

# **EAST MONTPELIER**

**Town Meeting**

**March 4, 2014**

**minutes**

The legal voters of the Town of East Montpelier, Vermont were warned to meet at the U32 Middle/High School located at 930 Gallison Hill Rd in East Montpelier on Tuesday, March 4, 2014 at 9:30 AM to transact the following business and to vote by Australian Ballot from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM on those Articles so noted. Approximately 300 residents were in attendance.

Moderator Dworkin called the Town and School Meeting of 2014 to order at 9:35 AM. He introduced himself as the duly elected Town and School Moderator and welcomed all those present.

Moderator Dworkin requested a moment of respect for community members that have passed away. He then acknowledged our military soldiers and their families. He thanked Colin McCaffrey for the sound system, the Boy Scouts for the circulation of the wireless microphone, and the lunch crew.

Moderator Dworkin began by reading the Town Meeting warning as follows:

**The legal voters of the Town of East Montpelier, Vermont are hereby notified and warned to meet at the East Montpelier Elementary School in East Montpelier on Tuesday, the fourth (4th) day of March, 2014 at 9:30 AM to act on the following:**

**The polls for articles to be voted on by Australian ballot will open at 7 AM and close at 7 PM (17VSA § 2561)**

He explained the tradition in East Montpelier was to alternate the Town and the School each year, and this year was the School's turn to go first. The Town's meeting was recessed at 9:38 AM until after the School's portion of the meeting.

Town Meeting was resumed at 2:25 PM.

**ARTICLE 1 To elect all necessary officers for the ensuing year. (To be voted by Australian Ballot)**

**Town Moderator, 1-year term**

**School District Moderator, 1-year term**

**Selectboard Member, 3-year term**

**Selectboard Member, 2-year term**

**Lister, 3-year term**

**Auditor, 3-year term**

**Trustee of Public Funds, 2 of 3-year term (position vacated in 2013)**

**Trustee of Public Funds, 3-year term**

**Town Law Agent, 1-year term**

**Town Grand Juror, 1-year term**

**First Constable, 1-year term**

**Second Constable, 1-year term**

**Cemetery Commissioner, 5-year term**

**Planning Commissioner, 2 of 3-year term (position vacated in 2014)**  
**Planning Commissioner, 3-year term**  
**Planning Commissioner, 3-year term**  
**Planning Commissioner, 3-year term**  
**EM Elementary School Director, 3-year term**  
**EM Elementary School Director, 2-year term**  
**U-32 School Director, 3-year term**

Moderator Brock read Article. As this Article is for the elected officers to be voted by Australian Ballot, no discussion was allowed.

**ARTICLE 2 To hear the reports of several Town Officers and to act thereon.**

Moderator Dworkin read the Article and offered the floor to the Selectboard. Selectboard Member Seth Gardner introduced himself as Chair and the other members present-Carl Etnier, Casey Northrup, Steve Sparrow, and Kim Swasey.

Selectboard Member Gardner referred to the Selectboard's Report on page 12 of the Town Report. He wanted to point out highlights of the past year that included the proposed Town Charter that incorporates the appointment of the Town Treasurer, the creation and implementation of the town's website, the combined efforts of the East Montpelier Fire Department and the Towns of East Montpelier and Calais to establish an excellent service agreement that proves beneficial to all, the paving projects, and the budget reflections. He brought attention to the new line item of a Reserve Fund for a 'rainy day'.

Mr. Gardner extended a thank you to the town employees, town officials, and town volunteers, and especially to Rick Hopkins-who after many years on the Planning Commission will not be running for another term. He received an ovation. He then opened the floor for discussion.

James Eniti inquired about the paving on Towne Hill Road near Bliss Road and wondering where East Montpelier stops and Montpelier starts-why there is such a gap?

