

Town of Royalton
Annual Town Meeting Minutes
March 1, 2016
South Royalton School Gymnasium

The 2016 Royalton Town Meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance. Moderator David Ainsworth announced the local Rebecca's café-style luncheon at noon, the observance of Roberts Rules of Order and requested the townspeople's permission to allow the library's architect to speak about the future building renovations they have planned.

Call to Order was read: **The legal voters are hereby warned and notified to meet at the South Royalton High School Auditorium in South Royalton Village, in the Town of Royalton on Tuesday, the 1st day of March, 2016, at ten o'clock in the forenoon to transact the following business:**

Article I: To elect by Australian ballot, the following officers: Town Moderator for one year, School Moderator for one year, Town Clerk for one year, Selectboard for three years, Selectboard for two years, First Constable for two years, Second Constable for one year remaining of a two year term, Collector of Delinquent Taxes for one year, Cemetery Commissioner for three years, Town Agent for one year, Grand Juror for one year, Trustee of Public Funds for three years, Trustee of Public Funds for two years remaining of a three year term, School Director for three years, School Director for two years and Library Trustee for two years.

Article II: To receive the reports of the Town officers? Moved, seconded and discussion requested.

Floor: Delbert Thurston stated he didn't believe "...we could accept the town report as published." He suggested more financial information was required. Chair Trottier said the Selectboard was focusing on frugality with the quantity of pages, but if townspeople wanted a lengthier report they would consider the request. The in-depth information was available at the office five days a week for all to review. **Non-binding straw poll indicated 50-50 split.** Suggestion made to place detailed information on town website; library computers available free of charge. **Request for vote: Motion carried.**

Article III: Shall the voters appropriate \$287,813 to the following Royalton organizations, pursuant to 24 V.S.A § 2691?

South Royalton Fire District #1 \$70,000: no discussion. Motion carried

Architect Jay White discussed expansion of local library for public use, including handicapped access, removal of vault, new elevator and landscaping modifications to be paid for through a capital campaign. He noted Greg Tischer's exceptional role as library director, and encouraged townspeople to speak with trustees; design and information available at library.

Royalton Memorial Library \$58,855: Motion carried.

South Royalton Rescue Squad: \$146,858: Allocation favorable? Motion carried.

Royalton Town Band: \$2,400: discussion?

Floor: David Ellis stated the Royalton Town Band would continue with Phyllis Cadlub as director and three assistant conductors. **Motion carried.**

South Royalton One Planet Program: \$6,000

Floor: Larry Parmenter believed town was already paying for program. Bridget Taylor said it was a sliding scale. Peg Ainsworth explained the One Planet Program was originally funded through the Recreation Program, now separated. Townspeople polled. **Motion carried.**

Fuller Stearn Post #51: \$700: Motion moved, seconded and carried.

South Royalton Area Senior Citizens: \$3,000 Motion moved seconded and carried. Article III reread and carried in entirety.

Article IV: Shall the voters appropriate \$23,718 to the following social service agencies, pursuant to 24 V.S.A. §2691? (Entire list of agencies located in Royalton Town Records under Warning of Annual Meeting March 1, 2016) Motion to vote approve as whole with ability to question individually?

Floor: Elliot Manning concerned we are being taxed twice by funding both the Orange County Parent Child Center and the One Planet Program. He suggested the town move \$1,000 back to our One Planet Program. Cynthia Powers said there are two parent-child centers in our region and both rely on money for Royalton families. Vermont Association of Conservation Districts allocation questioned; explanation was that monies were used to fund dry hydrant program. Elliot Manning asked for **amendment: To not allocate \$1,000 to Orange County Parent Child Center. Moved and seconded.** No questions. **Amendment: Those in favor of allocating \$1,000 to Orange County Parent Child Center? Motion carried and amendment defeated.** **Article IV motion to appropriate (in entirety) carried.**

Article V: Shall the voters approve total general fund expenditures of \$1,127,926 of which \$863,126 shall be raised by taxes pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 2664? Motion moved and seconded with discussion.

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Floor: Mike Bald asked why Green Mountain Economic Development is in our allocation request. Joshua Powers said they help to maintain current businesses and assist in bringing in new businesses and tax revenues to community. Harry Dodge asked that the money be allocated to town block for handicapped accessibility. Commissioner Joan Goldstein said that, by virtue of village destination, some funds were available. Dorothy Rikert asked about increase in police wages. Selectboard member Larry Trottier noted requests for seven day per week coverage, increased insurance costs and the replacement of retiring Chief, Robert Hull. Hull's "reasonable rate" appreciated, but his replacement is expected to be more expensive. In trying to prepare for the future, Trottier noted: "These budgets we print out for you are our best guestimates of what we think will do the job." Eunice Gavin asked about current police schedule and use of extra money. Chief Hull said staffing is usually Friday nights, days and some weekends. Casework requires office staff and state police continue to turn over more to our town. Selectboard Chair Trottier said the money was for the new Chief and more night and weekend hours. Selectboard member Conrad noted backup coverage would come from state police if Royalton police were unavailable. However, Chief Hull believed the state in general is asking local towns to do more and step up, hence additional coverage. Selectboard Financial Manager Rose Hemond said the new chief would have a higher level of certification which would cover different levels of crime. Harry Dodge stated he was opposed to the Selectboard appointing previously elected official positions and wanted to know why the Vermont Law School did not have its own campus security. Eunice Gavin asked for clarification on job description. Was Chief Hull that underpaid? Selectboard member Conrad said he was: sorely "underpaid" which was realized while they were looking over what current Vermont salaries were for police. Also, the health officer/animal control position would not be part of the new chief's position. That would have to be figured out. The question was asked, why are the health officer/animal control services which are not being placed upon the new chief, not budgeted for? Selectboard member Peg Ainsworth noted the health officer was a volunteer position and the animal control officer was covered through the constable position. Harry Dodge noted the State Police taxes should support out town and asked for names of interviewees. Josephine Levasseur called Selectboard member Conrad out for being out of order regarding her Australian ballot request. Moderator Ainsworth concurred. Conrad apologized. Dorothy Rikert wanted to know where contracted Sharon services were documented. Selectboard and police department answered, noting a \$38,000 charge to Sharon. Hours worked would vary. Rikert asked why "...Sharon doesn't see an increase if we're seeing an increase?" Selectboard member Conrad said they are currently in a two-year contract, but hopeful that future consolidation and combination of services could increase future funding. Dan Kinney stated that sending our force to another town for \$38 per hour was "ridiculous" because it "doesn't cover insurance...cost of vehicle." Bushrod Powers called question. Moderator Ainsworth acknowledges. **Motion carried. Article V read in entirety. Motion carried.**

