

# **EAST MONTPELIER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

## **Town Meeting**

**March 3, 2015**

**minutes**

The legal voters of the Town of East Montpelier, Vermont were warned to meet at the East Montpelier Elementary School located at 665 Vincent Flats Rd in East Montpelier on Tuesday, March 3, 2015 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 270 residents were in attendance.

Moderator Duane called the Town and School Meeting of 2015 to order at 9:37 AM. He introduced himself as the duly elected Town and School Moderator and welcomed all those present. He briefly addressed the emergency exits, voter registration and voter cards.

Moderator Duane requested a moment of silence and respect for community members that have passed away and a moment to remember our former Town Clerk Minnie Lane who passed away this past week. He then asked for a moment of respect to acknowledge our military soldiers and their families.

Moderator Duane explained that he will conduct this Town Meeting according to Robert's Rules of Order. Vermont State Law does allow Articles that are on the ballot to be discussed with the exception of Town Officers, but no changes can be made on ballot items.

He explained the tradition in East Montpelier was to alternate the Town and the School each year. This was the Town's year to go first, however the Selectboard is honoring a special request from the School Board to go first and therefore, the Town's meeting will be recessed until after the School's portion of the meeting. Town's meeting recessed at 9:40 am.

Moderator Duane began by reading the School Meeting warning as follows:

### **EAST MONTPELIER TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT WARNING**

**The legal voters of the East Montpelier Town School District are hereby notified and warned to meet At East Montpelier Elementary School located at 665 Vincent Flats Road in East Montpelier on Tuesday, March 3, 2015 at 9:30 AM to act on the following business not involving Australian ballot:**

**ARTICLE 1.** To elect a Moderator for the year ensuing.

Moderator Duane read Article. As this Article is for an elected office to be voted by Australian Ballot, no discussion was allowed.

**ARTICLE 2.** To hear and act upon the report of the Town School Directors.

Moderator Duane read Article. He introduced the East Montpelier School Board and turned the discussion over to them. Rubin Bennett introduced himself as the Chair, and the other members of the Board: Steve Looke, Flor Diaz Smith, Kim Kendall, and Priscilla Gilbert.

EM Board Chair Bennett presented a musical presentation put together by the children of the school with the help of local musician and educator John Gailmor.

Chair Bennett referred to the Board's report on page 101 in the Town Report beginning with the diligence of the School Board as elected representatives to be considerate of equitable and high quality education and the taxpayers' dollar. The Board feels that this goal was met considering the budget factors that are considered: the Town's CLA, the State Wide education tax rate, and the schools (EMES and U32) budget's needs. The Board's goal of looking ahead and the community communication and engagement was important and helpful. A slide reiterated some of the highlights that included budget figures and ratios for the tax rate along with narration of the changes on lines items. One being the salary in that it is non-negotiable being union. Another point being revenue in that the State reduced Special Education services reimbursement. The overall increase of the budget was \$14,255 (0.35 percent) from last year.

There was a brief explanation of the three budget factors:

- The Town's CLA adds 9.9% as this is based on the town property sales in comparison to the assessed values of the properties.
- The state wide education tax equalized pupil rate system based on real student vs equalized students.
- The factoring of our two schools with the numbers of students for our town and the operational budgets. A reference was made to the surrounding district schools and their spending, and in a few years, they will be in the same boat we are with renovations and expansion as well.

Moderator Duane opened the floor to discussion and questions on Articles 2 and 6 that relate the budget.

Jennifer Zollner inquired to the difference to the taxpayer per pupil before and after the 8 million dollar bond. A response was that the difference went from \$2200 to \$2500 per pupil.

Tony Klein commented that the actual cost per student was \$16840.00.

Ann Stanton noted that the decrease in student enrollment beginning in 2008 and 2009.

Chair Bennett explained that was during the recession when people stopped having children for a while. Now the trend is increasing. The State of Vermont has population projections and there is speculation to see a lot of new children. The Board believes there is a leveling out so to say.

Seth Gardner inquired as to the capacity of the school in the event of a merger. Board Member Looke responded that he was the chair of the Efficiency Committee and there is a meeting coming up later in March in which the topic of consolidation was going to be addressed. There has been some talk among all the district schools about reconfiguring the schools and taking into consideration the possibility of 6<sup>th</sup> graders attending U32. They are at the information gathering data stage. They want to make informed decisions especially regarding financial impacts.

A question was asked about the average student to teacher ratio. Chair Bennett responded that the State average is 9.9 kids per teacher and 4.67 kids per staff. EMES's average is 11.07 kids per teacher and 6.1 kids per staff.

Ellen Knodler wanted to make sure that people understood that Staff included classroom teachers, para-educators, helpers....all staff.

Jack Pauly spoofed to stop selling homes for more than they are assessed for.

Martin Miller indicated the silver lining is that the selling market in town is good.

A question addressed the matter of the Special Education needs cuts and if the School Board has the ability to get the help. Chair Bennett responded that the Board does not have the ability to change the State rules but they are keeping right up on the matter in close contact with Washington Central.

