

Town of Starksboro

Annual Town Meeting

Saturday, February 29, 2020 at 9am

Robinson Elementary School Multipurpose Room

The Town of Starksboro met for their yearly Town Meeting on Saturday, February 29, 2020 with 134 voters in attendance. The meeting was called to order by Dan Dubenetsky, Moderator, at 9:05. Child Care was provided by Esold & Lux Tierney, Lauren Cousino, Regan LaFreniere, Mya & Isabella Shea, Sam Schoendorff, Dylan Elder, Ashley & George Piper & Bailey & Carter Antos-Ketcham - a special thank you to them for the service they provided on such an important day.

All stood for Pledge of Allegiance. Moderator, Dan asked the residents for their hands in showing how many years of attendance with first timers receiving a pint of Maple Syrup. The resident's attendance ranged from 9 first timers, receiving maple syrup to 8 with over 40 years in attendance, receiving lottery tickets. Dan also went over Robert's Rule's and other Town procedures before commencing with the start of Town Meeting.

This Town Report was dedicated to the Farms in Starksboro and to Tom Estey, our Road Foreman, who retired in October 2019.

Koran Cousino and Susan Jefferies spoke to the retirement of Tom Estey and his years of service and dedication to the Town. He treated the Town as his family and worked diligently to make sure everyone knew they were taken care of. He was an invaluable employee to the town and what he did for us. The words to describe him are: honest, straight forward, giving, thoughtful, family oriented, integrity, and caring. Congratulations Tom! Enjoy your retirement! You will be missed!

Koran Cousino also gave a special Thank you to Keegan Tierney for his time with the Select Board after 3 years and Peter Ryersbach for his numerous years of service as Town Auditor.

Representatives present were Chris Bray, Mari Cordes, Ruth Hardy & Caleb Elder. They each spoke in reference to Paid Family Leave, House Education Comm, Health Care Committee, Natural Resource Energy, Climate Change, Agriculture Committee, Clean Water Act, Act 46. Incentives to schools who offer local foods for kids in the lunch program – this would entail more money for the lunch program. After school programs Project is hoping within 2yrs to be able to offer more afterschool programs for kids. Universal Pre-K Program since 2014 is complicated due to some schools offer the program while others are private in home programs. Criminal Justice Program is working on reform issues and the technical violations that people end up back in prison for. A concern was also underinsured and not being able to pay premiums or meet the deductible to lower out of pocket expense. EMS Services that are provided, the continuing training/classes are not an expense to the EMS staff.

Concerns from the residents were toward the closing of the surrounding towns elementary schools and how it would affect each individual town. Act 46 was not created to close schools. Student Population has been declining at the elementary and the high school level. Early 2000's the student population was

aprx 1000, now its 600 (2019) 24% decline. Schools cannot be closed by Select Board or School Boards – only by town vote.

Joe Kelly asked a question in reference to what VTRans would be doing about Lewis Creek Flooding of Hillsboro, Route 116, Ireland rd.

Mari Cordes stated that she would reach out to them and see what maybe in the works. This is a serious issue and understands the importance.

Celina Aiguer asked what GMP is using for herbicide is being used on the side of the road. 1000ft from the side of the road.

Ruth Hardy answered banning “glyficade” would lead to using worse pesticides and more harmful to the environment/people.

Kerry Kurt stated that allowing herbivore animals to graze where these plants are an issue (parsnip) – would help control or eliminate them. They also provide clean fertilizer and no artificial fertilizers need to be used.

Mari Corde also stated that these new plants – 2nd generations – have become resistance to the pesticides that is used to destroy them.

Edorah Frazer stated Robinson School is an amazing place for children to learn and the staff are caring and deeply skilled to provide the best atmosphere for learning.

A competitive event that we compete in is the School Geo Bee – 5th year participating – Reed Cousino won this year and is headed down to Castleton University to represent Starksboro. The Annual District Chorus was held and Rory Hendee participated in this event. Starksboro Program – 5/6 th grade girls won their 5 town Championship. Congratulations!!

Volunteers participate in 4 Winds Nature Program, Bites in a Bag (snack food to take home), Mentors – these programs show the level of caring toward our students here at Robinson School.

Announcements of retirement from Robinson School – Beth Ogden, Barbara Bordeaux & Ruth Beecher will be retiring at the end of the school year. Your caring and expertise will be missed from our school and community!

