

**ANNUAL WESTFIELD SCHOOL MEETING  
MINUTES  
MARCH 7, 2017**

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 7, 2017 at 10:00 a.m. to transact the following business:

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The meeting was called to order at 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 elect a moderator who would serve as both the School and Town Moderator. No one objected.

**Anne Lazor nominated Pat Sagui. Hearing no other nominations, Pat was re-elected by voice vote as the School and Town Moderator for a term of one year (2018).**

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. Procedural and housekeeping announcements were reviewed as well as an explanation of where the different types of voting would take place during the day. She stated only registered voters can vote or speak to the body at the meeting. She encouraged people to ask questions if they didn't understand something.

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 report. He stated after serving 8 years on the Government Operations Committee he has now been appointed to the Agriculture and Forestry Committee. Representative Higley asked for feedback on the following which the legislature will be working on this year: increase of minimum wage to \$15; Family Leave Bill with up to 12 weeks of leave; marijuana legalization; Senate passed Immigration Bill; and a law mandating that energy be generated by 90% renewables by 2050. Representative Higley said daily legislative updates can be found online at vtdigger.org. Voters asked questions about dismantling the EPA; concerns about 35% of Vermont's budget coming from federal money; farming milkweed and alternative ways for Vermont to raise education money besides from property taxes. Representative Higley reminded attendees that the Doyle survey was available at the meeting to fill out.

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

**Mike Piper nominated Kevin Amyot. Hearing no other nominations, Kevin was re-elected by voice vote for a term of three years (2020).**

**Article 3. To elect one Westfield School Board Member for a term of two years to fill an unexpired three-year term:**

**Mike Piper nominated Janellen Parker-Goodwin. Hearing no other nominations, Janellen was elected by voice vote for a term of two years to fill an unexpired three-year term (2019).**

**Article 4.** To elect one Westfield School Board Member for a term of one year to fill an unexpired three-year term:

Mary Lou Jacobs nominated Nicole Dunn. Hearing no other nominations, Nicole was elected by voice vote for a term of one year to fill an unexpired three-year term (2018).

**Article 5.** To elect one North Country Union High School Board Member for a term of one year to fill an unexpired three-year term:

Yves Daigle nominated Shawn Baraw. Hearing no other nominations, Shawn was elected by voice vote for a term of one year to fill an unexpired three-year term (2018):

**Article 6.** Shall the legal voters of the Westfield Town School District appropriate the sum of \$1,212,511 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 \$450,812? (Paper ballot to be commingled with Jay)

Motion by Mike Piper and second by Anne Lazor to bring the article to the floor.

Discussion: There was a question about the Governor's opposition to teachers picking up an additional 20% of their health care costs. Kevin Amyot said his understanding was that the Governor had scrapped his initial comments. Hearing no further questions, Moderator Sagui instructed voters that this was a paper ballot vote because it was to be co-mingled with Jay.

**Vote results: WESTFIELD: YES – 49      NO – 8**  
**JAY:                    YES – 29      NO – 5      BLANK – 3**  
(as reported by Tara Morse, Jay Town Clerk 3-8-17)

**Article 6 passed by paper ballot in Westfield and Jay.**

**Article 7.** Shall the voters of the Westfield School District approve the school board to expend \$686,399, 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 \$14,721 per equalized pupil. This projected spending per equalized pupil is 6.15% lower than spending for the current year:

Motion by Margaret Rowley and second by Laini Fondiller to bring the article to the floor.

Discussion: There was a lengthy discussion about what voters were actually voting on and if additional money was being raised through this article. Points of clarification that came out of the discussion included:

- The state has mandated centralized special services (formerly called special education) making it no longer part of the local school budget.
- What is being voted on in this article is to raise and expend \$235,587.
- The \$235,587 represents the difference between \$686,399 from this article and the \$450,812 which is Westfield's net assessment of the Jay/Westfield Joint Elementary School from Article 6.
- The \$235,587 being raised in this article is the cost to tuition Westfield's 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students and the monies paid to the Supervisory Union for special services.

