

Town of Royalton
Annual Town Meeting Minutes
March 3, 2015
South Royalton School Gymnasium

Town Moderator, David Ainsworth, warned the Town of Royalton's legal voters to begin their meeting at 10 a.m. to transact the following business:

Article I: To elect by Australian Ballot the following officers: Town Moderator: One Year, School Moderator: One Year, Town Clerk One Year, Town Treasurer: One Year, Selectboard: Three Years, Selectboard: Two Years, Lister: Three Years, Second Constable: Two Years, Collector of Delinquent Taxes: One Year, Cemetery Commissioner: Three Years, Town Agent: One Year, Grand Juror: One Year, Trustee of Public Funds: Three Years, School Director: Three Years, School Director: Two Years, Library Trustee: Two Years.

Moderator Ainsworth asked all to view list of officers on ballot, whereas voting booths would remain open until 7 p.m. this evening.

Article II: By Australian ballot: Shall the Town adopt the revised Town Plan?

Article III: To receive the reports of the Town Officers? Moved and Seconded. Request for discussion:

Floor: Ernie Amsden questioned if Selectboard had money in budget for highway crew raises. Selectman Larry Trottier addressed Amsden by noting "...a little extra in the budget...to offer a small increase." Specifics not yet discussed. Amsden then noted a \$3,100 and \$ 6,000 Town Office Building wage increase from current fiscal year to next fiscal year; Enforcement increase by \$4,000; Finance Manager by \$2,000; Town Clerk, no budget increase for clerk or staff. "Did Town Clerk request increase...?"

Selectboard Trottier asked Clerk Bascom to answer while notes reviewed. Clerk Bascom stated, a request had been put into Rose Hemond for a \$2,000 increase to extend staff hours for her assistant.

Rose Hemmond, Finance Manager, said department heads should have come to Selectboard for increases and town employees go through performance reviews. Amsden requested that the Selectboard answer his question. Selectwoman Goldstein said usually, if increases were submitted without explanation, wages would remain level-funded. Clerk Bascom stated her requests were given to Finance Manager Hemmond; that she attended a budget meeting dealing only with elections and had documentation from Hemmond noting level funding for budgets most likely. Moderator asked for a floor vote. **Motion carried.**

Article IV: Shall the voters appropriate \$276,674 to the following Royalton organizations, pursuant to 24 V.S.A. §2691?

	Approved 2014	Requested 2015
South Royalton Fire District #1	\$49,000	\$60,000
Royalton Memorial Library	\$55,355	\$56,855
South Royalton Rescue Squad	\$148,355	\$153,719
Royalton Town Band	\$2,400	\$2,400
Fuller Sterns Post #51(Memorial Day)	\$700	\$700
S. Royalton Area Senior Citizens	\$3,000	\$3,000

Floor: Paul Whitney explained history behind the department, stating the term should be the South Royalton Fire Department. R.F.D. vote requested, moved and seconded. **Motion carried.** Royalton library request moved and seconded. Greg Tisher, Library Director, explained that increases were due to one-time software system conversions. **Voters polled. Motion carried.** South Royalton Rescue Squad increase due to Workers Comp. insurance, explained Corrine Ingraham. **Motion to appropriate carried.** Royalton Town Band; **motion carried.** Fuller Stearns Post #51; **motion carried.** S. Royalton Area Senior Citizens; **motion carried.**

Article V: Shall the voters appropriate \$23,718 to the following social service agencies, pursuant to 24 V.S.A. §2691? Individual agencies noted in official Warning for Annual Meeting.

Prior to reading individual organizations, Moderator Ainsworth asked for motion to read individually or to combine? Motion seconded; no questions. **By show of cards, motion carried.**

Floor: Marion Whitney asked to have someone speak on last two items. Board Member Cynthia Powers for Orange County Parent Child Center, explained money is for support of about twenty families with children ranging from newborn to five years. Board Member Peg Ainsworth for the White River Conservation District, confirmed by Fire Chief, Paul Brock, noted that Royalton takes advantage of the Dry Hydrant Program.