Nancy Cornell wanted to thank people for coming to the Community Engagement Committee – school closures have been talked about – the scenarios are not set in stone – only exploring the possibilities. Moving grades around, closing a couple schools, restructuring K-6. Main goal is not to close. Asking public to keep up with the minutes of the meetings to be informed as to what is going on.

Caleb Elder - school budget up by \$450,00 – a little over a 1%. Increase. 2 Articles that will be presented - Prior surplus would be put to a reserve fund, with a per pupil cost of 8% - if that is voted on and fails then the \$450,00 would be applied to the tax rate and the per pupil rate would fall to 5%. 12 positions were lost – not due to lay offs – which is a silver lining. States the tax rate is going up a bit – but not just of school spending but also due to the Common Level of Appraisal dropped.

CLA is at 94.5% for 2019 – in 2018 it was 98.9% - this figure shows that we need to do a reappraisal. That our homes are undervalued according to the state. The budget can still pass if this article fails.

Polls were open from 7am to 7pm on March 7, 2017 at the Robinson Elementary School to elect town and school district officers, also to vote on the Mount Abe and Hannaford Career Center Budgets.

Article 1 To be voted by Australian Ballot on March 3, 2020. To elect Town Officers and Town School District Officers for the ensuing year. Jeff Keeney made a motion to the voters to bring Article 1 to the floor, second by Peter Ryersbach.

Auditor 3yrs -

Auditor 3yrs -

Cemetery Commissioner 3yrs

Delinquent Tax Collector 1yr

First Grand Juror 1yr

First Constable 1yr

Second Constable 1yr

Library Trustee 3yrs -

Library Trustee 3yrs -

Lister 3yrs

MAUSD 3yrs

Moderator 1yr

Planning Commission 3yrs -

Planning Commission 3yrs -

Selectperson 3yr

Selectperson 2yr

Selectperson 1yr (balance of 2yr)

Town Agent to Prosecute/Defend Suits 1yr

Thomas Payeur introduced himself for running for Town Auditor as a write in. Has lived in Starksboro for 1 ½ yrs and is a Winooski High School math teacher. Dan Nugent is running for re-election for Planning Commission and Dan Dubenetsky stated this maybe his last year running for Town Moderator. Has been doing this for 20yrs and would mentor someone that is interested.

Article 2 – Rob Liotard made a motion to accept the auditor’s report for the year ending June 30,2019. Seconded by Chris Runcie. No Discussion. Voice vote called, so voted. Article 2 passes.

Article 3 – Jeff Dunham made a motion to vote for the following sum of money for the proposed FY 20-21 General Fund Budget seconded by Peter Ryersbach. Voice vote called. Article 3 passes.

Koran Cousino stated the town report budget is in a new format – went from Quickbooks to NEMRC Acct Software. It was a difficult transition but with Robert Turner and Celine Coon’s guidance they were able to navigate through this process. There was a 12% increase in health care insurance for new employee’s, retiring of our Road Foreman Tom Estey - overall 2 ½ % increase to the budget. Page 50 will outline these changes. Voice voted called. Article 3 passes

Article 4 – Dan Nugent made a motion to vote the following sum of money for the Fire Equipment Reserve Fund, being \$49,268 seconded by Norm Cota. No discussion. Voice vote called. Article 4 passes.

Article 5 – Keegan Tierney made a motion to vote the following sum of money for the Road Equipment Reserve Fund of \$97,267, seconded by Dennis Casey. Voice vote called. Article 5 passes.

Keegan Tierney explained the Reserve Fund and how it works. Increase the contribution or borrow money for potential changes from other reserve funds. Page 44 explains the reserve fund and how it is implemented. Potential changes in the future years.

Article 6 – Mary O’Brien made a motion to vote the following sum of money for the Paving Reserve fund, being \$40,000, seconded by Jill Schoendorf. Voice vote called. Article 6 passes

Mary O’Brien wondered when the parking lot at the Post Office and the Town Clerk’s office would be paved.

Koran Cousino stated that due to the paving of States Prison Hollow and emergency paving for Hinesburg Hollow last year, the budget can’t handle it now. That is a project for 2021 or 2022. This reserve fund has been in the budget at least the last 3 years and will continue. The reserve fund of \$40,000 is something that needs to be in the budget for future years.

