

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING MINUTES

MARCH 3, 2015

The legal voters of the Town of Townshend are hereby notified and WARNED to meet at the Town Hall in Townshend, Vermont, on Tuesday, March 3, 2015 at 9:00 a.m. to act on the following articles, viz:

The Assembly recited the Pledge of Allegiance and David Liebow called the meeting to order at 9:06 A.M. Several announcements were made and the location of numerous handouts and surveys was pointed out to the Assembly. The preamble was read and a brief explanation was given of the procedure that would be followed during Town Meeting.

ARTICLE I. To choose a Moderator for the ensuing year:

David Liebow opened nominations for Moderator.

Nominated: David Liebow.

There being no others, nominations were closed and the clerk was instructed to cast one ballot for David Liebow as Moderator for a term of one year. Motion seconded and passed by voice vote.

David Liebow, 1 year term as Moderator

ARTICLE II. To approve the July 1, 2012 - June 30, 2013 Auditors' Report:

Motion made by Craig so moved and seconded by Kris Kuch. Irv Stowell questioned whether there was money set aside for the fire truck reserve. He says it's \$10,000.00 short. Kris Kuch addressed the issue and said that in April there will be \$20,000.00 added to the fund.

There being no further discussion, Article passes by voice vote.

Article II passed

ARTICLE III. To see if the Town will vote to reduce the Office of Lister to three elected officials.

So moved by Craig and seconded by Eugene Kuch.

Brief discussion: Diana Lane wanted to hear from the Listers. Mike bills stated that having only three Listers makes the office more efficient and that they were in favor of the Article. Additional comments were made.

Motion for paper ballot was made by Irvin Stowell and failed.

There being no further discussion, Article passes by voice vote.

Article III passed

ARTICLE IV. To see what salaries the Town will vote to pay its various officials for the ensuing year:

Town Clerk:	\$ 34,540.00/ yr
Town Treasurer:	\$ 2,282.00/ yr
Select Board: (1) Chair:	\$ 900.00/ yr
(4) Members:	\$ 775.00/ yr
Listers, Auditors, assistants and casual labor:	\$ 13.65/ hr

So moved by Charlie Marchant and seconded by Eugene Kuch

Brief discussion: Questions regarding the 10% increase for the Select Board. Kathy Hege responded stating that these positions were voluntary and took up a lot of time. There was minimal objection to the increase and the majority of the townspeople thanked the Select Board for all their time and effort.

There being no further discussion, Article passes by voice vote.

Article IV passed

ARTICLE V. To elect all Town Officials for the ensuing year(s):

TOWN CLERK: **1 – one year term:** Nominated: Anita Bean

Eugene Kuch made a motion to close nominations and have the clerk cast one ballot for Anita Bean for a one year term as Town Clerk; seconded and carried by voice vote.

Anita Bean, 1 year term as Town Clerk

TOWN TREASURER: **1 – one year term:** Nominated: Joseph Daigneault

Irvin Stowell made a motion to close nominations and have the clerk cast one ballot for Joseph Daigneault for a one year term as Town Treasurer; seconded and carried by voice vote.

Joseph Daigneault, 1 year term as Town Treasurer

SELECT BOARD: **1 – three year term:** Nominated: Irvin Stowell – Respectively Declined
Henry Martin – Respectively Declined
Carole Melis – Respectively Declined
Zip Jacobs – Respectively Declined
Doug Ballantine – Respectively Declined
Kyle Lapointe – Respectively Declined
Robert Wright

Motion made to close nominations and have the clerk cast one ballot for Robert Wright for a three year term on the Select Board; seconded and carried by voice vote.

Robert Wright, 3 year term on Select Board

1 – one year term remaining on a 3 year term: Nominated: Irvin Stowell – Respectively Declined
Kyle Lapointe
Kurt Bostrom – Respectively Declined

Motion made to close nominations and have the clerk cast one ballot for Kyle Lapointe for a one year term on the Select Board; seconded and carried by voice vote.

Kyle Lapointe, 1 year term on Select Board

Motion was made to suspend the rules to allow Emily Long speak which was passed without objection.

