

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
TOWN OF LUDLOW - ANNUAL MEETING
FEBRUARY 29, 2016**

Number in Attendance - 70

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Moderator Martin Nitka. Moderator Nitka introduced the head table: Selectmen John Neal, Brett Sanderson, Logan Nicoll, Bruce Schmidt, Howard Barton, Town Manager Frank Heald and Town Clerk Ulla Cook. The pledge of allegiance was recited.

Any non-residents of Ludlow were asked to identify themselves.

INFORMATIONAL MEETING FOR ARTICLES 2-5:

Article 2 – Sharon Bixby spoke regarding this article. She stated we have been trying for some 20 odd years trying to get a bike path for Ludlow and every time we apply it gets defeated as has this one. This route is not feasible, it was very expensive. We are open to suggestions for other routes that would not be too expensive so we could apply again.

Article 3 – Ms. Pollender explained that the windows have been replaced and repaired the \$66,000 is for the UV protection to preserve the artifacts and lower heat costs. We have done all this fund raising ourselves and we still need about \$36,000. Our goal is to make the museum open year round. Mr. Girouard asked if there is that much demand for people to go there in the winter months. Ms. Brehm responded there are programs throughout the winter. Mr. Heitsmith questioned could you only put UV protection on just the south, east and west side to save money. Ms. Brehm responded no you have to cover all windows as whatever light comes in whether natural or not will affect the artifacts. The only windows that will not be covered is the office which does not have artifacts.

Article 4 – Mr. Lagro stated this has been tax exempt and this is asking for an extension of that. The Mason are involved with the Shriners we have the care program and the Shriners hospital. They do a lot of good work. Mr. VanGuilder we work with the Shriners, this is nonprofit, we do scholarships, we try to do many good things as we can for the community and surrounding towns.

Article 5 – Mr. Girouard stated this could hurt all the businesses in town and I do not agree with it. Mr. Heald clarified the facts that 70 percent stay in the town, 30 percent goes to the State and some comes back to the Towns for payment in lieu of taxes. Car sales are not part of the sales tax. Mr. Remy stated as most people in Ludlow, I do not want to pay more taxes as we pay enough. When I first heard of this tax, I was against it. After learning more about it, I completely changed my mind. This is a good tax, it is good for Ludlow and makes a lot of sense. It is a 1 per cent tax and when you look at the amount of money that comes into this town from outside of Ludlow, non-residents, who are going to be paying that 1 percent tax and donate to our community. Others have done this Manchester, Stowe and when you look at the amount of money that comes to our town from non-residents and 70 percent comes back into our community to lower taxes and help with the infrastructure. These are people who are used to paying 8, 9 or 10 percent taxes where they come from. Mr. Heitsmith questioned has there been a study to see how this will impact the local resident. Mr. Heald responded this tax is not subject to most food products, only consumables. If your house is worth \$200,000 you would save \$40. Mr. Couch suggested reducing spending. Ms. Fortuna asked if this option tax is the same as other towns have such as Killington and Manchester and is this state program. Mr. Heald responded this was enacted by the legislature as part of the education tax enacted in 1997. This was an opportunity for towns, such as ours, known as gold towns to raise money to help offset what they are sending to the state. The City of Burlington and the City of Rutland both collect a tax under their charter and other resort communities such as Stowe, Killington, Stratton Winhall and Dover. Also, Manchester raises over a million dollars on the option tax. Mr. VanGuilder stated he shops in other communities that have the option tax and he does not even notice the tax in those communities. I agree with Mr. Girouard, I don't like sending money to Montpelier any better than anyone else, but that is part of the hazard of this law and it would allow us to make drastically good improvements in our community, not only to reduce our taxes but allow are select board to make great improvements in our infrastructure that is needed to

be done for many, many years. This is a win win situation for us. I highly support this. Mr. Tedford stated this is a long overdue tax for a community such as Ludlow. This would help cover the cost of providing services such as roads, bridges, sidewalks and sanding for the 15,000 people that show up on the weekends. Instead of raising our real estate taxes, that burden is shifted to the purchaser of the goods and services that fall under the 1 percent. This is truly a pass through tax. Scott Stearns stated this is not a good tax for a small retailer. Ms. Harrison asked if this tax is administered through the town or the state. Mr. Heald responded it is handled by the state and then reimbursed back to the town. Businesses would have to reprogram their cash registers. Mr. Stratman stated we have many people on fixed incomes and even 50 cents additional would be a lot on a \$50 bill. Mr. Heitsmith stated this would hurt businesses. Mr. VanGuilder stated people should do some research on this article.

Moderator Nitka called for an 8 minute recess so Representative Devereux and Senator Nitka could address the audience on legislative issues.

