

## TOWN MEETING MARCH 02, 2009

Moderator Joss Besse introduced guests; Representatives Bill Frank and George Till, Assistant Superintendent John Alberghini, Joanne Machia from CESU and Smilie Principal Sheila Rivers. Both Reps spoke briefly to the crowd outlining what they have been working on and invited residents to contact them with any question. The floor was opened to questions and Barry Spencer asked if the Legislature was interested in making any budget cuts. Till answered that there are two versions of the budget they would be ready for review soon.

The meeting was called to order and the school portion began.

Phil Graff, school board chair introduced himself and board members introduced themselves.

*Article 1 To hear and act upon the reports of the school directors. Motioned by Jerry Mullen and seconded by Ken Remsen.*

Phil Graff: There is an increase of 4% on the budget. There is a new act in the legislature, Act 82, which limits school spending, which this board always does. The staff was reduced and there are now multi age classrooms. Guidance and art hours were cut. The board has tried to reduce hours without forfeiting quality. 1,330,302 which is a 4% increase. The multi age configuration will be ready soon. An engineering firm did a study on the building and the roof and the Board did not feel they needed a bond issue for the roof right now, perhaps the stimulus package will help since the project is "shovel ready"

Ken Remsen: If we are reducing the specials are we reducing because of the multi class? Is there special ed for the teachers who will do multi age classrooms?

Sheila Rivers: There is no time reduction for the children with special needs. They will have the same time with their specials teachers (art, etc). There is professional development for multi-age teachers. They have a person from CESU to help the teachers. All were in favor motion passed

*Article 2 Shall the voters of the Bolton School District authorize the school board under VSA 16, §562 (9) to borrow money by issuance of bonds or notes of anticipated revenues for the school year? Motioned by Jerry Mullen and seconded by Tom Haviland.*

Ernest Levesque: How many students are at Smilie?

Graff 70

The question was called. Not all were in favor, but the ayes have it. Motion passed.

*Article 3 To vote a budget of \$1,330,302 to meet the expenses of the district. Motioned by Ken Remsen and seconded by Tom Longstreth.*

Levesque: That looks like 18K per student, which is double what the state allows.

Graff: I believe the number is closer to 14K which is still above the statewide average but the size of the school and the experience of the staff factor into this. Due to decreasing enrollment we have cut staff. We've no control over the numbers.

Levesque: We should think about merging.

Graff: There is a study in Jericho and Underhill regarding governance; which would mean one school board would govern all. I believe this has passed with

some of the schools. We are looking into this as well.

RJ Vallie: Is our per pupil cost over the state average?

Graff: If it were over the statewide average we'd have to ask for a second vote to get that passed. This year it is not but, my projection for next year is that we might be asking for the second vote.

Jerry Mullen: Several years ago the town did tuition kids out and our cost to Jericho was significantly higher than what the average cost per pupil would be if we kept them in town.

Graff: Also, when kids are tuitioned out we do lose our town center, so to speak.

The question was called, Not all were in favor motion passed were in favor, but the ayes carried. Motion passed.

*Article 4 Shall the voters of the Bolton School District authorize the Board of School Directors to apply for a loan from the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Program and borrow an amount not to exceed \$25,000 for water system improvements? Motioned by Jerry Mullen, seconded by Tom Haviland.*

Mullen: What's wrong with the water system?

Graff: We have to meet certain standards. We're going to borrow the money and add UV lighting. We will be able to get the money back from another program.

Mark Andrews: Will we need an over seer for this?

Graff: Yes, it'll be Mike Bernadine. And operating it will become part of the regular school budget with minimal maintenance.

Spencer: How much money in the regular budget?

Graff: Very little. Probably several hundred dollars.

The question was called. All were in favor motion passed

*Article 5 Shall the voters of the Bolton School District approve the payment of a \$10 stipend per board meeting to the School Board Directors? Motioned by Jerry Mullen Seconded by Duncan Galbraith. All were in favor motion passed*

*Article 6 To transact any other business thought proper when met.*

Andrews: Thanks to the board members for the good work on the budget. We are all were in favor motion passed in favor of supporting small school. I would like to see birth rates and long term planning in the town report. I believe it's the board's responsibility to look ahead at the consolidation issue and we should start thinking about it.

Graff: We have been doing that on the executive committee at CESU. We are aware of the numbers and the costs.

Andrews: We need public engagement. How does the public get involved early on.

