

Corinth Town Meeting Minutes for March 7, 2017

Gary Apfel Moderator called the meeting to order at 10:00 am. The Pledge of Allegiance was said by all. America the Beautiful was led by Marion Cawley, Linda Tobin and a group of singers.

Gary Apfel went over Roberts Rules of orders setting protocol for the day.

Bill Parmenter moved to recess at 10:12 am to let our Representative Rodney Graham speak. Tim O'Dell seconded, the ayes have it. Rodney spoke on the recount, that there was a slow start to the year and that there has been over 500 bills introduced to the house. Steve Long asked what committee he was on, he said he was on the Agricultural Committee and that Bob Frenier was on the Commerce and Economic Development Committee.

The meeting reconvened at 10:22 am.

Gary reviewed Article 1. To elect the following by Australian ballot. For the purpose of this article the polls will be open from 8:30 am to 7:00 pm. Moderator for 1 year, Selectman for 3 years, Town Clerk for 3 years, Lister for 3 years, Collector of Delinquent Taxes for 1 year, First Constable for 1 year, Grand Juror for 1 year, Town Agent to Deed Real Estate for 1 year, Town Agent to Prosecute and Defend Suits for 1 year, Cemetery Commissioner for 3 years and School Director for 3 years.

No action needed on this Article.

Article 2. To see if the voters will accept the various Officers' Reports as presented in the Town Report. Raymond Moulton moved the question, Joyce McKeeman seconded. TR Jackson moved to amend Article 2 to dispense with Roberts Rules of orders about who speaks when and the order they do it and to leave it to the Moderator. Gary Apfel, Moderator ruled the motion out of order and recommends this gets moved until after Article 2. Gary called for the vote to accept the various Officers' Reports as presented, the ayes have it.

Gary recognized TR Jackson, who made the motion to dispense with Roberts Rules of orders about who speaks when and the length, the order they do it, and to leave it to the Moderator. Kerry DeWolfe seconded. There was discussion on whether to keep them in place with most in favor of doing so because it has always worked well for us that way. Gary called for a voice vote. It was difficult to tell so he called for a raised hand count, the Town Clerk counted hands the nays have it. Meeting will continue with Roberts Rules of Order.

Article 3. To see if the voters will recommend that the Selectboard begin the process of amending the Town's charter for the purpose of converting the position of town Treasurer from an elected position to that of an employee hired by the Selectboard.

Raymond Moulton moved the motion and Jane Conner seconded. There was discussion about not wanting to move the control out of the public's hands. Chris Groschner, Chair of the Selectboard explained that this was suggested by Susan Fortunati, Treasurer because we are a small town and her job has gotten very complex. Susan made a job description, which is 4 pages long. This would open up a broader group of people for hiring when Susan decides to retire. There were questions about the cost to the Town, if it would make costs go up. Susan said it shouldn't cost any more than what she makes already. There was much discussion back and forth, people for and people against it. Jon Conner called the question, Sue Parmenter seconded. Debate ceased. Gary Apfel called for a vote on calling the question, the ayes have it. He then called for the vote on Article 3. as presented, the ayes have it.

Article 4. To see if the voters will amend the term of the Treasurer from three years to one year commencing March 2018.

Joyce McKeeman moved the article Raymond Moulton seconded. Joyce is in favor of this. If we don't change it to a hired position there will be recourse if an elected person doesn't work out. Susan Fortunati said that was the reason for this article, that if we didn't move forward with Article 3 we would be able to replace someone with-in a year if we needed to. Gary called for a vote the ayes have it.

Article 5. To see if the voters will vote \$742,855.00, of which \$559,445.00 to be raised by taxes, to support the Highway Fund.

Raymond Moulton moved the question, Jane Conner seconded. Lee Porter, Road Commissioner went over the budget. He said we tried to level fund as much as we could. Some of the items that went up are ones we couldn't do anything about like; Health Insurance, Workman's Comp and Property Insurance. Others were level funded. Susan Russell made an amendment to the article to give the Highway crew a 2% raise and the budget be increased to cover the cost. Gary asked for a second, there was none. Amendment fails.

