

ANNUAL WESTFIELD TOWN & SCHOOL MEETING

MINUTES from MARCH 5, 2019

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 5, 2019 at 10:00 A.M. to transact the following business:

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Selectman Jacques Couture who began the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

WESTFIELD TOWN 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.

Mike Piper 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 (2020).

Moderator Sagui made some housekeeping announcements including reminding people to turn off any electronic devices. She announced the meeting was being recorded. She referenced the Town Meeting Procedures printed on the inside back cover of the Town Report. She asked people to stand and state their name for the record, before making their comments. She explained there are three types of voting taking place during the meeting: voice voting from the floor on some articles; paper voting during the school and town meetings; and Australian ballot voting throughout the day until the polls close at 7 p.m. Moderator Sagui explained paper ballot voting is done at the head table with the Selectboard members and Australian ballot voting takes place at the table near the voting booths.

Moderator Sagui said if there was no objection Representative Mark Higley wanted to briefly address the body. Hearing no objection, Representative Higley gave a brief report about what was happening in the legislature.

- He said he served on the Agriculture and Forestry Committee for the past two years and has moved to the Energy and Technology Committee. This committee is working to increase broadband to rural areas of Vermont. He said there is money in the bill for feasibility studies. He suggested if our Town has an energy committee or people involved with communications they might want to get together or possible join with other towns to follow this bill and see how the towns can receive some of this money.
- The Minimum Wage Bill has passed out of the Senate.
- The Family Leave Bill is in the Ways and Means Committee.
- There are possibly a lot of changes coming to Act 250.
- Home improvement contractors may be licensed in the future.
- There are a couple of gun control bills.

Mike Salomey asked about new regulations on deer hunting. Representative Higley said he's heard the length of the deer hunting season may be changing.

Dennis Neumann asked what is being done in the legislature to improve the state's roads. Representative Higley said there is an additional four cent gas tax specifically for roads being looked at. There are concerns because more and more electric vehicles are on the roads. These vehicles don't pay a gas tax. A kilowatt tax or standard tax is being looked at for electric vehicles.

Representative Higley thanked the body for allowing him to speak and left flyers on the table with his contact information.

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

Kevin Amyot nominated Janellen Parker-Goodwin. Hearing no other nominations, Janellen was re-elected by voice vote for a term of three-years (2022).

Article 3. Shall the voters of the Westfield Town School District appropriate the sum of \$1,269,453 to defray the expenses and liabilities for the Jay/Westfield Joint Elementary School for the ensuing year with a net assessment to the town of \$474,141? **(Paper ballot to be commingled with Jay)**

Article 9. Shall the North Country Union High School District authorize the Board of School Directors to place \$350,000 of undesignated FY2018 fund balance from the general fund operations in the Capital Improvement Reserve fund? **(Australian ballot)**

Discussion: None

Votes by Australian ballot: Yes – 83 No – 22 Spoiled – 1 Blank – 3
Article 9 passed.

Article 10. Shall the North Country Union High School District authorize the Board of School Directors to establish a School Improvement Reserve Fund to provide additional resources to improve school programs and place \$200,000 of FY2018 fund balance from the general fund operations of the district in said reserve fund? **(Australian ballot)**

Discussion: None

Votes by Australian ballot: Yes – 83 No – 23 Spoiled – 1 Blank – 2
Article 10 passed.

Article 11. Shall the North Country Union Junior High School District authorize the Board of School Directors to establish an Athletic Field Maintenance Reserve Fund, for the ongoing maintenance of the school's athletic fields, and appropriate \$10,000 to be placed in said fund? This fund is in support of the Field of Dreams project. **(Australian ballot)**

Discussion: Yves Daigle asked if this was something new. Kevin Amyot said he did not know a lot about it but would get some information for Yves. Yves said he thinks sports are a good thing for young people to be involved in. Kelly Dean said she believes this is to convert some of the soccer fields to softball fields. She did not know if it was a one-time thing.

Votes by Australian ballot: Yes – 86 No – 20 Spoiled – 1 Blank – 2
Article 11 passed.

Article 12. To transact any other non-binding business which may legally come before this meeting.