Levesque: We could use the school for other functions. I do commend the board for the work they did this year.

Graff: Consolidation may sound like a bad word but it can work. It might not be next year and we won't jump into it.

Levesque: You need to be careful negotiating.

Remsen In thinking about different ways to fix small school costs, I would question governance. The small school issue is you are asking one administrator to do a lot of work. There are other options. Let's get the discussion going.

Remsen: You don't save money but you may have more options working with more schools,

Graff: The special ed needs of a school can be overwhelming and that's one place where we need an administrator. I think we do need one.

Mary Ellen Woods There is a lot of talk about merging, I think there are lots of issues. This could be a place for community events, well, it is used for that now and we would welcome more activities. It's being used now as a central community center. Building administration is essential and the principal is very involved with discipline issues and with teachers who might need help. Working parents need the day care close by the school.

Mike Rainville: I don't understand spec ed. What's going on? Why so high?

Graff: The type of special education needs have changed. More autism, some students need lots more care. Some of this money comes back to us from the state, some of it is unfounded.

Rainville: Do you think the special education is broken?

Graff: We used to send special ed children out for about \$50K per student per year. Now we have Mansfield Academy and we keep them in the district. We don't have a lot of control. The state says we have to educate them

Michael Woods: Some data from 1996 to 2007 shows that the amount of special ed kids declined by 3%. But the amount of classroom assistance went up 300%. The number of kids has dropped but the intensity of the needs has gone up. Having them in the classroom presents a predicament. Paras keep the kids in the classroom but it costs about \$80K per .kid per program with no transportation. Our hands are tied, we have to play by the fed laws.

Graff: Ann Whitman finished her one year as MMU rep and no one is running. Anyone interested in running as a write-in?

Mullen: Are the meetings still on Thursdays.

Graff: Yes.

There was no other business for this board. Tom Haviland motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Jerry Mullen.

There was a brief break and the town portion began.

Articles 1,2 and 3 will be voted by Australian ballot on Tuesday March 03, 2009.

*Article 1 To elect all officers as required by law.*

*Article 2 To see if the voters will approve the Select Board to add one quarter (1/4) cent to the tax rate to support a fund to purchase conservation land.*

*Article 3 To see if the voters will approve the Select board to add one-eighth (1/8) of a cent to the tax rate to support a fund for the purchase of library cards for residents.*

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*Article 4 To see if the voters will approve a value exemption increase for disabled veterans from the current exemption of \$10,000 to \$40,000.. Motioned by Jerry Mullen and seconded by Ernest Levesque.*

Rich Reid: Can you define disability?

Deborah LaRiviere: You must have been discharged from the military with more than a 50% disability.

Tom Haviland: What's the tax dollar impact?

LaRiviere: We have only one exemption right now and it would be about \$500 in taxes.

All were in favor motion passed

*Article 5 To accept the town report Motioned by Jerry Mullen and seconded by Ken Remsen.*

There were budget questions and the moderator requested that they be held until the budget article. All were in favor motion passed.

*Article 6 To vote a budget of \$716,750 to meet the expenses and liabilities of the town and to set a tax rate sufficient to provide the same. Motioned by Jerry Mullen and seconded by Mica Cassara.*

Mullen: Can you explain the abbreviations?

John Devine: Full time, part time and over time.

Pat Mallow: I noticed the town office had new lawn put in. How come?

Devine: The first grass seed planting after the construction didn't grown and it was re-seeded.

Spencer: Shouldn't that have been the responsibility of excavator?

Devine: Much of the excavation was donated.

Nancy Remsen: Can you tell us about the Notch Road project?

Devine: We have \$10,000 to do an engineering study to fix the problem.

We spent about one hundred thousand and those repairs haven't held up very well. The preliminary proposal would be 10K for the engineering study and we'll come back to the people.

Reid: Does the town get any income form the gravel pit

Devine: That's an issue. Our lawyers advise us that we can't single out gravel haulers to charge an excess load fee, we would have to charge all were in favor motion passed trucks even trash. We have no way to get money from the pit.

Vallie: One of the answers we want to get from the survey is why this is happening. The surface of the roan is cracking even above the pit.

David Parot: If we spend 1/10 of the repaving budget on an engineering study and they find it is the pit, will the board go after the pit?

Devine: The 10K won't be 10 %. The 100k is already spent and the only way we can go after the gravel pit it to reduce the weight on the road and force the truckers to take less load.