**Article 7 passed by voice vote with one vote in opposition.**

**Article 8** Discussion of items to be voted on by Australian Ballot (except candidates):

Moderator Sagui explained that Articles 9-14 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 (except for candidates). At the 7 p.m. closing of the polls, on March 7, 2017, the Australian ballots were counted. Following each article (9-14) are the official election results as reported at the close of the polls.

**Articles 9 through 14 were voted on by Australian ballot:**

**Article 9. To elect a Jay/Westfield Joint School Treasurer for the school year 2017-2018:  
(Australian Ballot)**

**Tara Morse Yes – 73 Spoiled – 0 Blank – 4 Write-in – 0  
Tara Morse was elected to a one year term (2018) with 77 votes cast.**

**Article 10. To elect a Westfield School Treasurer for the school year 2017-2018:  
(Australian Ballot)**

**Rita Petzoldt Yes – 74 Spoiled – 0 Blank – 4 Write-in – 0  
Rita Petzoldt was elected to a one year term (2018) with 78 votes cast.**

**Article 11. Shall the legal voters of the Westfield Town School District authorize the board of school directors to pursue joining the North Country Junior High School?  
(Australian Ballot)**

Discussion: The School Board was asked how they felt about joining the Jr. High School District. Kevin Amyot stated the School Board cannot advise people how to vote and directed people to page 23 of the Town Report where they shared their views. The School Board was asked why we haven't joined before now and it was noted that Jay does belong to the district. Kevin replied he couldn't answer that and Jay has always belonged to the district. In the past Westfield has discussed this issue but Kevin did not believe it had gone to vote. The idea was not embraced in the past. It was asked what the disadvantage of joining would be. Kevin stated that currently Westfield parents can choose to send their 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade children to a local school of choice as long as the school accepts them. If we were to join the Junior High School District, school choice would be taken away and all children in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade would go to the junior high in Derby. Someone pointed out a negative would be the length of time some children would spend on the bus to get to Derby and the length of day this makes for school children. Someone asked if we are currently tuitioning any students to other schools besides Derby. Kevin said he did not believe so presently and knew of 1 child in the last six years since he's been on the school board.

Moderator Sagui asked Kevin to clarify what a yes vote on this article would mean. He explained that the wording in the article said "pursue" because a yes vote means the Westfield School Board would pursue joining the Junior High School District contingent upon the other schools in the school district approving Westfield. Each of the member towns in the Junior High School District would have to hold a town vote accepting Westfield into the district. A no vote would mean we do not join the Junior High School District.

The question was asked if we would save any money on the education tax rate by joining. Kevin gave the example of fiscal year 16/17, we would have saved .05 cents and for 17/18 a .01 cent savings would have been realized on the education tax rate. Kevin stated an advantage of joining would be representation on the Junior High School Board. Currently we are assessed a tuition rate per pupil and we have no say or representation on that board. If we join the district, we would have a representative on the board. It was asked, if we joined and the junior high in Derby was not a good match for a particular student, would that student be able to attend the Lowell school. Kevin said no they would not be able to.

Votes by Australian ballot: Yes – 46 No – 31 Spoiled – 0 Blank – 1  
Article 11 passed with 78 ballots cast.

- Article 12.** North Country Union High School and North Country Career Center: Shall the voters of the school district approve the school board to expend \$14,392,463, 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 \$14,824 per equalized pupil. This projected spending per equalized pupil is 6.10% higher than spending for the current year: (Australian Ballot)

Moderator Sagui read the article. There was no discussion about Article 12.

Votes by Australian ballot: Yes – 54 No – 24 Spoiled – 0 Blank – 0  
Article 12 passed with 78 ballots cast.

- Article 13.** Shall the North Country Union High School District authorize the Board of School Directors to place \$280,000 of undesignated FY2016 fund balance from the general fund operations in the Capital Improvement Reserve fund? (Australian Ballot)

Moderator Sagui read the article. There was no discussion about Article 13.