Floor: Shannon Stoddard was under the impression that the Health Care Rehabilitation Services of Southeastern Vermont (HCERS) was not servicing our community; now sent to Clara Martin Center. **Amendment to motion to strike HCERS allocation moved and seconded.** Request is made for Selectboard to clarify. **An amendment to the amendment is then requested;** keep request in budget contingent on finding out that they serve Royalton residents in 2015. **Motion carried.**
Back to main motion; those in favor of and opposed to appropriating social services funding in the amount of \$23,718 polled. **Main motion carried.**

Article VI: Shall the voters approve total general fund expenditures of \$1,099,765 of which \$717,965 shall be raised by taxes pursuant to 24 V.S.A. §2664?

Motion moved and seconded. Floor open for discussion

Selectboard Chair, Larry Trottier explained that the budget went up by about 2.04% due to the Solid Waste Alliance, new payroll processing service, Gilman Road project, town appropriations, law enforcement and rescue squad insurance, fuel costs and repayment of Storm Irene debt. Selectboard was able to level fund the highway department.

Floor: Alison Gravel asked for clarification regarding clerk department budget requests. Selectwoman Ainsworth stated the meeting dealt with the elections budget increases due to use of electronic scanning machines and training. While Ainsworth believed clerk was correct, after looking at statute, said "If the State keeps their word, it won't cost us very much to begin with." Hence, level funded budget. Regarding salary, it was not brought up at meeting, however Selectboard was willing, at town's request to appropriate additional funds and had no complaints about clerk's performance or her assistant. Bascom stated she would get together with Manager Hemmond, regarding submission for additional hours. Selectman Phil Gates requested motion to amend general fund to total \$1,101,765.00 with the increase in taxes from \$717,965.00 to \$719,965.00. **Vote to amend signified by show of cards seconded; carried.**
Back to main motion for discussion

Floor: Amsden asked for Green Mountain Economic Development, to be removed from ballot; **motion moved and second.** Discussion: Amsden questioned value of program and believed the request was moved from Royalton organizations to social services. Bushrod Powers said we are getting our share of monies, even if it's not seen immediately. "They are looking to bring business to our town." Joan Goldstein, GMED Executive, said they charge 50 cents per capita to help towns who are members. Both small and large businesses are given financing and real estate management assistance. GW Plastics currently slated for expansion next year. GMED also organized a middle-high school program to introduce and prepare students for modern manufacturing process. \$1,000,000 in block grant funding for flooding distributed last year. Amendment on floor to remove request for GMED; voters polled; **amendment defeated.** Back to main motion.

Floor: Chris Mabey asked about the Bethel-Royalton Solid Waste Program; fees have doubled. Board Member Sandy Conrad stated they are self-sustaining, but new law, Act 48, will cost more and improvements need to be made. Plus, a capital fund will be started once debt is paid down. Also, Bethel – Royalton facility used as model for other towns in regards to efficiency.

Request for voters to approve total general fund of \$1,101,765 of which \$719,965 shall be raised by taxes? Those in favor and opposed polled. **Motion carried.**

Article VII: Shall the voters approve total highway fund expenditures of \$1,051,700, of which \$906,700 shall be raised by taxes pursuant to 24 V.S.A. §2664? Motion moved and seconded. All in favor and opposed polled. **Motion carried.**

Article VIII: Shall the voters authorize the Treasurer to collect property taxes on or before November 2, 2015, with delinquent taxes subject to interest charges of one percent per month or fraction thereof and eight percent penalty charged against them from the due date? Motion moved and seconded; discussion-none. All in favor and opposed polled. **Motion carried.**

Article IX: To transact any other non-binding business proper to be brought before said meeting.

