

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
March 5, 2018**

Total in attendance – 56

The meeting was called to order at 7:00PM by Moderator Nitka. The audience was asked to rise and recite the pledge of allegiance.

A moment of silence for the people we have lost in the past year.

Moderator Nitka then introduced the front table Selectmen Logan Nicoll, Bruce Schmidt, Brett Sanderson, John Neal, Howard Barton, Town Manager Frank Heald and Ulla Cook, Town Clerk and Treasurer.

Moderator Nitka stated that the meeting will be run according to Roberts Rules with a couple of variations that sometimes come up. One is everything is by voice vote but if seven voters rise and request a paper ballot they are entitled to do that and we would then have a paper vote. The other variation is once an article has been acted on there cannot be under state law a reconsideration of that article if you don't like what happened you can file a petition to have another town meeting.

I will read each article and look for a motion and a second. I will restate the article and then we will have a debate. Feel free to amend the article, only two amendments pending at one time. You need to be a registered voter of Ludlow to participate.

MONDAY, March 5, 2018: Public Information Meeting:

ARTICLE 2. Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow, VT vote a tax-exempt status of the property located on Rod & Gun Club Road, owned by the Black River Valley Rod & Gun Club, from property taxes for a period of (10) ten years commencing with the 2018 tax year?

There was a question by Mr. Buckley on how much are the taxes per year. Ulla Cook responded around \$3,200.00.

The President of the Black River Rod and Gun, Steven Howard, addressed the meeting. The Club has been around since 1946 and in 1954 purchased the existing property. The club has provided the community a variety of different services such as the use of the rifle range, and different activities not only for the members but the children of the area. We do a fishing derby providing food, shelter and fish for the children. We have an annual field day. These services are provided for free. The Ludlow police department uses the range for target practice and siting in their weapons.

Over the years we have attempted to have multiple use for our clubhouse. We have tried renting it out but after years of misuse, we found the floor is not safe to be used. We hold our monthly meeting elsewhere as a result. We are exploring how to replace that floor and return it to a community space to be used by the area people. We are a very small organization with about 250 members and only about 20 active members who meet on a monthly basis. That is why we are asking for this article. According my records the last tax payment was about \$2,100. That would go a long way helping us to fix the floor.

ARTICLE 3. Shall the Town of Ludlow vote to raise, appropriate and expend the sum of \$750 for the support of Senior Solutions (Council on Aging for Southeastern Vermont, Inc.) to provide services to residents of the Town?

No one was available for questions.

TOWN MEETING:

ARTICLE 4. Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow act on Town Officers' reports for the period from July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017?

Motion to approve made by Mr. Pace, second Mr. Kirkbride. Mr. VanGuilder asked if there could be more information on the recreation and ambulance uses. He questioned the \$54,000 revenue for the ambulance from the Town. Mr. Heald responded this should come under the budget, but in the past 3 - 7 years we have seen a continuing decline in volunteers and we have seen a continuing rise for the need for 24-7 coverage for our ambulance. We cover Cavendish and Plymouth also and they pay for the utilization of the ambulance. We included this amount from Ludlow as we are now a paid for service, the volunteers have dropped off. We are now providing a staff for the 24-7 coverage throughout the year. We have a lot of Medicare and Medicaid calls and we have some full insurance so the calls only does not cover the cost.

Mr. VanGuilder asked why we do not increase the cost of the calls instead of putting it on the taxpayer. Mr. Heald responded that Medicare and Medicaid pay only a certain amount.

Mr. Wingate asked how much would this add to the tax rate. Mr. Heald responded 1/3 of a cent.

Mr. VanGuilder questioned if fair amount of the calls come from Okemo but he does not see a contribution from them. Mr. Heald responded to stop in his office and he can show him the breakdown of the calls. Mr. Matteson stated that 15 per cent of the calls come from Okemo. Mr. Van Guilder asked how much you would have to raise the calls to make up the \$54,000. Mr. Matteson stated that Medicare and Medicaid only pay a certain amount. For example you can bill \$1,000 per call but they will only pay \$500. They pay a set amount.

Moderator Nitka stated we are discussing officer's reports ending June 30, 2017 and further discussion on fiscal 2018 budget items should come under the town budget.

There was no further discussion. The motion was voted and the article was adopted approving the town officer's reports.

ARTICLE 5. 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 by Mr. Kolenda to set the salaries of the Select Board at \$1,500, Cemetery Commissioners \$800 and Trustees of Public Funds at \$300, second by Mr. Bixby. Mr. Isaacson asked if this is the current amount. The response was yes. There was no further discussion. The motion was voted and the article was adopted.