Moderator Sagui said if no one objected, the comments would be limited to two minutes until everyone who wanted to speak had the opportunity.

a. Kevin Amyot, School Board Chair: He thanked the townspeople for their ongoing support of the school. He said the group of people he works with are second to none. He commented we are seeing Act 46 slowly falling apart around the state. Our small schools are some of the best schools in the state. He feels the Supervisory Union is always there for the teachers and school boards. He thanked the townspeople for their continued faith in the school board.

Article 13. To adjourn.

Motion by Sue Scott and second by Mike Piper to adjourn the meeting at 10:40 a.m. The motion passed by voice vote.

WESTFIELD TOWN ANNUAL MEETING :

Immediately following the School Meeting, the Town Meeting was called to order at 10:41 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 Connie LaPlume second by Theresa McAvinney to bring the Town Reports to the floor.

Discussion:

- Mike Saloomy asked why the expense in the actual column of the budget for the Community Center was \$6200 when \$2000 was the budgeted amount. The Treasurer, Mary Lou Jacobs, explained there were some plumbing issues and new stairs were put in the cellar. She explained it is an old building and some years more maintenance is required.

Vote: Motion passed by voice vote.

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

- a. **Auditor, remaining two-years of a three-year term:** Motion by Mary Lou Jacobs to nominate Karen O'Donnell. No other nominations were made. Vote: Following a motion by Mike Piper and second by Jacques Couture, the Clerk was instructed to cast one ballot for Karen O'Donnell for the remaining two-years of a three-year term. (2021)
- b. **Auditor, three-year term:** Motion by Mary Lou Jacobs to nominate Kay Courson. No other nominations were made. Vote: Following a motion by Richard Degre and second by Theresa McAvinney, the Clerk was instructed to cast one ballot for Kay Courson for a three-year term. (2022)
- c. **1st Constable-one-year term:** Motion by Jacques Couture to nominate John Hamelin. No other nominations were made. Vote: John Hamelin was elected by voice vote for a one-year term. (2020)
- d. **2nd Constable-one-year term:** Motion by Richard Degre to nominate Michael Piper. No other nominations were made. Vote: Michael Piper was elected by voice vote for a one-year term. (2020)
- e. **Delinquent Tax Collector-one-year term:** Motion by Mike Piper to nominate Joyce Crawford. No other nominations were made. Vote: Joyce Crawford was elected by voice vote for a one-year term. (2020)
- f. **Lister-Three-year term:** Motion by Mary Lou Jacobs to nominate Sue Scott. No other nominations were made. Following a motion by Pauline Couture and second by Mike Couture, the Clerk was instructed to cast one ballot for Sue Scott for a three-year term. (2022)
- g. **Selectperson-three-year term:** Motion by Richard Degre to nominate Jacques Couture. No other nominations were made. Vote: Following a motion by Pauline Couture and second by Sue Scott, the Clerk was instructed to cast one ballot for Jacques Couture for a three-year term as Selectperson. Motion passed. (2022)
- h. **Town Agent, one-year term:** Theresa McAvinney asked what the duties of the Town Agent are. The position has been vacant for the past year. The Clerk explained the Selectboard could have the Town Agent represents the town in a lawsuit or the Selectboard could hire legal counsel. There were no nominations. The position will remain empty.
- i. **Town Grand Juror, one-year term:** Motion made by Sue Scott to nominate Michael Piper. No other nominations were made. Vote: Michael Piper was elected by voice vote for a one-year term. (2020)

Article 4.

Shall the voters approve cleaning and/or repairing headstones at the Westfield Cemetery to be funded through donations and the Westfield Cemetery Fund investment money? Motion made by Connie LaPlume, second by Mike Piper to bring the article to the floor.

