



Town of Bolton
3045 Theodore Roosevelt Highway
Bolton VT 05676

TOWN MEETING 2015 MINUTES

March 2, 2015

7:00 p.m.

Smilie Memorial School

- Moderator Joss Besse reviewed Robert's Rules of Order, and asked the assembly if there were no objections to let representatives Tom Stevens, Rebecca Ellis, CESU Superintendent John Alberghini, and Principal Barbara Tomasi-Gay speak as necessary; no objections.
- Moderator Joss Besse called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m., and asked non registered voters to identify themselves by raising their hands; they were not eligible to vote unless the rules were suspended.
- Moderator Joss Besse noted that this was the final town meeting of the Bolton School District Board.

School Meeting 7 p.m.

Article 1 ~ To hear and act upon the reports of the School Directors.

Andrew Pond: Thank you for coming out. Let me introduce all of our board members, Paula Gervia, Amy Turner, Mary Ellen Seaver-Reid, Al Cohen, and MMU District #17 Representative Ken Remsen. In November 2014 voters approved to merge and form the Mount Mansfield Modified Union School District (MMMUSD), which takes over July 1, 2015. There have been questions as to why there are still Bolton and MMU board seats on the ballot, and that is because those boards will still oversee the day to day operations until that date (July 1, 2015) and the end of the school year. We anticipate that in future years the MMMUSD representative will give a budget presentation at town meeting, with several informational meetings held in various schools at various times prior to town meeting. There probably would not be an informational meeting held at Smilie School.

With respect to Smilie School, enrollment is flat with 76 students. There are no big budgeting changes proposed, but ways to gain efficiencies in food service and by combining forces with building maintenance. Next year there will be an option for before and after Preschool care, allowing preschool students to have full day coverage in school. We are also in conversation with the Bolton Select Board regarding land under a portion of the school that is owned by the town. In the late 1990s when the classrooms and gym addition were built, they were built on land owned by the town, leased by the school for \$1 year. We are looking at purchasing a small portion of the land that is under the school and adjacent, and are working through that process.

We feel we merged at the right time especially given what is going in Montpelier with the momentum for Preschool – Grade 12 districts to merge. If that legislation passes, we will not need to make many adjustments, we are ahead of the curve. The new MMMUSD board has met a few times and discussed how to do business as a board, focusing on the budget and negotiations. The board anticipates doing studies, and exploring offering magnets schools; STEM and a foreign language immersion school, which might be a good fit at Smilie School.

As far as the MMMUSD budget, the numbers look big, but remember that this is the combination of all the CESU schools' budgets except for Brewster Pierce. The 2.49% increase includes new preschool offerings. Bolton's tax rate will go down, there is a 5% cap on the reduction, and with the CLA, we are estimating a tax drop of 6.8 % next year. That's all I have to present.

Ernest Leveque: A couple years ago you said we'd have a reprieve on taxes, is this it? This is good, and how long will it go on?

Andrew Pond: This year is a 6.8% reduction. Bolton is still roughly 10% higher than the other towns. Next year we anticipate a drop, probably not 6.8%, then after that, back to normal probably. It will be good to see what comes out of Montpelier on this, hopefully between Montpelier and efficiencies by distributing resources we'll be able to save some money.

Article 2 ~ To transact other school business thought proper when met.

No business.

Gerry Mullen: Article 1 still needs to be voted.

Motion: Gerry Mullen

Second: Ken Remsen

No discussion. The moderator called for a vote. All were in favor. Article 1 passed.

Moderator Joss Besse noted that Articles 3, 4, & 5 would be voted by Australian ballot Tuesday March 3, 2015, and as there was no other business, adjourned the school meeting at 7:18 p.m.

Moderator Joss Besse stated that prior to the start of the town portion, State Treasurer Beth Pearce, and representatives Tom Stevens and Rebecca Ellis would be speaking.

Beth Pearce: I have two commercials. The first is to take a look at unclaimed property on the VT State Treasurer's Office website, check it out. I have also provided a list of unclaimed property to the town office, and procedures to claim property have been simplified.

The second commercial is on doing more with local investments to get a better rate of return and to do some good. We are putting out a solicitation for 8.2 million in the areas of housing, energy infrastructure etc., are soliciting proposals on our website, and have sent information to 500 groups. Please contact us if you have thoughts.

