

MINUTES OF THE LOWELL ANNUAL TOWN MEETING AND SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING 2020

The legal voters of the Town of Lowell, Vermont are hereby warned and notified to meet at the Lowell Graded School on **TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2020** at **10:00 a.m.** to act on the following articles of business:

Note: The Town of Lowell has a checklist of 635 eligible voters. The highest number of votes cast for Town Elections was registered at 150 votes for the NCSU Ballot, 105 for the Town floor votes, and 167 for the Presidential Primary.

- The School District Meeting was called to order at 10:03 a.m. Moderator Alden Warner asked voters to take a moment to honor our American Flag and led voters in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- Alden announced several upcoming events.
- Alden reviewed the Roberts Rules of conduct to be adhered to throughout the meeting.
- Alden Warner announced the hours of the Australian ballot voting for North Country Supervisory Union Budget and the Presidential Primary.

SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING:

ARTICLE 1: *To ELECT SCHOOL MODERATOR for the ensuing year.*

- Alden Warner nominated
- Steve Mason Nominated-Steve Mason Declined
- **ALDEN WARNER – ELECTED**

PRESENTATION OF LOWELL GRADED SCHOOL STUDENTS:

- Steve Mason, at this point asked permission to speak. He talked about a project that the students had been preparing since last year on stream restoration. He thought they did such a wonderful job that there should be a presentation so the town could be aware of their accomplishment. Steve introduced Mrs. Blay the Science Teacher for Lowell Graded, and her students. Kids from 5th through 8th grade spoke about what they had learned and are still learning from their research about Stream Restoration. The students who presented the presentation are as follows: Tristan Blay-7th, Lauren Legacy-7th, Kayla Kennison-8th, Kelcee Doaner-6th, Elizabeth Dizzazo-5th, Mikayla Richardson-8th. Each of these students talked about certain aspects of the research. At the end of the presentation, Elizabeth read a letter that was written by the 5th and 6th graders, to Jason and Ashley Randall, thanking them for the permission of access to the river on their property, and for allowing them to do their testing.
- After the presentation, all 3 School Board Members took turns speaking. Steve Mason spoke of how proud of the students and teachers he was. Jason Blay expressed how wonderful the fieldtrip opportunities were and how much he liked the fund raisers that we have in the community all year round. David Legacy spoke about a new development in the Board meetings. He stated that they now have a student council here at Lowell graded and they are often present at the School Board meetings giving their own input as well. The meetings are really amazing with them, and it shows how much the students are really growing, David stated.

ARTICLE 2: *To ELECT an ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DIRECTOR for a three-year term.*

- David Legacy was nominated; voice vote/carried
- **DAVID LEGACY-ELECTED**

ARTICLE 3: *Shall the voters of the **LOWELL TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT** approve the school board to expend **\$1,915,917.00**, which is the amount the school board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year **2021**. It is estimated that this proposed budget, if approved, will result in education spending of **\$15,280.00** per equalized pupil. This projected spending per equalized pupil is 11.31% higher than spending for the current year. The overall budget has **INCREASED 8.35%** from the current year.*

- Article moved and seconded.
- A request was made to explain why there was an increase in the cost of the budget.
- Steve Mason, School Board Chair explained that it was a complicated thing to explain. He stated that with there being less students and teachers, there is less State aid and grants for the school, which causes an increase in the budget. The amount of money the State gives changes every year, So the budget has to change to compensate for the extra cost.
- Question was asked if the 15,280.00 per student was budgeted based on the number of students. Steve Mason answered yes.
- Question was asked if we could use the \$35,000.00 and \$50,000.00 to with the monies that was needed to be used for school funding. Steve answered that is what it is for.
- Question was asked why was there a \$40,000 increase, Steve answered that it was for special needs children transportation that is now billed directly to the school from SU.
- A motion was made to call the question-seconded/Motion to call the question passed by voice vote.
- Question was asked to vote by paper ballot. The moderator asked for a show of hands needing to be at least 7 to vote by paper ballot. Show of hands was more than 7.
- Voting by paper ballot was directed by the moderator. Results were YES-77 and NO- 25 Total vote-102
- **ARTICLE 3 PASSED AS WRITTEN.**