Parot: A garbage truck is an essential service but gravel is not and it's hurting the road. We're talking about a lot of money. At what point does the board look at the pit and limit the weight or the amount of trucks coming out of there?

Devine: There is probably something we can do but we don't have an

answer right now.

Parot: Spending 200K on the road for one business is too much. Is the town willing to take a stand to limit our liability or not?

Vallie: We don't know the causation yet. The gravel pit may not be the sole issue. We'd like to hear from an engineer what is causing the issues.

Parot: It doesn't take a 10K study to tell us that.

Levesque: The trucking companies can afford the money. It's common sense. We don't allow them on our interstate because of the damage they do.

Andrews: Our road crew does a great job. Is the Board shortcutting anything in the budget to do this study? Is the town looking at any stimulus packages?

Devine: There's always a trade off. We are doing less paving in order to accommodate this study. Grading will still take place.

Andrews: Someone on the board should take an active role to look at grants.

Vallie: We didn't want to delay on the study in an effort to get some help. We might be able to get emergency funding if we could prove the problem

Joss Besse: VLCT is tracking stimulus package closely. Understanding what the federal law allows is complicated. Allocations to states is different.

Parot: I'd like to impress on the board that the economic problems stem from people looking to the feds to solve their problems. We should try to solve our problems at home.

Mullen: We had a problems earlier with overweight trucks but we need a police force to enforce over weight trucks.

Parot: If we enact a load limit it'll work.

Mallow: Was the 20 thousand dollars taken out of the paving to make it look good so everyone could get a raise?

Devine: We don't have a lot of control in the budget except services and payroll.

Mallow: Do employees pay portion of health care?

Vallie: Yes.

Brenda Bowler: Let's talk about pay increases, which I didn't get but I got a 9% increase in what I had to pay for health care costs.

Kathy Smith: The wages for full time show a dollar amount as a year-to-date expense. If that's correct, why is the new figure more than double?

LaRiviere: The year-to-date is a five-month figure.

The question was called. It was difficult to distinguish between the Yes and no. Jerry Mullen requested a division of the room, seconded by Mark Andrews. Those in favor to one side, opposed to another. The division of the room showed approximately 100 people in favor, approximately 10 opposed. The ayes have it, motion passed.

*Article 7 To see if the town will vote to pay its real and personal property taxes to the Town Treasurer in four installments with due dates of September 15, 2008, November 15, 2009, February 15, 2010 and May 15, 2010. Motioned by Jerry Mullen*

*and seconded by Linde Emerson. All were in favor motion passed*  
*Article 8 To see if the town will authorize interest charges on all delinquent real and personal property of one (1) per cent per month. Interest accrues as soon as the payment is late. Motioned by Ken Remsen and seconded by Jerry Mullen.*

Mullen: Do we accept postmarks?

LaRiviere: Yes

All were in favor motion passed

*Article 9 To authorize the Select board to borrow money for the necessary needs of the town as they may arise. Motioned by Jerry Mullen and seconded by Ken Remsen.*

Mullen: Insertion of the word "as" which was left out.

All were in favor motion passed.

*Article 10 To establish expenses for the members of the Select Board. Motion by Jerry Mullen to pay \$10, second by Tom Haviland. All were in favor motion passed with one nay.*

*Article 11 To see if the town will authorize the Select Board to acquire by gift or purchase, land, in collaboration with the Town's Conservation Commission, to promote reforestation, water conservation and good forest practices or for open land for animal habitats, recreational uses and to preserve important ecological areas. Motioned by Ann Whitman and seconded by Mica Cassara.*

Steve Macleod Are there any purchases on the town's horizon?

Devine: None for the town but the Conservation Commission has a project.

Lexi Haselton: I am representing the Conservation Commission and the purchase we are looking into buying is a Vermont Land trust easement for an extension of the Preston Pond property, know as the 'upper west'. The cost of the easement is 12 K but the Commission is asking for \$7500. CRAG VT is purchasing the land. The easement will protect the land for the town people and guarantee the access of the property.

Besse Article 11 is a normal general enabling vote. The Select Board will take this under consideration at the next meeting.

Macleod what's the acreage?

Haselton 18

Besse If anyone wants a public hearing, say so and the Select Board will schedule one.

Paula Gervia: I would hate for a small group of people to vote on this. We're acting like a bank. We shouldn't be giving funds to other people.

