

**TOWN OF CASTLETON**  
**INFORMATIONAL TOWN MEETING MINUTES**  
**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2021 at 7:00pm**  
**VIA ZOOM VIRTUAL PUBLIC MEETING**

**PRESENT:** Michael Finnegan, Town Moderator; Jim Leamy, Select Board Chair; Richard Combs, Select Board Vice Chair; Zack Holzworth, Select Board Secretary; Robert Spaulding, Select Board Member; Joe Mark, Select Board Parliamentarian; Michael Jones, Town Manager; Heath Goyette, Fire Chief; Eliza LeBrun, Recording Secretary; Representative William Canfield; Representative Robert Helm; Pam Arel; Genevieve Burt; Susan DiCarolis; Phillip Dumbrowski; Walter Ducharme; Chris Fretta; Mary Goyette; Sharon Gowain; Thomas Kearns; Patrick Keller; Eitan Kilchevsky; Lisa Ladd; Ted & Martha Molnar; JoAnn Riley; Pat Schroeder; Nancy Trudo; Bill Wood; several other Members of the public whose full names were not available.

**CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

Mr. Michael Finnegan called the meeting to order at 6:57p.m.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mr. Finnegan led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Finnegan shared guidelines with the audience for the evening. Audience Members should stay on Mute during the meeting and should raise their hand to be recognized. All speakers should identify themselves before speaking. All questions should be addressed to the moderator.

**REPRESENTATIVE ROBERT HELM**

Mr. Helm shared a quick briefing of what is going on in our district. Only a handful of bills have passed the house, however, he believes that the Budget Adjustment Act may be close. Mr. Helm stated that one of the budgets which he is tasked with reviewing is the Transportation budget. Mr. Helm shared some upcoming projects that will impact this area including; culvert and repaving sections of Route 4a within 2 years. There will be a new salt shed in Fair Haven in 2023. New lights will be placed around the Town Green in Fair Haven. A major project that will be happening is the widening of the Route 22 from West Haven (at the bottom of Long Hill) to the 4-way intersection in Orwell. In closing, Mr. Helm shared that in 2021 we have less money than we did in 2019, but more money than we thought we would last year. Mr. Helm shared that there is a loss in Rooms and Meal and that we still need to get the economy back up to the levels we had in 2019. Mr. Helm encouraged people to reach out if they have any questions.

**REPRESENTATIVE WILLIAM CANFIELD**

Mr. Canfield shared that much of the year will be dedicated to COVID Recovery however, the Committee on Weights and Means have addressed a few items that will impact the revenue and taxes of Vermont. There are \$15 million unused dollars in COVID Relief Fund, it is the hope that this money will be used in the schools to support ventilation and HVAC projects. This has been included in a new COVID Relief Bill, H315. The Weights and Means Committee has also acted on some items to be included in a larger miscellaneous tax bill, these items include draft language to update Town Clerk recording fees, language to clarify how taxes are collected for taxable meals that are delivered by a third party, the Taxable Meal Facilitator, and how Vermont treats the transfer tax of property that is transfer to siblings. H84 will expand the downtown and Village Centers tax credit program. Mr. Canfield shared that the final Education Tax Rate has not yet been set. H81 is a bill that deals with school and employee contract negotiations. This bill will separate administrative staff from teachers. There is a proposed bill that will legalize online gambling in Vermont. Mr. Canfield shared his contact information, he can be reached by phone at (802) 265-4428 or by email at [wcanfield@leg.state.vt.us](mailto:wcanfield@leg.state.vt.us), or toll free at (800) 322-5616.

**SELECT BOARD INTRODUCTIONS**

Mr. Finnegan introduce the Members of the Select Board in alphabetical order as well as the Town Manager. Mr. Finnegan also thanked the Town Office Staff for their technological assistance with this meeting.

Mr. Finnegan proceeded to read the following Articles to the Public for discussion.

