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Town of Royalton
Annual School Meeting
March 3, 2014
South Royalton School Gymnasium

The townspeople of Royalton started their Meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by School Moderator, David Ainsworth's explanation of Robert's Rules of order. Meeting was warned.

Article I

To Elect by ballot the following School District officers;

A Moderator for a term of (1) year,

Three School Directors, one for a term of three (3) years, one for a term of two (2) years

and one to fill the unexpired term ending in 2015.

Note Voting on Article I will be by Australian ballot and the polls will be open from 8:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M. on **Tuesday, March 4, 2014.**

Article I motion made to accept; seconded and passed by hand ballot.

Article II

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

Article II motion moved and seconded. Floor opened for discussion. No corrections or omissions were reported. Article passed. School Director Tom "Geo" Honigford addressed floor by introducing longtime resident and school supporter, Richard "Dick" Ellis. Dick has supported our school with his gift of music for many years and as a token of appreciation from the school, Geo presented Dick with a beautiful plaque. A copy of the plaque will be at the school. School Moderator read Article III.

Article III

To vote a sum of money for the support of the school for the **2014-2015** school year.

Motion made to accept \$6,023,335.00 for the proposed 2014-2015 school year. Motion moved and seconded. Ainsworth asked for Schoolboard presentation. Schoolboard Chair, Tim Murphy, thanked everybody for coming out and then other members introduced themselves: Christine Hudson, Chris Mabey and Laurie Smith. Laurie Smith presented a PowerPoint display. Smith said, "One of the functions that the Schoolboard has in addition to preparing the budget is crafting a vision for the school." Community input, retreats and meetings allowed for input, revision and adoption of statement. Vision: "South Royalton School is a safe, vibrant, learning environment, where all are engaged, challenged and supported in order to explore their passions and build a life they find meaningful." They prioritized physical and mental safety, vibrancy through technology, community support, participation in core and extracurricular activities (31% drama, 71% sports, high school alone has 21% band and 28% chorus participation.) Smith turned floor over to Geo Honigford. He compared FY14 to FY15. "We're actually down." Budget numbers assume that the state will have a \$1.01 tax rate (not official yet.) Our budget had a total decrease of \$41,253 and statewide expectations are at about a 3% increase. Presentation showed a 24% loss in students and 18% staff decrease over ten years. Property taxes relied on to fund schools. Included was an education funding breakdown: state giving less of a percentage to each town, town relying more heavily on property taxes to fund school.

Floor: Alison Gravel concerned about changes coming to Vermont regarding school boards. Geo Honigford, board member of House Education Committee, replied that they are looking to restructure how schools are run. Example: better delivery of education if governing boards are decreased. Board's goal is for Royalton to have a voice in restructuring. Floor: Sandra Conrad noted the school board blames legislature while the legislature blames school boards. She asked if Sara Buxton could explain. Control of funding is essential. Honigford noted statewide drop of 10,000 students vs. gain of two dozen teachers. Floor: Harry Dodge discouraged about salary of teachers, dropout rates and other countries higher academic levels. Honigford replied: Royalton graduation rate at 94% while state is at 91%. Murphy noted 50% of students "hovering" at poverty level.

Representative, Sarah Buxton: State recognizes tax rates up. Secretary of Education has committed to develop mechanism to measure higher achieving schools like Royalton's. Reasons for tax increases: statewide Grand List continues to decrease; school spending across state up \$46,000,000, federal cuts of \$10,000,000 for Special Education and Title 1 and \$20,000,000 from 2010 stimulus now expired. 1892 was Vermont's last major restructuring of education system. Currently there are 280 districts with multiple levels, while enrollment decreases. Elimination of some supervisory unions should result in more access and opportunities for education, no matter where students are born or live. 91 towns in Vermont have a form of school choice. Representative Buxton is currently working to vote out a bill that by 2020 supervisory unions will cease to exist. The state will realign districts, but will still need Senate and Governor's approval. Taxes won't decrease, but money will be spent

more wisely. Also, there's a potential bill to increase public access to school buildings. Best way to absorb costs and extend hours being studied.

Moderator Ainsworth called for discussion on Article III; Alison Gravel requested paper ballot. Harry Dodge concerned about higher student teacher ratio, lack of education in cursive writing, increased technologies with lack of guarantees regarding security. Geo Honigford replied, schools are "...better than they ever were." Tim Murphy agreed, recalling his parochial education. Floor discussion: need for continued support of our school and teachers. Sandy Conrad asked all to be mindful of costs, elders unable to afford cost. Floor discussion: Act 60 failed our state, those in Montpelier need to be addressed, because everyone is having problems. Floor: education not an expense, but an investment.

Board of Civil Authority passed out paper ballots; Point of Order called; Article III reread; Moderator Ainsworth named contested races in Article IV: Karmen Bascom and Pamela Levasseur; each addressed audience. Selectboard for 3 year term: Charles Bascom and Phil Gates; each addressed audience. Collector of Delinquent Taxes: Theresa Harrington and Samantha Prior; no address. School Director for 2 year term: Kimberly Hebard and Laurie Smith; each addressed audience. Moderator noted that position of Second Constable has no one running. 25 votes for one person would secure the seat, otherwise the Selectboard will appoint candidate of choice. Motion on Article III carried: Yes 159, No 22

Article IV

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 2013/2014 school year to the Building Reserve Fund?

Motion moved and seconded.

Floor: Sandra Conrad stated Capital Reserve fund had \$80,000; does school need roof repair or new furnace? Tim Murphy mentioned a line item was recommended for repairs; no excess money expected this year, for repairs. Schoolboard willing to do what town decides. Previous repair costs noted. Paul Brock reminded town that the building was built in 1965; current and future repairs to windows and science room floors would need funds; any surplus should go into building repairs. Board recognized need for strategic plan for energy credits and maintenance. Dan Kinney moved previous question, seconded. Moderator Ainsworth requested vote to end debate. Motion carried.

Moderator Ainsworth read Article IV; motion carried.

Article V

To transact all other business proper to this meeting.

Corrections to Town Report; updated records to include those removed from Delinquent Tax Report. Tim Murphy and Laurie Smith relayed gratitude for Town Report's dedication to Frank Berk; he is missed and all are grateful for his work in our community. Superintendent, David Bickford and Principal, Gail Trotin are to retire at end of school year. Larry Trottier, Chair of Selectboard, thanked Schoolboard and reminded everyone that the Selectboard has worked diligently on bond vote for new town offices. Crawford Property certification of completion is almost done and certificate will soon be available. \$600,000 bond request should be offset by Crawford Property gravel pit. New town offices would eventually be for all departments. He asked for townspeople's support with the understanding that taxes would not be increased for this project, which they had originally requested \$1,600,000. Floor: Harry Dodge expressed concern about roof design, sewer and water costs and location. Trottier replied that the schematic could be changed but that the vision should move forward. Motion to adjourn, seconded. Meeting was recessed.

Registered voters in attendance: 181
Registered voters on election checklist: 2003

Respectfully submitted,

Karmen M. Bascom

Karmen M. Bascom, Royalton Town Clerk

David Ainsworth

David Ainsworth, Royalton School Moderator

ROYALTON TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
This 14th day of March 2014
at 2 o'clock and 0 minutes PM
Received for record the instrument of which the foregoing is a true copy.
Attest: Karmen M. Bascom
Town Clerk