ARTICLE 6. Shall the Town of Ludlow collect taxes on Real Property in installments, taxes to be paid to the Town Treasurer on August 15, 2018, November 15, 2018, February 15, 2019 and May 15, 2019?

Motion by Mr. Kirkbride to approve the article, second by Mr. Bixby. Mr. Van Guilder asked if interest was added if not paid. The response was yes. There was no further discussion. The motion was voted and the article was adopted.

ARTICLE 7. 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 Ms. Gurdak to adopt the article, second by Mr. Buckley. There was no discussion. The motion was voted and the article was adopted.

ARTICLE 8. 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 \$4,108,861.00.**

Motion made by Mr. Buckley to adopt the article, second by Mr. Kottkamp. Mr. Denner noted that there was an expense twice for MSW bags one for \$27,500 and another for \$26,500. Mr. Heald responded that you are correct. We will adjust the budget. Mr. Alic asked if the permit fees for the transfer station were going to increase as the budgeted revenue is higher for 2018. Mr. Heald responded that the select board will decide on the fees prior to July 1.

No further discussion. The motion was voted and the article was adopted.

The Town Meeting was recessed for the opportunity for Representative Dennis Devereux and Senator Alice Nitka to give an update on Montpelier.

Representative Devereux – Education funding has a lot of proposals about shifting to the income tax and is not going smoothly in the Ways and Means Committee and the Education Committee. It has been postponed from 2019 to 2020 with good reason. No income tax on military pensions and reducing income tax on social security recipients is also proposed. We still have not found a good funding source for water cleanup and the Federal EPA is on our case. We are moving to legalize marijuana on July 1 growing a couple of mature plants and a couple immature plants is opening a can of worms. Towns, businesses and companies will have to come up with a policy for testing. Labor attorneys have spoken to us about several issues. There will be small changes to the open meeting law. Representative Devereux wanted to thank everyone for the past 12 years.

Senator Nitka – Some of the issues are prescription drug program that the State hopes to put in place with regard to the most expensive drugs and those that are not compound drugs and the plan under the Affordable Care Act to set up a system whereby you will be able to purchase drugs from Canada. The Senate Judiciary committee, which I am a member of, put together S.221 which is for an extreme risk situation another words the police could go in and take the weapons This can also be applied to a suicide situation as the majority of gun deaths in Vermont are suicide or a bomb situation such as what happened at the Boston Marathon, the police could go in take the bomb. Under this bill if the police were go to in for a gun situation they could call a judge and get an okay to search the house for additional guns. No illegal weapons would be returned to the owner. This bill was crafted very carefully to ensure due process and also to get the support of the gun owners and the anti-gun people. The state police are looking for troopers, Air National Guard is trying to recruit and the regular guard is down 50 people.

Moderator Nitka read a concurrent House resolution from State of Vermont House of Representative honoring Frank Heald. Some of his family was in attendance and was asked to come join Mr. Heald at the front table. Mr. Nitka then proceeded to read the resolution. A short speech from Mr. Heald followed. He also introduced his family members.

The recess ended and Town Meeting then was called to order.

ARTICLE 9. 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 approve the article was made by Mr. Bixby, second by Mr. Kirkbride. There was no discussion. The motion was voted and the article was adopted.

ARTICLE 10. 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 approve the article was made by Mr. VanGuilder, second Ms. Fortuna. There was no 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 Police Equipment Fund? **The amount to be raised by taxes will be \$5,000.**

Motion to approve the article was made by Mr. Bixby, second by Mr. Kirkbride. Mr. Greenslet questioned if this was enough. Chief Billings responded yes. 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 Recreation Facilities Fund for recreation purposes? **The amount to be raised by taxes will be \$5,000.**

Motion to approve the article was made by Ms. Gurdak, second by Mr. Bixby. Mr. Alic questioned the proposed expense of \$15,000 in the recreation budget. Mr. Heald responded that is for capital improvements and recreation facilities. There was 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 Capital Fund for repairs and restoration at the Ludlow Community Center? **The amount to be raised by taxes will be \$5,000.**

Motion to approve the article was made by Mr. Buckley, second by Ms. Gauthier. There was 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 Capital Fund for repairs and restoration at the Black River Senior Center? **The amount to be raised by taxes will be \$2,500?**

Motion to approve the article was made by Mr. VanGuilder, second by Ms. Gurdak. There was no discussion. The motion was voted and the article was adopted.