Discussion: Debra Dykeman explained she was present to make a pitch to clean the headstones at the Westfield Cemetery. She said most of the money will come from the cemetery fund but it needs to be voted on by the voters. This is a two part project. The first part is to repair the 10-12 broken headstones and the second part is to clean all of the almost 400 headstones. Debra stated some of the stones go back to the Civil War. Debra is donating \$1,000 in memory of her husband, Steve, who passed away in February. Mr. Bianchi, who owns Heritage Memorials, Inc., has offered to give a discount if we clean the whole cemetery and he will also donate \$1,000 per side towards the project. She is also applying for a Vermont Old Cemetery Association (VOCA) grant to help with the repairs needed. Debra's also secured \$300 in donations. Scott Bianchi was present to answer questions. Debra said the cleaning lasts 15-20 years. Yvan LaPlume asked what they will do to repair the ones that are laying on the ground. Scott said they would use epoxy to repair the stones. Yves Daigle said he takes care of the North Hill Cemetery. Yves asked what the stones would look like when the cleaning is completed. Scott said they don't use bleach but instead use a biological cleaner. Yves said those old stones don't have relatives around. Donations can be made by contacting Debra Dykeman, 107 North Hill Road in Westfield. Debra thanked the voters. Moderator Sagui thanked Debra for taking leadership on this project.

Vote: Article 4 passed by voice vote.

All were in agreement to break for five minutes before beginning the appropriations.

Article 5.

Shall the legal voters approve \$67,386.85 for the following appropriations?

Moderator Sagui explained there has been a request to do this article differently. The suggestion was to bring the whole dollar amount to the floor and read each article. Questions can be asked or an amendment can be made to raise or lower the amount and then at the end one vote can be made for the whole dollar amount. The consensus was to try the expedited version for this Article. The Moderator stated after the last

appropriation was read we would amend the amount, if needed, then vote on one total amount. There was a motion made by Carrie Glessner, seconded by Sue Scott to bring the article to the floor.

- a. **\$500** to American Red Cross. **Discussion:** None.
- b. **\$100** to Felines & Friends Foundation. **Discussion:** None.
- c. **\$250** to Green Mountain Farm-to-School, Inc.
Discussion: None.
- d. **\$50** to Green Up Vermont. **Discussion:** None.
- e. **\$500** to Hazen's Notch Association Campership Fund. **Discussion:** None.
- f. **\$200** to Jay Focus Group & the Jay Focus Group Children's Halloween Party. **Discussion:** None.
- g. **\$500** to Jay Food Shelf. **Discussion:** None.
- h. **\$250** to Jay Peak Post No. 28-American Legion
Discussion: None.
- i. **\$300** to Missisquoi River Basin Association. **Discussion:** None.
- j. **\$15,163** to Missisquoi Valley Ambulance Service. **Discussion:** None.
- k. **\$4,000** to Montgomery Fire Department. **Discussion:** None.
- l. **\$100** to North Country Friends of the Vermont Symphony Orchestra. **Discussion:** None.
- m. **\$300** to Northeast Kingdom Community Action, Inc. (NEKCA). **Discussion:** None.
- n. **\$300** to Northeast Kingdom Council on Aging (formerly Area Agency on Aging for Northeastern Vermont). **Discussion:** None.
- o. **\$563** to Northeast Kingdom Human Services (NKHS). **Discussion:** None.
- p. **\$200** to Northeast Kingdom Learning Services (NEKLS). **Discussion:** None.
- q. **\$450** to Old Stone House Museum (Orleans County Historical Society). **Discussion:** None.
- r. **\$500** to Orleans County Citizen Advocacy (OCCA). **Discussion:** None.
- s. **\$13,471.35** to Orleans County Sheriff's Department
Discussion: Deputy Kyle Engels from the Sheriff's Department was present to answer questions.
 - Mike Saloomy stated he lives on Route 100 in the village. He reviews the Sheriff's report. There have been 29 tickets issued. He said it is hard to fathom that only 29 tickets have been issued in a year. He wants to know how we can do a better job of slowing cars down in town. He feels a speed trap might work. He suggested to the Selectboard maybe we hiring a retired officer to issue tickets like they do on the snowmobile trail. Deputy Engels commented that cars flash each other as a warning when they see an officer parked. They get a couple of tickets in before they end up with a stretch that people are warning each other to slow down. He stated that they are also investigating other incidents so sometimes the allotted hours are used up on investigation rather than writing tickets. Maybe they could set up different operations where the officers' vehicles are hidden and they are on foot. The Sheriff's hours are 8 a.m. to midnight in the summer. They do have 6 a.m. hours. Mike feels the Selectboard needs to address this.
 - Sue Scott asked the Selectboard where things stand with the solar powered radar signs. Yves Daigle stated they have been working on it for over a year. There is a lot of permitting required which is being worked on. Mary Lou Jacobs and Eric Kennison are working together on this. They anticipate this will be ready to install in the spring.