Hannah Eagan asked what taxes are being used to fund this. Susan read the report as written in the Town Report. Joyce McKeeman wanted to know about the budget process if we just level funded things or if it just worked out that way. Lee spoke on that and said we didn't cut any services and most of the budget could be level funded. The cost per household was discussed. Susan said Joe was at the budget meetings and we had his input and everything is in place to cover good road maintenance. Linda Weiss stated the Budget Committee meetings are open to the public and they are welcome. Gary called for the vote on Article 5. The ayes have it.

Article 6. To see if the voters will vote \$116,365.00, of which \$121,865.00 to be raised by taxes, to support the Highway Capital Equipment Fund, which includes a projected \$5,500.00 estimated FY 17 deficit.

Susan Fortunati moved the article, Chris Groschner seconded. Susan explained the equipment payments that caused the deficit. We had an extra payment this year and sold a truck for less than we thought we would get for it.

Lisa Locke moved that we recess at 11:20 am to let Representative Bob Frenier speak. Marian Cawley seconded. The ayes have it. Bob talked about the inspiration of the State House and minority parties. They are working on the Independent Contractor bill. Susan said it's hard to keep track of the Independent Contractors. Bob said he would try to make it easier to be one. There was debate back and forth whether there should be independent contractors. He asked if there was anything anyone wanted him to pay attention to. There was some talk on Health Care. He said anyone is welcome to email him or write him to discuss issues with him. We thanked Bob for coming.

Meeting reconvened at 11:40 am.

Article 6. Gary Apfel, Moderator called for the vote. The ayes have it.

Article 7. To see if the voters will vote \$15,000.00, of which \$15,000.00 to be raised by taxes, to retire a portion of the deficit in the Bridge Reserve Fund.

Susan Fortunati moved the article, Raymond Moulton seconded. Susan explained our share of the Chicken Farm Bridge came to more than we thought so we had a deficit of \$40,611.20. Statues require us to take care of our deficits and the \$15,000.00 will help knock it down. Gary called for the vote, the ayes have it.

Article 8. To see if the voters will authorize the town to use funds received from the Better Back Roads grant program.

Joyce McKeeman moved the article, Irene Mann seconded. Joe Blodgett said we received two grants this year. They give us money to fix different problems on the roads. Used it to repair area's that will help keep rivers clean of road debris. Gary called for the vote, the ayes have it.

Article 9. To see if the voters will vote to exempt Sugar Maple Preschool, Inc. a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit from property taxes on its property at 10275 Waits River Road in East Corinth VT.

Raymond Moulton moved the article, Sue Parmenter seconded. Joyce McKeeman asked the approximate value of property, Susan said it was \$207,300.00. It is taxed as non-residential and taxes are \$4172.12. Steve Tillotson asked about appropriations and how much we are giving them there. Susan said they asked for \$1000.00 but budget committee level funded them at \$400.00. Susan said we still have to pay the state the education tax portion also. There was more discussion about others that were exempt. Melanie Del-Frari spoke for Sugar Maple Pre-school telling about their costs, what they offer to the kids, why they bought the house and their \$600.00 to \$1000.00 deficit every month.

She also mentioned the subsidized 10 hours a month per child and teacher certification. Most everyone spoke in favor of exemption. Sugar Maple is about 95% Corinth kids. Tania Aebi called the question, Jane Conner seconded, and the ayes have it. Gary Apfel called for the vote on the main motion on Article 9. The ayes have it.

Joyce McKeeman moved to recess at 12:15 pm for lunch, Chris Groschner seconded, the ayes have it.

Gary Apfel, Moderator called the meeting back to order at 1:14 pm.

Article 10. To see if the voters will vote \$2,215.00 of which \$2,215.00 to be raised by taxes, to support the Planning Commission.