**THE FOLLOWING ARTICLES WILL BE VOTED ON MARCH 2, 2021 BY AUSTRALIAN BALLOT.**

Article 1. To elect Officers for the following terms: a Town Clerk for 3 years; a 1st Constable for 2 years; a Treasurer for 3 years; a Library Trustee for 5 years; a Town Moderator for 1 year; two (2) Select Board Members for 1 year; a Select Board Member for 3 years. There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 2. Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$26,542 for Legislating? (Prior year \$26,079)

There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 3. Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$1,965 for Ordinances & Proceedings? (Prior year \$1,965)

There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 4. Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$182,428 for Managing Municipalities? (Prior year \$177,245)

Resident, Susan DeCarolis asked what is meant by Managing Municipalities.

Select Board Chair, James Leamy clarified that this is the Town Manager's salary based on a contract as well as a portion of salary and benefits for the Administrative Assistant.

Article 5. Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$8,804 for Conducting Elections? (Prior year \$11,162)

There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 6. Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$48,159 for Collection, Custody & Disbursement of Funds? (Prior year \$46,746)

Resident, Susan DeCarolis asked what is meant by Collection, Custody & Disbursement of Funds?

Select Board Chair, James clarified that this is for the salary and benefits of the Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, and 50% of the Tax Collector Administrative Assistant.

Article 7. Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$104,833 for Accounting? (Prior year \$97,048)

There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 8. Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$12,000 for Auditing? (Prior year \$12,000)

There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 9. Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$34,434 for Tax Listing? (Prior year \$39,332)

There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 10. Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$42,596 for Tax Collecting? (Prior year \$41,573)

There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 11. Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$80,878 for Document Recording/Issue? (Prior year \$78,394)

There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 12. Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$20,000 for Legal Services? (Prior year \$25,000)

There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 13. Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$41,738 for Municipal Planning & Zoning? (Prior year \$41,836)

There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 14. Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$7,490 for Community Development & Economic Revitalization (Prior year \$5,996)

There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 15. Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$192,850 for General Government Buildings? (Prior year \$194,950)

There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 16. Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$23,439 for General Government Equipment? (Prior year \$23,439)

There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 17. Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$526,025 for Police Department? (Prior year \$523,038)

Resident, Susan DeCarolis noted that on page 41 of the Town Report it states that the Police are doing residential property watches and would like to know if this is when people go away on vacation.

Select Board Vice Chair, Richard Coombs indicated that this was correct, if a resident lets the Castleton Police Department know they will be away, they will periodically drive by to check for broken doors or windows, they do not park and walk the property.

Article 18. *Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$36,218 for Emergency Medical Services? (Includes Regional Ambulance Service, Inc. & RAS/Castleton First Responders) (Prior year \$36,218)*

There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 19. *Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$167,144 for Fire Department? (Prior year \$165,147)*

There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 20. *Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$8,750 for Emergency Management? (Prior year \$9,000)*

There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 21. *Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$1,155,379 for Highway Department? (Prior year \$1,153,191)*

Resident, Susan DeCarolis asked the Select Board if it was part if the Highway Departments service to address trees that are within the right of way that are falling into the road. Ms. DeCarolis noted that there are a lot of these trees on Center of Town Road.

Select Board Parliamentarian, Joseph Mark responded that this is something that the Highway Department and Tree Warden would address. The best option for a resident would be to contact the Town Manager if they are concerned about trees falling near roads.

Resident, John Burke shared that the right of way is typically 25 feet from the center line of the road of every Class 3 Highway. Mr. Burke noted that the measurement would be to the trunk of the tree, not the branches. Mr. Burke also took this moment to express his gratitude to Paul Egan who recently retired from the Castleton Highway Department.

Article 22. *Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$3,400 for Town Lands? (Prior year \$3,400)*

There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 23. *Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$5,000 for Historical Cemeteries? (Prior year \$5,000)*

There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 24. *Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$29,000 for the Hillside Cemetery (Prior year \$29,000)*

There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 25. *Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$1,443 for Health Regulating & Inspecting? (Prior year \$1,446)*

There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 26. *Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$5,469 for Animal Control? (Prior year \$5,170)*

There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 27. *Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$29,803 for Constables? (Prior year \$37,239)*

There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 28. *Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$345,277 for Transfer Station? (Prior year \$346,430)*

Select Board Member, Robert Spaulding asked if the Select Board or Town Manager what they are doing to avoid losing another \$17,000 as we did last year. Mr. Spaulding would like the public to know what is being done to make up the difference.