- Sandy Snyder said there are proven ways to get people to slow down. Moderator Sagui said the conversation needs to be limited to the budget questions. Sandy said there are ways to make people feel more peaceful which will make them slow down.
 - Danny Young wanted to know why the budget was exceeded on the Sheriff's line item on the budget. Treasurer Jacobs explained she inadvertently made a quarterly payment at the end of the year.
- t. **\$2,500** to Orleans Essex Visiting Nurse Association (VNA) and Hospice, Inc. **Discussion:** None.
- u. **\$500** to Pope Memorial Frontier Animal Shelter, Inc. **Discussion:** None.
- v. **\$600** to Rural Community Transportation, Inc. (RCT). **Discussion:** None.
- w. **\$750** to Troy and Area Lions Club to run the Westfield Senior Meal Site
Discussion: Connie LaPlume commented the Mealsite is serving 30-40 meals per week and has a lot of volunteers helping. The donation is \$4 with the second Thursday of the month free. She said the appropriation request had gone down this year.
- x. **\$24,744.50** to Troy Fire Department. **Discussion:** None
- y. **\$400** to Umbrella. **Discussion:** None.
- z. **\$95** to Vermont Center for Independent Living (VCIL). **Discussion:** None.
- aa. **\$100** to Vt. Rural Fire Protection Task Force - Vt. Assoc. of Conservation Dist. **Discussion:** None.

Vote: Moderator Sagui re-stated the main motion being voted in the amount of \$67,386.85. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Article 6.

Shall the voters approve general government fund expenditures of \$269,987, of which \$109,020 shall be raised by non-tax revenues and \$160,967 shall be raised by municipal taxes? Motion by Mike Piper and second by Theresa McAvinney to bring the article to the floor.

Discussion: None

Vote: Passed unanimously by voice vote.

Article 7.

Shall the voters approve expanding the Town Garage with an additional bay to be funded with \$50,000 from the Good Neighbor Fund town investment and \$30,000 from the town road budget?
Note: This \$80,000 is included in the proposed Highway Budget, pending voter approval at Town Meeting. Motion by Theresa McAvinney and second by Richard Degre to bring the article to the floor.

Discussion: Yves Daigle stated the town garage has been there for many years. The equipment now is a lot larger than it used to be. The Road Commissioner, Eric Kennison, is buying a new 16-wheeler that won't fit in the current garage. The Recycling Center is getting a lot busier also and Yves said he could use an extra bay. Yves stated the Selectboard was in unanimous agreement to enlarge the current garage by 24' x 48'. That would give a large enough stall for the new 16-wheeler. They would tear the end of the garage out, push it out 24' and have a separate doorentrance for the road crew. This way the Recycling Center door could be locked. They put the job out to bid and got two bids. The third bidder decided they were too busy. The bidders were Jason Belisle and Ethan Bathalon. The bids came in at \$70,933 and \$71,475. The Selectboard decided to use the money that came in from the Good Neighbor Fund from the wind towers. The money comes in at \$10,000 per year up to \$100,000. The other \$30,000 will be deferred from the Balance Rock Road line item in the budget. That gives \$80,000. Yves said what they are asking is for the voters to approve this so the expansion can move forward. He also commented that some people have questioned why the town is paying for this expansion when Eric is hired by the town and not appointed. He said the garage has been there for over 50 years and if Eric decided he didn't want to be the Road Commissioner and the Selectboard couldn't find another person with equipment, the town would have to purchase about a million dollars' worth of trucks. Yves stated we are fortunate to have Eric and he does a very good job. Our back roads are very good.

Vote: Passed unanimously by voice vote.