Norma Raymond inquired about the line item showing that there is no pay rate increase for the Town Clerk and asked about a 3% increase. Selectboard Member Gardner responded that these were tentative figures and in light of the splitting the positions of Clerk and Treasurer have resulted in changes of duties within the office. Selectboard Member Swasey spoke in that the reflection of the split of the two positions shows the will of the voters, and the compensation of the Town Clerk will remain level funded for now. She reiterated due diligence of moving forward.

Ginny Callan inquired about the status of the Village bridge project and why the two houses were recently torn down. Selectboard Member Gardner answered that the plan at this time was to have a 3<sup>rd</sup> lane on Route 2 for straight through traffic. The date for the project is still not exactly known at this time, unless the State inspection in the spring shows emergency replacement/repairs are needed. He also noted that sidewalks had been granted based on a grant that the Village Committee had worked on.

With no further questions, Moderator Dworkin moved on to the next Article.

**ARTICLE 3 Shall the Town raise the sum of \$1,483,545 as proposed by the Selectboard, for laying out and repairing highways and for other necessary Town expenses for fiscal year 2015 (July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015). (To be voted by Australian Ballot)**

Moderator Dworkin read Article and explained that this Article was to be voted on by Australian Ballot and could discussed the floor but no changes could be made.

Michael Duane commented on the Articles to be voted on noting that the Fire and Ambulance line items are not separate and is questioning the democratic process.

Selectboard Member Gardner responded that if people wanted that change, they could do so.

Don Welch explained that the Fire and Ambulance Department provide a direct service that the Town pays for as they have done for many years. East Montpelier Fire & Rescue Department is a separate entity just as Barre Town EMS was. He referred to the protective services separation as a procedural question that would have to be addressed.

Selectboard Member Etnier responded that the Town needs to provide protective services.

James Eniti inquired as to whether or not the Selectboard could put Yes/No questions on warnings themselves.

Selectboard Member Etnier replied that the Selectboard can consider it through the very important petition process.

Moderator Dworkin called for further discussion of Article. With no response, he moved on to the next Article.

**ARTICLE 4 Shall the Town raise \$75,000 for the Capital Reserve Fund. (To be voted by Australian Ballot)**

Moderator Dworkin read Article and explained that this Article was to be voted on by Australian Ballot and could discussed the floor. With no discussion, he moved on to the next Article.

**ARTICLE 5 Shall the Town raise the sum of \$36,775 for Kellogg-Hubbard Library for the support of the Kellogg-Hubbard Library. (To be voted by Australian Ballot)**

Moderator Dworkin read Article and inquired for motion to discuss. With motion and second received, he opened the floor for discussion.

Lindy Biggs, our town representative for Kellogg-Hubbard Library, referred to page 62 in the Town Report. She focused on the level funded request from East Montpelier. She pointed out the primary funding for the Library comes from endowment interest. Of the towns' portions, East Montpelier's contribution is about 9%. Other benefits and programs at the Library include the second largest collection in Vermont, wireless internet access, videoconferencing, outreach to outer community though delivery, summer programs-for children and adults.

Nona Estrin asked about the new director and it being a country wide search.

Charles Johnson inquired as to all the good people working there, why there was no one qualified for Director.

Ms. Biggs responded that the Interim Director at this time is Tom McComb.

Moderator Dworkin inquired about further discussion. With no further discussion received, he moved on to the next Article.

**ARTICLE 6 Shall the Town adopt the proposed East Montpelier Town Charter as recommended by the East Montpelier Charter Committee and accepted by the East Montpelier Selectboard. (To be voted by Australian Ballot)**

Moderator Dworkin read Article and explained that it was to be voted on by Australian Ballot and reminded that it could not be amended, approved, or rejected on the floor, but that discussion was allowed.

Carl Etnier spoke on behalf of the Charter Committee. He acknowledged Edie Miller as Chair and Richard Brock as Vice-Chair.

Charter Committee Member Michael Duane explained that State Law governs towns. When towns want to change something from the State Law, they file a Charter that has been approved by the town's voters to the State Legislature. He referred to page 16 of the Town Report for the history of the charter, and pages 14-15 for the proposed charter as warned. The committee previewed charters from other towns and consulted with Municipal Attorney Paul Gilles for the Charter language.