Select Board Secretary, Zack Holzworth responded that bag fees have been increased, increased per tonnage weight for the scales, but we decreased the permit fee.

Select Board Vice Chair, Richard Coombs stated that when the Select Board reviewed this at the end of December, the revenue was 14.5% over what was projected and if the Town stays on this course, the Transfer Station may come out in the black.

Mr. Spaulding asked where the expenses are?

Mr. Coombs shared that some of those costs were incurred in the second half of the summer, so therefore it may appear that we have already spent more, but you need to consider the budget as a whole.

Select Board Parliamentarian, Joseph Mark noted that the goal of the Town was to have the Transfer Station revenue neutral. However, he noted that this is a moving target as the prices for recyclable are constantly changing.

Town Moderator, Michael Finnegan noted that as a resident he has noticed the improvements that have been made already at the Transfer Station.

Resident, Susan DeCarolis asked what the Town does with the compost material.

Mr. Holzworth responded that at this time Casella's picks up the composting.

Article 29. *Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$113,797 for Recreation? (Prior year \$108,827)*

There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 30. *Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$3,300 for Memorial Day Decorations/July 4<sup>th</sup> Parade? (Prior year \$9,650)*

Select Board Member, Robert Spaulding asked why the amount requested is so low this year.

Select Board Secretary, Zack Holzworth explained that the Town still has the fireworks from last year that were not used, so the Town will not need to purchase any more.

Article 31. *Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$116,000 for Library Administration? (Prior year \$111,500)*

There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 32. *Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$1,500 for Prevention/Control of Forest Fires? (Prior year \$1,500)*

There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 33. *Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$10,161 for Tree Warden? (Prior year \$9,749)*

There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 34. *Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$43,000 for Rutland County Tax? (Prior year \$40,000)*

There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 35. *Shall the Town deem necessary and appropriate \$3,500 for the support of ARC - Rutland Area determining that the program serves the residents of the Town with advocacy, resources, and community for citizens with developmental disabilities and their families? (Not included in the budget)*

There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 36. *Shall the Town deem necessary and appropriate \$3,600 for administrative support of Castleton Cares, Inc., determining that the program serves the residents of the Town with emergency assistance to local people in need. (Not included in the budget)*

Resident, Susan DeCarolis shared that she is a new volunteer with Castleton Cares, and is very impressed with their work. Currently they are serving at least 80 families. Castleton Cares Board is very active and recently made a connection with the Vermont Food Bank. They do more than just deliver food. If people are in need of assistance they can call (802) 468-2444.

Town Moderator Michael Finnegan commented on how important he felt these types of services are.

Article 37. *Shall the Town deem necessary and appropriate \$25,000 for the support of Castleton Community Seniors, Inc., determining that the program serves residents of the Town with the operation of the Castleton Community Center (The Old Homestead)? (Not included in the budget)*

Castleton Community Center Director, JoAnn Riley shared that this time last year the Community Center had to close due to COVID. During the summer and fall we were able to meet outdoors in the van shelter as well as a location to have classes and meetings. In the fall there were heaters placed outside. July 1<sup>st</sup> they were able to resume their transportation services. The Center was serving 1,100 meals in their dining room, but had to stop in March but Meals on Wheels delivered to over 4,000 seniors in our area. The

Community Center is still offering Lifelong Learning services through Zoom. They had to cancel 7 of 9 fundraisers this year due to COVID. They would like to thank the Town for their support in previous years and their continued support this year.

