

ANNUAL WESTFIELD TOWN & SCHOOL MEETING
Approved Minutes – March 1, 2016

The legal voters of the Town of Westfield and the legal voters of the Westfield School District are hereby notified and warned to meet at the Westfield Community Center, 59 North Hill Road, on Tuesday, March 1, 2016 at 10:00 A.M. to transact the following business:

The meeting was called to order 10:05 a.m. by Selectman Jacques Couture who began the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

SCHOOL DISTRICT ANNUAL MEETING:

Article 1. To elect a moderator for a term of one year:

Selectman Couture asked if there was any objection from the body to electing a moderator who would serve as both the School and Town Moderator. No one objected.

Motion by Kay Courson to nominate Pat Sagui to serve as the School and Town Meeting Moderator. **Motion passed by voice vote electing Pat Sagui to a one year term (2016).**

Moderator Sagui explained the School and Town Meetings will be held as separate meetings. She stated the Town Meeting will begin as soon as the School Meeting adjourns. First time attendees were welcomed to the meeting. Procedural and housekeeping announcements were reviewed as well as an explanation of where the different types of voting would take place during the day.

Moderator Sagui asked if there was any objection to allowing Representative Mark Higley to speak to the body. Hearing no objection Representative Higley gave a brief update on the farm and forestry bills, as well as reminding attendees the Doyle survey was available to fill out at the meeting.

Jerry Fiske from Lowell also asked permission to make a brief comment. Hearing no objection from the floor the Moderator granted permission. Mr. Fiske stated he wanted to say a few words about the Road Commissioner and his crew. He complimented Larry Kennison and his crew for the excellent job they do keeping Westfield roads in such good shape and asked for a round of appreciative applause for the road crew. There was an enthusiastic round of applause.

Article 2. To elect one Westfield School Board Member for a term of three years:

It was stated that Loren Petzoldt who has held this position for 18 years is retiring and a new person is needed to fill the position. Motion by Christine Amyot to nominate Kristy Pillsbury. Ms. Amyot stated that Ms. Pillsbury is an involved parent with two children in the school system. No other nominations were made. **Motion passed by voice vote electing Kristy Pillsbury to a three year term (2019).**

Article 3. To elect one High School Board Member for a term of two years (2018-to fill an unexpired three year term):

Moderator Sagui explained there were no nominations last year and the School Board did not find someone to fill the vacancy. Selectboard Chairman Daigle stated he had a call from the High School Board asking that this position be filled so Westfield would have representation on this board. **There were no nominations from the floor so this will be referred back to the Westfield School Board for an appointment.**

Article 4. Shall the legal voters of the Westfield Town School District appropriate the sum of \$1,343,489 dollars to defray the expenses and liabilities for Jay/Westfield Joint Elementary School for the ensuing year with a net assessment to the town of \$563,459? (Paper ballot to be co-mingled with Jay)

Motion by Mike Piper and second by Will Young to bring the article to the floor.

Discussion: Dennis Liddy asked why they are asking for 10% more. Loren Petzoldt replied it is because of a 6% change in student enrollment. For the 2015/16 school year Westfield has 39 students and Jay has 54 students. He referred people to page 30 of the Town Report.

WESTFIELD: YES – 40 NO – 12
JAY: YES – 18 NO – 2 (reported by Tara Morse, Jay Town Clerk, 3/2/16)

Article 4 passed by paper ballot by Westfield and Jay voters.

Article 5. Shall the voters of the school district approve the school board to expend \$771,872, 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 \$16,085 per equalized pupil. This projected spending per equalized pupil is 9.56% higher than spending for the current year.

Motion by Mike Piper and second by Theresa McAvinney to bring the article to the floor.

Discussion: The School Board explained they have done the best job they can to contain the budget but a lot of increases are out of their control because they are mandated by the state. They encouraged voters to learn as much as they can about Act 46. The Board felt Superintendent John Castle has been a help to them. Theresa McAvinney asked what the term equalized pupil meant. The Board said it is a state formula that is complicated and difficult to understand. Basically, it is a way to account for the different resources needed for varied classes of students. Mike Piper asked why the cost was up. The Board said it was because there are more children in Jr. High which represents a \$38,000 increase to the town and the special education costs have been centralized. Dennis Liddy asked what cost cutting is being done to control costs and when does it end. Kevin Amyot replied there is no building debt which helps control costs. He said to lower costs the School Board would have to cut programs. He also stated there was an almost 8% increase in insurance costs and this was a bargaining year which resulted in another three percent increase.

Article 5 passed by voice vote.

Article 6. Shall the legal voters of the Westfield Town School District authorize the Board of School Directors to place \$75,955 of undesignated general fund balance into the Buildings & Grounds Reserve fund? (Paper ballot to be co-mingled with Jay)

Motion by Mike Piper and second by Dennis Liddy to bring the article to the floor.

