

ANNUAL TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING MINUTES

FEBRUARY 29, 2016

The legal voters of the Cornwall Town School District met at the Anna Stowell Sunderland Bingham Memorial School in said Cornwall, Vermont on Monday, February 29, 2016 at 6:30 PM, with approximately 130 people in attendance and transacted the following business:

Willem Jewett, our State Representative was introduced and spoke for a few minutes. The topics he focused on were Marijuana legalization, Cycling deaths and traffic fines lowered to allow folks to get their licenses back to get back to work. In regard to the cycling deaths, they are talking about the interlock system for vehicles so they will not start if the driver is impaired.

Prior to the call to order, Sarah Kemp introduced the School Board Members. Sarah introduced Jen Kravitz the new Principal and indicated that she has been a wonderful addition to the school. Sarah outlined several staff and classroom changes. Due to those changes there is a combined 5th – 6th grade class, with the exception of a separate 5th grade math teacher.

Sarah Kemp called the meeting to order at 6:45 PM.

ARTICLE 1: *To elect a Moderator for a term of one year.*

Sarah Kemp called for nominations for School District Moderator for one year. David Donahue nominated Cy Tall, Joan Donahue seconded the nomination. There were no additional nominations. Cy Tall was elected Moderator for the School District for one year by voice vote.

ARTICLE 2: *Shall the voters of the Town School District approve the Town School District Meeting Minutes of March 2, 2015?*

Anne Collins/Benj Deppman moved to approve the Town School District Minutes for March 2, 2015. There was no discussion. The motion carried on voice vote.

ARTICLE 3: *Shall the voters of the Town School District accept the reports of the Town School District officers?*

Joan Donahue/Ingrid Jackson moved to accept the reports of the Town School District Officers. There was no discussion. The motion carried on voice vote.

ARTICLE 4: *Shall the voters of the Town School District authorize its Board of Directors, under 16 VSA 562 (9), to borrow money by issuance of bonds or notes not in excess of anticipated revenue for the school year?*

Lisa Roberts/Andrew Munkres moved to authorize the School District Board of Directors to borrow money by issuance of bonds or notes not in excess of anticipated revenue for the school year. There was no discussion. The motion carried on voice vote.

ARTICLE 5: *Shall the voters of the Town School District approve the school board to expend \$1,479,162, which is the amount the school board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year? It is estimated that this proposed budget, if approved, will result in education spending of \$15,976 per equalized pupil. This projected spending per equalized pupil is 1.75% lower than spending for the current year.*

Ingrid Jackson/John Roberts moved to approve the budget of \$1,479,162, which is the amount the school board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year. Andrew Munkres asked two questions about the Pre-K contracted services: 1) will the Pre-K students go to the Cornwall School? 2) will the Pre-K students be on the school buses? The answer to both questions was no. The students will continue to be instructed in day care centers or home based pre-schools. The students will not be riding the school buses. Cornwall will help to pay for 6 Pre-K spots for approved instructional partners. Andrew Munkres also mentioned that the school is still down one teacher. He wondered if there was discussion about which classes would be combined in the future. Jen Kravitz indicated that the budget must be passed first and then they will start the philosophical discussion of which classes would be best to combine based on size, group dynamics, math, literacy, etc. Todd Kincaid asked if there was any data indicating how small the population of Cornwall school might get. The data does show a decline, but the education program is good, so the board hopes that the numbers will remain strong. The Pre-K numbers are unknown, and 10 new families have recently moved into Cornwall. The motion carried on voice vote.

ARTICLE 6: *Shall the voters of the Town School District authorize its Board of Directors to place \$32,592 from the Education Reserve Fund into the Capital Projects Fund?*

Lisa Roberts/John Roberts moved to authorize the Board of Directors to place \$32,592 from the Education Reserve Fund into the Capital Projects Fund. Jean Terwilliger indicated that by moving this amount of money from the Reserve Fund, it appears that the Fund will be emptied. Sarah Kemp explained that if the ACT 46 merger is passed that all assets of the Cornwall School become part of the union. There is building maintenance that needs to be done, and by moving the money at this point, the school board will be able to utilize the money for capital improvement purposes. Ben Marks mentioned that the fire department had done a safety visit and identified several safety issues. Have those problems been addressed? Jen Kravitz indicated that all of the identified problems have been corrected except for the alarm in the kitchen, which is scheduled to be installed this summer. The motion carried on voice vote.