Nathan Phillips wanted to know how common this charter matter was of which Mr. Duane responded that it was becoming much more common these days.

Nona Estrin asked if the State was doing anything to change the laws if this was the case. Mr. Duane answered that the State was not doing anything-the responsibility is on the municipality. Selectboard Member Etnier added that there is currently a bill in the Legislature to have State approve passed Charters more quickly.

Don Welch commented that he found Charters can be simple or complicated.

Michael Duane added that Town Charters can be amended and referred to the State Statutes Title 24 that shows other Town and City Charters such as Burlington, Plainfield and Cabot.

Moderator Dworkin inquired about further discussion. With none received, he moved on.

**ARTICLE 7 Shall the Town authorize all property taxes for the fiscal year 2015 to be paid to the Treasurer, without discount in two installments and received by the Town Treasurer at the East Montpelier Municipal Building as follows: The first installment will be due on or before 5:00 PM Monday, November 17, 2014 and the second installment will be due on or before 5:00 PM Friday, May 15, 2015.**

Moderator Dworkin read Article and inquired for motion to discuss. Motion and second received. No

discussion or questions were presented. Moderator asked for and received motion with a second to vote. All voted in favor, and Moderator declared Article passed.

**ARTICLE 8 Shall the Town authorize the Selectboard to hold any audited fund balance as of June 30, 2014 in a reserve fund to be expended under the control and direction of the Selectboard to cover unanticipated revenue shortfalls and to pay non-recurring and unanticipated general and highway expenses, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §2804(a).**

Moderator Dworkin read Article and inquired for motion to discuss. With motion and second received, he opened the floor for discussion.

Selectboard Member Gardner explained this Article is different from the article that approves funds for the Capital Reserve Fund. This Article brings a new concept for now regarding unexpended funds to be set aside separately into a Reserve Fund for unexpected matters.

Ed Deegan questioned the approval every year for the Reserve Fund, but recommended the change or wording to 'subsequent years'.

Selectboard Member responded that this Article was to get the concept first.

Doris Washburn liked the idea-reiterating the confusion of a reserve fund, but call it a 'contingency fund'.

Moderator Dworkin called for a vote, all voted in favor. Moderator declared Article passed.

**ARTICLE 9 Shall the Town adopt the proposed East Montpelier Conflict of Interest Ordinance as recommended by the East Montpelier Charter Committee and accepted by the East Montpelier Selectboard.**

Moderator Dworkin read Article and inquired for motion to discuss. With motion and second received, he opened the floor for discussion.

Selectboard Member Carl Etnier spoke on the Conflict of Interest ordinance first explaining that it was separate from the Charter Committee. He further explained that there is no State Statute to prevent Town Officers from voting on an item in which they have an interest of any sort. An example would be a farm matter of which there is no state law that allow Seth Gardner as a Selectboard Member to abstain from voting.

Sam Dworkin commented as to whether or not this would pertain to any addressing of the budget items.

Mr. Etnier responded that the Selectboard adopted the VLCT version of the Conflict of Interest policy.

Moderator Dworkin inquired about further discussion. With none received, he asked for and received a motion with second to vote. All voted in favor, and Moderator declared Article passed.

**ARTICLE 10 Shall the Town raise the sum of \$4,400 for the Four Corners Schoolhouse Association for operating expenses during fiscal year 2015.**

Moderator Dworkin read Article and inquired for motion to discuss. With motion and second received, he opened the floor for discussion. With no discussion brought forward, Moderator called for a vote. All voted in favor and Moderator declared Article passed.

**ARTICLE 11 Shall the Town raise the sum of \$7,000 for the East Montpelier Cemetery Commission for the support and maintenance of Town cemeteries during fiscal year 2015.**

Moderator Dworkin read Article and inquired for motion to discuss. With motion and second received, he opened the floor for discussion.