Discussion: Mike Piper asked what the money is for. Outgoing Board member Loren Petzoldt explained that each year Westfield and Jay have voted to set aside \$5,000 per year for the Building & Grounds Reserve Fund. Since there was reserve money from the budget, the \$5,000 is not being requested this year. The Board feels the driveway is in need of work. Dennis Liddy asked if the money would be locked into this fund. Loren Petzoldt replied if the voters voted yes to this article then the money would have to be spent on capital funding/repairs unless it came before the voters again for another vote.

WESTFIELD: YES – 46 NO – 6
JAY: YES – 18 NO – 3 (reported by Tara Morse, Jay Town Clerk, 3/2/16)

Article 6 passed by paper ballot by Westfield and Jay voters.

Article 7. Shall the legal voters of the Westfield Town School District authorize the Board of School Directors to use \$30,000 of undesignated general fund balance to purchase new cafeteria tables and chairs? (Paper ballot to be co-mingled with Jay)

Motion by Mike Piper and second by Pauline Couture to bring the article to the floor.

Discussion: Board member Kevin Amyot explained the current tables and chairs are the originals from when the school was built. Preliminary bids were sought to get cost estimates to replace the original style tables and chairs that fold up into the wall. The Board is not sure what will happen with the old tables yet. Connie LaPlume commented on what a nice school our community has.

WESTFIELD: YES – 49 NO – 7
JAY: YES – 19 NO – 3 (reported by Tara Morse, Jay Town Clerk, 3/2/16)

Article 7 passed by paper ballot by Westfield and Jay voters.

Article 8 Discussion of items to be voted on by Australian ballot (except candidates).

Moderator Sagui read the school related Australian ballot items.

Article 9. To transact any other non-binding business which may legally come before this meeting.

a. Discuss the pros and cons of joining the North Country Union Jr. High School District:

School Board Overview: The School Board explained the town currently pays tuition to the junior high of choice capped at what the North Country Union Junior High School tuition would be. Currently we are not paying to transport the children to the junior high. As a courtesy, after the bus picks up the Jay junior high students it travels down North Hill Road and picks up the Westfield students near the town common. Joining the junior high school district could be a two year process. The towns of Jay, Newport, Derby, Morgan and Holland are already in the district. This type of decision requires an Australian ballot vote which could take place later this year along with either the August or November election. If the Australian ballot vote were to pass, the other towns in the district would have to vote to accept Westfield into the district. The Board said the point of discussing this at the annual meeting is to get a pulse or feeling if the townspeople want more information on this matter.

Discussion:

- The town would gain a seat on the junior high board by joining the district.
- Children taking the bus would not be picked up at their homes but likely at a couple of stops. The exception would be children living on North Hill Road as the bus passes along this route and could easily stop.
- We would have to pay for bus transportation by joining the district.
- We would lose school choice by joining the district.
- There is no direct benefit or detriment to the students by joining the district. It is mostly a budgetary and monetary decision.

After the discussion ended there was a show of hands indicating most people were interested in getting more information about joining the junior high school district. It was suggested to create a pro and con list to distribute at a future informational meeting.

b. Thank Loren Petzoldt:

LaDonna Dunn thanked Loren Petzoldt for his many years of service which was followed by a round of applause.

Article 10. To adjourn:

Motion by Mike Piper and second by Kay Courson to adjourn at 11:50 a.m. **Motion passed by voice vote.**

TOWN ANNUAL MEETING:

Immediately following the School Meeting, the Town Meeting was called to order at 11:51 a.m.

Article 1. To elect a moderator for a term of one year.

The body voted to elect Pat Sagui to the position of Town and School Moderator during the school portion of the meeting.

Article 2. To hear and act upon the reports of the Town Officers:

Motion by Mike Piper and second by Pauline Couture to accept the Town Reports as presented.

Discussion: Town Clerk, LaDonna Dunn, explained the contract for printing the Town Reports is up this year and asked if people still like the larger 8 ½" x 11" size. It would save a couple hundred dollars to print a smaller 5 ½" x 8 ½" report. With a show of hands, the consensus was to continue with an 8 ½" x 11" report size. Connie LaPlume thanked LaDonna for producing a nice Town Report.

VOTE: Motion passed by voice vote.

Article 3. To elect all necessary town officials required by law.

