

**Town of Royalton  
Annual Meeting Minutes  
March 3, 2020  
White River Valley School, Royalton Campus  
223 South Windsor Street, South Royalton, Vermont**

Moderator Allison Fulcher opened Royalton's town meeting at 10 a.m. by explaining general protocol and introducing the Scouts, who led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Moderator Fulcher introduced Australian Ballot Articles I and II

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

**Article II: By Australian ballot: Shall the Town of adopt the revised Town Plan, pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 4385, for a period of 8 years?**

Moderator Fulcher read **Floor Vote:**

**Article III: To receive the reports of the Town Officers?** Motion made by Paul Brock and seconded by Toby Ferris. Fulcher asked for questions and comments: Selectboard Chair Sandra "Sandy" Conrad opened discussion by asking townspeople to excuse Selectman Chris Noble, who was on a governmental mission. She was pleased to announce General Fund surpluses of +/- \$174,000, which would be returned to taxpayers by means of decreasing taxes in our general and highway department budgets. An additional police officer was hired and a new buildings and grounds position would be created to compensate for the loss of Town Administrator Rose Hemond, who Conrad said had been doing the job of two people. Acknowledgement was given for the completion of the Royalton Town Library renovation, a new garage at our wastewater facility, the town's 250<sup>th</sup> Charter Old Home Days celebration, 150<sup>th</sup> town band anniversary, a purchase of a new ambulance and water rescue training certifications for the fire department while Conrad noted future plans to reorganize the rescue squad's governmental structure within the Selectboard, build a new rescue squad building and ADA compliant sidewalks for our downtown. Conrad reviewed Betterment Fund activities: \$10,000 to So Ro's Rescue ambulance, \$1,800 for our community dinner and assistance in preservation of the Handy Memorial.

**Article IV: Commencing at March 3, 2020 annual meeting of the Town of Royalton, shall the Town vote on all public questions by Australian ballot, pursuant to 17 V.S.A. § 2680(d)(1)?** Suzanne Long motioned and Suzanne Milord seconded. Moderator Fulcher opened floor to questions. Suzanne Long questioned the change, pointing out Town Meeting's floor vote as a unique opportunity to ask questions, find clarification and hear from other town members as to how they are personally affected

questions, find clarification and hear from other town members as to how they are personally affected by governmental issues. Most importantly, she maintained that conversations and thought followed by amendments—perhaps would make a better proposal. Because we are a small community our participation returns a quality of votes which she believes Australian balloting would not engage. She would be willing to form a committee to help find out how to best save Town Meeting, because: “What we might lose is greater than what we might gain...” once we “...jump down the rabbit hole.” Jo Levasseur: wholeheartedly agreed with Long. Thomas “Geo” Honigford, looked around and summoned similar sentiment; adding: “All these people-- I wouldn’t know.”

In opposition, Amy Jurewicz questioned “Who is not here?” Suggesting people were being denied the opportunity to vote. Alison Gravel noted Tuesday morning is not a good time for people to vote. Selectboard member Tim Murphy was in favor of moving to Australian Ballot so more people could have their voices heard. He opined that, like building an ADA compliant ramp, Australian balloting would give so many others a vote, because: “Our biggest decisions should be done by larger groups.” Tim Dreisbach, speaking as a resident, not as a Selectboard member, reminded everyone that Town Meeting would continue, so would pre-town. It would be presumptuous to think that those voting by Australian ballot were less informed.

Moderator Fulcher asked for more discussion. Stuart Levasseur took the floor and asked how many floor votes would be affected by changing to Australian ballot? Moderator Fulcher said that out of the three types, budget question would remain floor votes. Sue Cain added that she sees both sides, but believes we need more people at our meetings. Frances Flannery stated government charter amendments were always voted by Australian ballot as well as municipal mergers and bond votes. Selectboard Chair Conrad added that some towns vote all Australian ballot (Randolph) plus, everyone still has Town Meeting discussions. Currently 95 out of 246 towns now use Australian balloting so more voices may be heard.

Moderator Fulcher clarified that while petitioned public questions have to be warned as written when submitted to the Selectboard, that they can be amended during floor votes. Jim Proctor asked if there were more people actually voting because of Australian ballots. Selectboard Chair Conrad said more people do vote, and that she was just talking about public questions. Tim Dreisbach added that re-wording articles on floor might be attractive, but such amendments may have unintended consequences. Geo Honigford felt that generally speaking, Saturday mornings and evenings don’t generally gather more attendance, yet the richness of discussion is imperative. “To give up our individual influence would be wrong.”

Charles Bascom moved previous question and Donald Hilts seconded. Moderator Fulcher reminded voters that a vote in favor of ending discussion would need a 2/3 vote. **Motion to end discussion carried by show of cards.**

**Article IV to vote on all public questions by Australian ballot was put before townspeople and defeated by show of cards.**

Moderator Fulcher asked if anyone objected to having all appropriations called together. **There was no objection.**

**Article V: Shall the voters appropriate \$351,919 to the following Royalton organizations, pursuant to 24 V.S.A. §2691?**

|  | Approved 2019    | Requested 2020   |
|--|------------------|------------------|
| Community Food Shelf                   | \$10,000         | \$10,000         |
| Health Hub School Clinic               | \$1,000          | \$1,000          |
| South Royalton Fire District #1        | \$96,325         | \$96,254         |
| Royalton Memorial Library              | \$75,405         | \$77,667         |
| South Royalton Rescue Squad            | \$151,906        | \$152,398        |
| Royalton Town Band                     | \$2,900          | \$3,900          |
| South Royalton One Planet Program      | \$6,000          | \$6,000          |
| Fuller Stearns Post #51 (Memorial Day) | \$700            | \$700            |
| South Royalton Area Senior Citizens    | \$4,000          | \$4,000          |
|  | <u>\$348,236</u> | <u>\$351,919</u> |

Moderator Fulcher asked for a motion: John Dumville moved and Stewart Ketcham seconded; discussion.