Tom Estey spoke to purchasing paving products – the more ton you buy the cheaper it is, this is one reason we started the reserve fund of \$40,000. A suitable amount of money to go out to bid.

Peter Ryersbach spoke about what a reserve fund is for – prevents our property taxes from going up and down with all the constant unexpected changes with maintenance and equipment issues.

Alan Quittner was wondering if Hinesburg Hollow is in wetland and maybe that’s why it keeps flooding and ruining the road. Any grants that could help it fix it more permanently.

Koran Cousino stated that is a road crew question and would refer to Tony on feedback.

Keegan Tierney stated that Hinesburg Hollow is owned by 3 towns and it takes a joint effort to establish how and when to do maintenance. Starksboro owns a small portion of it (a few hundred yards).

Rich Warren inquired about the interest earned for 18/19 for the reserve fund (pg45) is for investing the money or putting the money away to earn money.

Keegan stated yes based on Celine Coon’s agreement. Our reserve funds are in deposit/investment.

Article 7 – Ruth Beecher made a motion to vote the following sum of money for the Starksboro Public Library to fund the costs of its operation FY 20-21, \$31,950 seconded by Luke McCarthy. Voice vote called. Article 7 passes.

Chris Runcie (Trustee) gave an update on the amount of books the library holds – an amazing 7,000 or more books. They have seen a gradual increase in visitors and lending of books. In 2015 they saw around 3,000 books lent out, now they are over 5,000 in 2019. Out of that was 1200 for e-books or audio books. We lent out to surrounding library's 700 books while we borrowed 400 books from surrounding town libraries. Catherine Goldsmith is the Librarian and offers many special events to encourage people stop in and visit. There are only 183 towns that have library's located in them in the State of Vermont.

Article 8 – Dennis Casey made a motion to vote the following sum of money \$2,106 for Addison County Transit Resources to be taken from Town Funds for the purpose of maintaining and improving transportation services, seconded by Peter Antos-Ketcham. Voice vote called. Article 7 passes.

Peter Ryersbach asked what is it suppose to be used for precisely - why this amount?

Nancy Cornell asked – did we appropriate this last year?

Koran stated the amount last year was \$1708. If there is any change to amounts that are being requested, they must submit a new petition to the voters and be presented at town meeting to vote on. Once approved it will be listed with all the other out of town requests. Can't answer as to why this figure is asked or what it will be used for.

Article 9 – Chuck Webber made the motion to vote for the following sums of money \$3,400 for the Richmond Rescue Inc., to provide ambulance service to portions of the Town of Starksboro, seconded by Denny Barnard. Voice vote called. Article 9 passes.

Alan Quitner asked why these last 2 articles 8 & 9 were not listed in the list of out of town requests, but done separately.

Keegan Tierney stated any changes to amounts need to be done under separate warnings through petitions and voted on as a sperate article.

Cheryl Estey stated that Richmond Rescue can respond quicker to the northern end of Starksboro by Big Hollow/Shaker Hill faster than the Starksboro Rescue Squad. This is quite a reduced rate compared to what they charge other towns – trying to coincide with the range of Bristol Rescue.

Jim Runcie asked if this is decided by geographical areas?

Cheryl Estey stated yes it is. Time difference makes the decisions for what rescue squad should be responding to. Richmond Rescue has a paramedic and paid staff.

Article 10 – Chris Runcie made a motion for the following sum of money \$6,000 for the support of the Starksboro Cooperative Preschool, seconded by Ruth Beecher. Voice vote called. Article 10 passes.

Susan Pare stated that the preschool has been in operation for 44years. They have had no decline in enrollment. They have 2 licensed teachers and 4 assistances that run the preschool.

Bill Coon asked how many students from each town does the preschool enroll and total number enrolled.

Susan Pare stated that 23 children attend – 18 Starksboro, 3 Monkton, 2 Bristol.

Ruth Beecher stated the teachers at the preschool are amazing. Her 5/6 students interact with these kids on a weekly basis.

Carin McCarthy asked if there has been any discussion to having the preschool/daycare year round to accommodate working parents. Its always a struggle to find daycare that works year round without piecing it together.

