

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

MARCH 3, 2008

The legal voters of the Town of Ripton met at the Community House in Ripton on Monday, March 3, at 8:50 p.m. to act upon articles one through five of the 2008 Town Warning. There were about 100 people in attendance.

Moderator Joyce Dicianna called the meeting to order at 8:50 p.m.

Article 1: Will the Town vote the sum of \$409,746.86 to pay General Fund and Road expenses for the ensuing year, and pay outstanding orders or obligations of the Town, with interest, the tax rate on the 2008 Grand List to be determined by the Selectboard, divided as follows:

Roads	\$210,618.00
General Fund	\$198,706.04
Total	\$409,324.04

Article 1 was moved by Richard Kimler and seconded by Ross Elliott.

Bill Ford highlighted several items in the expenditures section of the budget on pages 14 and 15 of the Town Report:

- He noted an increase in hours worked by the Town Clerk and Treasurer from 27 to 33 hours per week and an increase in pay. Also noted was a pay increase for the Board Clerk. This results in a commensurate increase in health insurance and workers' compensation costs.
- The amount budgeted for Office Maintenance and Repair has increased to \$16,700. Extensive repairs are needed, and this money will allow the Town to begin addressing some of the problems. While a priority list has not been finalized, the following are among needed repairs: re-pointing the chimney; repairing the fascia and soffit boards which are in bad shape; replacing rotten wood in the northeast corner of the building; and reconfiguring the entrance to minimize the current danger from falling ice and snow from the eaves and entrance porch. The last item, reconfiguring the entrance, may not be possible to achieve this year.

Dick Collitt asked whether the building would be painted, and Mr. Ford replied that painting is needed but may be unaffordable this year.

Jeremy Grip advised that the electrical conduit into the building needs attention.

Mr. Ford then mentioned a few items in the roads portion of the budget:

- \$12,000 is budgeted this year for the Major Projects Fund. (This is the annual amount which alternates between the road budget and the Fire Department budget.)
- There is a Better Back Roads grant of \$7,000, allowing the budgeted expenditure of \$9,300 for work on the Barker Road in 2008. Ron Wimett commented that we have been receiving these small grants in recent years, and last year work was done on the Wagon Wheel Road. As was the case for Wagon Wheel Road, the Barker Road activity will include tree-cutting, ditching, and rip-rap for improved drainage. One goal is to enable roads to dry out faster.

Bonnie DeGray inquired what projects will be undertaken with the Major Projects Fund monies. Ron Wimett replied that the Robins Cross Road project was not yet finished, with negotiations ongoing with landowners and CVPS. Improvements to Peddlers Bridge Road are also anticipated, improving the corner between Mike Hussey and the Jewetts. Bill Ford then explained that Mr. Wimett was referring to activity

funded by the budget item Major Roadside Reconstruction, and that there are actually no specific projects lined up for Major Projects Fund expenditures.

Ross Elliott inquired about total grant income for road projects. Ron Wimett explained we have received \$7,000 from Better Back Roads, to be augmented by a 20% match from the Town. Bill Ford said most of these small grants are in the range of \$8,000 to \$12,000, with the Town matching 25% of project costs. Major Project Fund monies are a good way to leverage these small grants.

Dick Collitt asked for clarification of the school expenditure figures given near the bottom of page 16 of the Town Report. Tim Hanson explained that the format was a holdover from an old method of reporting on school expenditures. He said the total budgeted amount is given on the left, that the next number is the actual amount raised in taxes, and the difference is money received in State aid. Mr. Collitt suggested an explanatory footnote be added, and Sally Hoyler pointed out that such a footnote already is there.

Bill Ford said that the Board and Treasurer would meet soon to look at the Town Report format for financial reporting. A new format may be devised for next year.

Richard Kimler called the question, and Erik Eriksen seconded.

Article 1 was adopted by unanimous voice vote.

Subsequent to this unanimous vote, Dick Collitt noted that the amount shown on line one of Article 1 is incorrect: it should read \$409,324.04 instead of \$409,746.86. As this turned out to be a clerical error, Dick Collitt moved an amendment to change the dollar amount on line one of Article 1 to read \$409,324.04. The motion was seconded by Jeremy Grip.

