

Minutes of the 2016 Annual Meeting of the Town and Town School District of Fairfield, Vermont

The inhabitants of the Town of Fairfield met at Veteran's Hall, Fairfield Center School, on March 1, 2016. Vanessa Kittell, Moderator, called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was said. Announcements regarding lunch and bake sale were made, as well as reminders to use the microphones so that all can hear.

1. MODERATOR: Bridget Howrigan Rivet was nominated by Albert Tetreault and seconded by Gene Archambault. Nominations ceased. The Clerk was asked to cast one ballot for Bridget Howrigan Rivet.
2. TO RECEIVE THE VARIOUS REPORTS OF THE OFFICERS OF THE TOWN AND TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT AS CONTAINED IN THE CURRENT TOWN FINANCIAL REPORT: No discussion.
3. TO ELECT FROM THE LEGAL VOTERS OF SAID TOWN THE FOLLOWING OFFICERS:
 - a. ONE SELECTPERSON FOR 3 YEARS: Tom Howrigan nominated by Charles Thomas and seconded by Bennett Dawson. Nominations ceased, moved to cast one ballot for Tom Howrigan.
 - b. ONE SELECTPERSON FOR 2 YEARS: Norman Menard nominated by Charles Thomas and seconded by Mary Schreindorfer. Nominations ceased, moved to cast one ballot for Norman Menard.
 - c. ONE AUDITOR FOR 3 YEARS: Judy Magnan nominated by Mary Schreindorfer and seconded by Cindy Ryan. Nominations ceased, moved to cast one ballot for Judy Magnan.
 - d. ONE LISTER FOR 3 YEARS: Dan McCoy nominated by Mary Alice Elbaum and seconded by Joanne McCoy. Nominations ceased, moved to cast one ballot for Dan McCoy.
 - e. ONE LIBRARY TRUSTEE FOR 3 YEARS: Jennifer Archambault nominated by Albert Tetreault and seconded by Elizabeth Howrigan. Nominations ceased, moved to cast one ballot for Jennifer Archambault.
 - f. ONE LIBRARY TRUSTEE FOR 2 YEARS: Albert Tetreault nominated by Jennifer Archambault and seconded by Kristen Runyon Hughes. Nominations ceased, moved to cast one ballot for Albert Tetreault.
 - g. A FIRST CONSTABLE FOR 1 YEAR: Linda Hodet nominated by Tom Howrigan and seconded by John Baxter. Nominations ceased, moved to cast one ballot for Linda Hodet.
 - h. ONE OR MORE GRAND JURORS FOR 1 YEAR: Charles Thomas nominated by Norman Menard and seconded by Gene Archambault. Nominations ceased, moved to cast one ballot for Charles Thomas.
 - i. A TOWN AGENT FOR 1 YEAR: Vanessa Kittell nominated by Tom Howrigan and seconded by Michael Malone. Nominations ceased, moved to cast one ballot for Vanessa Kittell.
4. SHALL PROPERTY TAXES BE DUE AND PAYABLE ON THE FIRST FRIDAY IN THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER? Motion made by Bennett Dawson and seconded by Michael Malone. Motion passed by voice vote.
5. SHALL THE VOTERS APPROVE 2016 TOTAL GENERAL FUND EXPENDITURES OF \$1,321,608, OF WHICH \$861,651 SHALL BE RAISED BY TAXES AND \$459,957 BY NON-TAX REVENUES?: Motion made by Charles Thomas and seconded by Toby Fulwiler. Gavin Ryan spoke to this year's budget explaining that in 2015 we finished paying our share of 3 bridge replacements by the State. We also received an emergency grant to repair the culvert

at the end of Swamp Rd. of which we were only required to pay 10%. We bought a grader and traded in the old one towards the cost. We received a \$300,000 federal grant for the construction of a salt shed and this will be the focus in 2016. Our equipment is all fairly new and many repairs are being done right in the garage rather than sending them out. The increase in this year's budget is largely due to the payment on the grader and employee salaries and retirement. Last year the budget dropped 6 cents based on the removal of the 4% discount expense by voters. This year the budget will account for a 2 cent increase. It was commented that employees should be grading better and we need more material for the dirt roads. Gavin responded that the employees have had training on the new grader and the Selectboard is working on a plan to put more material on the roadways. Reynolds Road was surfaced this fall with crushed asphalt and has proven to be holding up well. Motion passed by voice vote.