Article 11 – Dennis Casey made a motion to vote for the followings sums of money for the Listed in Town Requests, seconded by Rob Liotard. Voice vote called. Article 11 passes.

Robinson Mentoring Program - \$2000

Starksboro First Response - \$9500

Starksboro Food Shelf - \$2000

Starksboro School Age Program (RASY) - \$425

Starksboro Sports Program - \$3500

Starksboro Village Meeeting House - \$3,000

Starksboro Volunteer Fire Dept - \$24,000

Total in Town Requests - \$44,425.00

Rob Liotard wanted to Thank the town for their continued support for the Mentoring Program. The program is always looking for more mentors. It only takes about an hour a week to spend with a child.

Barbara Herrington who is now running the Food Shelf with about 12 volunteers - stated that 42 families continuously use the food shelf and they are going to be open on the second Saturday of the month from 9-12pm to help accommodate other families that may not be able to it on the 2nd Wednesday of the month. This will start in March. Robinson School helps gather food and donates to the food shelf on a yearly fundraiser. The food shelf is run by the Town Select board.

Tom Estey spoke about the importance of working fire/co detectors in homes. Without them, the outcome for a tragedy to happen is inevitable. Introduced new members – Ryan Sienna, Dan Kuzio to the Fire Dept.

Rich Warren asked when the money would be released for the Meeting House (\$10,000) to pay for the repairs that were done and \$3000 for this year. He had heard that they had not been.

Keegan Tierney stated that the funds indeed had been release and there is \$3000 on the books for in town requests this year.

Article 12 – Richard Fasey made a motion for the voter of the town vote the following sums of money for the listed out of town requests, seconded by Peter Ryersbach. Voice vote called. Article 12 passes.

AC Home Health & Hospice - \$1964

AC Parent/Child Center - \$1600
AC Readers - \$350
AC Restorative Justice Services Inc - \$600
Age Well - \$1300
American Red Cross - \$500
Bristol Rec Center - \$2500
Bristol Rescue Squad - \$7500
Counseling Service of Addison County - \$2,200
Elderly Services Inc - \$900
End of Life Services - \$500
Green Up Vermont - \$100
Homeward Bound (AC Humane Society) - \$500
Hope (formerly ACCAG) - \$1750
John W Graham Emergency Shelter Services Inc - \$970
Lewis Creek Association - \$550
Open Door Clinic - \$250
Otter Creek Natural Resources Conservation Dist - \$176
RSVP - \$370
Vermont Adult Learning - \$700
Vermont Assoc for the Blind/Visually Impaired - \$500
Vermont Center for Independent Living - \$250
Vermont Rural Fire Protection Task Force - \$100
Women Safe - \$1250
Total out of town requests - \$27, 380

Peter Ryersbach stated that the \$600 - info is on pg 73/74 - has helped 24 Starksboro residents last year. Program helps a multitude of issues from getting a drivers license back, to staying out of jail, to making restitution for what has occurred, to prevent going to jail and getting help for the individuals that need it.

Dennis Casey asked if the Lewis Creek Assoc would be helping the residents on VT RTE 116, Ireland Rd, & Hillsboro Rd due to the flooding from Lewis Creek.

Chris Runcie stated they are a non profit educational info only committee. Have contacted ACRP to help these land owners. Yes we will support in ways that we can. The committee did a tour and are aware of the damage that has been caused due to the flooding.

Bill Coon – clarification for Counseling Services on their hours – the number is extremely high. 11, 332 hours would equate to 5 full time employees. Is this really accurate?

Celine Coon stated that in and out of town requests are disbursed in 3 ways. The first one to be disbursed is the school request, second is in town requests and third is out of town requests. Disbursements are due by the following year of being voted on. It's all about cash flow within the town and what bills need to be paid or what disasters that may have happened and need out financial attention before these requests.

Rich Warren stated that the Counseling Services is a total of 921,717 hours – that equals to 443 employees to do that amount of work for Addison County – agree with Bill and shows a very large amount.

Article 13- Norm Cota made motion for the voters of the Town vote the Real Estate taxes be paid, without discount, to the treasurer on or before Wednesday November 2, 2020 at 4:30 becoming delinquent after November 2, 2020 at 4:30pm, taxes must be received by this time, postmarks are not considered receipts, seconded by Jeff Keeney. No Discussion. Voice vote called. Article 13 passes

Article 14 – Jim Runcie made a motion for the voters to transact, vote and act upon any further non-binding business which may legally come before this meeting. Seconded by Eric Hanson. Voice vote called. Article 14 passes.

