receives the donation from TransCanada. He said what was previously a gift from the power company is now a payment from the municipal budget. John Robohm questioned what Wilmington contributes. Seth Boyd stated they contribute \$220,000.00. Mr. Robohm questioned what the percentage of Wilmington's budget contribution as it is 6% in Whitingham's municipal budget. Mr. Boyd did not know what percent Wilmington paid and said that they have a 1% option tax and funding may be different. Dwight Williams, Chair of the School board spoke in favor of the user fee stating it makes good sense in his opinion. There is itemizing in the school budget and for clarity the state allows the user fee for the facility being used as a disaster shelter, Maplefest and most importantly Old Home Week. It costs the town approximately \$.04 per hundred to raise the \$110,000 versus \$.07 on the school budget. The savings represent about \$60 on an average tax bill. Cutting the user fee would raise taxes plus the school would be in the penalty box. He stated the school budget has a net decrease of \$700,000 with \$500,000 going to the bond leaving roughly a \$190,000 reduction in the budget. Mr. Brown stated he was not suggesting voting down the article. He suggested the school directors and selectboard meet each year to discuss what the threshold would be to keep the school out of the penalty box. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 5

A motion was made by Robin Kingsley, seconded from the floor to raise and appropriate **\$7,093.00** for the upkeep and improvement of the Town Hill Common for fiscal year July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017. Discussion: None. Motion called and carried voice vote.

Article 6

A motion was made by Stanley Janovsky, seconded by Gregory Brown to raise and appropriate **\$72,058.00** for the operation of the Town Fire Department for fiscal year July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017. Discussion: None. Motion called and carried by voice vote.

Article 7

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, 2016 – June 30, 2017. Discussion: None. Motion called and carried by voice vote.

Article 8

A motion was made by Stanley Janovsky, seconded by Gregory Brown to raise and appropriate **\$1,253,062.00** for the maintenance and repair of Town Highways for fiscal year July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017. \$1,114,935.00 to be raised in taxes, offset by \$119,146.00 in anticipated revenues and previous year balance of \$18,981.00. Discussion: Sherry Adams commended Mr. Janovsky for the reduction in the highway budget. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 9

A motion was made by Gregory Brown, seconded by Allan Twitchell to raise and appropriate **\$85,000.00** for the Highway Equipment Fund for fiscal year July 1, 2016 - June 30, 2017. John Robohm asked why the increase from \$75,000.00. Ms. Aekus explained the \$75,000.00 was for fiscal year 2015. Stanley Janovsky stated the amount in fiscal year 2016 was \$85,000.00. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 10

A motion was made by Lise Barus and seconded by Kristine Sweeter to raise and appropriate **\$76,355.00** for the operation of the Whitingham Free Public Library for fiscal year July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017 with **\$63,580.00** to be raised in taxes, and the balance to be offset by **\$12,775.00** in anticipated donations. Discussion: John Robohm questioned the unemployment in the budget. Ms. Aekus stated the library had previous employees that had collected from unemployment. Gregory Brown stated the money was for unemployment insurance. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 11

A motion was made by Robin Kingsley, seconded from the floor to raise and appropriate **\$10,000.00** for the Municipal Facilities Fund for fiscal year July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017 for continued maintenance. Discussion: Phil Edelstein asked for clarification purposes if the fund was a reserve fund. Mr. Kingsley stated it was. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 12

A motion was made by Allan Twitchell, seconded from the floor to raise and appropriate **\$10,000.00** for the continuing support of Deerfield Valley Rescue for fiscal year July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017. Discussion: None. Motion called and carried by voice vote.

Article 13

A motion was made by Almira Aekus, seconded by Allan Twitchell to make taxes due and payable on or before November 1, 2016 with ninety-day notice. Discussion: None. Motion called and carried by voice vote.