Floor turned over to Representative Sarah Buxton. Buxton drew awareness to three major challenges in Montpelier: an ever rising property tax burden, affordable education reform and closing the gap on spending vs. revenue. Balancing budget was particularly challenging due to recession and dependency on federal funds. Despite stagnant wages, declining population, lingering Tropical Storm Irene costs and highway expenditures, the Legislature chose not cut as many services to Vermonters as other states. Result: Gap of \$94 Million dollars possible, dependent on projected revenues vs. spending. Legislature may eventually decrease House of Representatives, decrease social welfare, eliminate Vermont Life Magazine, cut Vermont Veteran's home funding and decrease state jobs. Regarding Royalton's potential

charter change, Representative Buxton said once voters decide what they want to do; she would assist us in the process.

Floor: Paul Brock expressed concerns regarding closing of dispatch centers. Closure would affect Royalton's police force, which uses Rockingham. Newport and Rutland dispatch proposed cuts would place heavy burden on community. Rep. Buxton asked to please give thoughtful consideration prior to making cuts. Ernie Amsden reminded Rep. Buxton that withholding taxes are nearly one-third of his gross income, excluding hidden gas and meals taxes. Tax burden needs to be addressed. Bob Quillia supported Chief Brock, reiterating that there are better ways to reduce costs than cutting public safety. Chris Hudson asked if Buxton could represent a larger district; she responded, yes, due to rural region.

Floor: Sean Smith, local youth given opportunity to tell townspeople about a weather website he created for Royalton, which may be visited at soroweather.com.

Moderator Ainsworth asked audience to allow a brief school musical presentation, prior to additional subjects needing discussion. Floor: Bob Slattery asked for audience; Ainsworth noted serious discussion would follow performance. Billy Ray Poli, Music Director introduced students from the musical's opening number: Working.

Floor: Bob Slattery, member of Planning Commission, believes that neither the citizen's nor commission's voice has been well represented. He requests the Selectboard use the Hope Property, instead of removing a prime commercial development parcel from tax rolls. As a former architect, he is willing to assist with dangerous traffic patterns and then unwise use of the Crawford site, due to contaminants.

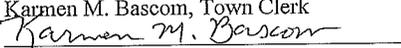
Selectboard Chair, Larry Trottier explained that the ACT 250 permit was in place, completed traffic study would allow for ample (seventy-five trips per day) out of Crawford property. Also, about 23 board meetings, articles in The Herald and Valley News newspapers and a segment on Channel 3 news publicized plans for the Crawford property. Trottier, noted the possibility of future space for Fire and Rescue and Town Garage. The nearby sites to be reclaimed, perhaps for assisted living and commercial space will be on the Route 110 entrance. Ernie Amsden spoke to process, stating the Selectboard has made the office a reality within three years, opposed to almost no progress in the previous twenty years. Mark Wood believes may not have facts right and not to assume the Fire Department wants to be at new site. Tim Dreisbach, Chair of Planning Commission, spoke of contradiction regarding final reason Crawford property was chosen. Also, commission wants more involvement and due process regarding the Act 250 permitting.

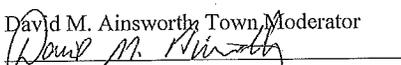
Selectwoman Goldstein stated that the architect and engineer were hired, ACT 250 documentation is and meetings were posted and warned. Selectman Gates, said bond vote was discussed a year ago, drawings are done and sewer costs will be minimal due to the gravel base. A Brownfield study has been done and the site is cleaned up. Selectwoman Ainsworth said they voted understanding not everyone has agreed, but they are focused on the site for municipal and gravel. They know they can't satisfy everyone, but they realize they must move forward. Selectwoman Conrad said she was originally a Hope property proponent, but that as a democracy, she believes even though she did not agree with choice, she knows the Crawford property plans must move forward.

Floor: Paul Whitney says about 20 years ago, they voted on Hope property for offices and bigger fire house, but board's study asked to build too many facilities, and now the same thing is happening with the Crawford property.

Moderator Ainsworth made a motion to end town discussion, with those in favor to please stand up.

Townspeople in attendance: 142
Meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted;
Karmen M. Bascom, Town Clerk


David M. Ainsworth, Town Moderator


Joshua Bushrod Powers, Justice of the Peace
