

**Town of Royalton
Annual School Meeting Minutes
February 29, 2016
South Royalton School Gymnasium**

Prior to calling the Royalton Town School District meeting to order, Moderator David Ainsworth explained that he would follow Robert's Rules of Order, microphones would be available and allow all who were inclined, an opportunity to speak.

Call to Order was read: **The legal voters of the Royalton Town School District are hereby warned and notified to meet in the South Royalton School Gymnasium in South Royalton Village, on Monday, February 29, 2016 at 6:30 p.m.**

Moderator Ainsworth read the following Article and then noted polls would be open from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. for Australian ballot voting in this gym, tomorrow.

Article I: To Elect by ballot the following School District officers:

A. A Moderator for a term of one (1) year, and B., Two School Directors, one for a term of three (3) years, one for a term of two (2) years.

Article II: To Hear and Act upon the report of the School District Officers.

School Director Tom Honigford introduced himself, followed by Principal Dean Stearns, Director Christine Hudson, Director Tim Murphy, Director Chris Mabey and Director Laurie Smith. Honigford noted projected budget expenditures of \$6,145,145, with projected tax rate of \$1.40, which is a .26% increase from last year. A PowerPoint presentation highlighted educational costs to decrease due to the projected merger. Health care, elementary education, a consumer science class and negotiated salaries would increase slightly. July 1st will mark official merger. Multiple schools will dissolve and merge into our system. A full listing of schools being considered and an explanation of Act 46 and the restructuring of local supervisory districts is available. Contact Laurie Smith for additional details on the new White River Valley Supervisory Union.

School Director Laurie Smith explained our legislature's Act 46 legislation as response to Vermont's very high spending, relatively high staffing and decreasing enrollment. The goals would involve quality, equitability and sustainability. Bottom line: law say school districts need to "...create larger systems governed by a single board at a single budget." The challenge comes from the ruling that choice and non-choice schools will not be allowed in the same district. Currently we have ten districts, six of which are choice and four are non-choice. Towns will get to vote; major concern being the State may force compliance, regardless. Compliance of Act 46 may allow for short-term property tax decreases and transition monies through grants. Options: do nothing and see what our state does or adopt a choice model. Choice could be an option. Townspeople are encouraged to come to school meetings where the Transition Board just viewed the vertical model and is preparing for an upcoming 2017 vote on new structure, followed by a summer 2019 end date for change or forced compliance, per State review. Smith encouraged townspeople to keep focused on the "big picture" not the "weeds," fully acknowledging the importance of such concerns as school name, colors and bussing when the time comes. Moderator calls for questions; none. **Motion to accept report school district officers; moved and seconded.** Discussion? None. **Motion carried.**

Article III: Shall the voters of the school district approve the school board to expend \$6,145,145, which is the amount the school board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year? It is estimated that this proposed budget, if approved will result in education spending of \$14, 756.90 per equalized pupil. This projected spending per equalized pupil is 1.79% higher than spending for the current year. Moderator calls for motion. **Motion made and seconded.**

Director Tim Murphy began budget presentation by noting an 11% growth in student enrollment over the past two years. Twenty-five of which are tuition students, others moved to town because of curriculum and community support. Murphy noted the school stayed under spending threshold, increased course offerings and cut down on undersubscribed programs. Director Honigford explained that the State's Common Level of Appraisal formula helps keep towns from underinflating home values as a way to reduce their state education payments. No further questions. **Article III motion carried.**

Article IV: To Act upon the following question: Shall the voters of Royalton Town School district approve the transfer of a sum not to exceed \$50,000 from any General Fund balance remaining from the 2015-2016 school year to the Building Reserve Fund? Motion moved, seconded. Discussion?

Floor: Paul Whitney asked how much money is in the building reserve currently. Director Murphy said about \$12.00. Murphy said it was not much, but if any money was left, they hope to add it to the reserve.

Floor: Justice of the Peace Bruce Post asked if the town would lose the money if it is placed into the building reserve. Honigford said it can only be used for the building reserve. Voters questioned, **motioned carried.**

Article V: To Transact any other business proper to come before the meeting.

Director Smith, on behalf of the board, thanks Tim Murphy for nine years of service. Noted as one of his greatest gifts to the school was his relentlessly upbeat and positive attitude regarding "SoRo."

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Floor: Representative Sarah Buxton spoke about this being her sixth school meetings and that she feels “extremely encouraged” in regards to the changes in education for our next generation. Kudos to Laurie, Geo and Dean for working to meet goals of Act 46. Taxpayers made it clear to the House of Representatives that the rate of spending was not sustainable. It was discovered that many towns have responsible reserve funds (3.5-5.5% of budget) for unexpected expenses and insulation from ups and downs. However, some communities like Milton and Colchester are sitting on over a million dollars when others are trying to level fund; this creates an imbalance. Regardless, Act 46 will probably not be worked on for the remainder of this year. The State will most likely “...stay the course.” The legislature will set the tax rate. Representative Buxton noted a conversation with Lister Jeff Barcelow, who brought up important inconsistencies in the current education finance reform bill which negatively impact some taxpayers. She recognizes the importance of his suggestion and will raise that point when working on the upcoming bill.

Contested races are noted. Selectboard member Sandra Conrad said she would appreciate a vote for Selectboard. David Barker was noted as a write-in for Trustee of Public Funds. Jo Levasseur said she would accept a write-in vote as Cemetery Commissioner. Dan Kinney asked how he could get a \$10,000 tax break as noted in the GW Plastic’s ballot. Alison Gravel mentioned the skilled workforce and job opportunities that would be created.

All in favor of adjournment were asked to stand up.

Registered voters in attendance: 99
Total number of voters on checklist: 1986

Meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted;
Karmen M. Bascom, Town Clerk

David M. Ainsworth, Town Moderator

Joshua Bushrod Powers, Justice of the Peace