Elliott Morse introduced himself as the Cemetery Sexton and wanted to speak briefly about our town cemeteries. They are maintained by himself and Allen Ploof, of which Elliott wanted to this time to thank him. Mr. Morse referred to the Cemetery Commissioners report in the Town Report, and the matter that the Selectboard will have to consider in the near future of more land, as the cemeteries are growing.

Rachel Grossman noted the large amount of fence repair expenses.

Moderator Dworkin called for further discussion. With none received, Moderator called for a vote. All voted in Favor and Moderator declared Article passed.

**ARTICLE 12 Shall the Town raise the sum of \$9,000 for the East Montpelier Signpost to provide for the production and mailing of six issues of the East Montpelier Signpost for each East Montpelier resident household and non-resident property owner during fiscal year 2015.**

Moderator Dworkin read Article and inquired for motion to discuss. With motion and second received, the floor was opened for discussion.

Barbara Ploof spoke on behalf of the Signpost in that they had requested \$1500 from the Selectboard for the latest edition as their funds have been nearly depleted. The silent auction on Rally Day was their largest source of income.

Nona Estrin spoke on how grateful she is that the *Signpost* being so informative, especially with the edition for this Town Meeting with the change of location.

Janice Waterman commented on the original committee when Jean Cate began the town news concept and supported the town funding of the *Signpost*.

Alex Brown, a member of the *Signpost* staff, spoke on Jean Cate's much valued legacy.

Don Welch offered the choice that folks have to receive the *Signpost* electronically.

Doris Washburn commented that the *Signpost* is her favorite piece of mail to receive as it keeps her connected with the Town.

James Eniti inquired if the *Signpost* mailing was limited to just town residents.

Paul Cate remarked on his parents being so involved with the *Signpost* over the last 30 plus year. We are tired as a country, and the limited correspondence and communications endured over these last many years reiterate the importance community involvement. He quoted his father, the late Wes Cate, about being able to vote Australian Ballot was good, but not as good as pot luck lunch.

Erica Zimmerman mentioned the disappointed that Rally Day is no longer happening, and that is a memory that definitely will not fade.

Alex Brown added that the *Signpost* staff are volunteers. She maintains the mailing list, and explained that folks have a choice to receive an electronic edition. She also reiterated the gratitude of the Selectboard funds and the community involvement and direct participation.

Carl Etnier commented on the support from the Selectboard and their willingness to put the *Signpost* in the budget.

With no further discussion or questions presented, Moderator asked for and received motion with a second to vote. All voted in favor, and Moderator declared Article passed.

**ARTICLE 13 Shall the Town raise the amounts listed below as recommended by the Town's Funding Request Study Committee, or what other amounts, for the following organizations for fiscal year 2015.**

a) American Red Cross	\$ 250
b) Central Vermont Adult Basic Education	\$ 750
c) Central Vermont Community Action Council	\$ 500
d) Central Vermont Community Land Trust	\$ 150
e) Central Vermont Council on Aging	\$ 1,600
f) Central Vermont Home Health & Hospice	\$ 5,500
g) Central Vermont Memorial Civic Center	\$ 1,000
h) Circle (formerly Battered Women's Services & Shelter)	\$ 675
i) Community Connections	\$ 2,500
j) Family Center of Washington County	\$ 500
k) Friends of the Winooski River	\$ 200
l) Green Mountain Transit	\$ 1,366
m) Green Up Vermont	\$ 150
n) Home Share Now	\$ 600
o) North Branch Nature Center	\$ 750
p) Onion River Food Shelf	\$ 1,000
q) People's Health and Wellness Clinic	\$ 1,250
r) Prevent Child Abuse Vermont	\$ 300

s) Project Independence	\$ 250
t) Retired & Senior Volunteer Program	\$ 275
u) Sexual Assault Crisis Team	\$ 250
v) Twin Valley Senior Center	\$ 750
w) Vermont Association for the Blind & Visually Impaired	\$ 100
x) Vermont CARES	\$ 150
y) Vermont Center for Independent Living	\$ 245
z) Washington County Diversion Program	\$ 450
aa) Washington County Youth Service Bureau	\$ 400
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$21,911</b>

Moderator Dworkin read Article and inquired for motion to discuss. With motion and second received, he opened the floor for discussion. No discussion and Moderator called for and received motion with second to vote. All voted in favor and Moderator declared Article passed.

