

MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF COVENTRY
SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
NOVEMBER 14TH, 2018 AT 6:00 P.M.

The legal voters of the Town of Coventry are hereby warned and notified to meet at the Coventry Community Center, 168 Main Street, Coventry VT 05825 in said Town on **Wednesday November 14th at 6:00 p.m.** to transact the following business from the floor:

Note: The Town of Coventry has a checklist of 757 registered voters.

36 registered voters attended the meeting to participate in the floor vote.

This represents a 5% participation in the Special Town Meeting on November 14, 2018.

Moderator Jean Maxwell called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Article 1: Shall the legal voters of the Town of Coventry vote to authorize the Select Board to expend up to \$30,000 in excess of the current fiscal year budget for the purpose of contracting a qualified professional consultant to complete a comprehensive Economic Development Plan for the Town?

- Article moved and seconded.
- Select Board Chairman Mike Marcotte explained the purpose of conducting an Economic Development Plan to assess the assets of the Town and propose the best use on development based on research into the population and their needs. This will include; the Village center as a whole; village designation which provides homeowners with tax credits for improvements; specific recommendations for the village Church to understand the best long-term goal for ownership and development; opportunities associated with the airport and economic growth; and how the Town can encourage business growth while also ensuring the residents continue to enjoy the place they live.
- Martha Sylvester questioned if the Coventry Village School will be part of the consideration as they are currently addressing their enrollment growth and space limitations.
- Mike Marcotte responded that the School will absolutely be encouraged to participate as part of the Town's asset base. He stated that the school is a huge part of why people live, or want to live, here and it is important to understand their needs not only in the school but as a community.
- Mike explained that the process for an Economic Development study involves the entire community and a consultant will meet with not only the public but with each entity to understand their needs and overall vision for the future.
- After comment on the Town Plan, Mike stated that this was in the process of regional approval, and the Town Plan is an important stepping stone to an Economic Development Plan. The Town Plan provides an overall view of many different areas with long term goals; where an Economic Development Plan will prove specific strategies and projects to achieve the long-term vision.
- Mike Marcotte introduced Karen Geraghty, Economic Development Specialist for the Regional Planning Commission the Northeastern Vermont Development Association, who was invited to attend

to answer any questions about the process. Karen recently assisted with the Economic Development Plan completed by Newport City.

- Karen Geraghty explained how an Economic Development Plan conducted would provide better insight into the labor and trade markets, new business growth potential and housing needs, and provide the steps and sequence to the best avenue for improvements and development. The community is a huge part of the process to ensure the growth coincides with the resident's vision.
- Mike Marcotte stated the need for a professional consultant as they can better provide an objective opinion that would not be influenced by the emotion a resident might have.
- Kathleen Ahearn questioned the current year budget status; and if the proposed \$30,000 is low and could it be exceeded.
- Mike Marcotte stated that the funds would be taken from the excess landfill revenue the Town receives which far exceeds the current municipal budget.
- The requested "not to exceed \$30,000" is at the high end; Economic Development Plans are estimated around \$22,000 with an extra \$5000 to conduct the comprehensive study on the village church.
- Town Administrator Amanda Carlson stated that the current fiscal year budget for municipal expenses was on target with no anticipation to exceed the approved amount.
- Dominique Gervais expressed his frustration with the water situation in village and asked why the Town could not expend the funds to fix the drinking water.
- Mike Marcotte explained that the Coventry Fire District is a separate entity and not under the control of the Town. The Town could not legally expend funds for a project that only serves a small portion of the voters. Mike stated that he understood the Fire District had received grant funding and projects were underway to correct drinking water concerns.
- Rachel Witherspoon stated she was against the proposed plan stating that there was no value in creating jobs, no one will move to the Town for jobs, and there is a lack of available employees in the general area.
- Jim Cobb stated that the Town center was currently uninviting with a lack of pride. The plan would help develop a vision for the village center and make it somewhere people want to be. A consultant would ensure all factors fit together for successful growth and felt the \$30K was not a lot to spend to make the Town better for all residents.
- Dominique Gervais stated that residents could volunteer for Village improvements and do themselves.
- Moe Jacobs replied that there was no participation in the Town Plan process with the Planning Commission and although he is personally unsure if he supports the proposal, he does feel that a qualified professional would be able to help the Town greatly.
- Karen Geraghty explained the timeline for completion which involves first issuing a Request for Proposals for professional consultants to apply. Once a Consultant is chosen the process is approximately nine months long. The City of Newport recently conducted an Economic Development Study which included many statistical studies of the area that Coventry would be able to access.
- **No further discussion; voice vote / carried.**
- **Article passed as written.**

ARTICLE 2: To transact any other business that may legally come before the Town.

- Martha Sylvester stated that residents may petition to bring any items before the voters at Town Meeting with signatures of 5% of the voter checklist.
- Dominique Gervais requested an update on the investigation on the former Town Clerk and Treasurer and the Towns missing money.
- Mike Marcotte stated that the investigation is still in the hands of the FBI and there were no updates at this time.

ARTICLE 3: TO ADJOURN.

- Motion made and seconded to adjourn the Special Town Meeting.
- **Meeting adjourned at 6:46 p.m.**

SELECT BOARD:

Michael Marcotte, Select Board Chair

Bradley Maxwell

Scott Briere

Jean Maxwell / Moderator

ATTEST:

Deb Tanguay / Town Clerk