6. TO HEAR THE REPORT OF THE LIBRARY: Laura Fulwiler, Trustee, explained that there was literature regarding the library at one of the tables and encouraged people to use their library.
7. SHALL THE VOTERS APPROVE 2016 EXPENDITURES OF \$132,310 FOR THE BENT NORTHROP MEMORIAL LIBRARY, \$19,000 OF WHICH SHALL BE RAISED BY TAXES AND \$113,300 BY NON-TAX REVENUES? Motion made by Toby Fulwiler and seconded by Martha Manning. Motion passed by voice vote.
8. TO ADJOURN TEMPORARILY THE BUSINESS OF THE TOWN UNTIL AFTER COMPLETION OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING: Motion made by Tom Howrigan and seconded by Michael Malone. Motion passed by voice vote.
9. TO ORGANIZE THE ANNUAL TOWN SCHOOL MEETING.
10. TO ELECT A MODERATOR FOR THE ANNUAL TOWN SCHOOL MEETING: Bridget Howrigan Rivet was nominated by Joy Kane and seconded by Howard Mitchell. Nominations ceased. The Clerk was asked to cast one ballot for Bridget Howrigan Rivet.
11. SHALL THE LEGAL VOTERS OF THE TOWN OF FAIRFIELD SCHOOL DISTRICT APPROVE THE SCHOOL BOARD TO EXPEND \$5,625,188.00 WHICH IS THE AMOUNT THAT THE SCHOOL BOARD HAS DETERMINED TO BE NECESSARY FOR THE ENSUING FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JULY 1, 2016? IT IS ESTIMATED THAT THIS PROPOSED BUDGET, IF APPROVED, WILL RESULT IN EDUCATION SPENDING OF \$14,377.04 PER EQUALIZED PUPIL. THIS PROJECTED SPENDING PER EQUALIZED PUPIL IS 1.95% HIGHER THAN SPENDING FOR THE CURRENT YEAR. **[AUSTRALIAN BALLOT]**

Moderator explained that Australian ballot items could be discussed at the meeting if the voters chose to and polls were open until 7pm to vote.

Michael Malone made a clarification on the ballot. While the ballot says that it the projected spending per equalized pupil is 1.95% higher than the current year, it should have said 1.67%. The per pupil spending is below the state average.

(Results counted after the polls closed at 7:00 p.m. showed the budget passed 326 to 200.)

12. SHALL THE LEGAL VOTERS OF THE TOWN OF FAIRFIELD SCHOOL DISTRICT AUTHORIZE THE SCHOOL BOARD DIRECTORS TO BORROW MONEY IN ANTICIPATION OF TAXES AS NECESSARY, FOR THE NEXT FISCAL YEAR: Motion made by Charles Thomas and seconded by Elizabeth Howrigan. Motion passed by voice vote.
13. SHALL THE LEGAL VOTERS OF THE TOWN OF FAIRFIELD SCHOOL DISTRICT APPROVE THE USE OF ANY CURRENT (JUNE 30, 2015) FUND BALANCE RESERVED

FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS FOR VARIOUS BUILDING AND GROUNDS IMPROVEMENTS: Motion made by Michael Malone and seconded by John Baxter. The total fund balance \$105,000. The school is hoping to repair the plumbing in the '64 building. They are also planning on updating bathrooms, expanding the number of stalls and making them ADA compliant. The boiler in the newer wing needs to be replaced. The question was raised as to where the fund balance will go if the unification passes and Michael Malone answered that it will be combined with the other schools' fund balances. It was hoped that they could fix as many things as possible in the interim. Motion passed by voice vote.

14. TO ELECT ONE (1) SCHOOL BOARD DIRECTOR BY BALLOT FOR A THREE (3) YEAR TERM: Michael Malone nominated by Charles Thomas and seconded by Tom Howrigan. Nominations ceased, moved to cast one ballot for Michael Malone. Motion passed by voice vote.
15. TO ELECT ONE (1) SCHOOL BOARD DIRECTOR BY BALLOT FOR A TWO (2) YEAR TERM: Damian Boomhower nominated by Charles Thomas and seconded by John Baxter. David Gaudette nominated by Greg Christie and seconded by Vanessa Kittell. The candidates introduced themselves and spoke about their intent to be on the Board.

A paper ballot election was conducted. 107 ballots were cast, and the results were David Gaudette 67 and Damian Boomhower 40.

David Gaudette was elected to the two year School Board Director position.