ARTICLE 7: *Shall the voters of the Town School District authorize its Board of Directors to place \$30,200 from the disposition of School House #5 into the Capital Projects Fund?*

Michael Sheridan/T Tall moved to authorize the Board of Directors to place \$30,200 from the disposition of School House #5 into the Capital Projects Fund. Bjarki Sears reiterated that the logic of moving the money now in preparation for the ACT 46 merger vote makes sense. If the merger vote is defeated, the money can be moved back to the Education Reserve Fund. The motion carried on voice vote.

ARTICLE 8: *To transact any other business proper to come before said meeting. Upon completion of the transaction of the aforesaid business, or upon adjournment of the aforesaid meeting for any other purpose, said meeting shall be reconvened on Tuesday, March 1, 2016 at the Cornwall Town Hall for the purpose of voting on the following business of the Town School District by Australian ballot. **Polls will be Open 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM.***

There was no other business to discuss.

ARTICLE 9: *To elect one School Director for the Town School District for a term of three years.*

ARTICLE 10: *To elect one School Director for the Town School District for a term of two years.*

No action was taken on Articles 9 and 10 as voting will take place tomorrow, Tuesday, March 1, 2016 at the Cornwall Town Hall from 7 AM – 7 PM.

Unified Union School District Articles

ARTICLE 11: *Shall the Cornwall Town School District, which the State Board of Education has found necessary to include in the proposed unified union school district, join with the school districts of Bridport, Middlebury ID#4, Ripton, Salisbury, Shoreham, Weybridge, and Union District #3, which the State Board of Education has found necessary to include in the proposed unified union school district for the purpose of forming a unified union school district to be named the Addison Central School District, as provided in Title 16, Vermont Statutes Annotated, upon the following conditions and agreements:*

- (a) Grades. The unified union school district will operate grades pre-kindergarten through grade twelve to all students in the unified union school district.*
- (b) Board of School Directors. The unified union school district board of school directors will be roughly proportional to the populations of the forming school districts based upon the decennial U.S. Census. The initial composition of the Board shall consist of thirteen (13) school directors, seven (7) being residents of Middlebury, and one (1) each being a resident from Bridport, Cornwall, Ripton, Salisbury, Shoreham, and Weybridge, respectively. School directors shall be elected by the voters of all forming school districts of the proposed unified union district. The Board composition shall be recalculated promptly following the release of each subsequent decennial census.*
- (c) Assumption of debts and ownership of school property. The unified union school district shall assume the indebtedness of member districts; assume all operating deficits and/or surpluses or reserve funds of the member districts; acquire and pay for the school properties of member districts; all as specifically identified and provided for in Articles 6 and 7 in the Final Report.*
- (d) Final Report. The provisions of the Final Report approved by the State Board of Education on December 15, 2015, which is on file in the Town Clerk's office, shall govern the unified union school district.*

Article 11 will be voted on by Australian ballot tomorrow, Tuesday, March 1, 2016 at the Cornwall Town Hall from 7 AM – 7 PM, however, it was important to discuss and clarify exactly what the ACT 46 merger entails and allow voters time to ask questions about the proposed merger.

Peter Conlon, our current UD#3 representative, started the discussion by giving an overview of the proposed unified school district and school board. Dave Donahue asked what the philosophy was for creating the number of board representatives from the towns involved. Peter C. indicated that the first number was 15 board members, but the State Board denied that request. At large voting, which allows the voters of each member town to vote on all of the board members allows proportionality across the district. There will be 7 board members from Middlebury and 1 board member from each of the other towns. Ben Marks asked if the population numbers change when the next census is taken will the number of board members change. It is not possible to answer that question until the census occurs. With the at large voting as it stands now, Middlebury is under represented and several towns are over represented. Laura Fetterolf expressed concern that Middlebury would be able to block a vote with their majority. It was explained that the board members are representing all of the district students and it was felt that a blocked vote would not be an issue. Peter Conlon explained the district will be taking a leap of faith, but his experience on the UD#3 board is that town lines do not exist and that the board looks at all students. T Tall asked if the merger is approved, when the unified board would take over. The Unified board would take over the official duties on July 1, 2017. The existing school boards would continue in effect until December 2017 to handle any last property or paperwork requirements. Voters will be voting for