Chris Preston moved the article, Linda Weiss seconded. Tim O'Dell asked what this was for. Susan said to turn to page 16 which shows the budget items and reviewed them. Joyce McKeeman asked why this fund is separate. Susan said everyone wants to keep their own money so it's a different fund. Gary called for the vote the ayes have it.

Article 11. To see if the voters will vote \$400.00, of which \$0 to be raised by taxes, to support the Conservation Commission.

John Conner moved the article, Lynn Murphy seconded. Glynn Pellagrino, chair of the Commission, spoke on what the money was for, educational programs, trails and FX Shea Forest. It was asked why \$0 to be raised by taxes, Susan said it's because they make so much in bottles that it doesn't need to be funded with taxes. Gary called for the vote, the ayes have it.

Article 12. To see if the voters will vote \$13,000.00 of which \$13,000.00 to be raised by taxes, to support the Town Hall Capital Improvement Fund.

Joyce McKeeman moved the article, Linda Weiss seconded. There was discussion on why this fund was needed. It was explained any time you have a building it will need repairs. You have to have money set aside for that. It was noted that water runs down the back of the building and is damaging the window casings and that the handicap entrance isn't covered and those are two things that need to be taken care of. Also the windows on the second floor. The aye's have it.

Article 13. To see if the voters will fix the compensation for the Selectmen for the coming year at \$1000.00 each.

Susan Fortunati moved the article, Chris Groschner seconded. There was no discussion. The ayes have it.

Article 14. To see if the voters will vote \$400,134.00 of which \$231,187.00 to be raised by taxes, to support the General Fund.

Raymond Moulton moved the article, Jane Conner seconded. Katie Kramer asked about surplus. Susan Fortunati directed everyone to look at page 9. She went over Revenue's. Joyce stated that this article should come earlier on the warning. Glynn Pellagrino asked why Law Enforcement was up from \$6000.00 to \$10,000.00. Chris Groschner spoke about Constable duties changing and that they can't really do anything anymore. We increased the Orange County Sheriffs budget to cover more services from them, since we aren't going to have a Constable anymore. Susan Fortunati spoke on why this article is placed where it is. Most town meetings have articles that will change the budget so this is listed later on the warning, so any approved items can be added. Gary called for the vote, the ayes have it.

Article. 15. To see if the Town will vote to levy an interest charge on all overdue tax installments to the maximum allowed by Vermont State Statute per month or fraction thereof from the due date(s) as provided in 32 VSA 4873, 5136, or as amended.

Tim O'Dell moved the motion, Susan Fortunati seconded. Linda Weiss asked what the maximum was allowed by law. Susan said it was 1% for 3 months then 1 1/2 % after. TR Jackson moved to amend the article to remove the language "interest charge on all over due tax installments to the maximum allowed by Vermont State Statue" and replace it with 6% late fee with a credit of 4% if pre-paid earlier and to accept postmarks, with the burden of calculation on tax payer. Linda Weiss seconded.

TR said 18% is outrageous and it doesn't make sense to charge people that are already having a hard time paying, such high interest. Susan showed examples of companies that the town does business with that all charge that amount. She also showed samples of incoming tax payments that had no postmarks or ones that weren't legible. There was discussion in favor of lowering the interest rate but residents weren't in favor of some other parts of the amendment so TR moved to separate amendment into three parts. First part being interest rate; second part: giving a discount of 4% for prepaying and third part being postmarks accepted, Linda Weiss seconded.

First part, Joyce McKeeman thinks interest should be 6% annually, Tim O'Dell said that would be ½% per month. Dan Eagan asked if budget was set on revenues from 18% interest, if 6% would there be a deficit. Susan Fortunati said no, we would still have about \$7200.00 in interest fees at 6% and we would make up the rest with taxes. There was discussion back and forth. Susan was asked what the penalty fee was, she said after the first installment your just late, after second installment it is 8% total with 3% being charged until March then an additional 5% added after that. Gary called for the vote on changing the percentage rate on late taxes to ½ percent per month. Gary called for the vote on the Article amendment first part. The ayes have it.