Votes by Australian ballot: Yes – 60 No – 15 Spoiled – 0 Blank – 3  
Article 13 passed with 78 ballots cast.

- Article 14.** Shall the North Country Union High School District authorize the Board of School Directors to place \$110,000 of undesignated FY2016 fund balance from the general fund operations in the Technology Reserve fund? (Australian Ballot)

Moderator Sagui read the article. There was no discussion about Article 14.

Votes by Australian ballot: Yes – 52 No – 22 Spoiled – 0 Blank – 4  
Article 14 passed with 78 ballots cast.

- Article 15.** To transact any other non-binding business which may legally come before this meeting:

Motion by Mike Piper and second by Dianne Laplante to bring this article to the floor.

**a. Discuss Act 46 Vermont's Education Governance Law:**

Moderator Sagui stated this is just a discussion on this item; no vote will be taken. She said if there was no objection she would limit comments to one minute per person. There was no objection stated.

Kevin Amyot gave an overview of Act 46. He said there are 13 different school districts in our supervisory union. If Act 46 goes as planned, those 13 districts would become one unified school district. This means for the unified school district there would be one school board. We would lose our local representation we currently have with our local school board. As an example, he said Westfield and Jay might get one vote each on a unified school board while a larger town like Derby might get three votes. Instead of voting on a local school board budget like we do now, we would be voting on a budget for the whole unified district. Kevin stated the school board is not trying to sell anyone, one way or another. Their goal is to provide information.

**Points that were clarified during the discussion:**

- A goal of Act 46 is to consolidate districts and get a handle on spending.
- Our supervisory district has one Superintendent and no Assistant Superintendents for 13 school districts so administrative savings would be minimal with consolidation.
- There is a preferred model and an alternate model to consolidate.
- Local control is lost for school repairs/maintenance with consolidation.
- Debts and maintenance for all 13 school districts would go into a unified budget.
- The equity in the Jay/Westfield Joint Elementary School would be lost with consolidation.
- With consolidation schools could be closed with little local control, although the state says this is not their objective.
- Teachers would become supervisory union employees and could be moved around to different schools.
- The best way to get your voice heard is to attend the public hearings and fill out the survey. There will be a meeting at the end of March where the Executive Board at the supervisory level will decide which direction we will go. If the findings are that people don't want consolidation then the supervisory district will apply for a waiver. If a waiver is applied for, we will have to prove we can meet educational quality standards.
- It was suggested by a voter that we could work towards repeal of Act 46.
- It is possible if we don't consolidate we could lose small schools grants.

**b. Principal, Kristy Ellis:**

Kristy shared her thoughts on the amazing school, teachers, parents, kids and community we have. She said everyone is in it to do what is best for the kids. She expressed her appreciation for being part of the community and offered an open invitation to visit the school. She recognized and thanked Kevin Amyot for his dedication and hard work on the school board and working with the supervisory union. This was followed by a round of applause for Kevin.

**c. Town Clerk, LaDonna Dunn:**

LaDonna thanked the local businesses that contributed food for Town Meeting. She said we are fortunate to have such amazing organic and quality food producers in Westfield.

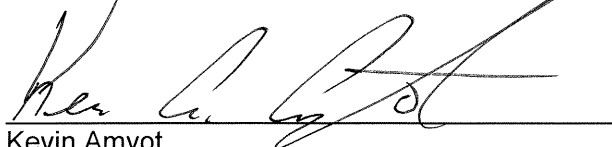
**Article 16. To adjourn:**

Motion by Dianne Laplante and second by Will Young to adjourn the meeting at 11:40 a.m. The motion passed by voice vote.

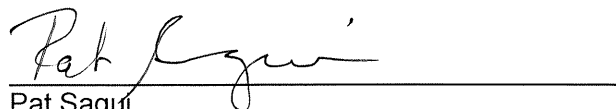
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**Submitted by: LaDonna Dunn, Town Clerk**

Dated at Westfield, Vermont this 12<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2017.



Kevin Amyot  
Westfield School Board, Chair



Pat Sagui  
Moderator