ARTICLE 4: *Shall the voters of the **LOWELL TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT** authorize the Board of School Directors to use **\$35,000.00** of the unallocated, unaudited general fund balance from the 2018-2019 school year, to **reduce taxes** in the 2020-2021 school budget?*

- *Motion made and seconded to authorize Article 4 as written.*
- **ARTICLE 4 PASSED BY VOICE VOTE**

ARTICLE 5: *Shall the voter of the **LOWELL TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT** Authorize the Board of School Directors to transfer from the Tax Stabilization Fund **\$50,000.00** of unallocated, unaudited General Fund balance **from** the 2018-2019 school year to be used to **reduce taxes in the 2020-2021 school budget***

- Article moved and seconded
- Question was asked how much money is in the Tax stabilization fund, Steve answered just a little over \$50,000.00, which gives the school a little cushion.
- *Motion made and seconded to authorize Article 5 as written.*
- **ARTICLE PASSED BY VOICE VOTE.**

ARTICLE 6: *Shall the voters of the **LOWELL TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT** Authorize the Board of school Directors to name the circle in front of the school "**SCOTT BOSKIND CIRCLE**", TO RECOGNIZE THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE SCHOOLS LONG-TERM PRINCIPAL?*

- *Motion was made and seconded.*
- Question was asked how this came to be? Steve answered that he had several people call him an inquire about doing this, and he felt along with the other Board members that it was a Town decision not a School Board decision.

- Wayne Warner shared his feelings and thoughts about this recognition of Scott Boskind. He told people about his own past with Scott and how much Scott has touched and helped the people in this community for years.
- Motion made and seconded to call the question. Motion to call the question passed by voice vote.
- **Article 6 passed by Voice Vote.**

ARTICLE 7: TO TRANSACT ANY OTHER NON-BINDING BUSINESS WHICH MAY LEGALLY COME BEFORE THIS MEETING.

- *Article moved and seconded; voice vote/carried.*
- *There was no Non-binding business to discuss.*
- *Jennifer Harlow, Orleans County Sheriff, asked to speak briefly to the towns people before the meeting continued. She reintroduced herself to the town and wanted everyone to know that they could call her anytime with any questions or concerns we may have.*

ARTICLE 8: TO AJOURN

- Motion made and seconded to adjourn.
- Motion carried by Voice Vote.
- Meeting adjourned at 11:58 a.m.

**OUTCOME OF AUSTRALIAN BALLOTING FOR NORTH COUNTRY UNION HIGH SCHOOL:
Polls were open from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.**

ARTICLE IV: NCUHS BUDGET- TOTAL VOTES CAST: 150
IN FAVOR-87 OPPOSED-63 BLANK-0
ARTICLE PASSED

Attest:

MODERATOR: Alden Warner _____

SCHOOL BOARD DIRECTOR: Steve Mason _____

TOWN MEETING: Moderator call Annual Town meeting to order at 12:07 p.m.

ARTICLE 9: *To ELECT TOWN MODERATOR for the ensuing year.*

- Alden Warner nominated; voice vote / carried.
- **ALDEN WARNER – ELECTED**

ARTICLE 10: *To HEAR and ACT upon reports of TOWN OFFICERS.*

- Before Article 10 was discussed Priscilla Matten-Town Treasurer spoke about the financial reports in the Town Report Book and explained how to read them.
- Motion made and seconded to accept the reports as written.
- Moderator asked for any errors or omissions in the town reports.
- **TOWN REPORT ACCEPTED AS WRITTEN, BY VOICE VOTE.**

ARTICLE 11: To **ELECT** the following **OFFICERS** required by law:

a. SELECT PERSON 3-year term

- Darren Pion- nominated.
- Dwight Richardson-nominated.
- It was questioned whether Darren could run being that his wife is the Town Clerk, the moderator said he would let the voters vote and check into regulations with VLCT on this matter. Moderator found that it was legal for Darren to be a Select person

