

Minutes of the Hinesburg Annual Town Meeting  
March 1, 2010  
Town of Hinesburg, Vermont

**Selectboard:** Jonathan S. Trefry, Chairman, Howard E. Russell, Randall C. Volk, Andrea Morgante and Kenneth Brown

**Town Clerk & Treasurer:** Melissa B. Ross

**Town Moderator:** Joseph D. Fallon

Moderator Joseph Fallon called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. on March 1, 2010. He reviewed Roberts Rules of Order and some general rules of conduct.

Moderator Fallon then read the warning:

The legal voters of the Town of Hinesburg, Vermont are hereby warned and notified to meet at the Champlain Valley Union High School auditorium, in said Town of Hinesburg, Monday evening March 1, 2010 at 7:30 PM to transact business on all articles except Articles 1 and 2 which will be voted upon by Australian ballot Tuesday, March 2, 2010 at the Town Hall in said Town of Hinesburg. Polls will be open at 7:00 AM and close at 7:00 PM. The March 1, 2010 meeting to be adjourned to the Town Hall in said Town of Hinesburg at 9:00 AM March 2, 2010, if necessary, to act on any business left unfinished when met.

**Article 1:** *To elect the necessary town and school district officers by Australian ballot on Tuesday, March 2, 2010. (See Officers for Election list in the Town Report)*

**Article 2:** *Shall the Selectboard be authorized to extend the term on the Farmers' Tax Stabilization "Piggy Back" Contracts to qualified farmers for a five-year period to extend from April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2015?*

**Article 3:** *To hear the reports of the Town officers and take action thereon.* Jonathan Trefry, Selectboard chair, made a Powerpoint presentation detailing highlights in the community during the prior year. He began his presentation with a brief overview of the on-going suspension of Police Chief Chris Morrell and updated the attendees on the arbitration process and what the accrued costs have been. He showed photos of all new additions to the staff, as well as committees that had done some significant work over the preceding months. Among the highlights were photos of the wastewater facility upgrade that is still in the process of making improvements; the safety committee that was formed to increase and improve workplace safety; the Laplatte Headwaters Town Forest Management Committee and Hinesburg Rides. He also discussed the schematic plans for the new fire and police building, the wellness program for town employees, paving, the new lowered village speed limit, the new Silver St. intersection, and the village growth center zoning.

The moderator then asked if there were questions or comments regarding the report. Barbara Walling asked a question regarding the amount of money that had been

spent on legal fees for the police chief issue. Trefry explained again what the total costs were. There were then a couple of other comments from residents Bruce Cunningham and Paul Zenaty expressing their support for the chief and questioning the actions of the selectboard around this issue.

A motion to accept the report of the selectboard as given was then made and seconded and the report was approved by voice vote.

**Article 4:** *Shall the town appropriate \$854,304 to defray the general expenses of the Town?* The moderator asked for questions or comments regarding Article 4. There was one question regarding the town administrator's salary questioning why she was getting a \$10,000 raise. The selectboard members said that this was not the case and no such raise was being given. A motion was made and seconded to pass Article 4 as written and it was approved on a voice vote.

**Article 5:** *Shall the Town appropriate \$695,881 for highway purposes?* There was no discussion on Article 5. A motion was made and seconded and Article 5 passed on a voice vote.

**Article 6:** *Shall the town appropriate \$470,702 for the general expenses of the Community Police Department?* Matt Galloway made a motion to remove the word "community" from the Article and to change it to the Hinesburg Police Department. The motion was not seconded and was therefore dismissed by the moderator. Mary Crane then asked how many full-time officers we would have if this budget were approved. Howard Russell answered that the budget included 5 full-time officers, one of which will be paid for by a COPS grant for 3 years, and 35 hours of part-time coverage. There was a question as to whether this reflected an increase in the hours of coverage to 24 hours a day and the answer was no, but that it would allow for 2 officers on duty on some occasions. Will Patten asked whether the canine program would be continued and whether anything had been warned regarding the new police / fire station. Russell replied that there was no plan regarding the canine program at this time and there had not been a warning for the fire and police facility as we do not know whether we will get funding for it yet under the federal stimulus funds. Sam Hemingway then asked what the term "charges" referred to in regards to the Morrell suspension. He wondered if this term was appropriate given that there are no allegations of legal wrongdoing. This was answered by the selectboard saying that the process for dismissal of police chiefs is very specific and that the term originated in State statute. Vicki Matthews had a question regarding how judicial fines were calculated and wondered why they didn't do more enforcement on Route 116. Randy Volk answered that the Town retained a larger share of the traffic ticket dollars on secondary roads, and that the State is the one who uses a formula to calculate the Town's share of tickets.

There were then a couple of other questions regarding the COPS grant and why we need another full time officer. Russell answered that Hinesburg officers' caseload was higher per officer than surrounding towns. He also reiterated that the Town is only obligated to retain the 5<sup>th</sup> officer for a period of one year after the grant term is through. There were then several more questions and answers regarding the department. Will Patten asked whose idea it had been to hire an assistant chief in the first place, and Ken

Brown answered that it had been Chief Morrell who suggested it might be a good idea as he was approaching retirement age. Sara Quinn asked how much revenue the town was losing by not having the canine program. Tonya Bouchard wondered what had happened to the "5 or 6" officers who had left the department due to the Morrell suspension. Howdy Russell said only 2 part-time officers had left. Phil Pouech asked what constitutes a "case" in order to better understand if our officers were actually overworked. That data is available and may be put on the website so people can see it. Ellen Dooley asked whether we are legally obligated to have a police department and the answer was no. John Kiedaisch said that it has been a difficult year and that he wanted to commend the Selectboard for dealing with a very difficult issue. There was a round of applause for the Board. A motion was made and seconded and Article 6 passed by voice vote.