The Amendment to Article 1 was adopted by unanimous voice vote.

Article 2: Will the Town vote to establish a reserve fund pursuant to 24 V.S.A. Section 2804 to be entitled Major Building and Equipment Fund for the purpose of being held, managed, and expended for future major building projects and equipment, this reserve fund to be made up of existing or future tax surpluses, other miscellaneous revenues, or as budgeted?

Article 2 was moved by Ed Sullivan and seconded by Dick Collitt.

Laurie Cox explained that voters were not being asked for money at this point, but that in future if there were, say, a building or road equipment needed, this article would provide a basis for a Major Building and Equipment Fund to exist. Such a fund could be seeded with surplus taxes, or voted monies, but this is not being requested yet.

James Daignault asked whether this is different from the Major Projects Fund, and it was explained that the Major Projects Fund is for roads only.

Dick Collitt asked if the Town was considering buying road equipment. Bill Ford responded that it was not, but that Ron Wimett would eventually retire and we should be prepared for any eventuality. He said the Town might want to build, for example, a salt shed. He reiterated that the Town did not want to purchase road equipment.

Joyce Dicianna stated that in the future, were there monies in the Fund, voters would need to approve an expenditure before the Select Board could spend such monies. Bill Ford disagreed, saying that once voters approve any money going into a fund the Board could in fact spend that money without returning to voters for approval. After some back-and-forth discussion about spending authority, Bill Ford reiterated that the Board was not asking for funding at this time, just for the establishment of a mechanism. He said the Board would look into regulations and report back to the voters before asking for any monies to be put in such a fund.*

[* On April 4, 2008 before the final minutes were signed by the Selectboard, Deb Karpak provided this response: In reference to the question regarding funds established through the vote of the Town and expenditures from the fund, it is the opinion of the Town Attorney based on statute that once the Town votes to put money in a fund, it can be used by the Selectboard for the purposes of the fund.]

Alice Clark asked why we have not had such a fund before now.

Marty Kulczyk said he wanted to clarify that when voters approved money for the Fire Department's Vehicle Replacement Fund monies were then spent on equipment without returning to voters for spending authority. It was understood these monies could be spent.

Ned Horning asked why a fund was being created now—why not wait until we have money to put in a fund? Bill Ford replied that the Board felt it to be a useful action to take, that the Board thought there should be a fund for projects other than roads, and that there was no reason to wait a year. The Board could determine whether voters were supportive of such a fund and, if not, what the objections were. Ron Wimet said the idea arose several years ago when the State wanted towns to build salt sheds; there was no money budgeted or available to do so.

Ed Sullivan stated it seems sensible to have some money put aside, especially if this money was not obtained by raising taxes but rather through surpluses or other money that may come in. Bill Ford responded that any money put in the fund would require specific voter approval.

Richard Kimler said he read the Secretary of State's opinions on fund regulation differently from those being discussed. Laurie Cox again stated that the Board would research the issue and report back to voters.

Bill McKibben called the question and Warren King seconded.

Article 2 was adopted by voice vote, with a few "nay" votes.

Article 3: Will the Town vote the sum of \$23,604.00 to Ripton Fire and Rescue to help pay Fire Department and First Response expenses for the year?

Article 3 was moved by Joyce Henderson and seconded by Alison Joseph.

Fire Chief Erik Eriksen thanked the townspeople for their support. He said the mini-pumper was luckily still running. The plan is to attend the New England Expo in June to check out possibilities for a "new" used pumper or possibly retrofitting.

He noted that the Department has three new members: Diana Davidson (taking the EMT course), Marty Kulczyk, and Liz Poulin (taking the Firefighter 1 course).

Mr. Eriksen said there were 38 calls last year, down 20 from the previous year.

A grant was received from the State for wildland firefighting equipment; backpacks will be coming in the spring. The Department applied to the Lions Club for funding and received \$100 for mannequins.

Vermont's charter calls for an executive board, and the Department has set up a board consisting of Chuck Martin, Mike Seligman, and Tim Hanson. The Executive Board will scrutinize the budget and consider long-range recruitment.