Article 14

A motion was made by Almira Aekus, seconded by Allan Twitchell 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: Sherry Adams stated the delinquent tax list has delinquent taxes for 2009 and 2012 that are asterisked and states "could not be collected as of June 30, 2015." The report says the town will collect funds when it is legal to do so. Also, there was no notation on the delinquent list as to what the asterisk's means. Ms. Aekus explained there are instances such as foreclosure and bankruptcy where the town cannot collect taxes for a period of time. She said the town will collect the taxes as soon as it can legally do so. Ms. Aekus stated the asterisks represent delinquent taxes. She went on to explain the individual

delinquent amounts were not printed in the report due to confidentiality in regards to income sensitivity. She apologized for the omission of the explanation. Motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 15

A motion was made by Almira Aekus, seconded by Allan Twitchell to authorize it's town treasurer to collect current taxes pursuant to 32 V.S.A. section 4791. Discussion: Ms. Aekus stated there was a change in the law that states either the treasurer, town manager or constable needs to collect the taxes. She said the amount that had been budgeted under collector of taxes in the budget had been added to the treasurer compensation. John Robohm stated he thought the current and delinquent tax collector were two different positions. He read a statute (no number given) that states: When a town or municipality within it votes to collect its taxes by its treasurer, the proper officers shall make and deliver such taxes to the treasurer and such treasurer shall keep separate accounts for all monies received to pay out orders. He questioned why now and when did the statute change. Ms. Aekus said she believed it was in 2015 and that the change had been tacked on to another bill in the legislature. She said the article was for clarification. Johanna Robohm questioned the tax collector budget on page 14 of the town report and asked why there was a budget. Ms. Aekus stated the budget was for the delinquent tax collector and was based on penalty. Ms. Robohm questioned if the social security and Medicare in the budget were because of the penalty amount. Ms. Aekus said it was. Mr. Robohm questioned if the town would have to pay retirement if someone else that was not full time were collector. Ms. Aekus said they would not. Motion called and carried voice vote.

Article 16

A motion was made by Gregory Brown, seconded by Karl Twitchell to raise and appropriate **\$16,900.00** for the operation of Town Cemeteries for fiscal year July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017. Discussion: None, the motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 17

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: None. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 16

A motion was made by Chris Walling, seconded from the floor to raise and appropriate **\$4,700.00** for Valley Youth Sports programming for the fiscal year July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017. Discussion: None. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 19

A motion was by John Doty, seconded by Vanda Warner to raise and appropriate **\$1,795.00** for Wings for the fiscal year July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017. Discussion: Gregory Brown questioned if the amount was in addition to the \$10,000.00 the town already gives to Wings. Mr. Doty stated the money would be used for a summer program the Wilmington recreation department has and the money makes up the difference Whitingham kids would have to pay to participate in the program. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 20

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

Article 21

A motion was made by Karl Twitchell, seconded from the floor to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$1,203.00** to help support outpatient, mental health, and substance abuse services by the staff of Health Care and Rehabilitations Services, Inc. (HCRS). Discussion: None. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

Article 22

A motion was made by Vanda Warner, seconded by Henry Millett to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$250.00** to Brattleboro Area Hospice for general budget support. Discussion: Sherry Adams questioned if the town needed both Hospice and Visiting Nurse. Vanda Warner stated that Brattleboro Area Hospice does not charge anything for services and is strictly volunteer. She said they have asked for \$250.00 for the last ten years. Ms. Adams asked if Visiting Nurse charges for services and was told they do. She stated it would be nice to have them here to speak to the article. Mr. Brown stated he expected Visiting Nurse to be at the meeting. Danielle DeVost from Visiting Nurse and Hospice for VT and NH identified herself. The Moderator asked for and received the permission of the electorate to allow her to speak. She stated Visiting Nurse has made 755 visits in Whitingham to 33 patients and has provided \$7,555.00 in charity care. Patients receive services regardless of ability to pay. She stated they appreciate the town's support. Gail Anderson questioned why the town would pay when they are reimbursed by Medicare. Vanda Warner stated Brattleboro Area Hospice is not reimbursed by Medicare and that they are volunteer organization. The motion was called and carried by voice vote.

The moderator asked for and received permission for State Representative Ann Manwaring to address the electorate.

Ms. Manwaring invited the electorate to ask her questions. Steven Morse read some of his observations and comments regarding the inequities of what was Act 60, Act 68 and now Act 46 in regards to education and changes to Current Use. Linda Corse expressed her concerns about the state not realizing the value of the small farms in Vermont.