Results: Darren Pion-63, Dwight Richardson -42, Total votes 105

- **DARREN PION – ELECTED**
- Motion was made to break for lunch and seconded; voice vote/carried
- The Moderator announced that at 12:20 pm lunch break would start, and the meeting would reconvene at 1:20 pm.
- **Meeting reconvened at 1:26 pm.**

b. LISTER 3-year term

- Lerold Chase- nominated.
- There were no other nominations, the Moderator using unanimous consent, instructed the Clerk to cast one paper ballot for Lerold Chase.

- **LEROLD CHASE - ELECTED**

c. AUDITOR 3-year term

- Melanie Richardson- nominated.
- There were no other nominations, the moderator using unanimous consent, instructed the clerk to cast one paper ballot for Melanie Richardson.

- **MELANIE RICHARDSON – ELECTED**

d. 1st CONSTABLE 1-year term

- Jason Randall- nominated; voice vote / carried.

- **JASON RANDALL – ELECTED**

e. 2nd CONSTABLE 1-year term

- Darren Pion-nominated; voice vote/carried

- **DARREN PION-ELECTED**

f. TOWN AGENT 1- year term

- Andre Tetreault Sr. nominated; voice vote / carried.

- **ANDRE TETREAUULT Sr. – ELECTED**

g. LIBRARY TRUSTEE

- Jill Legacy-nominated

- Carol Wood-Koob -Nominated/Declined
- **JILL LEGACY-ELECTED**

ARTICLE 12: *Shall the legal voters appropriate the sum of \$ 280,000.00 for **TOWN EXPENSES AND LIABILITIES** (Select Board's Account)?*

- **Motion made and seconded.**
- **Motion Carried by Voice Vote**

ARTICLE 13: *Shall the legal voters appropriate \$ 135,000.00 plus Vermont State Aid funding for **WINTER ROADS?***

- Article moved and seconded.
- Motion carried by voice vote.
- **ARTICLE PASSED By Voice Vote.**

ARTICLE 14: *Shall the legal voters appropriate \$ 135,000.00 plus Vermont State Aid funding for **SUMMER ROADS?***

- Article moved and seconded.
- Question was asked whether or not Hodgeman Bridge was going to be replaced? It was answered that the State and Federal are working on a plan to replace it in a couple of years.
- **ARTICLE PASSED By Voice Vote**

Before starting Article 15, Mark Higley, our Town Representative, spoke to the Towns people to update them on the current House Bills and to give an update on the COVID-19, which he handed a pamphlet of this to the Town Clerk to be able to have it accessible in the Town Office.

ARTICLE 15: Shall the legal voter authorize the **Selectboard** and **Road commissioner** to borrow money for **additional paving**, and how much?

- Article moved and seconded
- Question was asked how many miles of black top do we currently have? The Road Commissioner answered roughly 14.5 with only a mile of blacktop not needing to be paved at this time. \$200,000 to \$300,000 would only do the worst spots in town and that is just a guess.
- A towns person asked to hear what the Board Chair's suggestion would be on the amount of money to borrow, the Board Chair said at least \$300,000.
- Question was asked if we could get a grant match for the paving? The Road Commissioner answered that it is nearly impossible to get a paving grant.
- Question was asked if the money borrowed could be paid back over a ten-year span? The Board Chair stated that last time we borrowed money for paving it was paid back over a 7- or 8-year span.
- Question was asked, what is the procedure for paving? The Road Commissioner stated that we usually put it out for bid. We have used Gray's in the past who uses a virgin mix, others use rap, and some use a mixture of both.
- Motion was made and seconded to borrow \$300, 000 and pay it back in 5 years. Motion was made and seconded to amend the motion to borrow \$500,000 and pay it back in 7 years. There was a small discussion on this .
- A recommendation was made to make a list of all the paved road from worst to best and prioritize it.
- Motion to amend the motion to \$500,000 failed by voice vote.
- Question was asked will this raise our taxes? The Board Chair said that it will create a small municipal tax.
- A recommendation was made to wait until summer to evaluate the paving conditions, and to have the Selectboard get figures and then hold a special meeting in 90 days.
- It was discussed that a review of the roads in the summer and have a special town meeting for it would be to late to pave the roads this year.