16. TO TRANSACT ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT MAY PROPERLY COME BEFORE THIS MEETING. No discussion.
17. SHALL THE FAIRFIELD CENTER SCHOOL DISTRICT, WHICH THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION HAS FOUND NECESSARY TO INCLUDE IN THE PROPOSED SUPERVISORY DISTRICT, JOIN WITH THE ST. ALBANS TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT, ST. ALBANS CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT, AND BFA/NWTC UNION DISTRICT #48, WHICH THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION HAS FOUND NECESSARY TO INCLUDE IN THE PROPOSED SUPERVISORY DISTRICT, FOR THE PURPOSE OF FORMING A SUPERVISORY DISTRICT, AS PROVIDED IN TITLE 16, VERMONT STATUTES ANNOTATED, AND AS PROPOSED IN THE FCSU ACT 46 STUDY COMMITTEE'S REPORT AND ARTICLES, UPON THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS AND AGREEMENTS:
 - (A) GRADES. THE SUPERVISORY DISTRICT SHALL OPERATE AND MANAGE A SCHOOL OFFERING INSTRUCTION IN GRADES PRE K THROUGH 12.
 - (B) BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS. THE BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS SHALL CONSIST OF NO MORE THAN TWO REPRESENTATIVES FROM FAIRFIELD (1/2 VOTE EACH); NO MORE THAN FOUR REPRESENTATIVES FROM ST. ALBANS CITY; NO MORE THAN FOUR REPRESENTATIVES FROM ST. ALBANS TOWN, WITH BOARD MEMBERS BEING ELECTED AT-LARGE BY ALL THREE COMMUNITIES.
 - (D) ASSUMPTION OF DEBTS AND OWNERSHIP OF SCHOOL PROPERTY. THE SUPERVISORY DISTRICT SHALL ASSUME THE INDEBTEDNESS OF MEMBER DISTRICTS, ACQUIRE THE SCHOOL PROPERTIES OF MEMBER DISTRICTS, AND PAY FOR THEM, ALL AS SPECIFIED IN THE FINAL REPORT.
 - (E) FINAL REPORT. THE PROVISIONS OF THE FINAL REPORT APPROVED BY THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION ON THE 19TH DAY OF JANUARY, 2016, WHICH IS ON FILE IN THE TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE, SHALL GOVERN THE SUPERVISORY DISTRICT.

[AUSTRALIAN BALLOT]

Brian Jerose encouraged future savings by looking into merging the entire county and combining other similar size towns into the District. Bennett Dawson stated that he has been on the School Board for 7-8 years and has seen budgets increase, taxes increase yet opportunities for the students are decreasing. Stop denying students and give the opportunity for the districts to join. He cannot promise expenses will go down but we will have the same opportunities as the other schools, such as second languages and a math specialist. School choice will not go away and let's take advantage now for tax decreases. If we wait the state will force us later.

Mary Schreindorfer asked if they could see the school being closed in the future. The moderator asked if there were no objections, the rules could be suspended to allow the Superintendent, Kevin Dirth and Act 46 Committee Chair, James Farr to speak despite the fact that they were not registered voters of the town. Kevin Dirth responded to the question stating that it will not be closed. It is a relatively large school with 205 students k-8th grade and an important school for the area. Further, there is no room in town or city to move students. Fairfield School is loved for its character and personality. James Farr concurred that he does not see Fairfield School closing in the future.

Gabrielle Tiffany asked if kids from other schools will come here? It was answered that the new board could allow freedom between schools. Although it can be done now it is a process to coordinate tuition and two board approvals. This will be an easier process.

John Baxter asked if it fails in any one of the three towns will you put to a revote? Kevin Dirth responded that it may make sense for a reconsideration after looking at the vote results and if so, the vote would held before June 30th.

Michael Malone stated that he had been on the Board for 9 years and Chair for 7 years and if the vote passes he will be voted out of a job that he really likes, but this unification is best for the kids and taxpayers.

Anne Howrigan asked that they be more specific about advantages of unification. The response was that the new board will be brought from existing boards, while the schools will not be exact, they will be equitable. They will all benefit from the same opportunities.

Anne Howrigan asked if the curriculum will be sent from the supervisory office or will teachers have the ability to set their own curriculum? Kevin Dirth responded that they will have some flexibility but as is currently the case, there are state standards that require what needs to be taught.