Steve Hall, representing the legion, thanked the town for funds, which helped purchase new flags and stand replacements. Harry Dodge doesn't want rescue squad to get additional funding. Pam Levasseur asked if the duck race and coin drop were expenses or revenues. Moderator Fulcher received voters' permission to have Tunbridge resident, Victoria Paquin speak. Paquin clarified that those fundraising monies were used to offset expenses. Townspeople called to vote: **Fulcher announced motion carried by show of cards.**

**Article VI: Shall the voters appropriate \$24,924 to the following social service agencies, pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 2691?**

|   | Approved 2019   | Requested 2020  |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|
| CV Community Action (Capstone)                | \$400           | \$0             |
| CV Council on Aging                           | \$1,500         | \$1,500         |
| Clara Martin Center                           | \$4,180         | \$4,180         |
| The Family Place                              | \$200           | \$200           |
| HCRS  | \$2,689         | \$2,689         |
| HIV/HCR Resource Center                       | \$500           | \$500           |
| Orange County Parent Child Center             | \$1,000         | \$1,000         |
| Vermont Association of Conservation Districts | \$100           | \$100           |
| Safeline                                      | \$1,000         | \$1,000         |
| Stagecoach                                    | \$3,800         | \$3,800         |
| Vermont Adult Learning                        | \$500           | \$500           |
| VT Assoc. of the Blind                        | \$750           | \$750           |
| VT Ctr. for Independent Living                | \$305           | \$305           |
| Visiting Nurses                               | \$7,000         | \$7,000         |
| WR Partnership                                | \$500           | \$500           |
| WC Partners                                   | \$500           | \$500           |
| WC Youth Services                             | \$400           | \$400           |
|   | <u>\$25,324</u> | <u>\$24,924</u> |

Discussion:

Bridgette Taylor gave recognition to the VT Assoc. of the Blind for the quality of life services given to her father. Sue Cain asked why Capstone wasn't in the budget this year. Chair Conrad said they did not ask. Moderator Fulcher called for vote: **Article VI carried by show of cards.**

**Article VII: Shall the voters approve total general fund expenditures of \$1,360,286 of which \$1,105,081 shall be raised by taxes pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 2664?** John Dumville moved question and Bridget Taylor seconded. Discussion ensued. Sue Cain questioned the \$40,000 increase? Chair Conrad stated that, upon an exit interview, former Town Administrator Rose Hemond felt she was doing too many jobs. The Selectboard will now look to split the position up more evenly. Suzanne Long poised a total general budget question: "Are we kicking the ball down the road by taking our surplus and adding them into next year's budget?" Chair Conrad: Yes, but the board has left a small cushion of about \$33,000 in case they go over budget. Capital reserve funds will be set aside in the amount of \$ 50,000 a year for future downtown renovation project. Jim McCleery hopes extra money could go toward asphalt for fixing Happy Hollow Road. Tim Dreisbach agreed that asphalt to dirt road transition was tough. A permanent solution would be to pave the whole road. Tom Wells reminded everyone that the highway budget wasn't up for discussion yet. Moderator Fulcher polled voters. **Motion to approve Article VII carried by show of cards.**

**Article VIII: Shall the voters approve total highway fund expenditures of \$1,038,000 of which \$823,737 shall be raised by taxes pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 2664?**  
Motioned by John Dumville and seconded by Sandy Conrad. Moderator confirmed no questions or discussion. **Article VIII carried by show of cards.**

**Article IX: Shall the voters authorize the Treasurer to collect property taxes on or before November 6, 2020 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?**  
Motioned by Sandy Conrad and seconded by John Dumville. Moderator finding no questions called the vote. **Article IX passed by show of cards.**

**Article X: To transact any other non-binding business proper to be brought before said meeting?**  
Del Thurston thanked Selectboard member Tim Dreisbach, while Selectboard Chair Conrad commended him on his three years of service with customary Simon Pierce vase. The sophomore class was recognized for their delicious baked goods. Tom Wells asked if anyone had met with the state officials regarding the Coronavirus. Brad Salzman, Emergency Director told all that as of 5 p.m. last evening, Governor Scott had declared a task force specifically for Coronavirus. Also, the Dept. of Health had ongoing website information, noting that as of this morning, no cases reported in Vermont, but abutting states had been affected. Suzanne Long ended discussions by restating her interest in collaborating with others to increase our unique and traditional Town Meeting's attendance. **Moderator Fulcher asked for a motion to adjourn.** Bridget Taylor so moved and Stuart Ketchum seconded the motion. **The motion to adjourn carried by a show of cards.**

Meeting was adjourned at 11:40 a.m.  
Registered voters on checklist: 2,365  
Registered voters in attendance: 178  
Respectfully submitted:  
Allison Fulcher, Moderator  
Joshua Powers, Board of Civil Authority Chair  
Karmen Bascom, Clerk

