

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
ANNUAL MEETING
TOWN OF LUDLOW, VERMONT

MARCH 2, 2015

TOTAL IN ATTENDANCE – 49

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

Moderator Nitka stated the meeting would be conducted by Roberts Rules of Order.

- ARTICLE 1. To elect Town Officers for the coming year.
Australian Ballot vote on Tuesday, March 4, 2015 for Town Officers.

INFORMATIONAL MEETING FOR ARTICLES 2, 3 AND 4.

- ARTICLE 2. Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow authorize the collection not to exceed \$20,000 to fund and implement the Ludlow Quest Program for middle school students entering into grades 8, 9 and 10? Ludlow Quest is a collaborative effort with the Town of Ludlow, Ludlow Rotary Club, educators and local volunteers and provides the opportunity to improve academic performance, foster new friendships, and share challenging and inspiring experiences with the overall objective of increasing their skills, self-confidence and self-worth. The Ludlow Quest Program will run for seven (7) weeks.

Sharon Bixby gave a brief explanation on the Quest Program for its third year. It is for kids that are not old enough to have jobs but yet still in high school or middle school. There are several activities to keep the kids busy. It is a wonderful program for kids of this age. Mr. Girouard asked if we have the recreation program why we need this. Mr. Heald responded that the recreation program is for kids through grade 6 and Quest is for older kids. Mr. Jurkoic asked how the program is funded. Mr. Heald responded that money from the Town, the Rotary Club and Okemo Challenge Grant.

- ARTICLE 3. Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow authorize the collection not to exceed \$25,000 to create a Bike Path Fund to cover the local share needed for the construction of a bike/pedestrian path connecting the Village of Ludlow to the activities located to the north at the Jackson Gore Recreational Area, the Green Mountain Turnpike and Buttermilk Falls? The purpose of the Bike path is to provide a recreational passageway and safe route for bicyclists, pedestrians and outdoor enthusiasts to travel to and from the Village of Ludlow to recreational facilities north of the Village.

Ms. Bixby stated this project has been going on since her youngest daughter was 5 year old and she is now 28. We first started with a path from the School to Fletcher Fields and the state environmental department stopped that. We started on another path and that was also rejected. This past 3 years we have been working on this current path. We think a lot of people would use this proposed route. We are working to strongly to get this path resolved. Mr. Girouard questioned the path route. Ms. Bixby stated it would start from the Park and Ride by the Fire Station on the West Side of 103, up Locust Hill to Ranta Road and to Jackson Gore. Mr. Isaacson questioned we voted \$25,000 last year what happened to that. Mr. Heald responded that this program is to vote \$25,000 per year for a 4 year period to raise \$100,000 from the Town. The Okemo Challenge will raised \$40,000 for 3 years for \$120,000, for a total of \$220,000 which is approximately the local share.

- ARTICLE 4. Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow vote to exempt the property owned by the Trustees of the Gill Odd Fellows Home of Vermont (Nursing Home) from property taxes for a period of two (2) years; commencing with the 2015 tax year?

Mr. Girouard stated they get reimbursed from the State of Vermont therefore if we reduce their expenses by voting them tax exempt the State of Vermont reduces this payment the State will be saving that money. Mr. Lagro stated how do we benefit from this, do we get a discount. Mr. Girouard asked what would their taxes be, around \$90,000. Ulla Cook responded it would be just over \$30,000.

No more questions or comments for the Informational meeting.

TOWM MEETING AGENDA:

- ARTICLE 5. Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow act on Town Officers' reports for the period from July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014?
Motion made by Ms. Terri Gurdak to approve the article, second by Ms. Sharon Combes-Farr. No discussion. The motion was voted and the article was adopted.
- ARTICLE 6. 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 made by Mr. Ronald Bixby to set the Select Board salary at \$1,500 a year, Cemetery Commissioners at \$800 a year and Trustees of Public Funds at \$300 a year, second by Mr. Peter Kolenda. It was stated these are the same as last year. Ms. Carter asked when was the last time these amounts were raised. Mr. Heald responded not since he has been here. No further discussion. The motion was voted and the article was adopted.
- ARTICLE 7. Shall the Town of Ludlow collect taxes on Real Property in installments, taxes to be paid to the Town Treasurer on August 15, 2015, November 15, 2015, February 15, 2016, and May 15, 2016?
Motion made by Ms. Gurdak to approve the article, second by Ms. Eddy. No discussion. The motion was voted and the article was adopted.
- ARTICLE 8. 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 made by Mr. Buckley to adopt the article, second by Ms. Eddy. No discussion. The motion was voted and the article was adopted.
- ARTICLE 9. 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? 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 \$3,578,178.94.**
Motion made by Mr. Bixby to adopt the article, second by Mr. Pace. No 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 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 \$72,272.**
Motion made by Ms. Virginia Gurdak to adopt the article, second by Ms. Gauthier. Mr. Girouard questioned is this amount in the Town Budget. Mr. Nitka responded that the Cemetery Commissioners have their own budget separate from the Town Budget. Ms. Combes-Farr questioned the major overage in the land site and fencing account. Mr. Sanderson responded we did some property transfer with Okemo and changed the fence lines. We seeded and mulched a whole new section. No further discussion. The motion was voted and the article was adopted.
- ARTICLE 11. 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 made by Ms. Gauthier to approve the article, second Ms. Gulli. No 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 Fire Equipment Fund? **The amount to be raised by taxes will be \$20,000.**