The Fire Station will be dedicated to Theodore Conklin, the Department's founder, in July. His wife, son, and a friend will be coming to the ceremony. Mountain Signs has already made a sign.

Mr. Eriksen reported that the Department needs members. Members don't need to fight fires—there are many ways to be useful.

Muriel, a member of the BMW Club which holds its rally at Silver Towers each summer, presented the Fire Department with a donation of \$500. Mr. Eriksen reported that he had met with Silver Towers/Elks Club people who expressed their willingness to help the Fire Department with some minor expenses in future (although probably not this year).

Jeremy Grip asked for an update on the status of the Vehicle Replacement Fund. Mr. Eriksen explained that the funds have not been spent. Their availability allows Department members to visit the New England Expo in June to investigate equipment replacement. Mr. Eriksen mentioned receipt of a letter about possible donation of a newer used ambulance, a 1996 automatic/diesel.

Bonnie DeGray asked if the Fire Department would host a rabies clinic this year. Mr. Eriksen responded that it was not likely: there are plenty of clinics being held in nearby towns, and although he will speak with veterinarians, they seem happy with the schedule they now have.

Mr. Eriksen described vehicle maintenance practices in response to a question from James Daignault. Mr. Daignault offered to help with vehicle maintenance.

Marty Kulczyk asked if there would be a Fire Department picnic this summer, and Mr. Eriksen said it would be held in conjunction with the July 26th dedication of the Fire Station.

Richard Kimler called the question, and Ross Elliott seconded.

Article 3 was adopted by unanimous voice vote.

Article 4: Will the Town have current property taxes collected by the Treasurer, with a tax due date of November 6, 2008?

Article 3 was moved by Carol Ford and seconded by Jeremy Grip.

Sally Hoyler pointed out that November 6 will fall on a Thursday this year, not the usual Monday. (This week will also see the national election.)

Ed Sullivan called the question and Jeremy Grip seconded.

Article 4 was adopted by unanimous voice vote.

Article 5: Any other business proper to come before this meeting.

Bryan Alexander announced the launch of a web presence for Ripton, which can be accessed at riptonite.com. Submissions to the site may be made by emailing riptonite@gmail.com. Along with Mr. Alexander, Bill McKibben, Phillip Bullied and Win Colwell are involved in the project. Mr. McKibben noted that Tuesday's election results would be posted that evening on the site.

James Daignault commented that the Lincoln Road is icy and unsafe. Ron Wimett replied that the road crews have mostly been using sand, and little salt. He acknowledged that icy ruts had formed but noted that unless roads can be plowed at just the moment slush turns into ice, there is little to be done to prevent such ruts. They are doing the best they can within the methods utilized.

Laurie Cox asked that people interested in being vendors at a possible farmers market this summer should contact her. If there is little response, there probably won't be a market. She also mentioned the "Moveable Feast" flyer which has been posted around town.

Bonnie DeGray noted that there is some provision before the State legislature about selling raw milk. This may be of interest regarding a farmers market.

Ed Sullivan asked that people post their 911 address signs where they are visible from the road. Especially in the case of medical calls, people shouldn't assume responders know where they live.

Sally Hoyler introduced Pat Chase, who gave a brief update on the activities of Addison Central Teens. She reported that the teen center has been operating for about six months. It is doing well, and is a positive influence in the community. Located under the municipal building in Middlebury, there are many appropriate activities for teens. She described some of these activities and gave the center's hours of operation.

Rick Klein asked people to sign a petition he was circulating regarding Vermont Yankee's license renewal after 2012.

Win Colwell spoke in support of Elderly Services.

Ed Sullivan moved that the Meeting be adjourned, and was seconded by Erik Eriksen.

The Meeting adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Joyce Dicianna announced that the Meeting would be reconvened on Tuesday, March 4, 2008, at the Community House to vote by Australian ballot on election of Town officers and approval of certain allocations from the General Fund.

William Ford

Laureen Cox

Ronald Wimett

Selectboard for the Town of Ripton