

Minutes of the Annual School Meeting March 5, 2012

The legal voters of Ripton met at the Community House on Monday March 5, 2012 to act upon articles 1-5 of the 2012 School District Warning; approximately 70 people attended. Moderator Joyce Dicianna welcomed the gathering, especially new town members and newly eligible voters, and read an invocation. She reviewed meeting procedures including how articles are addressed, rules and courtesies regarding speaking, voting procedures, and encouraged questions if anything was unclear. The meeting was called to order at 7:37 p.m.

The floor was turned over to Willem Jewett, Ripton resident and state representative, for his annual update from the state house. Copies of his newsletter, "Town Meeting Legislative Update", were handed out. Mr. Jewett noted that Montpelier is dominated by bills and issues defined by Tropical Storm Irene. He said the state house was energized to get things done, that a lot of tough legislation has been passed with strong bipartisan votes. In general, he continues to receive questions and input from his constituency and welcomes that involvement.

Robert Wagner asked about the tuition town education tax, specifically, of the portion of taxes paid to the state, how much comes back to Ripton? Willem Jewett explained that the section about tuition town education tax in his newsletter was specifically about towns that tuition their students to other towns and does not apply to Ripton. He noted that the education tax rate in tuition towns can vary widely from year to year depending upon the number of students, that the "smoothing mechanisms" available to towns that operate schools are not there for tuition towns. He could not say exactly how many dollars were shipped out compared to how many shipped in, but feels the funding formula of Act 68 works for Ripton.

Charles Billings asked if all states will implement the Affordable Care Act at the same time with the same structure, or if Vermont has its own structure. Mr. Jewett reminded the group that this is the federal act under which states are asked to create health care exchanges. He said that all states will not implement these exchanges the same way, and some states not at all which makes federal funding relief unavailable to them. The amount of this relief for Vermont is estimated to be \$350 million.

Marty Kulczyk asked for an update regarding search and rescue for lost recreational persons. Mr. Jewett responded that hearings about this have just begun and it has been noted that there are no statutes directed at search and rescue, only at missing persons and there are important differences between the two. It is planned to create a search and rescue chapter and set a standard that addresses speed of response. There is also discussion about unifying the four arms of state law enforcement under one command structure.

Mr. Jewett thanked the voters and left the meeting. The school meeting resumed at 7:51 p.m. with the reading of the first article. School board members present were Carol Ford, Amy McGlashan, and Michael Hussey.

Article 1: To see if the voters of the Town School District will authorize its Board of Directors, under 16 VSA 562 (9), to borrow money by issuance of bonds or notes not in excess of anticipated revenue for the school year.

The article was moved and seconded by Tim Hanson and Barry King. Carol Ford explained that it is "boiler plate" language from the new ACSU administration that allows the school board to act to borrow money, and noted that the situation has not come up in the past and is not anticipated at this time. The question was called and seconded by Tim Hanson and Ed Sullivan and it was unanimously voted to vote on the article. Article 1 was adopted by voice vote with one "nay".

Article 2: To see if the voters of the Town School District will approve the sum of \$775,360 to defray current expenses of the Town School District for the ensuing school year and to pay outstanding orders and obligations.

The article was moved and seconded by David Disque and Laurie Cox. Carol Ford noted that the proposed budget is a 5.43% increase over the current year but that after receipts are figured in, net proposed spending is about \$300 less than current and this is primarily due to increased revenue from tuitioned students from other towns. The budget is increased to meet the needs of these students, but is then offset by that increased revenue. Ms. Ford continued to explain that the same number of teachers and paraprofessionals is budgeted for as for the current year's budget, though the anticipated final for salaries for aides will be about \$33,800 rather than the \$24,016 budgeted due to the amendment on the floor at last year's annual meeting where it was decided to maintain an aide position that had been proposed to be cut. Following questions from Dick Collitt and Charles Billings it was clarified that although a teacher had been added for this current school year because of an influx of students in the 5/6 classroom, the position will not be required next year when many of those students will graduate. The overall increase of about 3% in teacher salaries represents a different mix of positions rather than an increase of persons.

Ms. Ford said that although the Spanish language program was rejected at last year's annual meeting, it is proposed again with support from the supervisory union and Ripton staff. Robert Wagner spoke in favor of the program and asked if the budget was for time and materials or for more staff. It was explained that the school is following guidelines from ACSU and is not yet fully designed, but the budget will likely cover a 20% teacher position plus supplies which will translate to about one hour of instruction per class per week.

A question from Michael Seligmann clarified that the "early separation" payment in the budget is the final of a discontinued program to offer payments to teachers retiring early. The answer to Bryan Alexander's question about the nature of the large reduction in "math inservice" was that these funds are administered at the supervisory level and likely had to do with a combination of availability of funds and Ripton School's need for them.

Andrea Chesman, Dick Collitt and Charles Billings had questions about the anticipated student enrollment for next year and tuitioned students. Principal, Tracey Harrington, said that they expect roughly 40 students, 4 of which will be tuitioned. Carol Ford noted that there are three tuition towns adjacent to Ripton - Hancock, Granville and Goshen – and many of the students from these towns go to other area schools. We have no control how many students will come to Ripton; we can only make our school attractive through what we offer. Examples of this are the newly offered after-school program which is attractive for people who work, and the Spanish program which is offered by only one other school in the supervisory union. Ms. Ford further noted that Ripton school is proud of the interdisciplinary thematic units in place since the school was built, and feels that this makes Ripton stand out in the region.