- Motion made to call the question and seconded. Motion to call the question passed by voice vote.
- Motion to borrow \$300,000 and pay back in 5 years; passed by voice vote.

ARTICLE 16: *Shall the legal voters appropriate \$ 30,000.00 for the FIRE DEPARTMENT?*

- *Article moved and seconded*
- **ARTICLE PASSED By Voice Vote**

ARTICLE 17: *Shall the legal voters appropriate \$ 6,000.00 for the COMMUNITY LIBRARY?*

- Article moved and seconded.
- Question was asked does the Library really need all that money? Regine Griswold, Librarian, answered that the library really does need all that money to be able to order new books, supplies and update the computer in the library.
- **ARTICLE PASSED By Voice Vote.**

ARTICLE 18: *Shall the legal voters appropriate \$ 3,000.00 for the LITTLE LEAGUE & T-BALL teams?*

- Article moved and seconded.
- **ARTICLE PASSED BY VOICE VOTE.**

ARTICLE 19: *Shall the legal voters appropriate \$ 1,000.00 for the JR. HOOP BASKETBALL teams?*

- Article moved and seconded.
- Question was asked what was the money used for? Jill Legacy spoke on behalf of the JR. HOOP fund by saying that the money is always used to purchase uniforms, equipment, and trophies for the kids.
- **ARTICLE PASSED BY VOICE VOTE**

ARTICLE 20: *Shall the legal voters appropriate the sum of \$ 3,500.00 to the ORLEANS ESSEX VNA & HOSPICE, INC. for the services of Skilled Nursing, Physical Therapy, Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Medical Social Work, Licensed Nurse's Aide, Homemaker, Personal Care Attendant, Hospice, and Maternal Child Health Programs, and other community health programs provided by the Agency?*

- Article moved and seconded
- **ARTICLE PASSED BY VOICE VOTE.**

ARTICLE 21: *Shall the Town of Lowell enter into a communications union district (CUD) to be known as NEK Community Broadband, under the provisions of 30 V.S.A. Ch 82?*

Goal

Bring a reliable and affordable, high-speed internet option (at least 100 mbps symmetrical) to every residential and business address in the Northeast Kingdom.

The towns of the Northeast Kingdom have a chance to benefit from funding available through the State of Vermont and the federal government to develop broadband infrastructure that would offer high speed internet (at least 100 mbps up and down) to every residential and business address in the region. A CUD is municipal entity, made up of 2 or more towns, with the specific purpose of bringing high-speed internet access, commonly called "broadband" to every e911 address in the NEK. As stated in Title 30 V.S.A. Chapter 082 § 3053(d), membership in the CUD poses no financial risk to the Town of Lowell or individual taxpayers within Lowell. All

towns that approve this ballot measure will become members of the CUD and each member town must appoint a representative to the CUD governing board. (See details on pages immediately following this warning)

- Article moved and seconded
- Before any discussion on this article, Marjorie Kramer asked to speak on behalf of the NEK CUD. The Moderator granted her permission to speak. Marjorie prepared a speech and began by stating that this would not cost the Town any money. This would give the whole town access to high speed internet. The CUD is a municipality and will not be a cost, but if people want to participate, there will be a small cost just like any other internet provider.
- Mark Higley stated that if we do decide to join the CUD at least one member from the Town would have to be appointed to join the Board for the CUD. Mark also said that if all the towns agree on it there wouldn't have to be any skipping around towns to get this available.
- After the speech the Moderator asked for the floor to vote. Voice vote/carried
- **ARTICLE PASSED BY VOICE VOTE**

ARTICLE 22: Shall the legal voters appropriate the following sums:

	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	
a)	\$500	\$250	to AMERICAN RED CROSS
b)	\$250	\$500	to GREEN MOUNTAIN FARM-to-SCHOOL, INC.
c)	\$ 50	\$50	to GREEN UP VERMONT
d)	\$250	\$0	to JAY PEAK POST NO. 28, INC. – AMERICAN LEGION
e)	\$200	\$200	to MISSISQUOI RIVER BASIN ASSOC.
f)	\$0	\$1,000	to LAMOILLE COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH
g)	\$300	\$300	to Northeast Kingdom Community Action, Inc. – (OCCD)
h)	\$300	\$300	to NORTHEAST KINGDOM COUNCIL ON AGING
i)	\$923	\$1,758	to NORTHEAST KINGDOM HUMAN SERVICE, INC.
j)	\$200	\$200	to NORTHEAST KINGDOM LEARNING SERVICES, INC.
k)	\$659	\$659	to NORTHEASTERN VT. DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION
l)	\$200	\$200	to ORLEANS COUNTY CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER
m)	\$500	\$500	to ORLEANS COUNTY CITIZEN ADVOCACY
n)	\$0	\$500	to ORLEANS COUNTY FAIR ASSOCIATION-(OCFA)
o)	\$500	\$550	to ORLEANS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
p)	\$500	\$0	to POPE MEMORIAL FRONTIER ANIMAL SHELTER
q)	\$200	\$0	to PREVENT CHILD ABUSE VERMONT
r)	\$700	\$700	to RURAL COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION
s)	\$825	\$825	to UMBRELLA
t)	\$100	\$100	to VACD – VERMONT RURAL FIRE PROTECTION
u)	\$200	\$200	to VT ASSOC for the BLIND and VISUALLY IMPAIRED
v)	\$90	\$90	to VT CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING
w)	\$0	\$250	to VERMONT FAMILY NETWORK
x)	\$100	\$100	to VERMONT SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

\$7,547.00 **\$8,539.00** Totals for above appropriations

PLEASE NOTE: Individual service reports printed in back of town report.

- Motion made and seconded
- Motion made and seconded to delete line **n**.
- Pam Tetreault who has worked for the OCFA stated that they are a non-profit farm organization
- Question was asked why was line **p**. at \$0. The Town Clerk stated there was not a request from line **p**. this year.
- Motion was made and seconded to amend the motion to also delete line **i**.
- Question was asked why LCMH (Lamoille county mental health) would be asking for money from our town. Trish Pion, LCMH's Comptroller, stated that they do service Lowell residents, for example anytime someone from here goes to Morrisville hospital and requires services that they provide, the person is sent to them for these services to be filled.

- Pam Tetreault commented that we shouldn't have to choose between Lamoille and Orleans County for both organizations should be able to request money.
- Motion to delete line **i.**; voice vote/failed. Line **i.** not deleted
- Motion to delete line **n.**; voice vote/failed. Line **n.** not deleted
- Motion was made to call the question; voice vote/carried
- **ARTICLE PASSED AS WRITTEN BY VOICE VOTE.**

ARTICLE 23: *To transact any other business that may legally come before the Town.*

- *Jason Blay spoke on a non-binding bill for the Resolution for the Defense for the right to bear arms. There is a resolution for the Town to sign if it is agreed upon.*
- *Comments and opinions were made between the towns people on their own beliefs and on whether or not we should or shouldn't be allowed to own guns.*
- *Motion was made to call the question and seconded. Motion to call the question passed by voice vote*
- *Motion made to accept Resolution; voice vote/carried*

ARTICLE 24: *TO ADJOURN*

- The motion was made and seconded to adjourn the Town Meeting; voice vote / carried.
- **MEETING ADJOURNED AT 3:59 P.M.**

Attest:

MODERATOR: Alden Warner _____

JUSTICE OF THE PEACE: Steve Mason _____

PRESIDING OFFICER: Christy M. Pion _____

Received for recording in Town Proceeding Book

Attest: Christy M. Pion- Town Clerk