She spoke to several issues including: Education; the Budget Gap of 112 million dollars and Efficiency Vermont. She took questions and comments regarding education, the open meeting law, school choice and the legalization of Marijuana. She left at 10:00 and the meeting continued with the elections.

1 – one year term: Nominated: Irvin Stowell
Patrick Kiernan
Allison Dercoli

Each Nominee had the opportunity to speak.

During the duration of ballot counting Charlie Marchant spoke to the assembly regarding Hope and Action and Leland and Gray photos.

Total Ballots - 106 Irvin Stowell - 55 Patrick Kiernan – 18 Allison Dercoli - 27 Blanks - 4 Spoiled – 2

Irvin Stowell, 1 year term on Select Board

1 – one year term: Nominated: Henry Martin
Allison Dercoli
Patrick Kiernan
Robert Lecours – Respectively Declined
Susan Lecours – Respectively Declined

Total Ballots - 103 Henry Martin - 68 Patrick Kiernan – 12 Allison Dercoli - 21 Spoiled - 2

LISTERS: **1 – three year term:** Nominated: Stanley (Mike) Bills

Susanna Palmer
Eric Scott

Total Votes – 103 Stanley (Mike) Bills – 63 Susanna Palmer – 11 Eric Scott – 29

Stanley (Mike) Bills, 3 year term as Lister

AUDITORS: 1 – three year term: Nominated: Barbara Bedortha – Respectively Declined
Richard Lucier – Respectively Declined
Patrick Kiernan
Tricia Shine – Respectively Declined

Motion made to close nominations and have the clerk cast one ballot for Patrick Kiernan for a three year term as Auditor; seconded and carried by voice vote.

Patrick Kiernan, 3 year term as Auditor

1 – two year term remaining on a 3 year term: Nominated: Tricia Shine

Motion made to close nominations and have the clerk cast one ballot for Tricia Shine for a two year term as Auditor; seconded and carried by voice vote.

Tricia Shine, 2 year term as Auditor

1 – one year term remaining on a 3 year term: Nominated: Barbara Bedortha – Respectively Declined
Kristina Wright – Respectively Declined
Allison Dercoli – Respectively Declined
Margaret Bills – Respectively Declined
Eric Scott

Motion made to close nominations and have the clerk cast one ballot for Eric Scott for a one year term as Auditor; seconded and carried by voice vote.

Eric Scott, 1 year term as Auditor

PROPERTY TAX COLLECTOR: 1 – one year term: Nominated: Joseph Daigneault

Motion made to close nominations and have the clerk cast one ballot for Joseph Daigneault for a one year term as Town Treasurer; seconded and carried by voice vote.

Joseph Daigneault, 1 year term as Property Tax Collector

DELINQUENT TAX COLLECTOR: 1 – one year term: Nominated: Becky Nystrom

Motion made to close nominations and have the clerk cast one ballot for Becky Nystrom for a one year term as Delinquent Tax Collector; seconded and carried by voice vote.

Becky Nystrom, 1 year term as Delinquent Tax Collector

FIRST CONSTABLE: 1 – one year term: Nominated: Warren Beattie

Motion made to close nominations and have the clerk to cast one ballot for Warren Beattie for a one year term as First Constable; seconded and carried by voice vote.

Warren Beattie, 1 year term as First Constable

SECOND CONSTABLE: 1 – one year term: Nominated: Michael Cutts

Motion made to close nominations and have the clerk to cast one ballot for Mike Cutts for a one year term as Second Constable; seconded and carried by voice vote.

Michael Cutts, 1 year term as Second Constable

TOWN GRAND JUROR: 1 – one year term: Nominated: Margaret Bills

Motion made to close nominations and have the clerk to cast one ballot for Margaret Bills for a one year term as Town Grand Juror; seconded and carried by voice vote.

Margaret Bills, 1 year term as Town Grand Juror

TOWN AGENT: **1 – one year term:** Nominated: Carole Melis

Motion made to close nominations and have the clerk to cast one ballot for Carole Melis for a one year term as Town Agent; seconded and carried by voice vote.