- a. **Auditor, 3 year term (2019):** Motion by Connie LaPlume to nominate Kay Courson. No other nominations were made. **The Moderator, without objection, instructed the Clerk to cast one ballot re-electing Kay.**
- b. **1st Constable, 1 year term (2017):** Motion by Mary Lou Jacobs to nominate Normand Piette. No other nominations were made. **Normand Piette was re-elected by voice vote.**
- c. **2nd Constable, 1 year term (2017):** Motion by Laini Fondiller to nominate Mike Piper. No other nominations were made. **Mike Piper was re-elected by voice vote.**
- d. **Delinquent Tax Collector, 1 year term (2017):** Motion by Normand Piette to nominate Joyce Crawford. No other nominations were made. **Joyce Crawford was re-elected by voice vote.**
- e. **Lister, 3 year term (2019):** Motion by Mary Lou Jacobs to nominate Steve Dykeman. No other nominations were made. **The Moderator, without objection, instructed the Clerk to cast one ballot re-electing Steve Dykeman.**
- f. **Selectman, 3 year term (2019):** Motion by Mike Piper to nominate Jacques Couture. Motion by Laini Fondiller to nominate Ann Lazor. No other nominations were made. **Jacques Couture was re-elected by a paper ballot vote (44 to 4).**
- g. **Town Agent, 1 year term (2017):** Motion by Mary Lou Jacobs to nominate Dianne Laplante. No other nominations were made. **Dianne Laplante was re-elected by voice vote.**
- h. **Town Grand Juror, 1 year term (2017):** Motion by Mary Lou Jacobs to nominate Mike Piper. No other nominations were made. **Mike Piper was re-elected by voice vote.**

Article 4. Shall the legal voters approve \$60,339.20 for the following appropriations?

Motion by Theresa McAvinney and second by Mike Piper to bring the article to the floor. The Moderator explained if all were in agreement she would read each appropriation amount and name. Anyone wishing to discuss or make an amendment to the amount could do so before she would move on to the next item. She stated if there were no objections, a total dollar amount would be voted on at the end of the appropriation reading which would include any amended amounts. Hearing no objections, the Moderator read the appropriations and noted where increases over last year's amounts were being requested.

- a. **\$500 to American Red Cross** (2015 was \$250)
- b. **\$100 to Felines & Friends Foundation**
- c. **\$250 to Green Mountain Farm-to-School, Inc.**
- d. **\$50 to Green Up Vermont**
- e. **\$450 to Hazen's Notch Association Campership Fund**
- f. **\$800 to Jay Athletic Association**
- g. **\$200 to Jay Focus Group & the Jay Focus Group Children's Halloween Party**
- h. **\$500 to Jay Food Shelf** (2105 request of \$250 was amended to \$500)
- i. **\$200 to Jay Peak Post No. 28-American Legion**
- j. **\$200 to Missisquoi River Basin Association**
- k. **\$10,812 to Missisquoi Valley Ambulance Service** (2015 request was \$10,628.04)
- l. **\$4,000 to Montgomery Fire Department**
- m. **\$100 to North Country Friends of the Vermont Symphony Orchestra** (2015 was \$75)
- n. **\$200 to Northeast Kingdom Community Action, Inc. (NEKCA)**
- o. **\$300 to Northeast Kingdom Council on Aging (formerly Area Agency on Aging for Northeastern Vermont)**
- p. **\$563 to Northeast Kingdom Human Services (NKHS)**
- q. **\$200 to Northeast Kingdom Learning Services (NEKLS)**
- r. **\$300 to Old Stone House Museum (Orleans County Historical Society)** (2015 was \$250)
- s. **\$500 to Orleans County Citizen Advocacy (OCCA)**
- t. **\$12,328.20 to Orleans County Sheriff's Department** (2015 request was \$11,992.51)
- u. **\$2,500 to Orleans Essex Visiting Nurse Association (VNA) and Hospice, Inc.**
- v. **\$500 to Pope Memorial Frontier Animal Shelter, Inc.**
- w. **\$600 to Rural Community Transportation, Inc. (RCT)**
- x. **\$1,000 to Troy and Area Lions Club to run the Westfield Senior Meal Site**
(2015 was \$1500)
Discussion: Someone asked why this went down by \$500. Lion's club member, Denny Lyster, responded by saying the year before the club had capital expenses and the mealsite increased the meal donation to \$4 from \$3 which helped cover the expenses. To increase participation the club is offering a free meal the 2nd Thursday each month and bingo following the meal. The free meal enticement will be offered during the fall and winter months. Yves Daigle commented he would not like to see the meals end.
- y. **\$22,591 to Troy Fire Department**
- z. **\$400 to Umbrella**
- aa. **\$95 to Vermont Center for Independent Living (VCIL)**
- bb. **\$100 to Vt. Rural Fire Protection Task Force- Vt. Assoc. of Conservation Dist.**

VOTE: Article 4 passed by voice vote in the amount of \$60,339.20 with no amendments.

Article 5. Shall the legal voters approve general government fund expenditures of \$214,135.00, of which \$86,715.00 shall be raised by taxes and \$127,420.00 by non-tax revenues?

Motion by Mike Piper and second by Will Young to bring the article to the floor. No discussion.