Keegan Tierney spoke about the Jersalem School House renovation information – roof leaking, foundation sinking, lean to (houses firetruck) pulling away from building.

Luke McCarthy (JCCC) stated the building is about 150yrs old and 40yrs for the fire truck lean too – the plans are to see about updating the school and fire station to co-habitat on the same land. The \$25,000 approved to research how to fix this - hired an architect to look at the school and determine the best course of action. Not asking for a vote - there are come zoning issues.

Donna Lescoe asked if there was a price ticket for this.

Keegan Tierney answered not yet. Its all in the works. The estimates that were given were not taking into consideration of zoning issues. So no actual validity on the figures.

Dan Nugent asked when are the JSH Committee going to come to the Dev. Review Board to see if any of these plans can actually be implemented/feasible before presenting this to the public.

Keegan Tierney stated not sure if they have anything possible to present and they are not ready to move forward.

Celine Coon stated there was survey that was sent out and we have not seen any results to show what was projected that the public liked.

Susan Klaiber stated that there was 153 responses by paper and survey monkey. The overall summary was sent to the SB.

Keegan Tierney presented a questionnaire to the voters (Dan Dubenesky read the following) as to how to proceed – The following questions were asked and responded with:

Shall the SB continue pursuing the renovations for the JSH and New Fire Station? Yes

Shall the SB continue pursuing both projects on the same lot? Yes

Shall the SB commit future funding to complete the previous construction planning, design engineering process? Yes

Dan Dubenetsky announced Rabies Clinic on March 21 from 9-11am at the town office.

Eric Hanson stated that Water Resources is asking people to test their drinking water if they own their own wells. This process is not expensive.

Peter Ryersbach (as an auditor's view) stated the Donation for Recycling shouldn't happen – there is no way to ensure the money concerns (stealing) or the safety of the people that run this or the ones that use the drop off. People don't want to use it because they have to pay and now they throw their recycling in with the garbage. Other places are free and that's where some may go.

Donna Lescoe – asked - has there ever been a problem before? Stealing, taking the cash box? Have not heard of any issues. Stated it works well.

Peter Ryersbach stated that at least one incident has happened. But the issue is – we have no way of knowing the accuracy of the money in this situation – coming from an auditor's view.

Alan Quittner stated that the Town needs to use the Front Porch Forum. The gazette was a great way to inform people buy since its not being done – this might be another solution. Short and brief for info purposes only. Minutes of meetings should be announced that they are available on the website so people are aware that they are available to read. The gazette should be done for those that still want on it on a monthly basis.

Jim Runcie wanted to state he loves the Town Report and has never thrown one out ever!

Koran Cousino wanted to Thank the staff at the office for all their hard work with the town report – Cheryl Estey, Celine Coon, Rebecca Elder, Robert Turner, & Amy McCormick.

Betsy Dunham commented that not everyone has access to internet for the gazette or information that they may need from the Town – that's why the gazette was still important to mail to those that are limited. Front Porch Forum states that there is apprx 900 subscribers – but that is a misconstrued number due to homes may have more than 1 email per family. Could 1 each per member per household.

Mary O'Brien reminded everyone about the Rocking Chair Raffle for Project Read.

Janice Sabett asked if we are ready for a Cyber Attack and what we have done to prepare for one.

Keegan Tierney/Rebecca Elder stated that we have upgraded our firewall and service provider with VLCT. NEMRC Acct Software is in the cloud with also the same protection and monitoring. Monitored 24/7 both softwares.

Peter Antos-Ketcham reminded the community about the food share on Sundays at the Baptist Church and an Emergency Firewood Share Program.

Tom Estey wanted to Thank the Community for the support and well wishes for a Happy Retirement!

Donna Lescoe stated that we need to be accountability for our selves in gathering information that is pertinent to ourselves. Friends share information, town website has all kinds of information.

Kerry Kurt stated the gazette was a nice addition to those that don't have access to devices for this information.

Tom Estey made a motion to adjourn the town meeting, seconded by Dan Nugent, so voted. Meeting adjourned at 11:44am.

DRAFT