I also want to say congratulations to you on your school work; the work of the boards and the merger. Tom and Rebecca; hats off to them for forward thinking. In Vermont we are unique; we work together to solve our problems - that's what town meeting is all about. We are hardworking, resilient, thrifty and we work together to find solutions. We in Vermont have a very unique government, and anything we can do to help, just let us know. We commend you on a fantastic process.

Tom Stevens: Thanks for having us. Our Town Meeting report is available out front, and lets you know what has been going on between January and March. We have 35 new members, committees have been rejiggered, so we have spent a lot of time learning and teaching. As far as the budget, this has been the

hardest budget year we've seen in 7 years been in Montpelier. There is much less financial help coming from DC and help is not going to come. We have a 112 – 115 million budget gap to finesse. It's not a deficit – we don't call it that. We try to zero out the budget. This year the gap is bigger and there is less funding to tap leading to potential cuts to programs that are near and dear to us; PILOT, human services, and schools. We have to remember what we are able to get done with the budget that we do have. Good things will still come out of this year, and we want to emphasize the school issues are key. You might not know this, but Andrew Pond was in the Statehouse every day representing our school district and how it can work. It was important for my peers in Education and Ways and Means to hear about this first hand. Please stay in touch; feel free to contact us, our contact information is on our report. We are here to help you, to listen, or to find someone who can help. Thank you.

Rebecca Ellis: It is a pleasure and honor to serve you in Montpelier. Please feel free to contact me anytime, I look forward to your input. I have an advertisement: a Driver Restoration day will be held on March 20th at the Costello Courthouse in Burlington. Any unpaid traffic tickets can be paid for \$20 a ticket to get driving privileges reinstated. Driver Restoration/Amnesty day March 20th - contact the State's Attorney's office for more information.

We know that the bad news is the budget. It is a big challenge; cuts this year will be very painful and hard for everyone. On the positive side, we can congratulate ourselves for Vermont having one of the top 5 public education systems, some of the lowest unemployment in country, and more people with health insurance than ever before.

There are two big environmental bills on the table; an energy bill that will require utilities to have more than 55% renewable in portfolios by 2017; solar, wind, and bio-methane. The bill passed the House on Friday with strong bipartisan support. The other is the cleanup of Lake Champlain, everybody is in - farmers, towns etc. Farms will need to register and certify agriculture accepted practice. Towns will need a general permit for road systems for minimal runoff. This is important to pass or we will lose delegated status. Thanks again.

David Parot: As far as the deficit, the PILOT program is going to cost the town 25K a year. Seventy five % of our land is conserved. 25K a year makes the school savings small. Are conservation groups helping us pay our bills? No. We endured the construction project all summer; 3K in repairs and 25 blown tires. The Preston Lafreniere property was put up for auction didn't sell. We are told we are so important, yet state is kicking on us big time. What are you going to do at the state level? The world is paved with good intentions – how can we trust the state to fund appropriately when they can't even keep the Preston Property according to the owner's wishes?

Rebecca Ellis: There is no quick answer. The November 2014 study on PILOT payments sees Bolton as one of the worse hit towns along with Ferrisburg. You are right that taking out 25K is not encouraging the town in conservation.

Moderator Joss Besse recommended that should Mr. Parot want continue the conversation that he do so outside of the meeting.

- On behalf of the Select Board, member Jen Dudley-Gaillard acknowledged and thanked Steve Barner and Deb Shelby for all of their hard work on updating the town's website, for sharing their knowledge and expertise, and recognized Steve for maintaining the website for many years.
- Carol Devlin presented the 2015 Good Citizen of the Year Award to Linda Baker, Panning Commission Chair, noting her nearly 30 years of volunteer service to the town, and for making Bolton more beautiful by sharing her gardening expertise and plants, tending to and planting gardens at the school and the town office over the years, and through her own gorgeous gardens that delight all passersby. As Linda was not able to attend Town Meeting, Linda's husband, Mike Baker accepted the award on Linda's behalf.
- Carol Devlin noted that dog registration was available that evening as well as tomorrow during voting, and that the Planning Commission had a survey seeking community input on the Town Plan.

Town Meeting 7:30 p.m.

- Moderator Joss Besse called the town portion of the meeting to order at 7:45 p.m. and noted that Articles 1, 2, and 3 would be voted by Australian ballot on Tuesday March 3, 2015, and opened discussion.

Gerry Mullen: What are the advantages of eliminating the Listers?

Ron Lafreniere: The main reason is because of having a hard time filling the Lister positions, we have one Lister, and we are supposed to have three. It just has become harder and harder to find people to run for the position.