Devine The ¼ cent vote is tomorrow, but whether or not we contribute to this issue will not happen tomorrow. We can do a vote and have public hearings.

Besse: Would you like to have a public hearing? Hands were raised

Levesque: Stop spending.

Devine Tomorrow will not be the decision maker. The ¼ cent is uncommitted money.

Rainville: How much does the ¼ cent generate per year

LaRiviere: Between 4 and 6 thousand

Jerry Mullen requested the question be called with a second by Tom Haviland. All were in favor motion passed.

*Article 12 To see if the voters of the town of Bolton shall request the Vermont legislature to:*

- 1) Recognize that the 2% of our New England region's power grid supply that is provided by Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Plant can be replaced with a combination of local, renewable electricity and efficiency measures, along with the purchase of hydro generated electricity and excess power already in the New England electricity Market.*
- 2) Given the viable alternatives and the risks posed by continued operation, ensure that Vermont Yankee will cease operation in March 2012, after having completed its 40 year design life by not granting approval for operation of the plant after that date by not determining that further operation will promote the general welfare;*
- 3) Hold the Entergy Corporation, which purchased Vermont Yankee in 2002 responsible to fully fund the plant's clean-up and decommissioning when the reactor closes, as the corporation pledged to do when it purchased Vermont Yankee. Motioned by Jerry Mullen and seconded by Tom Haviland.*

Mullen: This article is a little misleading. What are we going to replace this with? Energy is a serious problem. 1/3 of the lights in this room are powered by Yankee. But every time someone wants to put up a wind tower someone cries 'it'll block my view'. There should be an engineering study.

Tom Haviland: I'm one of the people who got this on the ballot. Yankee does provide about 30% to Vermont and about 2% to New England. Our rates are going up in 2012. Entergy is not looking out for us. It's important to let the plant close

Parot Without Entergy here to defend themselves, this article is unfair.

Duncan Galbraith: GMP gets 30% of their day-to-day from Entergy. A 2% figure downplays the importance of Yankee.

Steve Barner: I'd like to propose an amendment to separate 1 and 2 from 3. Jerry Mullen seconded by the amendment.

Deborah Shelby I'm new to the area but what struck me was the information that I gathered over the last few months about how the facility hasn't been taken care of. The company has demonstrated that they are not responsible. If we are going to have nuclear power the companies should be more responsible. No errors should be stood for.

Besse: The question is to separate the article into two parts. The question on the amendment was called. All were in favor, the motion to separate passed.

The discussion continued on the separated pieces.

Items 1 and 2

Mica Cassara: One thing that is rarely discussed is the waste issue. The legislature will be voting on safety, but at this time every gram of waste is sitting on the ground at the Yankee plant. There is no way to dispose of it. It is the most dangerous waste produced. The federal government was suppose to develop a plan to dispose of this but haven't. If Yankee is allowed to continue we will have more waste. Do you want 20 more years of that waste sitting there? I'd rather pay more for electricity or wind.

Duncan Martin Vt Yankee isn't a resident of Bolton and they have failed to give answers before.

Macleod If you want to pay more, close Vt Yankee in 2012. As far as the safety goes Vt Yankee is regulated by a federally controlled process which is very rigorous. As far as renewable, we don't have the time before 2012 to replace what Yankee is producing.

Levesque: I don't want Hydro Quebec to have a hold on Vermont  
The question was called on parts 1 and 2. A sow of hands indicated that there were 24 in favor 27 against. Motion failed

The discussion continued on part 3

Steve I understand why those in Brattleboro don't want a power plant. Now it's at the end of its' life cycle. There seemed to be money to close another plant in Readsboro, leaving a pristine place. That's the model of how it should be done. Entergy should be responsible. We shouldn't let them get away with not closing it correctly. They don't have Vermont's best interest at heart.

The questions on part 3 was called. All were in favor motion passed

*Article 13 To transact any other business thought proper when met.*

Barb Stanley Can you explain the library card vote for tomorrow?

LaRiviere: Since we have no library, and the cost of cards could be prohibitive to some, with this 1/8 cent the town could reimburse families for the cost of cards. It would be done on the honor system, if you really couldn't afford a card, the town would reimburse you for that cost in some way.

A motion to end the meeting was made by Jerry Mullen and seconded by Linde Emerson.  
The meeting ended at 9 pm.

Attest:  
Deborah La Riviere