**Article 7:** *Shall the Town appropriate \$174,000 for the Carpenter Carse Library?* Tonya Bouchard wondered why we were appropriating this amount of money when the Library had received a large gift from a former resident. Library board members responded that the decedent's wishes were for the money to be spent on special things for the library and that the Board had yet to decide how to spend the money. There was a motion and a second and the Article passed by voice vote.

**Article 8:** *Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$7,500 for the purpose of obtaining options and/or the acquisition of lands, or those rights in land, which would preserve open space and natural resources, any unexpended portion of such sum to be placed in the Land Preservation Reserve Fund?* A motion was made and seconded and passed on a voice vote with no discussion.

**Article 9:** *Shall the Town appropriate \$2,000 to the Hinesburg Land Trust?* A motion was made and seconded and passed on a voice vote with no discussion.

**Article 10:** *Shall the Town appropriate \$600 for the Lake Iroquois Recreation District as Hinesburg's share?* The motion was made and seconded and passed on a voice vote with no discussion.

**Article 11:** *Shall the Town vote to raise the sum of \$28,700 to be disbursed as specifically designated to the following agencies/organizations?*

Hinesburg Community Resource Center	\$ 9,500
Visiting Nurse Association	7,000
Women Helping Battered Women	2,000
Champlain Valley Agency on Aging	2,200
Maple Leaf Farm	1,900
Chittenden Community Action	1,500
Committee on Temporary Shelter (COTS)	1,000
Hinesburg Rides Elderly & Disabled Transportation	1,000
Howard Center	800
Hinesburg Community Meal Site	500

Vermont CARES	500
Women's Rape Crisis Center	500
Vermont Center for Independent Living	300
	<u>\$28,700</u>

There was a fair amount of discussion regarding the methods for deciding which social service agencies received funding. The Selectboard explained that it is based on their requests and the evidence for how many Hinesburg residents they served. A member of the audience said that they felt that the Selectboard should not be asking residents to use tax dollars for this purpose in such difficult economic times. Howard Russell stated that such times were when the demand for those services was highest and that donations go down when economic times are tough, and that we should therefore continue our support for these agencies who help our friends and neighbors. A motion was made and seconded and the Article passed on a voice vote.

**Article 12:** *Shall the voters authorize the Town to become a Member of the Chittenden County Transportation Authority (CCTA) with first year cost of up to \$12,796 (for the period February – June 2011), and with membership costs changing annually, based on the cost of transportation services by the Chittenden County Transportation Authority (currently estimated at \$34,000 annually), with said funds to be used to establish commuter bus service to the Town of Hinesburg with these costs to be added to the amount to be raised annually by taxes? Karla Munson of Hinesburg Rides gave a brief presentation regarding the proposed bus service. She outlined the need for public transportation and how the program might work. She then introduced Chris Cole of CCTA who spoke about the bus service and answered questions from residents. There were several questions and answers, and the Selectboard noted that they had supported the proposal unanimously. Bob Hedden wondered if providing bus service would take shoppers away from Hinesburg merchants? There was a motion to approve Article 12 as written, it was seconded, and the motion passed on a voice vote.*

**Article 13:** *Shall the voters authorize the Selectboard to furnish the Town of St. George fire protection and first response coverage at the sum of \$26,417 for the period of one year?*

(If all articles are approved as printed, a total of \$2,246,483 will need to be raised in taxes for town government.)

A motion was made and seconded and the article passed on a voice vote with no discussion.

**Article 14:** *Shall the voters authorize the Selectboard to borrow money when needed to meet current expenses and indebtedness of said Town? A motion was made and seconded and the article was passed on a voice vote with no discussion.*

**Article 15:** *Shall the voters authorize the payment of real and personal property taxes for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2011 payable in full to the Town of Hinesburg in one*

*installment, with the due date being November 15, 2010? Any and all payments received in the Town Treasurer's Office later than midnight on November 15, 2010 will be considered delinquent and will be subject to the collection of interest at the rate of 1% per month or fraction thereof for the first three months and thereafter at the rate of 1 1/2% per month or fraction thereof.* Mary Crane asked whether there has been any thought given to paying taxes in more than one installment. Town Clerk Missy Ross indicated she is not averse to the idea, but that it might have some consequences such as necessitating borrowing by the town and also requiring people to pay part of their taxes prior to November. Ruth Ayer said she would prefer to leave it the way it is and if someone wants to pay their taxes ahead of time, they should feel free to do so. Ross said that she would look into it and we could discuss it further next year. A motion was made and seconded to pass Article 15 as written and it was passed on a voice vote.

**Article 16:** *To transact any other business proper to be brought before said meeting.* Roger Kohn made a motion to thank NRG Systems for being a good corporate citizen by offering their financial support to CCTA and its public transportation initiative for Hinesburg. The motion was seconded and approved.

Rob Bast then made a motion to thank Jim Gelber, who is serving in Afghanistan through a program in the Justice Department, and to let him know how much we appreciate his efforts in this regard and that we are very proud of him. Sharon Lee Trefry suggested that we recognize all the men and women in uniform. The motion was amended as such, seconded, and passed on a voice vote.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 9:45 p.m. The motion was seconded and the meeting was adjourned.