Article 8. Shall the voters approve highway fund expenditures of \$408,833, of which \$125,700 shall be raised by non-tax revenues and \$283,133 shall be raised by municipal taxes?
Motion by Mike Piper and second by Theresa McAvinney to bring the article to the floor.

Discussion: None. **Vote:** Passed unanimously by voice vote.

Articles 9 through 10 voted by Australian ballot: Moderator Sagui read each article during the Town meeting and discussion followed. The results of the Australian ballot voting were reported after the polls closed at 7 p.m.

Article 9. Shall the voters authorize the Northeast Kingdom Waste Management District to appropriate and expend a budget of \$825,073? (**Australian ballot**)

Discussion: Sandy Snyder asked how this money impacts us. Moderator Sagui said the article is to vote to expend not to raise the money. They raise their own money. She referred Sandy to the report on page 31 of the Town Report.

Australian ballot election results: Yes – 94 No – 10 Spoiled – 0 Blank – 4
Article 9 passed with 108 votes.

Article 10. Shall the voters agree to open all town roads to All Terrain Vehicles (ATV) travel? (**Australian ballot**)

Discussion: Moderator Sagui suggested that if a lot of people want to talk they be limited to two minutes. She said there was an Informational Meeting the other night on this subject.

- Selectperson Jacques Couture explained that a year ago the Selectboard opened North Hill Road to ATV travel as a trial. During the past year that went well. They did not get any complaints. This year the Selectboard was approached to open all roads to ATV travel. The Selectboard felt this decision should be left up to voters. There was an informational meeting with lots of people in attendance and lots of good questions were asked and answered. Many of the neighboring towns already have their roads open.
- Sandy Snyder said she was misrepresented in earlier comments. She does not want them to be on all roads. She had a comment about snowmobilers on her road. Moderator Sagui said the conversation is limited to ATV's.
- Bill Salmon had a concern about speed, safety because of seeing 2-3 kids on an ATV. He's concerned about the bad apples. He wants to see people use common sense and respect for neighbors.
- Sue Scott: Concerned about seeing them on public roads. She feels they belong on trails. The noise is a problem. They are designed for dirt road not on paved roads. What about the liability on the town roads. She's concerned about wear and tear on the roads.
- Mike Saloomey: He has yet to hear about a town that has opened the roads and has had to close them. He feels it helps the economy and businesses. He doesn't think it's happened.
- John Hamelin: The clubs are in favor of trails. There are no trails in the Town of Westfield right now. The trail system does run in Lowell and Montgomery.
- Theresa McAvinney: They live on School Street. They are having a problem with noise and disrespect at 11 p.m. They are up and down School Street and Ballground Road with backpacks and zooming around. It is a problem for them.
- Rob Brewster: The concern he has is where it says all roads. Does it include class 4 roads?
- Jacques Couture said it is all town roads.
- Richard Degre: He said the noise level is less than motorcycles.
- Roger Gosselin: He lives on Balance Rock Road. He said it's not uncommon to see large groups of 50 ATV's going by on Saturday and Sundays. He said people are going 70 mph because it's not legal for them to be on the road and they are looking behind them to see if there are police after them. He urged a yes vote. He feels if it passes we are not going to see an influx of people from say, New Hampshire, but we will then start getting trails and then clubs will help pay for the roads.
- Carrie Glessner: She lives off of Balance Rock Road. She said she hears concerns and wonders if this should be voted down and then it could be brought back for another vote with more restrictions in place. Maybe not open all town roads. Maybe restrictions so people aren't on the roads after dark. If there another way to make it fun for ATV's but not a free for all. Can there be restrictions added to this?
- Jacques Couture said they can't modify the Article now. It would have to be voted down and then a new vote would be brought forward with the restrictions specified.
- Yves Daigle said every year we make a budget with road maintenance. Everyone present shares the budget. Everyone should be able to share the road for their own purpose because we all pay for it in taxes. The Selectboard asked Eric Kennison if there was any damage to North Hill Road from the ATV's last year. Eric said there was not. The Selectboard did not get any complaints. He said the Towns of Troy, Lowell and Newport City is allowing ATV's to promote the economy. He feels it will be good for the General Store.