Lori Scime spoke in regards to some animal related bills.

Rosemary Tefft commented about the garbage disposal legislation and her hopes that there would be education for residents to initiate the changes. Ms. Manwaring discussed garbage disposal legislation that was passed.

She introduced Brandon Ryker who is running for Lieutenant Governor in November. Mr. Ryker is a Twin Valley High School graduate.

Meeting recessed from lunch at 12:10 p.m.

Meeting reconvened at 1:02 p.m.

Article 23

A motion was made by Gretchen Havreluk and seconded from the floor to appropriate and expend the sum of \$3,000.00 for the support of Pool Learning Center, 117 Adams Crossroad, Marlboro, to provide services to residents of the Town. Discussion: None. Motion called and carried by voice vote.

Article 24

A motion was made by Aimee Reed, seconded by Vanda Warner 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, 2016 – June 30, 2017. Discussion: Sherry Adams stated she had read they had received a \$100,000.00 grant and

wondered why they needed additional funding. Ms. Reed stated they are very active within the school from elementary to post graduate and they provide programs such as Above the Influence, Leadership, Anti-bullying and Be the Wall. They run substance based ads in the newspaper. The motion called and carried by voice vote.

Article 25

A motion was made by Phil Edelstein and seconded by Karl Twitchell to raise and appropriate **\$2,100.00** to support Economic Development in Whitingham for the fiscal year July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017. Discussion: None. Motion called and carried by voice vote.

A motion was made by Karl Twitchell, seconded by Gregory Brown to combine Articles 26-30 and raise and appropriate \$3,605.00. Discussion: A question was asked as to why the particular articles were lumped together. Mr. Twitchell stated the amounts are small.

Article 26

Voted to raise and appropriate **\$1,000.00** for Deerfield Valley Community Cares for the fiscal year July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017.

Article 27

Voted to raise and appropriate **\$850.00** to the Women's Freedom Center for general budget support to provide services to women and their children who are experiencing emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse and are residents of the town.

Article 28

Voted to raise and appropriate **\$750.00** to support the Senior Solutions-The Council on Aging for Southeastern VT, Inc. to serve elders and \$305.00 for Green Mtn RSVP to train and support senior volunteers.

Article 29

Voted to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$500.00** to the Deerfield Valley Food Pantry, Inc. an organization that provides food and other basic personal care items to all those who ask for assistance.

Article 30

Voted to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$200.00** for the Windham County Disaster Animal Recover Team (WinDART) in order to assist in the care and sheltering of pets in the event of a local emergency.

Article 31

A motion was made by Henry Millett and seconded from the floor 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 32

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	304	Lee Peters	2
Blank	23	Spoiled	0

Treasurer, 1 year

Almira L. Aekus	309	Kerri Boyd	1
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Phil Edelstein	2	Blank	17
Spoiled	0		
Town Clerk, 3 years			
Almira L. Aekus	307	Doris Steinhardt	2
Blank	20	Spoiled	0
Selectboard, 3 years			
Gregory S. Brown	185	Lyman W. (Skip) Tefft	106
Leon Corse	1	Blank	37
Spoiled	0		
Selectboard, 2 years			
Allan L. Twitchell	279	Lyman Tefft	5
Dwight Williams	4	Steven Betit	1
Clyde Twitchell, Jr.	1	Wayne Corse	1
Amy Mentz	1	Donald Green	1
Scott Reed	1	Blank	34
Spoiled	0		
Lister, 3 years			
Jenepher Burnell	296	John Robohm	1
Blank	32	Spoiled	0
Grand Juror, 1 year			
Susan Cooke Johnson	289	Jason Klump	1
Linda Corse	1	Lese Barus	1
Blank	37	Spoiled	0
Town Agent, 1 year			
Susan Cooke Johnson	290	Wayne Corse	1
Brian Mentz	1	Lese Barus	1
Blank	36	Spoiled	0
Collector of Delinquent Taxes, 1 year			
Almira L. Aekus	300	Kristine Berberian	3
Steve Morse	1	John Robohm	1
Blank	24	Spoiled	0
Library Trustee, 3 years (2 trustees)			
Lucas Earle	197	Maryanne Johnson	226
Aysha Peltz Wahlstrom	2	Blank	233
Spoiled	0		
Cemetery Commissioner, 3 years			
Linda Brown	6	James Kidney	1
Bradford Lackey	1	Steven Morse	2
Dana Dix	3	Kenneth Bernard	2
Edward Metcalfe	1	Joan Briggs	2
Brad York	2	Lyman Tefft	1
Amy Mentz	1	James Overton	1
Susan Johnson	1	Robert Durfey	1