Representative Dennis Devereux - Renewable Energy Projects. It is something we have talked about for 5 or 6 years. We have about 16 bills in the House dealing with this that give more local input, more local control to regional and local planning commissions. I work on the Government Operations which oversees government. We deal with a lot of election issues, town charters. We also oversee public safety.

Senator Nitka – I serve on the appropriations and judiciary committees. The budget is handled in appropriations and last year we had a balance budget in May. One of the big problems is health care that is consuming just about all the money. There is a real problem with landlord and tenants and I have introduced a new bill regarding this. There is also a real problem with opiates so I have introduced a new bill for prescription drugs regarding doctors being able to see if a person is already prescribed an opiate.

Town Meeting reconvened.

- ARTICLE 6. Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow act on Town Officers' reports for the period from July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015?
Motion to adopt article made by Mr. Pace, numerous seconds. Repairs to Walker Bridge were questioned as to how long it would take. Mr. Heald responded that sometime in the summer of 2017 the bridge will be fast tracked and closure will be between 30 and 40 days. No further discussion. The motion was voted and the article was adopted.
- ARTICLE 7. Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow fix the salaries of the Select Board, Cemetery Commissioners, and Trustees of Public Funds for the ensuing year?
Motion to fix the salaries of the Select Board at \$1,500, Cemetery Commissioners at \$800, and Trustees of Public Funds \$300 made by Peter Kolenda, second by Mr. Kirkbride. No discussion. The motion was voted and the article was adopted.
- ARTICLE 8. Shall the Town of Ludlow collect taxes on Real Property in installments, taxes to be paid to the Town Treasurer on August 15, 2016, November 15, 2016, February 15, 2017, and May 15, 2017?
Motion to adopt made by Mr. Kirkbride, second Mr. Heitsmith. No discussion. The motion was voted and the article was adopted.
- ARTICLE 9. Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow authorize the Select Board to borrow money to pay the necessary expenses of the Town and Town School District and any part of its indebtedness?
Motion to adopt made by Ms. Gauthier, second Mr. Remy. Mr. Girouard stated our school budget is 3.8 million for 165 kids, we should start looking at these small schools and how they are consuming up these small communities. This school is killing us because of the money. No further discussion. The motion was voted and the article was adopted.
- ARTICLE 10. Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow vote a specific amount in lieu of a rate on a dollar on the Grand List as set forth in the Select Board's budget and the Windsor County budget? Then the Select Board shall set the tax rate necessary to

raise this amount after the Grand List has been completed and lodged in the office of the Town Clerk. **The amount to be raised by taxes will be \$3,658,708.75.**

Motion to adopt made by Ms. Carter, second Ms. Gully. The question was how much more is this than last year. The response was about \$70,000. Mr. Meier questioned the money for disposal plastic bags which do not decay. The town should look into other methods. No further discussion. The motion was voted and the article was adopted.

ARTICLE 11. Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow vote a specific amount in lieu of a rate on a dollar on the Grand List as set forth in the Cemetery Commission budget? Then the Select Board shall set the tax rate necessary to raise this amount after the Grand List has been completed and lodged in the office of the Town Clerk. **The amount to be raised by taxes will be \$82,654.00.**

Motion to adopt made by Mr. Pace, second Ms. Gauthier. Mr. Girouard asked why the increase in the budget. Mr. VanGuilder indicated there are many projects that need to be completed. There are increases in payroll, health insurance. Mr. Girouard asked why they do not share their backhoe with the town during the winter at the transfer station. Mr. VanGuilder responded they will look into it. Monument restoration money was questioned and Mr. Van Guilder it is for the older monuments in the lower cemetery. No further discussion. The motion was voted and the article was adopted.

ARTICLE 12. Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow authorize the Select Board to maintain a Highway Equipment Fund for highway purposes? **The amount to be raised by taxes will be \$30,000.**

Motion to adopt was made by Mr. Kirkbride, second Ms. Eddy. Mr. Girouard asked does the money come out of this Special Fund along with some borrowing to help purchase the equipment or is it used to make payments. Mr. Heald responded the fund is used for purchase and we short term the balance. Mr. Girouard asked we do not use all the money in the fund and finance the balance instead of just a portion. Mr. Heald we try to keep a level amount of payments each year not a big jump from one year to the next. Mr. Schmidt said what we try to do is the taxpayer now pay some and the future taxpayer pay some. No further discussion. The motion was voted and the article was adopted.

ARTICLE 13. Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow authorize the Select Board to maintain a Fire Equipment Fund? **The amount to be raised by taxes will be \$20,000.**

Motion to adopt made by Mr. VanGuilder, second Ms. Farr. No further discussion. The motion was voted and the article was adopted.