VOTE: Article 5 passed by voice vote.

Article 6. Shall the legal voters approve highway fund expenditures of \$346,093.00, of which \$228,593.00 shall be raised by taxes and \$117,500.00 by non-tax revenues?

Motion by Will Young and second by Mike Piper. No discussion.

VOTE: Article 6 passed by voice vote.

Article 7. Discussion of items to be voted on by Australian ballot (except candidates):

Moderator Sagui explained that Articles 8-12 were Australian ballot items voted on throughout the day until 7 p.m. at the Westfield Community Center. She explained she would read each article and then there would be an opportunity to ask questions. At the 7 p.m. closing of the polls on March 1, 2016 all ballots were counted. Recorded below each article (8-12) are the official election results.

Article 8. Shall the voters authorize the Northeast Kingdom Waste Management District to appropriate and expend a budget of \$716,673? (Australian Ballot)

Discussion: Yves Daigle commented that Westfield's Recycling Center is the only one out of 47 in the district that runs at no cost to its residents. He said with the passage of Act 148 no recyclables are allowed to go into the trash. Yves estimates approximately 60% of Westfield residents are recycling and encouraged everyone to recycle. People from outside of town are using Westfield's Recycling Center which helps us run the center at no cost. These people bring their trash which gives the Recycling Center revenue. Jacques Couture thanked Yves for his efforts which was followed by a round of applause for Yves.

Yes – 122 No – 40 Blank – 16

Passed with 178 votes cast.

Article 9. To elect a Jay/Westfield Joint School Treasurer for the school year 2016-2017. (Australian Ballot)

Tara Morse Yes – 165 Spoiled – 1 Blank - 14 Write-in – 0

Tara Morse was elected to a one year term (2017) with 180 votes cast.

Article 10. To elect a Westfield School Treasurer for the school year 2016-2017. (Australian Ballot)

Rita Petzoldt Yes – 158 Spoiled – 1 Blank - 20 Write-in – 1

Rita Petzoldt was elected to a one year term (2017) with 180 votes cast.

Article 11. North Country Union High School and North Country Career Center: Shall the voters of the school district approve the school board to expend \$15,429,210, 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 \$13,972 per equalized pupil. This projected spending per equalized pupil is 1.76% higher than spending for the current year. (Australian Ballot)

Yes – 108 No – 59 Spoiled – 0 Blank – 12

Article 11 passed with 179 votes cast.

Article 12. Shall the North Country Union High School District authorize the Board of School Directors to place \$190,000 of undesignated FY2015 fund balance from the general fund operations in the Capital Improvement Reserve fund? (Australian Ballot)

Yes – 117 No – 47 Spoiled – 0 Blank – 15

Article 12 passed with 179 votes cast.

Article 13. To transact any other non-binding business which may legally come before this meeting.

A. Jacques Couture gave an update on the Wild & Scenic Designation for the Missisquoi & Trout Rivers. Jacques and Dianne Laplante are the Westfield representatives on the committee that meets monthly. They have received \$122,000 in federal funding that can be used for signage, river clean-up or a town doing a project related to the river just to name a few ideas. Anyone interested in getting a portion of this money can apply to the committee or visit their website at www.vtwsr.org. This is an ongoing project with annual federal funding. Lindsey Wight is the newly hired coordinator.


B. Theresa McAvinney asked when the Town's next milestone anniversary was so we could start planning another big celebration. The Clerk will research this.

C. Selectman Yves Daigle reported the Westfield Cemetery is just about sold out. The Selectboard discussed this at one of their regular meetings and thought it would be a good idea to see if additional land could be added to the North Hill Cemetery since no land is available to expand the Westfield Cemetery. They made an inquiry to the abutting neighbors, Merlin and Luke Backus, to see if they were interested in selling some land to the town. Merlin said they would be happy to donate ½ acre to the town. Yves thanked Merlin and Luke for their generosity. Merlin and Luke would like to have the fence removed around the North Hill Cemetery. Yves offered the fence to anyone who would like to come and remove it. He said anyone interested should talk to a Selectboard member. Connie LaPlume asked about putting the fence around the Recycling Center to help with illegal dumping. Yves said it wouldn't help because the trucks wouldn't be able to get to the dumpsters.

Article 14. To adjourn:

Motion by Theresa McAvinney and second by Pauline Couture to adjourn the meeting at 12:40 p.m. **Motion passed by voice vote.**

I certify the above minutes are a true and accurate report of the votes taken at the Westfield Town and School Meeting held Tuesday, March 1, 2016.



LaDonna Dunn, Town Clerk

These minutes have been approved by the following three Town/School Officials:



Pat Sagui, Town and School Moderator



Yves Daigle, Selectboard Chair



Kevin Amyot, Westfield School Board Member