Gabrielle Tiffany stated that the maple sugaring unit was started 15 years ago and with community involvement a sugarhouse was built. This is important to Fairfield. How will it fit with the equity curriculum? Will it stay? The board is not looking at these schools as "us" and "them". They will not vote to cut out things important to schools and communities.

Jane Williams noted that the townspeople should be aware that the board of school directors will give Fairfield 2 representatives with only one-half vote each. Michael Malone responded that the representative number is governed by law according to population. It was his opinion that St. Albans Town and City do not always agree and these votes will be important in breaking a tie. Over time boundaries will dissolve. He stated that although some worry this is giving up local control we have been losing local control for some time and especially as budgets are voted down. We cannot negotiate high school tuition so all costs can be contained. This unification will allow us to preserve local control.

Jeffrey Nelson asked what the total number of kids will be upon unification. The answer is 2700.

Charles Thomas spoke stating that he wanted to clear up a misunderstanding that the board will be looking at Fairfield and saying they want 5.7 million dollars and approving yes or no. In fact, with Act 46 they will be presented with a 30 + million dollar budget. Fairfield will not be itemized and St. Albans Town and City will not be able to vote against Fairfield separately. This is a collective budget.

Tom Morin questioned that 2 one-half votes could cancel each other so why not just have one representative? Michael Malone explained it was a decision made to allow for more than one person and give the board some diversity.

John Baxter noted that the unification with BFA and representatives on the board give us a vote so we have more say in high school costs.

Anne Howrigan asked what the new budget numbers will look like? An estimate from Kevin Dirth was approximately \$50,000,000.

Gail Morin asked how the unification will affect property taxes. Michael Malone responded that taxes are governed by the State. They are only projections but the unification should stabilize taxes by virtue of the number of equalized pupils. Taxes should go up less and we will be saving in the short term regardless because of tax incentives. If we don't take advantage of it taxes will increase for these that don't end up unifying and decreasing for those that do.

Lori Niederer questioned what parents have been giving for feedback. Mostly positive feedback with some negative. Lori offered her own positive experience in a town with multiple elementary schools and shared high school.

Lorne Babb asked for a business model, where is the evidence of saving? Some purchasing savings. In other towns that have unified such as Essex and Westfield as well as Jericho and Underhill savings have been seen.

Brian Jerose hesitates towards voting yes only because he would like to see a larger merger with other high schools to preserve school choice.

Charles Thomas noted Act 129 as school choice law which gives up to 40 students the opportunity to choose another high school. Currently we have 79 at BFA and 19 Enosburg. There is a possibility for a separate program that will exchange students between BFA and Enosburg. Tech Centers are not included and not a part of Act 46. Kids will be able to go to either Tech Center.

David Gaudette asked if the budget for Fairfield is submitted separately to the Board? No, the needs will be established by the administration and sent to the Business Manager. The budget will be presented as a whole.

Gavin Ryan asked how a principal will be chosen for each school. The process will not change and will remain as it is today. The committee and community will choose together.

Gene Archambault stated that the discussion of unification started as property tax relief. Now the state is going to force us? He doesn't like that regardless of what he votes today. He suggests contacting your representatives.

It was also noted that on a 10 member board, if Fairfield has two one-half votes, and one full vote is absent, how is a tie going to be broken? Like other boards in this situation, it cannot be.

18. TO ELECT TEN (10) SCHOOL DIRECTOR(S) FROM THE NOMINEES BELOW TO SERVE ON THE PROPOSED SUPERVISORY DISTRICT BOARD FROM THE DATE OF THE

ORGANIZATION MEETING FOR TERMS AS PROVIDED IN THE FINAL REPORT:
[AUSTRALIAN BALLOT]

PLEASE SELECT NO MORE THAN TWO REPRESENTATIVES FROM FAIRFIELD (1/2 VOTE EACH);

ONE FOR A ONE YEAR TERM

ONE FOR A TWO-YEAR TERM

PLEASE SELECT NO MORE THAN FOUR REPRESENTATIVES FROM ST. ALBANS CITY;

TWO FOR A ONE YEAR TERM

ONE FOR A TWO YEAR TERM

ONE FOR A THREE YEAR TERM

PLEASE SELECT NO MORE THAN FOUR REPRESENTATIVES FROM ST. ALBANS TOWN;

ONE FOR A ONE YEAR TERM

ONE FOR A TWO YEAR TERM

TWO FOR A THREE YEAR TERM

Motion made by Charles Thomas and seconded by Tom Howrigan to break for lunch at 12:30 pm. Motion passed.

