

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
TOWN OF LUDLOW, VERMONT  
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING  
March 2, 2020**

Total in Attendance – 74

The meeting was called to order by Moderator Nitka at 7:00PM. The pledge of allegiance was recited. Moderator Nitka then introduced the head table Select Board members Justin Hyjek, Heather Tucker, John Neal, Brett Sanderson, and Bruce Schmidt, Town Manager Scott Murphy and Town Clerk Ulla Cook. Moderator Nitka stated this meeting will be run according to Roberts Rules of Order.

ARTICLE 1. To elect Town Officers for the coming year. See attached results.

ARTICLE 2. Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow hear Town Officers' reports for the period from July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018?

*Mr. Buckley stated the dates are wrong and should be July 1 2018 to June 30, 2019. Motion to accept the article made by Mr. Buckley, second by Mr. Bixby. Mr. Buckley stated the date is wrong on page 47 next to the last paragraph should read September 2019 and not September 2020. Mr. Lagro made the motion to correct the date, second by Mr. Turkic. No further discussion. The amended motion was voted and the article was approved.*

ARTICLE 3. Shall the Voters of the Town of Ludlow vote to use the **\$95,879.14** from the Special Revenue Fund for Municipal Transit to reduce the Town Tax Rate and subsequently eliminate the fund?

*Motion to accept the article was made by Mr., Pace, second by Mr. Lagro. No discussion. The motion was voted and the article was approved.*

ARTICLE 4. 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. VanGuilder to add \$100 to all these positions. Mr. Murphy stated the current salaries are Select Board \$1,500 per year, Cemetery Commissioners \$800 per year and Trustees of Public Funds \$300 per year. Ms. Gurdak made a second to Mr. VanGuilder's motion. Ms. Thomson stated the increase should be on a percentage basis not a flat \$100 for each board member. Mr. Alexander agreed with Ms. Thomson. Mr. Kirkbride asked why we have Cemetery commissioners if the cemetery is under the supervision by the Select Board. Mr. Schmidt stated they are elected positions and currently there are five himself, Brett Sanderson, Lou Gabranski, Robert Brandt and Herb VanGuilder. They are separate boards. No further discussion. The motion was voted by a show of hands. The motion was passed and the article adopted.*

ARTICLE 5. Shall the Town of Ludlow collect taxes on Real Property in installments, taxes to be paid to the Town Treasurer on August 17, 2020, November 16, 2020, February 15, 2021 and May 17, 2021, and must be delivered to the Town Treasurer and postmarked on or before the due date?

*Motion to accept the article was made by Mr. Murphy, second by Mr. Kirkbride. Mr. VanGuilder question why we charge interest. He felt it should not be until the last due date. Mr. Alexander stated if we did not pay in installments, it would be due the first date. No further discussion. The motion was voted and the article was approved.*

ARTICLE 6. Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow authorize the Select Board to borrow money to pay the necessary expenses of the Town and any part of its indebtedness?

*Motion to accept the article was made by Mr. Bixby, second by Mr. Kirkbride, No discussion. The article was voted and the article was approved.*

ARTICLE 7. 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 \$4,082,863.00.**

*Motion to accept the article was made by Mr. Welch, second Ms. Thomson. Ms. Bixby question if this was the correct time to bring up the ambulance or should it be under Article 9. It appears they are underfunded so I would like to know what their future plans are. Mr. Murphy stated we hired an ambulance consulting firm that came in evaluated the Ludlow Ambulance system. They made 64 recommendations. We have made some changes already. We switched to a paid staff so we have a 24/7 paid staff. Allows for a quicker response and better survival logs. We have made a management structure change and billing services which will help us get funds back quicker. The select board approved new rates so that will improve the financial position and tighter control on the finance situation. No discussion. The motion was voted and the article was accepted.*

ARTICLE 8. Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow authorize the Select Board to maintain a Capital Fund to support the following vehicle and equipment purchases, building maintenance & repairs, and to fund programs? **The amount to be raised in taxes will be \$92,500:**

- Highway Equipment Fund - \$40,000
- Fire Equipment Fund - \$30,000
- Police Equipment Fund - \$5,000
- Recreation Facilities Fund - \$5,000
- Ludlow Town Hall Facilities Fund - \$5,000
- Ludlow Community Center Facilities Fund - \$5,000
- Black River Senior Center Facilities Fund - \$2,500

*Motion to accept the article made by Ms. Carter, second by Mr. Lagro. Mr. Isaacson asked why this question was brought up in previous years and we were told that is was not allowed. What changed? Mr. Murphy stated we checked with the State and we were told we could do this. Mr. Kirkbride stated he likes the one article. Mr. Bakerman asked is this putting the money from Article 3 to Article 8. Mr. Murphy stated we cannot do that. Mr. Sanderson stated that Article 8 is a yearly occurrence and Article 3 is only one time. No more discussion. The motion was voted and the article was adopted.*

ARTICLE 9. Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow appropriate the sum of **\$66,000** to the **Ludlow Community Ambulance Service** to help support their overall operations?