ARTICLE 15. Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow appropriate the sum of **\$7,250.00 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. Gurdak, second Ms. Gauthier. Mr. VanGuilder question how often this is used by Ludlow people. Mr. Nicoll stated there is a letter in the Town Report stating they provided 4,103 rides in Ludlow between their van and volunteer services last year. Ms. Kottkamp stated she has used the bus service to Rutland and found it to be very convenient. Mr. Isaacson asked how they came up with the amount of \$7,250. Mr. Heald responded that amount has been for local share for a while and that seems to work for them. They blend things together with federal and state funds and this seems to work for them. There was no further discussion. The motion was voted and the article was adopted.

ARTICLE 16. Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow appropriate the sum of **\$800.00 for the support of the Women's Freedom Center** to provide services to women and their children who are experiencing emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse and are residents of the Town?

Motion to approve the article was made by Ms. Fortuna, second Ms. O'Neil. Ms. Gulli asked what this is. Ms. O'Neil this used to be called Women's Crisis Center and stated this is an amazing organization. They offer counseling services, 24 hour hot line, offer transportation to court, safety in the middle of the night, temporary housing in hotels if needed. They have programs in school. They are an amazing resource for not only for victims but also in the prevention. Ms. Gulli asked if they were private. Ms. O'Neil stated they are non-profit. Mr. Schmidt indicated they did not get their paperwork in and we, the select board, decided to have the voters decide. They had been on in the past as an appropriation and we decided to adhere to the rules regarding getting paperwork in on time for appropriations. Ms. Kottkamp suggested having information available at the Town Hall and the school system so people would be aware of their resources. Chief Bixby stated that this is good organization and well worth the support. Ms. Fortuna asked to amend her original motion. She wants to change it to \$1,500. Moderator Nitka ruled the amount as not germane. Ms. O'Neil made a motion to inquire as to whether the ruling of the moderator that the proposed amendment to \$1,500 was not germane and should be sustained. Second by Chief Billings. No further discussion. Motion was voted and the ruling of the moderator was not sustained.

Ms. Fortuna made the motion to amend the article and raise the amount to \$1,500, second by Ms. O'Neil. Ms. Gauthier stated if they wanted \$1,500 they would have asked for it.

Ms. O’Neil stated you cannot put a price tag on the support that they give and have given to the residents of Ludlow. Mr. Kottkamp stated if we don’t understand the impact of this issue, as indicated in the media this year, in providing women with more sense of control over their own lives, we have had our heads in the sand. The amendment was voted and passed. There was no further discussion on the amended article. The amended article was voted and the amended article was adopted.

ARTICLE 17. Shall the voters of the Town of Ludlow appropriate the sum of **\$2,000.00 to the Friends of the Ludlow Auditorium** to promote special events for the community?

Motion to approve was made by Mr. Buckley, second Mr. Bixby. There was no discussion. The motion was voted and the article was adopted.

ARTICLE 18. To transact any other business necessary and proper when met.

Mr. Barton stated that Mr. Heald came to Ludlow 15 years ago and before Frank we had a revolving door of Town Managers and all sorts of other issues going on in town. Since Frank has been here, being on the select board has been very enjoyable. The stability throughout the Town has been great, his leadership proves that and his management style and all the employees would stand behind that 100 percent. It will be hard shoes to fill for the next guy or girl. He expressed his thanks and stating it has been an honor and pleasure working with him.

Mr. Heald responded that it has been a pleasure working with the select board and it is mutual admiration. He stated that the staff for the Town and Village in my estimation is first class. It has been such a pleasure working here whether it is with the volunteers, the semi-paid guys in the fire department, my office staff. Over the years you have been served by really great staff members and volunteers. These five guys have been super. Thank you.

Mr. Buckley asked for update on search for replacement for Town Manager. Mr., Barton stated from the advertisements we have received 43 applicants and we are in the process of going through them and should narrow things down in a month or so.

Mr. Kirkbride suggested any outfits that want money to have a representative here to explain what they want the money for.

Mr. Nicoll stated the Planning Commission will be holding a meeting on March 20 to discuss the early stages of the revision to the town plan. He encouraged people to attend. They will have pizza from American Pie.

Mr. Buckley stated that March 20 is the organizational meeting for the new Ludlow-Mount Holly Unified School District and also the sports banquet.

Motion to adjourn at 8:45 made by Mr. VanGuilder, second Mr. Kolenda.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Martin Nitka, Moderator

Ulla P. Cook, Town Clerk

Jean Strong, Chair BCA