board members for both school boards again next year at Town Meeting. Fred Greenman asked what the definition of a majority on the new unified board would be. Maureen Deppman indicated that a simple majority would carry a motion on typical board decisions. A super majority of 10 votes would be required on a major question, such as closing a specific school. Klara Calitri asked about the possibility of including two at large members to the unified board. The State Board denied any additional members to the unified board. Marc Lapin asked why the board number is limited to 13, the number given to the charter committee was limited to 18, however, the State board only approved 13 for this unified district. Benj Deppman verified that if the merger passes, the Cornwall School District will sell everything to the Unified District for \$1, and that should the school close, the Unified District would sell the building, et al back for the same \$1. Maureen Deppman indicated that was correct. Bill Johnson remarked that there is a lot of institutional history with the members on the current school board, and wondered if there would be any kind of advisory committee formed to assist the new unified board. Maureen D. indicated that would be a decision that the new board would make. Charlie Grigg asked what the benefits of the unified district would be. Benefits include: one school board overseeing the district, there will be a cost savings of \$200,000 over the next 5 years, the state is offering incentives (\$150,000) to merge now, and these incentives will not be available later, the schools in the ACSU are being governed by 50 people now on various boards which makes it difficult to make any major changes to the current district, declining enrollment is a reality so the local districts need to work together, the small schools grant will go away without the merger. Bjarki Sears pointed out that the benefit to at large voting allows board members from all towns to talk to each other. Donna Brewer pointed out that the seven one room school houses in Cornwall were governed by one school board. T Tall reminded the group that the Cornwall school was built with donated dollars, not tax money. He wanted to make sure that the building and land would come back to the town for the \$1 as outlined. The charter committee determined that the building and land would be returned to the town. Janet Greenman reminded the voters that if the merger does not pass now, the state will mandate that the district becomes unified in a few years. Lisa Calitri asked if there was any reversibility in the unified district. In other words, if Cornwall votes to merge, but is unhappy after a period of time can they pull out of the district. Maureen D. indicated that the community could negotiate an exit from the unified district. David Donahue pointed out that all of the things that are charming about the Cornwall School will remain, such as FOCS, Grand friends Luncheon, etc. Laura Fetterolf asked if class configuration will still be a local school decision, and it will. Carolyn Jackson asked why we must sell the building and that is because the Unified board will maintain the building. Abi Sessions indicated that the 2018 budget will be for the Unified District, will there be one school meeting for the Unified board or will they meet in all of the schools? The new board will make this decision. Brian Gill said that the plan is to consolidate districts throughout the state and wondered if this was designed to close schools. The law says that it is not designed to close schools, but would make it easier. The ACSU is doing an accelerated version of the consolidation process as our district is simple. Kristina Simmons asked how the Cornwall School section of the unified district budget will be created. Does the principal create the budget and then present it to the Unified board or is there a district wide per pupil cost. The Superintendent will receive all budgets and discuss with the new unified board. Bill Johnson asked if there was a Charter School effect allowing the possibility of sending a student to another school within the district if the child needs services provided there. Once again, the new unified board will make these types of decisions.

ARTICLE 12: *To elect thirteen (13) school directors from the nominees to serve on the school board of the proposed unified union school district board from the date of the organizational meeting for the following terms:*

- One (1) school director who is a resident of Bridport for a one-year term.*
- One (1) school director who is a resident of Cornwall for a two-year term.*
- Two (2) school directors who are residents of Middlebury for a one-year term.*
- Two (2) school directors who are residents of Middlebury for a two-year term.*
- Three (3) school directors who are residents of Middlebury for a three-year term.*
- One (1) school director who is a resident of Ripton for a three-year term.*

One (1) school director who is a resident of Salisbury for a one-year term.
One (1) school director who is a resident of Shoreham for a two-year term.
One (1) school director who is a resident of Weybridge for a three-year term.

No action was taken on Article 12 as voting will take place tomorrow, Tuesday, March 1, 2016 at the Cornwall Town Hall from 7 AM – 7 PM.

With no further business to conduct, T Tall moved to adjourn the Cornwall School District meeting at 7:58 PM. The motion was carried on voice vote.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Johnson,
Cornwall School District Clerk