*Motion made by Mr. VanGuilder adopt the article, second by Mr. Bakerman. Mr. VanGuilder stated he has had to use the services we have in our community and we do not appreciate how good they are until you use them. The ambulance, fire and police departments as well as the other departments are second to none. We are very fortunate to have people in these departments that are all concerned to do the best they can do for our community of Ludlow. Ms. Bixby is this enough money for the ambulance. Stephanie spoke on behalf of the ambulance describing steps taken to improve the service. Mr. Murphy stated the ideal situation is to have 5 paramedics fulltime. Shortly we will be adding the fourth at the end of this month after she finishes training. Ms. Bixby wanted to amend the article. Bruce Schmidt thinks this is the right number \$66,000. They are looking at forming a regional ambulance service with other towns. Mr. Abraham asked about the increase in certain line items in the ambulance budget. Mr. Murphy responded we now use a billing service and the insurance is increased as we had a couple of workmen's compensation claims. Ms. Bixby made a motion to amend the article to \$100,000. Moderator Nitka ruled it not germane. Mr. Crosswell made a motion to overrule the moderator's ruling, second by Angela Kissell. Motion to overrule was defeated. Mr. Jurkoic made a motion to amend the article to \$75,000 second by Mr. Buckley. Mr. McIntyre stated throwing out numbers is arbitrary and capricious based on no fact. Mr. Murphy the \$66,000 is what the select board determined the amount needed. No further discussion on the amendment. Motion to amend was defeated. Mr. VanGuilder asked to move the question. No further discussion. Motion to terminate debate passed. The article was voted as written and the article was adopted.*

ARTICLE 10. Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow appropriate the sum of **\$7,250** to **The Current 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 approve the article was made by Ms. Carter, second by Ms. Thomson. Mr. McIntyre asked if other town appropriate money. Mr. Murphy responded that they do. No further discussion. The motion was voted and the article was adopted.*

ARTICLE 11. Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow vote all public questions by Australian Ballot?

*Mr. VanGuilder requested a paper ballot asking 6 more people to join in his request. Did not pass. Motion to accept the article made by Mr. Alexander, second by Mr. Crowell. Mr. Isaacson stated the elected officials should decide whether a vote should be Australian Ballot or off the floor depending on the issue. Mr. Schmidt stated he is against this article and feels we should have the town meeting format but I also understand there are situations where different situations are done by Australian Ballot. We should look at doing a town charter which needs the approval by the Vermont Legislature. That is the way the select board can make a decision on how we vote. This question was voted on in 1989 and it was defeated. I am hopeful that this will get voted down and we can move forward and try to do something to give the town options. Mr. Alexander feels a charter will take a long time and there are votes coming up such as the option tax which would be done town floor format. He feels that more people would vote in an Australian Ballot system than attending town meeting. For example, last year only 71 people attended town meeting, less than 5 percent. Australian Ballot system allows for absentee voting, town meeting does not as you have to be there in person. We need to update the system we use to determine how the town hears the voice of all the people. Adopting a policy of Australian Ballot is beneficial to the voting citizens of Ludlow. Mr. Bakerman stated if this is passed it would totally eliminate the town meeting forum. All public questions would be Australian Ballot. The same people that are not coming to the Town Meeting why is it so sure they would come to vote Australian Ballot. Mr. VanGuilder stated we need to do something to encourage people to attend these meetings and get a better thought as to what direction we want our community to go in. Ms. Thomson stated we need to have people come to vote but will they be educated voters because they did not come to the informational sessions. Ms. Alexander feels that more people would vote if it was by Australian Ballot. Mr. Kolenda stated that the select board and managers are doing a responsible job running the town and that reflects on the turnout for here. If there was a hot item, he feels this auditorium would be packed. Mr. Schmidt stated if we go to Australian Ballot, there would be an informational meeting but no changes can be made to an article as the warning has to be posted not less than 30 days before the meeting. There were several more comments from citizens both pro and con. Mr. Bakerman made a motion to move the question. The motion was voted and passed. The article was then voted and defeated.*

ARTICLE 12. To transact any other business necessary and proper when met.

*Pam Cruickshank wanted to thank John Neal for his many years of service on the Select Board.  
Mr. Buckley asked about the local options tax. Mr. Schmidt felt this was not the appropriate time because of Article 11.  
Senator McCormick, Senator Nitka and Representative Nicoll were present.  
Senator Nitka expressed if you have any concerns to please contact her.  
Representative Nicoll stated he attends coffee hours every Monday morning*

*to listen to concerns at the towns he represents. He also has a small brochure giving the legislative updates.*

*Mr. Abrahams question what makes certain properties tax exempt. What are the criteria? You have to be nonprofit, charitable organization. You have to have a petition.*

*Mr. VanGuilder wanted to thank all the departments for doing a good job for the tax payers.*

Motion to adjourn Mr. Donnelly at 8:40PM. Second by Mr. John Murphy.

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Ulla P. Cook, Town Clerk

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Jean Strong, BCA Chair

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Martin Nitka, Moderator