- Jack Lazor: He sees a lot of ATV's on Route 58. He drives large farm equipment that sometimes takes up all of the road. A lot of the time it's hard for the ATV's to get by him. Maybe by voting yes
- Mike Jacobs: In favor of ATV's. Don't judge all by a few. Don't blame everybody for a few bad apples.
- Mike Couture: He thinks it's very good for the community. He rides in Maine. The clubs make you show proof of insurance, factory exhaust. There are lots of rules with the clubs. The people should be able to go to the Town Clerk and get a permit.
- Terry Couture: They belong to clubs. She called all the Town Clerks last year to get permits. Most were approved over the phone. It's good for the economy.
- Sue Scott: She did research online. There's a trade association called Specialty Vehicle Institute of America that represents ATV. They ask that on road use of ATV's be prohibited because of the safety issues. Is it true that only VASA members can use town roads that have VASA trails? The answer was yes.
- John Hamelin said you have to get permission from the town.
- Sandy Snyder: She spoke about people who are coming up her road that are lost. She suggested signage.
- Ellen Fox: Everyone is very articulate. She is wondering what the enforcement is going to be. She's not certain that making it legal is going to help.
- John Hamelin said the problems will still be there. The Sheriff will be the primary enforcement if it's a club trail. The club pays to patrol. ATV's can be enforced the same as a vehicle if there is an ordinance.
- Jacques Couture: He mentioned at the information meeting the other day. He says it's like back in the 60's before there were VAST trails. It's an evolutionary process. Kind of the wild wild west at the moment but it will get better as there are more trails.
- Bill Salmon: Agrees with Jacques about the VAST trail scenario. What fixed it for VAST was when they started policing themselves.
- Ellen Fox: She thinks we should work with other towns and make a trail system so we can do better.
- John Marczyzak: They need access just like it's a car.
- Theresa McAvinney: What is the age kids can ride ATV's? She's concerned about kids being on a public road.
- Bill Salmon said they have to be a licensed operator and under the supervision of a licensed operator after they have passed a test.
- Kelli Dean: Lives on North Hill. She's seen worse things with trucks than 4-wheelers. The parents have to control their own kids.
- Mike Salomey: Motion to cease debate. Richard Degre seconded. Passed unanimously to cease debate on Article 10.

Australian ballot election results: Yes – 58 No – 51 Spoiled – 0 Blank – 0
Article 10 passed with 109 votes.

Article 11: To transact any other non-binding business which may legally come before this meeting.

- A. Sandy Snyder: There is money for artists. She has applied for grants to work with poseys. She handed out free flax seed packets and asked people to plant them. She's looking for artists to do dimensional art in her posey patch.
- B. Connie LaPlume asked anyone who picked up their Australian ballots to please return them to the ballot box so the ballot count will match the voter checklist at the end of the night.
- C. Danny Young: As a Lister he wanted to draw people's attention to the Listers Report in the Town Report. The reappraisal process is beginning soon. People will get a postcard telling them when the assessors will be in their neighborhood. He reminded property owners that they are required by law to file a HS122 annually. People filing extensions on their income taxes will get a penalty on their tax bill. Dan Backus asked who was doing the reappraisal. Danny explained it was an outside company that was hired and the Listers will be spending time in the field with them much of the time. Mary Lou clarified that the HS122 is the Homestead Declaration.
- D. Anne Lazor reminded people that Dog Licenses are due by April 1.
- E. Yves Daigle spoke about Hazardous Waste Day in Westfield in June. He will be handing out flyers with the exact date from 8 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. There was a question today about the budget and where the money comes from. This year the waste management district had to buy a bailer. The district ended \$41,000 in the red because of having to buy a new bailer. They get grants, the haulers money (\$22/ton of trash they haul). Thank you for supporting the recycling center. The national average of recycling is about 30% and Westfield is about 60% participation.

Article 12. To adjourn: There was a motion by Mike Piper and second by Mike Salomey to adjourn the meeting at 12:27 p.m. The motion passed by voice vote.