Carole Melis, 1 year term as Town Agent

LIBRARY TRUSTEES: **1 – five year term:** Nominated: Margaret Bills

Motion made to close nominations and have the clerk to cast one ballot for Margaret Bills for a five year term as Library Trustee; seconded and carried by voice vote.

Margaret Bills, 5 year term as Library Trustee

1 - 2 year remaining on a five year term: Nominated: Nan Danforth

Motion made to close nominations and have the clerk to cast one ballot for Nan Danforth for a two year term as Library Trustee; seconded and carried by voice vote.

Nan Danforth, 2 year term as Library Trustee

CEMETERY COMMISSIONER: **1 – five year term:** Nominated: Ricky Snow

Motion made to close nominations and have the clerk to cast one ballot for Ricky Snow for a five year term as Cemetery Commissioner; seconded and carried by voice vote.

Ricky Snow, 5 year term as Cemetery Commissioner

ARTICLE VI. To see if the Town will authorize its Property Tax Collector to receive its Real Property Taxes quarterly, August 28, 2015; November 30, 2015; February 26, 2016; and May 27, 2016? Monthly interest will be charged at the rate of one-half percent (1/2%) or fraction thereof; interest of one percent (1%) or fraction thereof plus penalties will commence on June 1, 2016.

So moved by Irvin Stowell and seconded by Eugne Kuch.

There being no discussion, Article passes by voice vote.

Article VI passed

ARTICLE VII. To see if the Town will vote to appropriate \$498,959.00, to pay for the running expenses and liabilities of the Town, of which \$737,501.00, to be raised by taxation?

So moved by Craig Hunt and seconded by Eugene Kuch.

Kathy Hege explained the reasoning behind the motion.

A proposed budget was presented to the voters at Town Meeting in March 2013, and the voters approved revenue to be raised, by taxation, to separately fund municipal and highway department needs. The Select Board, when setting the tax rate for the 2014 fiscal year, made an executive decision not to raise all of the funds necessary to cover the spending approved at Town Meeting. This was done to keep taxes from rising sharply because the reappraisal was not yet completed and because several expensive highway projects were in the voted budget. The under-funding of appropriations also included the cancellation of a new plow truck.

At the close of FY14, a NEMRC consultant was hired to help the new bookkeeper reconcile the books. It was brought to this Select Board's attention that since the voters had approved appropriations totaling more funds than were raised in taxes, tax revenues had to be allocated to the Highway and Equipment funds from the Town General Fund. This created a major deficit in the General Fund (- \$367,198) and substantial surpluses in the Highway Fund (+ \$188,891) and the Equipment Fund (+ \$181,617). Added together, a \$3,316 actual surplus for the year becomes apparent and is being returned to the taxpayer. In the FY16 proposed budget the application of

these surpluses and the deficit makes the “to be raised in taxes” requests appear skewed in Articles VII and VIII.

The Select Board is trying to be completely transparent in the accounting of this money and is attempting to follow accepted accounting practices for recording it on the balance sheet for the Town. While the decision to not fully fund the appropriations of the voters in 2013 was not the doing of this Board, we are the ones that have to account for that decision.

As a note of interest, taxes to be raised by the combined expenses of the Town and Highway Funds **are down by \$6,868 for FY16 over the current year.**

There was brief discussion regarding the Job Description for the Town Administrator and Bookkeeper positions.

There being no further discussion Article passes by voice vote.

Article VII passed

ARTICLE VIII. To see if the Town will vote to appropriate \$ 690,242.00, for the running expenses and liabilities of maintaining the Town's roads, of which \$ 206,735.00, to be raised by taxation?

So moved by Craig Hunt and seconded by Eugene Kuch.

Brief discussion regarding gravel crushing and special projects; including Grafton Road and East Hill.

There being no further discussion Article passes by voice vote.

Article VIII passed

ARTICLE IX. To see if the Town will vote to contract for law enforcement services, costs of which to be raised by taxation, and, if so, how much?

Motion made by Kathy Hege that the Town contract with the Sheriff's Department for law enforcement services in the amount of \$20,000.00 to be raised by taxation. Seconded by Eugene Kuch.