Article 38. *Shall the Town of Castleton vote to raise, appropriate and expend the sum of \$3,500 for the support of the partial funding of Marble Valley Regional Transit Districts (The Bus) public transit service to the residents of the Town? (Not included in the budget)*  
There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 39. *Shall the Town deem necessary and appropriate \$6,720 to support the Rutland Area Visiting Nurses & Hospice (\$550 to support Rutland Area Hospice & \$6,170 to support RAVNAH Home and Community Health Services)? (Not included in the budget)*  
There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 40. *Shall the Town deem necessary and appropriate \$4,088 for the support of Rutland Mental Health Services, determining that the program serves residents of the Town with counseling, substance abuse and emergency services? (Not included in the budget)*  
There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 41. *Shall the Town deem necessary and appropriate \$900 for the support of RSVP and the Volunteer Center, determining that the program serves residents of the Town with volunteering opportunities and community services? (Not included in the budget)*  
There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 42. *Shall the Town deem necessary and appropriate \$2,000 for the support of Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging, determining that the program serves residents of the Town with elder services? (Not included in the budget)*  
There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 43. *Shall the Town deem necessary and appropriate \$1,000 for the support of Vermont Association for the Blind & Visually Impaired, determining that the program serves residents of the Town with services to enable the blind and visually impaired to achieve and maintain independence? (Not included in the budget)*  
There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 44. *Shall the Town deem necessary and appropriate \$2,725 for the support of BROCC-Community Action in Southwestern Vermont, determining that the program serves residents of the Town with weatherization, emergency food and small business development? (Not included in the budget)*  
There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 45. *Shall the Town, pursuant to VSA 32, § 3840 and beginning this current year, exempt in whole the non-income producing property owned by Lee Lodge No. 30, a non-profit organization from taxation for a period not exceeding five (5) years?*  
There were no questions or discussion on this article.

Article 46. *Shall the Town exempt all non-income producing real and personal property owned by the Castleton Community Seniors from taxation for a period of 5 years pursuant to 32 VSA 3832 (7)?*

Select Board Chair, James Leamy stated that the budget submitted by the Select Board for Articles 1 through 46 is \$10,552.00 or 0.3%

Article 47. *Shall the Town of Castleton withdraw from Rutland County Solid Waste District and take the necessary steps to join the Solid Waste Alliance Communities?*

Select Board Member, Robert Spaulding shared that he is responsible for continuing to put this article on the ballot for the residents to vote on. Mr. Spaulding stated that he does not feel that the previous votes were losses. Mr. Spaulding believes that 3 years ago the language was changed, 2 years ago the vote was a tie and the State recognizes a tie as a loss, and last year the article was lost by 90 votes. Mr. Spaulding stated he would take the responsibility for the uninformed voters.

Mr. Spaulding presented an explanation of the benefit of the Town of Castleton joining the Solid Waste Alliance Communities, and the savings that the residents of the Town would experience.

Select Board Parliamentarian, Joseph Mark stated that he felt the Solid Waste Alliance Communities proposal would cost more to the Town and have less services and urged neighbors and friends to vote against this article.

Town Moderator, Michael Finnegan noted that a comparison of the Rutland County Solid Waste District to the Solid Waste Alliance Communities is difficult because it is not comparing apples to apples.

Discussion on the costs and benefits of each program continued. It was noted that there is a difference between the cost to residents who have their garbage removed by private haulers versus those residents that take their garbage to the Transfer Station. The Town Moderator commented that there did not appear to be much clarification.

Mr. Mark stated that with Rutland County Solid Waste, the Town charges \$0.19/ton for tipping fees. Hubbardton pays 20% of this. The Solid Waste Alliance Communities charge \$4.51/capita = \$21,200 plus the cost to host 2 Household Hazardous Waste events at \$0.71/capita = \$2,790.

Select Board Chair, James Leamy noted that the Town Manager has developed a report that provides information regarding this, he is not the first Town Manager to do this either.

It was noted that the Rutland County Solid Waste submitted a report due inclusion in the Town Report, however, it was unintentionally omitted.

Mr. Finnegan thanked everyone for coming to this meeting and reminded everyone voting is Tuesday, March 2, 2021 at the Castleton Fire Station, 273 Route 30N. Polls open at 8:00am and close at 7:00pm.

Mr. Mark thanked Zack Holzworth as this is his final meeting as a Castleton Select Board Member.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Town Moderator, Michael Finnegan concluded the Informational Town Meeting at 8:23pm.

Respectfully submitted; Eliza LeBrun, Recording Secretary