Second part, TR moved to have a credit of 4% if pre-paid to be calculated by the tax payer. Susan asked what constitutes early and that she wasn't going to rely on calculations done by the taxpayers. There was discussion about if paid early with a credit of 4% we wouldn't be able to budget correctly because we wouldn't know how many would pay early and what the credit to them would be. Tim O'Dell said it would cause issues in Revenue's. Tania Aebi called the question, Glynn Pellagrino seconded, the ayes have it. Gary called for the vote on Article amendment second part pre-pay credit the nays have it.

Third part, TR moved to accept postmarks. He also thought we should have online payments. Philip Sharp said we could have a 5 day leeway. It was mentioned there is a drop off box on the front porch. Rebecca Buchanan spoke about tax bills being due when the taxpayer receives the bill not on the end due date. She stated there is plenty of time to pay the bill before the end date. Tania Aebi called the question, Glynn Pellagrino seconded, the ayes have it. Gary called for the vote on article amendment third part, postmarks. The nays have it.

Susan Fortunati moved to amend Article 15 to include the language "or a fraction there of" meaning by the month not the day and to see if voters will vote to change the interest on all overdue taxes to ½% per month or fraction thereof from the due date. Lisa Locke seconded the amendment to the motion. More discussion. Glynn Pellagrino moved to call the question, Tania Aebi seconded. Gary called the vote to move the question the ayes have it.

Gary re-read the Amended motion: To see if the town will vote to levy interest in the amount of ½ % per month or a fraction there of on all over due tax installments per Vermont Statue as provided in 32 VSA 4873, 5136 or as amended. The ayes have it.

Article 16. To see if the Town will vote to have the taxes collected by the Treasurer and to fix the dates for payment of the same.

Linda Weiss moved the article, Luise Graf seconded. TR Jackson moved to amend the motion to include "The Treasurer is directed to establish an on line payment system. Gary Apfel Moderator called this amendment out of order. Nancy Ertle moved to have the taxes collected by the Town Treasurer and to fix the dates for payment as Tuesday, September 12, 2017 and Friday, February 9, 2018 on or before the close of business. Postmarks are not accepted. Susan Fortunati seconded. Lynn Murphy asked why it was due on Feb. 9th what impacted paying taxes on that day. Susan replied cash flow for paying bills. There was discussion on "the close of business day" Miranda Miller made a motion to amend it to say close of business at 6:00 pm, Hannah Eagan seconded. Susan said she is only open until 3 on that day and everyone has already had their bill for six months. There was discussion back and forth. Nancy pointed out that no one can set the Treasurers hours but the Treasurer. Lee Porter called the question, Raymond Moulton seconded. Gary called the vote on calling the question, the ayes have it. Gary called for the vote on the amendment the nays have it.

Gary called for the vote on the main motion for Article 16, the ayes have it.

Article 17. To recommend four members-at-large for the Budget Committee for 1 year.

Nancy Ertle moved to recommend Lee Porter, Irene Mann, Linda Weiss and Raymond Moulton. No action on this is needed

Article 18. In case of unanticipated State Aid Funds (funds not included in the budget) for specific highway and bridge projects applied for and received during the fiscal year, shall the Town allow expenditure of such funds for those projects?

Joyce McKeeman moved the article, Lynn Murphy seconded. No discussion, the ayes have it.

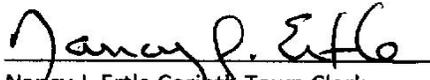
Article 19. To transact any other business that may legally come before the meeting.

TR Jackson would like to pay online for taxes. There was discussion on different options for that, shop around and find a free pay program. Bill pay systems that send checks was discussed.

Susan stated that Gary Apfel did a really great job at his first time being Moderator and he got a round of applause.

Lisa Locke moved to adjourn. Lynn Murphy seconded, the ayes have it, meeting adjourned at 3:26 pm

Respectively Submitted by:


Nancy J. Ertle Corinth Town Clerk

Approved by: 
Office Held: JP

Approved by: 
Office Held: Moderator