**ARTICLE 14 Shall the Town raise the sum of \$5,800 for the Montpelier Senior Activity Center for operating expenses during fiscal year 2015.**

Moderator Dworkin read Article and inquired for motion to discuss. With motion and second received, the floor was opened for discussion.

A speaker on behalf of Montpelier Senior Center explained some of the various programs offered.

Fran Weinbaum inquired as to why the amount had doubled over the previous year.

A response was offered in that Montpelier City cut the Senior Center budget by about 20%. There are quite a few East Montpelier residents that partake in the program prompting the larger funds request.

Diane Chace questioned the Funding Request list and the matter of the Montpelier Senior Center being a separate Article this year.

Selectboard Member Gardner responded that because the amount requested this year was larger, the Selectboard decided to bring it before the people.

Selectboard Member Etnier also explained that the increased amount would have put the floor cap for an Article over \$25,000 making the Funding Request Article an Australian Ballot item.

Doris Washburn wanted to know why the Twin Valley Seniors were only getting \$750.00 this year.

Rita Copeland (of Twin Valley Seniors) responded that the Twin Valley Seniors currently services six towns. She summarized the programs that they offer-including meal deliveries, exercise programs, etc.

Other members of the audience spoke of their support of the Montpelier Senior Center, commenting



on the noticeable increase of our community members taking advantage of the services offered at these centers.

Someone questioned the dues required and a response was a variation from \$10.00 to \$30.00 per year. These rates are based on a per capita basis.

Jack Pauly wanted to know why we were squabbling over \$6500.00 for our Seniors when we just passed our school budgets of four and fourteen million dollars.

With no further discussion or questions, Moderator asked for and received motion with a second to vote. All voted in favor, and Moderator declared Article passed.

**ARTICLE 15 Shall the Town raise the sum of \$8,333 as its share of the annual ongoing cost of providing commuter bus service along Route 2 with service into Montpelier. This appropriation funds a portion of the total cost of the service, which will also be supported by appropriations from other towns, State and Federal funds, and rider fares.**

Moderator Dworkin read Article and inquired for motion to discuss. With motion and second received, he opened the floor for discussion.

James Armstrong from GMATA referred to page 61 of the Town Report for a breakdown of ridership.

Rachel Grossman spoke in support of the Route 2 Commuter Bus.

Lindy Biggs uses the Route 2 Bus often.

A question was asked about the two different color buses and rates. Mr. Armstrong explained the red bus being the St. Johnsbury run with no charge. The white bus is the Montpelier run with a rate of \$2.00.

Rebecca Reed inquired about the actual East Montpelier residents that use GMATA. Mr. Armstrong indicated that his records show about 261 boardings last year.

Laura Brown inquired about the park & rides locations of which Mr. Armstrong responded that the East Montpelier location was in the village across from Washington Electric, and there was one in Plainfield near Goddard College.

Robert Duncan observed that the breakdown of 261 riders at the \$8333.00 requested funding equals a net cost of \$31.00 per ride that seems high.

Mr. Armstrong explained that this is quite beneficial to all of the riders on all the routes, not just East Montpelier.

Carl Etnier commented that there are East Montpelier residents who do board the bus in Montpelier.

Moderator Dworkin inquired about further discussion. With none received, he asked for and received a motion with second to vote. Most voted in favor, and Moderator declared Article passed.