Jon Carrier	1	John Robohm	3
Seth Boyd	1	Peter Bernard	1
David Farrington	2	Donald Boyd	1
Donald Greene	1	Allan Twitchell	1
Leon Corse	1	Sherry Adams	1
Linda Corse	1	Levi Tefft	1
Jon Carrier	1	Blank	285
Spoiled	3		

Article 33

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

Linda Donaghue reported that there are low income housing rehabilitation loans available from Whitingham, Marlboro & Halifax Housing Rehabilitation Committee.

Sherry Adams stated there was a meeting in February for the Farmers Market that was not very well attended and that they are going to have another one on the 8th of March. She encouraged people to come. Phil Edelstein was unsure of the date and Almira Aekus said the municipal center was in use that night.

Aimee Reed questioned the delinquent taxes for 2009 and 2012. Ms. Aekus stated they are properties that are either in bankruptcy or foreclosure and the town cannot legally collect on them at this point. She stated that as soon as it is legally able to collect it will do so.

Aimee Reed questioned the current use figures in the town report. Almira Aekus and Jenepher Burnell explained what they were and how they were exempt from taxes.

Dwight Williams asked for the Selectboard's position on law enforcement. Mr. Brown said the board looks at the possibility of law enforcement with either the state police or the sheriff's department and it has not been in the best interest of the town to contract with them. The cost would have been \$30,000 to \$40,000 per year with 10-15 hours a week that would be at their discretion. Adam Ranslow questioned if someone needed help in a hurry what they would do. Mr. Brown stated they had contracted with Newfane and Bennington and the town never knew what their scheduled patrol. If there was an emergency a person would call 911 and that would trigger a state police response. Dwight Williams questioned if the town might have a conversation with Wilmington as they were looking at a Dare officer grant. He also questioned if the town might do gap funding and if the board would be open to funding. Mr. Brown again said the board would be open to looking in to it.

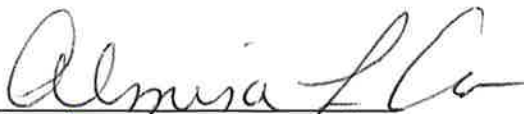
Mr. Williams questioned the selectboard compensation that is equivalent to about \$30.00 per meeting. He stated the school board reduced their compensation to \$500. Mr. Brown said there is more than just going to a meetings and that he is there several times a week.

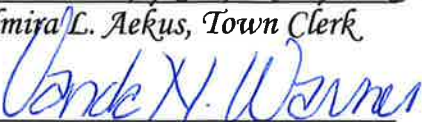
Sherry Adams questioned removal of the house that had burned in Whitingham, the old Kingsley house. She is concerned for safety and the appearance in the village. The board will look in to it.


Meeting adjourned 01:37 p.m.

Dated at Whitingham, Vermont this 4th day of March 2016.

Attest:


Almira L. Aekus, Town Clerk


Vanda N. Warner, B.C.A. Chair


Leon L. Corse, Moderator

NUMBER OF VOTERS ON THE CHECKLIST -867

NUMBER WHO VOTED AUSTRALIAN BALLOT - 329

HIGHEST NUMBER VOTED FROM THE FLOOR -100-ESTIMATE

Note speaker between the town and school meeting: The moderator asked for and received the permission of the electorate to allow Laura Sibia to speak. Ms. Sibia reported on issues she is working on and invited the electorate's questions. Sherry Adams urged residents to call Ms. Sibia with their questions and concerns and said she is very good at returning calls.