Some additional budget increases were explained – health insurance due to a change in plan, EEE Tuition due to the discontinuance of federal funds, and Internet Access which now includes telephone service but is offset by the E-Rate Reimbursement. Tim Hanson and Robert Wagner called the question and seconded, the group voted to vote on the article and Article 2 was adopted by unanimous voice vote.

Article 3: To see if the voters of the Town School District will authorize the Board of Directors to place \$14,000 from the FY 2011 Unreserved Fund Balance (of \$41,198) into the Capital Improvement Reserve Fund.

Carol Ford explained that the \$14,000 is proposed to be added to the Capital Improvement Reserve Fund (which now has about \$108,000). This fund has been used in the past for things like a new roof. The next article proposes to use \$10,000 from the Unreserved Fund Balance for playground improvements. The remaining \$17,198 (\$41,198 minus \$14,000 minus \$10,000) will essentially reduce the amount of money to be raised by taxes.

Charles Billings asked what other things the Capital Improvement Reserve Fund is anticipated to be used for other than a new roof and what might a new roof cost. The response was that there are no immediate needs known at this time and that estimates for a new roof will not be gathered until it is time to replace it. Responding to a question from Robert Wagner to clarify the amount of the budget, Ms. Ford explained that on page 66 of town report the

warned proposed budget amount for next year of \$775,360 plus the special articles equals the spending total of \$799,360, and that these corresponding figures for the current and previous year also appear there. It was further noted that these numbers are for the Ripton school only, not for the middle and high schools.

The moderator asked if the group was ready to vote, and Article 3 was adopted by unanimous voice vote. (It was clarified around this time that if the moderator asks if the group is ready to vote, then the group can move directly to a vote; if the question is called, the group must vote that it is ready to vote.)

Article 4: To see if the voters of the Town School District will authorize the Board of Directors to use up to \$10,000 from the FY 2011 Unreserved Fund Balance (of \$41,198) for playground upgrades.

The article was moved and seconded by Barry King and Warren King. Bonnie DeGray asked what specifically were the upgrades being proposed and Tracey Harrington responded. She said that a committee is determining the specifics but that one of the greatest needs is to provide equipment for pre-kindergarten age children. The school currently does not have age-appropriate equipment for pre-K and as a licensed pre-school should provide a fenced-in play area for this group. It is also hoped to enhance existing equipment, with shading and benches for instance, and have imaginative equipment that ties to the landscape allowing students to relate to the outdoors. Jeff Wulfman asked how the \$10,000 number was arrived at. Carol Ford and Amy McGlashan explained that the number is based upon some rough estimates from the previous year's research into new equipment and from determining what seemed to be a fair amount to use from the unreserved fund balance. The playground committee will then come up with a plan that stays within the \$10,000 budget.

The moderator asked if the group was ready to vote, and Article 4 was adopted by voice vote with one "nay".

Article 5: To transact any other business proper to come before said meeting.

Carol Ford acknowledged former school board member, Connie Trudeau, who served for 10 years and tendered her resignation in the fall of 2011, which the board received with regret. Ms. Trudeau also served on the ACSU board, volunteered in Ripton school classrooms, worked with FORS, chaperoned field trips – basically did everything the ideal classroom parent can do. The Ripton school board thanks Connie Trudeau for her service and has a gift for her, but noting that she was not present at this meeting Ms. Ford commented that they can certainly find her at the school.

Amy McGlashan invited the group to come to a community forum on March 13 about the future of education in Ripton. She acknowledged the members of the committee that have been helping put the forum together and explained that the March 13 meeting will begin a process to identify immediate and long-term educational issues, and prepare the community for decisions it may face in coming years concerning education in Ripton and the Addison Central Supervisory Union. This meeting will continue the discussion that long-range planning meetings by the local community began two years ago. This meeting is one of several "study circles" to be held in the school district and participants will be asked to commit to three additional meetings to complete the process. Cindy Seligmann spoke of her positive experience with the Ripton School and encouraged everyone to attend this meeting.

Mike Hussey extended an invitation (on behalf of Willem Jewett who forgot to mention it during his presentation) to a governor's lunch at the Bread Loaf campus Barn on Monday, March 12 at noon. The charge is \$7.00 and local foods will be featured.

Andrea Chesman spoke of the contested race for the open position on the school board. She asked that the school board consider restructuring the way positions open in the future suggesting that positions could be chosen from a pool of candidates rather than separately filled individual offices. Ms. Ford, Laurie Cox and Sally Hoyler contributed to the explanation that on a five-member board there are two 3-year positions and three 2-year positions so that every year, one 2-year position and one 3-year position are on the ballot. This year there is an additional race to

complete two years of a vacated 3-year term. Current law requires that a candidate must specify one of the five positions for which they are running and the ballot is formatted accordingly. Carol Ford said she did not know if there is an option to do it any other way, but will look into it.

Bill McKibben and Erik Eriksen moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting and following a unanimous voice vote, the school annual meeting adjourned at 8:38 p.m. The meeting will reconvene at 7:00 a.m. on March 6, 2012 at the Ripton town office to vote by Australian ballot for school directors and moderator, and for warned articles from the UD#3 district and Hannaford Center.

Joyce Dicianna
Moderator

Sally Hoyler
Town Clerk

Carol Ford
School Board Chair