Leslie Pelch: How much will it cost to have an assessor replace the Listers?

Sharon Murray: We already contract with an assessor for services, so there would be no increase in costs.

Ernest Levesque: There would be no increase in costs?

Sharon Murray: Correct, there is no increase in costs and no additional increase in the budget.

No further discussion on Articles 1, 2, and 3.

Article 4 ~ Shall the voters of the Town of Bolton accept the Town Report?

Motion: Gerry Mullen

Second: Tom Haviland

Betty Wheelock: I'm a long time resident and want to know why there are no vital records in the Town Report; the names are no longer in there.

Carol Devlin: The birth, marriage and death statistics are still in the Town Report, but several years ago best practice was to remove names due to privacy reasons and concerns, particularly births, and Bolton followed that practice.

Moderator Joss Besse noted that there was a lot of refinement to the budget to reflect past realities.

Jen Dudley-Gaillard: Sharon Murray and I met with all the department heads to look at the actual costs of running the town for the last three 3 years, line by line item, averaging costs, and seeing what made good financial sense. Eric Andrews (Highway Foreman) was particularly helpful in highlighting reductions and reallocations. The budget does look different, and we hope it is more streamlined and user friendly.

Sharon Murray: We also addressed issues raised in the audit report which recommended separating out reserve funds and debt service from the general fund, and accounting for those separately. This doesn't affect the bottom line, just how those funds are reported.

No further discussion. The moderator called for a vote. All were in favor. Article 4 passed.

Article 5 ~ Shall the voters of the Town of Bolton vote a budget of \$893,927 to meet the expenses and liabilities of the town and authorize the Select Board to set a tax rate sufficient to provide the same?

Motion: Ken Remsen

Second: Gerry Mullen

Sharon Murray: There is a correction in the FY 13-14 budget, that budget was \$849,900. A line item was mistakenly deleted and reduced that budget by 2K to \$847,900. That does not affect the FY 15-16 budget, but reduces the increase of that budget to 5.18 %.

Motion: John Devine I make the motion to amend the FY 13 – 14 budget to reflect the 2K deletion.

Second: Steve Peery

No further discussion. The moderator called for a vote. All were in favor. The amendment passed.

David Parot: I see that the town did not fully fund obligation to CUSI (Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations). Could you elaborate on that Ron?

Ron Lafreniere: As you know, CUSI gives a recommended cost per town. Each year we work to bring our contribution amount up. We also recognize that impacts taxes as well, so we don't want to jump up contributions a lot at one time. We also don't necessarily find all requests at 100%, and try to fund requests at level that the town can feel comfortable with.

No further discussion. The moderator called for a vote. All were in favor. Article 5 passed.

Article 6 ~ Shall the voters of the Town of Bolton vote to pay real and personal property taxes to the Town Treasurer in four (4) installments with due dates of September 15, 2015, November 15, 2015, February 15, 2016, and May 15, 2016?

Motion: Bernie Moore

Second: Gerry Mullen

No further discussion. The moderator called for a vote. All were in favor. Article 6 passed.

Article 7 ~ Shall the voters of the Town of Bolton authorize interest charges on all delinquent taxes of real and personal property of one (1) percent per month? Interest accrues as soon as the payment is late.

Motion: Ken Remsen
Second: Gerry Mullen

No further discussion. The moderator called for a vote. All were in favor. Article 7 passed.

Article 8 ~ Shall the voters establish a planning reserve fund as authorized under 24 V.S.A. § 2804 and recommended by the Planning Commission, to fund community planning projects, including municipal plan and bylaw updates? If yes, shall the voters appropriate \$4,000 to this fund for the FY 2015/16 fiscal year?

Moderator Joss Besse stated that the question would be divided into two parts as warned (and as under Robert's Rules of Order).

Question 1: Shall the voters establish a planning reserve fund as authorized under 24 V.S.A. § 2804 and recommended by the Planning Commission, to fund community planning projects, including municipal plan and bylaw updates?

Motion: Gerry Mullen
Second: Ken Remsen

Amy Ludwin: I'd appreciate hearing about this reserve fund from the Select Board.

Sharon Murray: Basically we don't have full time planning staff, and we rely on volunteers. However drafting updates and bylaws has become much more complicated, and the town needs assistance. Without staff, we have to go to CCRPC, or hire a consultant and those services don't come for free. The Bolton Town Plan has to be updated every 5 years, and the Planning Commission is struggling to get that done. The intent is to build up a reserve fund to have funding set aside for technical assistance.