Hillary Farrington asked about the two administrators and comparable schools question brought up last year. Chair Bennett responded in that the Principal and Assistant Principal have added such a positive note to the operations of this school and it has been noticed by other schools as well. He referred to their report on page 103/104 in the Town Report. There is a two-year contract for the Assistant Principle, so salary could not be addressed. This situation continues to be highly effective.

Board Member Smith added that a recent efficiency report showed a favorable development improvement in the school and this was largely due to Marion and Alicia.

A new resident in town commented on our great school and encouraged a way to promote our school program.

Board Member Smith summarized the construction of the school project being completed \$79,000 under budget and completed on time.

Lindy Johnson commented on the benefits of attending the school board meetings. They are very informational. She especially referred to the Pre-K and Kindergarten classes and the 3-4-5 year olds and the classroom student to teacher ratios that have been previously discussed.

Nathan Phillips spoke on his concern for our future in that he noted the math of the constant state increase in education taxes on student spending. Board Member Looke referred to the state worksheet on page 99 in the town report for the figures.

Alice Angney spoke on being a long time town resident and educator, wanted to express her sincere appreciation to the school board, the workers, and the supervisory union for their excellent results.

Paul Cate asked about the line items for the figures entered for the heating oil and wood chips for the years 2014 and 2016. Chair Bennett explained that this being the first winter with the new facility and using the new wood chip furnace plus being exceptionally cold as there was uncertainty of the BTUs. The figures were put there to be safe for a best/worst case scenario.

Moderator Duane inquired for further discussion. With none received, he declared Article 6 would be voted on Australian Ballot. He asked for and received for a motion to vote on the Article. All voted in favor, and Moderator Duane declared Article 2 passed.

**ARTICLE 3.** Shall the School District authorize the Board of School Directors to hold any audited fund balance as of June 30, 2015 in a reserve fund to be expended under the control and direction of the Board of School Directors for the purpose of operating the school?

Moderator read Article 3, asked for and received a motion with second for discussion. No comments or discussion brought forward, he asked for and received a motion to vote on the Article. All voted in favor, and Moderator declared Article passed.

**ARTICLE 4.** Shall the School District authorize the Board of School Directors to borrow money in anticipation of the receipt of revenues for the 2015-2016 school year?

Moderator read Article 4, asked for and received a motion with second for discussion. No comments or discussion brought forward, he asked for and received a motion to vote on the Article. All voted in favor, and Moderator declared Article passed.

**ARTICLE 5.** To transact any other business that may legally come before the meeting.

Moderator read Article 5, asked for and received a motion with second for discussion.

Cort Richardson offered a motion for the Supervisory Union to put a separated budget outlining the expenses and revenues for the two schools.

Moderator Duane explained that this topic was germane to the budget, but not a warned item and could be advisory only.

Mr. Richardson reworded his motion to instruct the EMES School Board to set out and separate assessments for Washington Central Supervisory Union revenues and expenses. Motion seconded.

Board Member Looke referred to the Supervisory Union's report on page 89 in the town report, and inquired if this was a clarification of the request.

Charles Johnson wanted to know what it would prove.

Chair Bennett explained that the Board works closely with the Supervisory Union, and it has helped cut numbers before, especially with the combination of technology, resources, transportation, and services. Various line items have changed over the last few years as the Union has combined and changed things with all the schools.

Ellen Knodler wanted to know what would happen if the budget failed. Board Member Looke responded that they would look into other matters.

Donald Welch asked if the information on page 89 made the motion go away and Loring Starr added that the information on page 89 was quite broad and not much help.

Chair Bennett responded that they would inquire into a more comprehensive and informational breakdown.

Moderator Duane invited a vote on the motion, all voted in favor and motion passed.

Alice Angney asked about the item presented last year's town meeting of better attendance.

Board Member Smith responded that the Committee formed of which some members were present and they submitted a report on page 43 in the town report. The report is also available on the Town's website.

Chair Bennett invited the audience to attend Board meetings as they are open to the public. Mr. Connor complimented the Board on their ORCA meetings as being very informative.

**Articles to be voted by Australian Ballot  
Polling Times – 7:00 A.M. Through 7:00 P.M.**

**ARTICLE 6.** Shall the School District adopt a budget not to exceed \$4,133,843 for the operation of the school for the ensuing year?

**ARTICLE 7.** To elect the following School Directors:

One (1) School Director

Two (2) Year Term

One (1) School Director

Three (3) Year Term

Moderator Duane called for any other further business. With none, motion made with second received to adjourn. All voted in favor. Moderator Duane concluded School Town Meeting 2015 with a thank you for attending, and called the meeting adjourned at 10:25 AM.

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

School Meeting minutes of March 3, 2015 approved by:

**East Montpelier School Board Members**

**East Montpelier School Moderator**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Rubin Bennett

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Michael O Duane

\_\_\_\_\_  
Flor Diaz-Smith

\_\_\_\_\_  
Priscilla Gilbert

**East Montpelier Town Clerk**

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Stephen Looke

\_\_\_\_\_  
Teresa E Conti

\_\_\_\_\_  
Kim Kendall

Received for Recording:

East Montpelier Town Clerk's Office this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_ AD at \_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_ AM

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