Motion made by Mr. Kirkbride to adopt the article, second Ms. Eddy. Mr. Girouard questioned we have all these funds and where do they go. Mr. Schmidt responded we have a list of items that need to be purchased in the future and we are saving some each year for that purpose thus reducing borrowing. Mr. Farr questioned who makes the decision on using these funds. Mr. Schmidt responded that the Select Board makes that decision. Mr. Kolenda stated this past year we purchased a new rescue pumper at a cost of \$563,000. A lot of the money came out of this fund and we did have to bond for some of it. I don't foresee a major purchase for another 10 years. 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 Police Equipment Fund? **The amount to be raised by taxes will be \$5,000.** Motion made by Ms. Morrill to approve the article, second Mr. Bixby. No 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 Municipal Transit Bus Fund? **The amount to be raised by taxes will be \$30,000.** Motion made by Mr. Harrison to approve the article, second Ms. Gauthier. Mr. Girouard asked if this is to replace the buses we use for school buses. Mr. Heald responded this is the continuing replacement fund for the Municipal Transit buses. Mr. Girouard asked how many buses we have now. Mr. Heald responded we have 5 buses, 3 large and 2 small. Ms. Morrill asked who ride these buses. Mr. Heald said in the mornings and afternoons it is mainly kids, the Springfield route there are folks who use that. About 40 percent of the activity around the buses revolves around work that we do for the school in terms of transporting athletic groups, the various classes to a variety of different things. At least 3 have to have handicap lifts on them. We do a shopping trip once a week from Gill Home to Shaw's. Ms. Kirkbride asked how do you distinguish these buses. Mr. Heald responded they are fairly recognizable as they are federal safety yellow. No further 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 Recreation Facilities Fund for recreation purposes? **The amount to be raised by taxes will be \$15,000.** Motion to adopt the article was made by Ms. Virginia Gurdak, second Ms. Morrill. No 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 Capital Fund for repairs and restoration at the Ludlow Town Hall? **The amount to be raised by taxes will be \$5,000.** Motion made by Ms. Morrill to adopt the article, second Mr. Lagro. Mr. Girouard asked there is \$3000 in the budget for repairs, we just spent \$750,000 there can't be that much that needs to be fixed. Mr. Heald responded this building had been grossly neglected for 15-20 years. The parapet was about to fall into the street, if you don't continually maintain on older building like this you will end up spending much more again in a few years. Mr. Harrison suggested putting in a bathroom upstairs so you would not have to go downstairs. No further discussion. The motion was voted and 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 made by Ms. Eddy to adopt the article, second Mr. Kirkbride. Mr. Girouard asked why we are putting another \$5,000 in as there is already \$14,000 in the budget. Mr. Schmidt responded the \$5,000 will go into the fund that already has \$15,000 for capital expenses, the \$14,000 is for normal operations and maintenance. The \$5,000 is for problems that might develop down the road. This community center is being used much more than originally thought. No further discussion. The motion was voted and the article was adopted.

ARTICLE 18. 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 made by Ms. Leary to approve the article, second Ms. Morrill. Ms. Morrill asked how many riders from Ludlow utilize this. It is stated in their letter in the Town Report as 2,888 riders. Ms. Eddy stated that Adult Day Care in Springfield uses this service. Mr. Buckley asked if this could be coordinated with the Municipal Transit Bus System. Mr. Heald stated we do not. Ms. Eddy stated she believes the Connecticut River Transit gets paid through Medicaid for the Adult Day Care transports.

ARTICLE 19. 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 made by Ms. Morrill to approve the article, second Ms. Farr. No discussion. Motion voted and the article was adopted.

Recess the meeting to hear from Representative Devereux and Senator Nitka.

Mr. Devereux stated we will all be impacted by taxes to make up the deficit in the budget. They are hoping sales tax revenues will be up, income tax revenues and rooms and meals taxes which will help. Water Quality is getting worse and we need to do something. E911 is consolidating to 2 locations from 4. Our emergency 911 calls should not be impacted.

Senator Nitka stated this is the start of a two year session almost all the bills introduced have not made it to the floor for a vote. There have been 361 House bills introduced and 122 Senate bills. There will be more than 1,000 before the end of the two year session. The budget adjustment bill has passed which alters the budget that was passed last night when we left the legislature. The budget was balanced at that time and still is now because in November we cut 24 million from it and a few weeks ago we cut 12 ½ million. We are in a balanced budget now until the end of June. We keep hearing about the 118 million deficit that would start with the July 1, 2015 budget. Severe cuts need to be made, a lot of changes and maybe a delay for projects that have been in the works to get to a balanced budget. The revenues expected simply did not come in. The biggest items are education spending 27% and Medicaid 23%. Two bills that have passed in the Senate is the Child Protection Bill and S97 which is taxing prewritten software in the cloud. State Police are looking for candidates as well as the Fish and Game.

Mr. Heald wanted to clear up the fact that 911 calls in Ludlow come directly to our police department and will be dispatched from there.

ARTICLE 20. To transact any other business necessary and proper when met.

Ms. Bixby wanted to give a hand to the road crew for the excellent job done on the roads this winter.

Mr. Schmidt wanted to encourage everyone and spread the word we will be having a lot of conversations on changes in how to deal with trash. We will be having additional meetings at the town level. There are mandated changes that are coming from the State that are going to affect how we handle our waste. I encourage you to get involved and get to understand it be part of the process as it will be different starting July 1. Ms. Gulli asked are we going to have zero sort. Mr. Schmidt responded yes along with pay as you throw. It will be different from what the taxpayers of Ludlow have been used to doing.

Motion to adjourn made by Jay Jurkoic at 8:30PM. Motion voted a passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Ulla Cook, Town Clerk

Martin Nitka, Moderator

Jean Morrill, BCA Chair