Leslie Pelch: Has the town considered sharing services, such as a community planner?

Sharon Murray: Yes, we have and recently hired a DRB staff support person that also works full time in Underhill. Bolton is at disadvantage though in that all the surrounding communities have full time planners. That makes sharing services challenging but we can keep looking into it.

No further discussion. The moderator called for a vote. All were in favor. Article 8 question 1: to establish a planning reserve fund passed.

Question two: If yes, shall the voters appropriate \$4,000 to this fund for the FY 2015/16 fiscal year?

Motion: Ken Remsen
Second: Steve Peery

Micah Cassara: Can we change this if we've passed the budget?

Moderator Joss Bess: Yes.

Tom Haviland: How did the number come to 4K?

Sharon Murray: By looking at time, costs and matching funding. This would accumulate 20K over five years for technical assistance on a project.

No further discussion. The moderator called for a vote. All were in favor. Article 8 question 2: to appropriate \$4,000 to this fund for the FY 2015/16 fiscal year passed.

Article 9 ~ Shall the voters appropriate \$65,000 in uncommitted general funds to the following reserve funds, in addition to those reserve contributions included in the FY 2015/16 Proposed Budget?

Highway Equipment Reserve Fund \$50,000

Fire Equipment Reserve Fund \$15,000

Motion: Tom Haviland

Second: Ken Remsen

Jen Dudley-Gaillard: As an explanation, the current reserve fund in the Town Report on page 23 details how much money we have for large expensive things. In the budget review process it was noted that the town will have large expenses in coming years; a new town truck, a new fire truck. We would rather save for those coming expenses than go to the bank for a loan, and save on interest costs. This year we refinanced all of our loans to save on those interest payments; 14k in interest savings. Putting 65K into the reserves would be reallocating money we already have in the general fund.

Moderator Joss Bess: Is the 65K in addition to the budget?

Jen Dudley-Gaillard: No, this is not an addition to the budget. This is money in uncommitted funds. The annual audit breaks down committed and uncommitted funds. This would not increase the budget we voted on.

Micah Cassara: Would we be voting on this amount every year?

Jen Dudley-Gaillard: No, just this year, this is a one-time thing.

Sharon Murray: There are larger uncommitted funds than usual this year due to closing out 3 FEMA projects in which the expenses were paid out in previous fiscal years.

No further discussion. The moderator called for a vote. All were in favor. Article 9 passed.

Article 10 ~ Shall the voters of the Town of Bolton authorize the select Board to borrow money for the necessary needs of the Town as they arise?

Motion: Barb Stanley

Second: Ken Remsen

No further discussion. The moderator called for a vote. All were in favor. Article 10 passed.

Article 11~ Shall the voters of the Town of Bolton establish expenses for the members of the Select Board?

Motion: Gerry Mullen - \$10 per meeting.

Second: Amy Ludwin

Gerry Mullen: Twenty years ago the Select Board was getting \$10 a meeting too – considering inflation, this is a bargain.

No further discussion. The moderator called for a vote. All were in favor. Article 11 passed.

Article 12 ~ To transact any other business thought proper when met.

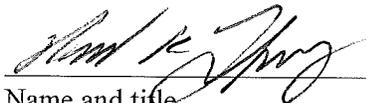
Lars Botzjorns: The Conservation Commission wants to acknowledge 2 outgoing members Ken Remsen and Larissa Urban. We now have 4 members and are looking for a couple of more people to join us. I also want to note that it is the 100th anniversary of the act allowed towns to establish town forests.

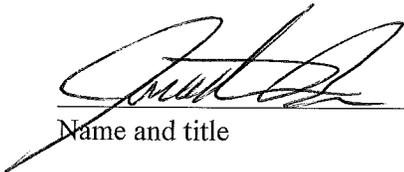
The town of Bolton has the Sara Holbrook property, which is 16 acres flood plain forests, and now the Long Trail Winooski Bridge crossing area. Another is the Preston Pond conservation area with 400 acres, trails and great place to visit. We are currently working on a management plan for the Preston Pond area. There are additional areas a little further out. The forests are managed for your enjoyment. Thank you.

Moderator Joss Besse adjourned the meeting at 8:16 p.m.

Attest: Amy Grover
Town Clerk & Treasurer

These minutes were accepted on March 9, 2015


Name and title SELECTBOARD CHAIR


Name and title Town Moderator