908,650 → 708,650
708,650 ←

Article VI: Shall the voters approve total highway fund expenditures of \$1,053,650 of which \$908,650 shall be raised by taxes pursuant to 24V.S.A. § 2664? Moved and seconded. Amendment offered. Board asked to change town allocation from \$988,650 to \$788,650. In essence, the \$200,000 highway surplus would be given back to taxpayers. **Amendment: To raise only \$788,650 by taxes for the highway fund? Motion carried.** Original Article reworded and voted on as amended: **Shall the voters approve total highway fund expenditures of \$1,053,650 of which \$708,650 shall be raised by taxes pursuant to 24V.S.A. § 2664? Motion carried.**

Article VII: Shall the voters authorize the Treasurer to collect property taxes on or before November 1, 2016 with delinquent taxes subject to interest charges of one percent per month of fraction thereof and eight percent penalty charged against them from the due date. No discussion. **Motion carried.**

Representative Buxton took floor, noting current work dealing with statewide ambulance and dispatch services. Fire Chief Paul Brock said Royalton pays extra fees and new system needs to be more fairly allocated. Those dispatched by state police do not pay a fee. Royalton says state police will not offer dispatch services, so Royalton pays \$13,000 to Hartford. Representative Buxton welcomed questions and said she is advocating the per capita fee, as she believes the state budget has stabilized and is sustainable. Mark Russell asked for renter rebate equality for law students. She also noted her ongoing bill aimed at just that, alongside additional testimony from individuals to be heard by other representatives and senators.

VIII: Shall the town authorize the Selectboard to relocate the water trough to the corner of the South Royalton Green? Motion moved and seconded. Discussion followed.

Floor:
Alison Gravel, William Ballou, Paul Whitney and Bridget Taylor asked not to move trough. Bad drivers were more of a problem, along with a disinterest in "outside experts" telling locals what to do. Selectman Larry Trottier replied highway studies (available at town offices) recommended trough be moved. But, after a well attended Selectboard meeting, the board decided to bring the question to the voters at Town Meeting. Grace Adams, who maintains decorations, said it was a safety concern. Paul Whitney reminded townspeople of damage caused one wild night where "...kids built a "heck" of a bonfire." He suggested a Barre granite company look to see what repairs might be necessary to properly repair it. Toni Hover asked the Selectboard to make driving patterns clear, regardless of whether the trough stays or goes. Julia, newcomer of 6 months, loves trough. She just asked for traffic clarity, not removal. Selectwoman Conrad noted seventeen accidents in study and a move would create additional and necessary parking. Grace Adams replied that if the trough is not moved, would money be donated to repair it? Tim Dreisbach, Delbert Thurston, Harry Dodge and Brian Mahon

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all made pleas to keep trough for historic reasons and to create safety lines or cones for traffic and decorator's safety.

Article VIII amended to read: Shall town allow money to go to repairs and lineage, but not move? Amended article carries.

Floor: Vermont Law students Jeff Caesar and company gave a presentation noting, with the permission of the townspeople, their hope to nationally register a commemorative mural at the railroad underpass and a statue commemorating Vermont's role alongside Harriet Tubman in the Underground Railroad movement. Tax credits are available for preservation and a congressional bill currently exists to ensure that the National Parks Service continue historic route and site documentation. Peg Elmer asked for interested people to create a social cohesion day.

Moderator Ainsworth reminded everyone that the tenth grade silent auction was in progress along with the Rebecca's luncheon and that library trustees were available for questions. Selectwoman Conrad gave a short speech drawing attention to the maple conference table they were currently seated at as a gift from the South Royalton School. They are "honored and humbled" that teacher Will Brooks alongside students Brendan Striker and Chris Lamson created the new table. On behalf of the entire Selectboard, Selectman Trotter gave thanks to David Ainsworth for his twenty-five years of service as town moderator. The board presented him with chocolates, suspenders and a Simon Pearce vase as tokens of the townspeople's appreciation.

All in favor of recess signified by standing up.

Floor meeting adjourned at 1 p.m.

Registered voters in attendance: 198
Registered voters on checklist: 1986

Respectfully submitted:

Karmen M. Bascom, Town Clerk
Karmen M. Bascom

David M. Ainsworth, Town Moderator
David M. Ainsworth

Joshua "Bushrod" Powers, Justice of the Peace
Joshua B. Powers

ROYALTON TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
This 21st day of March 20 16
at 2 o'clock and 00 minutes PM
Received for record the instrument of which the foregoing is a true
copy.
Attest: Rita Hus
Asst Town Clerk