

**TOWN OF STRATTON
MINUTES OF
THE SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING OF
May 7, 2019**

The legal voters of the Town of Stratton, Vermont met at the Stratton Town Hall on Tuesday, May 7, 2019 at 7:00 P.M. The Moderator, Diana Stigger, opened the meeting and the Clerk took the roll. 79 voters were present, which requires a majority of 40 votes. Guests present were: Mary Ann Degala-Paraiso; Michael Culver; Bill Anton – superintendent of the Windham Central Supervisory Union; Chris Kaltsas – Head Master of Stratton Mountain School; Holly Wendell – Assistant Head Master of Stratton Mountain School; Peter Ahlfeld – Head Master of Mountain School in Winhall; Meredith Morin; and Christian McCauley.

The Moderator allowed the Clerk to provide an explanation of the meeting. Kent Young explained that this meeting was the first phase of a three phase meeting held by the Stratton School Board this evening. This meeting was called to revote the budget, which had been voted upon at the March 5, 2019 meeting, because more information had been gathered since that time, as had been requested at the March Meeting. He explained that the Budget Article had to be warned exactly as it had been written for the March Meeting Warning. Tonight, the Article can be amended appropriately in accordance with the voters' decision based on three scenarios, which are based on three options the School Board has developed as revisions to the Tuition Policy. Once the budget has been established by the approval of the amended Article, this meeting will adjourn. The School Board will then hold the warned Public Hearing established to adopt the option which complements the approved budget. Following that vote by the School Board, they will recess to reopen their meeting at the Town Office in order to continue with their monthly meeting agenda. The Moderator then read the following Article:

ARTICLE 1: Shall the voters of the School District approve the School Board to expend \$1,023,476.00, 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 \$15,835.38 per equalized pupil. This projected spending per equalized pupil is 2.18% lower than spending for the current year. Kent Young so moved. Boomer Walker seconded. Discussion: The School Board explained that they have created three options for budgets, of which each has a corresponding change to the Tuition Policy. The School Board will then consider adopting the appropriate change to the Tuition Policy tonight, as warned, after the budget has been approved. Allison Young presented the three options:

Option 1:

Shall the voters of the School District Approve the School Board to expend \$1,080,027.00, 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 \$16,851.00 per equalized pupil. This projected spending per equalized pupil is 4.10% higher than spending for the current year. (This option is based on implementation of the Tuition Policy currently in place).

Option 2:

Shall the voters of the School District Approve the School Board to expend \$1,319,159.00, 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 \$24,328.00 per equalized pupil. This projected spending per equalized pupil is 50.28% higher than spending for the current year. (This option is based on implementation of the Tuition Policy with a change recommended by the Agency of Education).

Option 3:

Shall the voters of the School District Approve the School Board to expend \$1,183,729.00, 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 \$19,267.00

per equalized pupil. This projected spending per equalized pupil is 19.02% higher than spending for the current year. (This option is based on a implementation of a change to the Tuition Policy which would allow Private Schools to implement a cap on the number of students said schools would accept from the Town, as well as an offer made by Stratton Mountain School reducing the tuition charged to the Town by 50%.)

The School Board and Town Office staff also discussed the responses received back from each of the schools regarding the ability to comply with these associated policy options, as well as the refusal of the Secretary of Education to make any decision regarding each of the options, although several attempts were made requesting such decisions. At one point in the discussion, the voters agreed to have Chris Kaltsas, Head Master of Stratton Mountain School (SMS) explain his offer to the Town. This offer reduces the tuition Stratton pays for students attending SMS by 50% for one year and imposing a cap of 15 Stratton students accepted by the school per year for at least two years. This offer was made if Option 3 of the Budget / Policy combination is approved. This effectively limits the school tax rate increase to about 17%, down from the 48% increase which would apply if Option 2 was implemented. The discussion moved to the legality of the existing Tuition Policy associated with Option 1, since the Agency of Education had responded to a review of the current Tuition Policy only by recommending a change to the language. This new language resulted in the policy which complements Option 2. The Secretary of Education, however, did not provide a definitive answer to the legality of our current policy. Some voters expressed that they were willing to chance maintaining the current policy and approving Option 1. Others felt that if the current policy is found to be unacceptable, then the School District would have to borrow money from the Town to pay for the students' tuitions previously eliminated by said policy. This deficit would have to be paid for by a tax increase in the following year.

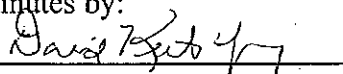
Following the discussion, the Moderator decided to take a straw vote to see which option should be used to modify the Article. This resulted in moving toward Option 3. The Moderator then asked for a motion to amend the Article as follows:

ARTICLE 1: *Shall the voters of the School District Approve the School Board to expend \$1,183,729.00, 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 \$19,267.00 per equalized pupil. This projected spending per equalized pupil is 19.02% higher than spending for the current year.* Boomer Walker so moved. Joe Conti seconded. The Moderator asked for a voice vote to approve the amendment. The majority approved by saying aye. The Moderator then asked for a voice vote to approve the Article as amended. The majority approved by saying aye and Article 1 passed as amended.

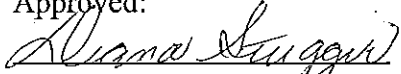
ARTICLE 2: *To transact any other business that may legally come before this meeting.* No other business was transacted.

The Moderator asked for a motion to adjourn. Boomer Walker so moved. Allison Young seconded and the meeting adjourned at 8:00PM.

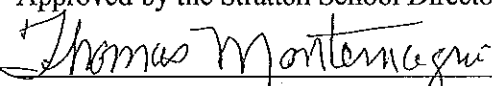
Minutes by:

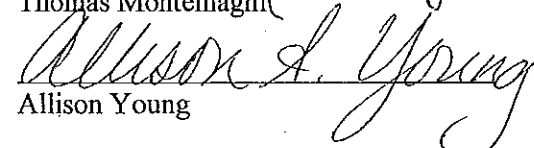

Town Clerk – David Kent Young

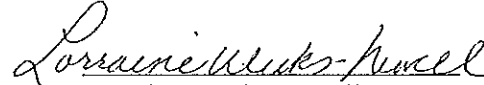
Approved:


Moderator – Diana Stigger

Approved by the Stratton School Directors


Thomas Montemagni


Allison Young


Lorraine Weeks-Newell