19. TO RESUME THE BUSINESS OF THE TOWN.
20. SHALL THE LEGAL VOTERS OF THE TOWN OF FAIRFIELD APPROVE \$58,548 FOR SUPPORT OF THE FAIRFIELD VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT? APPROPRIATION TO BE PAID UPON CONDITION THAT THE FAIRFIELD VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT SUBMIT TO THE TOWN, BY JUNE 30, 2016, A COPY OF ITS MOST RECENT BALANCE SHEET AND BANK STATEMENT FOR REVIEW BY THE TOWN AUDITORS: Motion made by Tom Howrigan and seconded by Norman Menard. Motion passed by voice vote.
21. SHALL THE LEGAL VOTERS OF THE TOWN OF FAIRFIELD APPROVE \$35,000 FOR SUPPORT OF THE EAST FAIRFIELD VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT? APPROPRIATION TO BE PAID UPON CONDITION THAT THE EAST FAIRFIELD VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT SUBMIT TO THE TOWN BY JUNE 30, 2016 A COPY OF ITS MOST RECENT BALANCE SHEET AND BANK STATEMENT FOR REVIEW BY THE TOWN AUDITORS: Motion made by Toby Fulwiler and seconded by Howard Mitchell. Martha Manning asked how many members are active in the East Fairfield Fire Department and whether it consolidation with Fairfield Fire Department has been considered. Patrick Winegar responded that there are three active members and as he understood it, they were already consolidated and it was unclear why they were separated in the town report. Amanda Forbes responded that there are separate EIN numbers, separate chiefs and the budgets are submitted separately. Patrick said that there is a working tanker truck and it always responds to fire. The accidents are split up by based on location. Gavin Ryan hopes they can work together for coverage on both sides of town. It is important to have the two fire departments in case of flooding on Rt. 36. John Baxter asked the Selectboard to push for consolidation. Gavin invited the fire departments to the Selectboard's second meeting in March (March 28th) at 7:30 pm to discuss the possibility further. Joyce Mitchell asked how many active members there were in Fairfield and it was answered by Martha that there were approximately 25. Motion passed by voice vote.
22. TO SEE IF THE VOTERS WILL APPROVE A DONATION OF \$15,000 FOR THE FAIRFIELD COMMUNITY CENTER ASSOCIATION: Motion made by Edward Haak and seconded by Michelle Bessette. Michelle Bessette referred people to the Community Center letter in the Town Report. They have bingo, senior meals, vacation camps, food shelf, thanksgiving baskets and the Meeting House on the Green, which can be rented for events. Motion passed by voice vote.

23. TO SEE IF THE VOTERS WILL APPROVE A DONATION OF \$3,782 FOR THE FRANKLIN COUNTY HOME HEALTH AGENCY, INC.: Motion made by Tom Howrigan and seconded by Bennett Dawson. Motion passed by voice vote.

24. TO SEE IF THE VOTERS WILL APPROVE A DONATION OF \$2,500 FOR THE OUTDOOR CLASSROOM: Motion made by Charles Thomas and seconded by John Baxter. Joanna Jerose explained the program as one that teaches students about maple sugaring and its history through interviews. Motion passed by voice vote.

25. TO SEE IF THE VOTERS WILL APPROVE A DONATION OF \$1,000 FOR THE FRANKLIN COUNTY ANIMAL RESCUE: Motion made by Gail Williams and seconded by Laura Fulwiler. Gail Williams explained the low cost spay/neuter program. Motion passed by voice vote.

26. TO TRANSACT ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT MAY PROPERLY COME BEFORE THIS MEETING: Michael Malone thanked Kenderlyn Phelps for her hard work on the School Board and welcomed David Gaudette. Bridget Howrigan Rivet was thanked for doing a great job as moderator.

27. TO ADJOURN. A motion to adjourn was made by Toby Fulwiler and seconded by Michael Malone at 1:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Amanda L. Forbes, Clerk

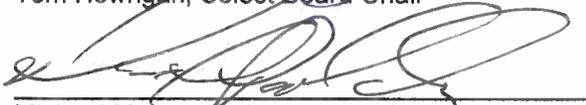
To the best of my recollection, I attest that these minutes are a true and accurate reflection of the events of Town Meeting Day, March 1, 2016.



Bridget Howrigan Rivet, Moderator



Tom Howrigan, Select Board Chair



Michael Malone, School Board Chair