ARTICLE 14. Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow authorize the Select Board to maintain a Police Equipment Fund? **The amount to be raised by taxes will be \$5,000.**

Motion to adopt made by Ms. Eddy, second Ms. Remy. No discussion. The motion was voted and the article was adopted.

ARTICLE 15. Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow authorize the Select Board to maintain a Municipal Transit Bus Fund? **The amount to be raised by taxes will be \$30,000.**

Motion to adopt made by Ms. Gauthier, second Mr. Lagro. No further discussion. The motion was voted and the article was adopted.

ARTICLE 16. Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow authorize the Select Board to maintain a Recreation Facilities Fund for recreation purposes? **The amount to be raised by taxes will be \$15,000.**

Motion to adopt made by Ms. Carter, second Mr. Bixby. Mr. Heitsmith asked what is this going to be used for. Mr. Paul responded it has been used for the tennis courts, Dorsey building, Skate Park and West Hill Recreation Area in the past and it is also set aside for unexpected repairs. Mr. Heitsmith stated West Hill could have been a nice skating rink and I feel we should not spend any money on it. Mr. Girouard made a motion to amend this article to decrease it to \$5,000. Second Mr. Heitsmith. Mr. VanGuilder said West Hill is an important part of our community and the sliding hill is enjoyed by many youth in the area as is the basketball courts. Mr. Heitsmith stated that West Hill is turning into a meadow that needs to be dredged out, the building is full of a bunch of junk. Mr. VanGuilder suggested that if West Hill is getting to be as run down as Mr.

Heitsmith suggested, perhaps they need the \$15,000 to help bring it back. No further discussion. The amendment was voted and did not pass. Mr. Heitsmith stated he needs more specific details on what this money is going to be used for. No further discussion. The motion to adopt the original article was voted and passed. The article was adopted.

ARTICLE 17. Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow authorize the Select Board to maintain a Capital Fund for repairs and restoration at the Ludlow Community Center? **The amount to be raised by taxes will be \$5,000.**

Motion to adopt made by Mr. Girouard, second Ms. Remy. No discussion. The motion was voted and the article was adopted.

ARTICLE 18. Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow authorize the Select Board to maintain a Capital Fund for repairs and restoration at the Black River Senior Center? **The amount to be raised by taxers will be \$2,500?**

Motion to adopt made by Ms. Gauthier, second Ms. Eddy. Mr. Heitsmith asked if there is any use for that building. Mr. Heald responded the downstairs is used by the Senior Center 4 days a week, the upstairs is used by a couple of the members of the education community and some is rented to the Vermont Journal. It is a town building and needs to be maintained. The outside needs to be painted this summer. No further discussion. The motion was voted and the article was adopted.

ARTICLE 19. Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow appropriate the sum of **\$7,250.00 to the Connecticut River Transit, Inc. and Marble Valley Regional Transit Company of Rutland** to support the public transit bus service to Ludlow, from Bellows Falls and from Rutland?

Motion to adopt made by Mr. Girouard, second Ms. Bixby. No discussion. The motion was voted and the article was adopted.

ARTICLE 20. Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow appropriate the sum of **\$1,500.00 to the Friends of the Ludlow Auditorium** to promote special events for the community?

Motion to adopt made by Mr. Kirkbride, second Ms. Combes-Farr. No discussion. The motion was voted and the article was adopted.

ARTICLE 21. To transact any other business necessary and proper when met.

Mr. Girouard asked if the ambulance service was regional and are we paying for it. Mr. Schmidt stated it is not regional, it is self-sustaining. We cannot take any money from the ambulance. We are having discussions on becoming a regional ambulance.

Mr. Heitsmith wanted to thank Okemo for doing a fantastic job despite the lack of snow.

Mr. VanGuilder stated we have a great community. What a great organization of municipal staff, selectmen, fire and police departments and the many people that volunteer on the different organizations in this community to help make Ludlow the great community that it is.

Mr. Schmidt stated the select board wants the input of the community on the marijuana legalization bill. We will be having discussions on an ordinance of not allowing any type of dispensaries around the town.

Is it possible to have smaller trash bags for the transfer station? Mr. Schmidt responded we are required by the pay to throw part of the law and the bags are the simplest and least expensive way to accomplish the pay to throw thought process under state law. Therefore the purple bags in one size.

No further discussion. Motion to adjourn at 9:00PM made by Ms. Gauthier, second Ms. Combes-Farr.

Respectfully submitted,

Ulla P. Cook, Town Clerk
Jean Strong, Chairman, BCA

Martin Nitka, Moderator