Discussion regarding addressed the amount of hours that the town will be covered and the duties that are performed; the town's spending as far as law enforcement services; more visibility during school hours; revenue from speeding tickets and more patrol on Route 35.

Irvin Stowell Called the Question. Discussion was closed by a show of hands. Yes - 64 No - 16

Request for paper ballot.

Total – 105 Yes – 66 No – 39

Article IX passed

The meeting was recessed for lunch at 12:00 noon, to reconvene after the Townshend School District Meeting.

The Moderator reconvened the Town Meeting at 1:55 P.M.

ARTICLE X. To see if the Town will vote to raise \$43,588.00, by taxation, for the running expenses and liabilities of the Library?

So moved by Marilee Attley and seconded by Kris Kuch.

There being no discussion, Article passes by voice vote.

Article X passed

ARTICLE XI. To see if the Town will vote to raise \$10,000.00.00 by taxation, to be placed in the Capital Expenditure Fund Fire Department Reserve toward a future pumper?

So moved by Irvin Stowell and seconded by Kris Kuch.

There being no discussion, Article passes by voice vote.

Article XI passed

ARTICLE XII. To see if the Town will vote to raise \$1,500.00, by taxation, for the Old Cemetery Fund?

So moved by Charlie Marchant and seconded by Irvin Stowell.

There being no discussion, Article passes by voice vote.

Article XII passed

ARTICLE XIII. To see if the Town will vote to raise \$ 14,375.00, by taxation, for the support of Social Services, as recommended by the Screening Committee?

So moved by Craig Hunt and seconded by Charlie Marchant.

There being no discussion, Article passes by voice vote.

Article XIII passed

ARTICLE XIV. To see if the Town will authorize the Selectmen to set a tax rate sufficient to cover all monies raised for municipal entities for the period July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016, and to borrow money in anticipation of taxes?

So moved by Carole Melis and seconded by Craig Hunt.

There being no discussion, Article passes by voice vote.

Article XIV passed

ARTICLE XV. To see if the Town will authorize the Board of Selectmen to sell or convey properties received through gift or other means, including Parcel 08100-000 of 17.0 +/- acres in West Townshend and to execute, acknowledge and deliver deed and other transfer documents upon such terms and conditions as the Board of Selectmen may deem to be in the interest of the Town?

So moved by Carole Melis and seconded by Craig Hunt.

Discussion: Parcel location, how property is accessed and value. The property has been off the tax rolls for many years.

Select Board was asked if there were any other properties included in this Article. It was stated that Article includes all properties acquired by town through tax sales and that Voters do not have the right to stop the sale of properties that town acquired through tax sales.

Comment was made that properties to be sold must be put out to bid. Legal advice received from the Town's attorney noted that they can be sold outright if the price is deemed fair and the Town recovers its lost revenues.

They are required to be advertised in the newspaper and posted in the town hall.

There being no further discussion, Article passes by voice vote.

Article XV passed

ARTICLE XVI. To see if the Town will authorize the Board of Selectmen to acquire, by gift or purchase, land for municipal forest, to promote reforestation, water conservation and good forestry practices?

So moved by Craig Hunt and seconded by Charlie Marchant.

There being no discussion, Article passes by voice vote.

Article XVI passed

ARTICLE XVII. To see if the Town will vote to set the first Tuesday in March 2016, as the date for the 2016 Town of Townshend Annual Meeting?

So moved by Craig Hunt and seconded by Carole Melis.

There being no discussion, Article passes by voice vote.

Article XVII passed

ARTICLE XVIII. To transact any other non-binding business to properly come before said Meeting?

Points of Interest: Consistency when putting out the sandwich board;
Concerned for new Auditors and training;
Thanks to the old and new Select Board members;
Thank you to the School Board;
Pedestrian safety and grants for sidewalks;
Community Skating Rink;
New Garbage Procedures;
Voluntary Committee to explore the possibilities of a Town Manager;

There being no further discussion, Craig Hunt made a motion to adjourn at 2:40 P.M. Seconded and unanimously carried.

Anita Bean, Town Clerk

Kathleen Hege, Select Board Chair

Joseph Daigneault, Justice of the Peace