**ARTICLE 16 Shall the Voters of the Town of East Montpelier support the following request to the Vermont Legislature:**

**Whereas the establishment of a Public Bank in Vermont will help towns reduce the local tax burden by offering low cost bonds for public works and a depository for their accounts with competitive interest,**

**Whereas a Public Bank that makes loans and investments in Vermont's people and our economy will help create jobs, income, and economic security for all Vermonters,**

**We call on the State Legislature to create a Public Bank for Vermont that enhances the work of the Vermont Economic Development Authority, the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation, the Vermont Housing Finance Agency, the Municipal Bond Bank, and Vermont chartered community banks and credit unions by accepting deposits from the state and municipal governments and making loan programs available for students, homeowners, municipalities and enterprises to make Vermont economically stable, self-reliant, and successful.**

Moderator Dworkin read Article and inquired for motion to discuss. With motion and second received, he opened the floor for discussion.

Selectboard Member Etnier explained that the Selectboard chose to put this Article before the people and turned the floor over to Eric Esselstyn.

Mr. Esselstyn began by explaining his stand in support of many issues over the years. Of all the significant issues presented, he felt this matter important. To summarize, this Article asks the Legislature to consider the matter of the Senate Bill #204 lead by Anthony Polina to start a state bank. This would allow towns to deposit and borrow funds. A lot of money will be spent on infrastructure over the next few years as there is an enormous need for capital improvements.

Diana Chace commented that this was a complex question and was not feeling qualified.

Norma Raymond added that Credit Unions began this way a long time ago, using the example of Adamant Credit Union being the first in the State and the Country.

Rubin Bennett added his feeling on banking knowledge and the big failures affiliated with them. He supports buying local and financing local.

A comment from the audience offered the suggestion for a friendly amendment for the State to study the notion. There were a lot of seconds shouted out.

Selectboard Member Gardner explained that the state will study it. Approval of this Article would send the message to the Legislature to study the bill.

Bob Nuner officially made the motion to amend the Article to add: ...to **study the creation of a** ...Public Bank and seconded by Paul Erlbaum.

Moderator Dworkin called for a vote to amend the Article. Most voted yes and Moderator declared Article 16 amended.

Further discussion on amended Article ceased. Moderator called for motion to vote with second Received. Most voted in favor and Moderator declared amended Article passed.

**ARTICLE 17 To transact any other business that may properly come before the meeting.**

Moderator Dworkin read Article and inquired for motion to discuss. With motion and second received, he opened the floor for discussion.

Doris Washburn offered thank you on behalf of the Old Brick Church.

Selectboard Member Swasey spoke on behalf of Representative Tony Klein who could not make Town Meeting this year. She had a letter from him addressed to the townspeople welcoming them to contact him with any concerns they may have. She will put this letter on the Town's website.

Ed Deegan thanked the Selectboard for all their efforts.

Sandy Conti spoke about the East Montpelier Fire Department 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary coming up this summer. Details will follow. Also, the annual Rabies Clinic will be held at the Fire Station on Thursday, March 13<sup>th</sup> from 6:00-8:00 pm.

Don Welch encouraged folks to check into the Capital Improvement Committee's report on page 50 in the Town Report and contribute thoughts and ideas for the future of our Town.

Selectboard Member Gardner offered a thank you to Moderator Dworkin.

With no further thoughts, discussions or comments, Moderator Dworkin called for and unanimously received motion with seconds to adjourn.

Moderator declared Town Meeting 2014 adjourned at 4:40 pm.

Respectfully noted and recorded by Teresa E. Conti-Town Clerk

Town Meeting minutes of March 4, 2014 approved by:

**East Montpelier Selectboard:**

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**Seth Gardner**

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**Casey Northrup**

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**Carl Etnier**

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**Steve Sparrow**

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**Kim Swasey**

**East Montpelier Town Moderator**

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**Michael Dworkin**

Received for Recording: East Montpelier Town Clerk's Office, \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ A.D. 20\_\_\_\_ at  
\_\_\_\_\_ AM

**Attest: Teresa E. Conti - Town Clerk**