

**MINUTES OF TOWN MEETING**  
**PERU, VT**  
**March 3, 2015**

Gary Ameden, welcomed everyone to the 2015 Peru Town Meeting, called to order at 10:00AM Tuesday morning.

Before getting the meeting under way he welcomed students from the Burr & Burton Mountain Campus and Flood Brook Union School. He also encouraged anyone new to Town and/or Town meeting to stand and introduce themselves. Carl Holcomb Jr., Sarah Hamlett, Dec Jamieson, and Isabelle Caldwell stood and kindly introduce themselves adding a little narrative. Gary asked all to stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance. He said Peru had lost some good people this year and asked for a moment of silence to remember those that had passed.

Gary read the warning that states "The legal voters of the Town of Peru are hereby warned and notified to meet at the Peru Town Center on Tuesday, March 3, 2015 at the hour of 10:00AM to act on the following articles."

Article 1: To hear and act on the reports of the Town Officers.

Chuck Black made a motion to accept the reports as written and John Maher seconded. Hearing no discussion, Gary asked if those assembled were ready for the question? All in favor, motion passed.

Article 2: To elect Town Officers as the law directs.

Gary directed everyone to turn to page twelve for the list of elected town officers and then turned the meeting over to Charlie Howard, the Selectboard chair. Charlie asked for nominations for Town Moderator. John Maher moved to elect Gary Ameden and Gary Sharon seconded. Proposition B was moved and motion passed unanimously. Proposition B is moved when a sole person is nominated to move the vote.

➤ Moderator – 1 year

Gary Ameden

Gary resumed as the newly elected moderator and continued to move Article 2.

Town Clerk: Lucy Maher elected Margaret Cobb and Bob Stelz seconded. No other nominations, proposition B moved by Vickie Beattie with Jean Black seconding. All in favor, motion passed.

- Town Clerk – 1 year                      Margaret Cobb

Treasurer: Lucy Maher elected Donna Williams and Margaret Wood seconded. No other nominations, proposition B moved by Grant Braddish with Gary Sharon seconding. All in favor, motion passed.

- Town Treasurer – 1 year                      Donna Williams

Selectboard: John Acosta nominated Gail Acosta and Fran Stelz seconded. No other nominations, proposition B moved by Chuck Black with Jon Mowry seconding. All in favor, motion passed.

- Selectboard – 3 year                      Gail Acosta

Listers: Jack Pennypacker nominated Jan Georgett and Gary Sharon seconded. No other nominations, proposition B moved by Cindy Mowry with Gary Sharon seconding. All in favor, motion passed.

- Lister – 3 year                      Jan Georgett

After some discussion it was determined a second lister and all three auditor positions require elections as a result of resignations and appointments.

To continue, Alex Sheets nominated John Acosta and Jack Pennypacker seconded. No other nominations, proposition B moved by Jean Black with Vickie Beattie seconding. All in favor motion passed.

- Lister – 2 year                      John Acosta

Auditors: John Maher moved to elect Chuck Black. Mike Gayda seconded. Proposition B moved by Gary Sharon, Ben Freeman seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

Chuck Black moved to elect Alex Sheets. Gail Acosta seconded. Proposition B moved by Grant Braddish, Vickie Beattie seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

Chuck Black moved to elect Melinda Bebe. Alex Sheets seconded. Proposition B moved by John Maher, Gary Sharon seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

- Auditor – 3 year                      Chuck Black
- Auditor – 2 year                      Alex Sheets
- Auditor – 1 year                      Melinda Beebe

Cemetery Commission: Stewart Beattie moved to elect David Farnum. Grant Braddish seconded. Proposition B moved by Jean Black, Todd Williams seconded. All in favor, motion passed. By reason of Larry Daley's passing another position needs to be elected. Stewart Beattie nominated Bob Stelz. Gail Acosta Seconded. Proposition moved by Grant Braddish, Cindy Mowry seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

- Cemetery Commission – 5 years      David Farnum
- Cemetery Commission – 3 years      Bob Stelz

First Constable: David Farnum moved to elect Stewart Beattie. Bob Stelz seconded. Proposition B moved by Todd Williams, Gary Sharon, seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

- First Constable – 1 year              Stewart Beattie

Second Constable: Stewart Beattie moved to elect Chris Felion. Bob Stelz seconded. Proposition B moved by Grant Braddish, Jean Black seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

- Second Constable – 1 year              Chris Felion

Delinquent Tax Collector: Barbara Petra moved to elect John Maher. Mike Gayda seconded. Proposition B moved by Jean Black, Todd Williams seconded. All in favor, motion carried.

- Delinquent Tax Collector – 1 year              John Maher

Grand Juror: Gail Acosta nominated Hope Richardson. Gary Sharon seconded. Proposition B moved by Lucy Maher, Jean Black seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

- Grand Juror – 1 year                      Hope Richardson

Town Agent: Alex Sheets nominated Tracy Black. Todd Williams seconded. Proposition B moved by Cindy Mowry, Vickie Beattie seconded. All in favor, motion carried.

- Town Agent – 1 year                      Tracy Black

Trustee of Public Funds: Alex Sheets moved to elect Ben Freeman. John Acosta seconded. Proposition B moved by Grant Braddish, Lucy Maher seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

- Trustee of Public Funds – 1 year              Ben Freeman

RED Representative: Lucy Maher moved to elect Jon Mowry. Gail Acosta seconded. Proposition B moved by Vickie Beattie, Jean Black seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

- RED Representative – 3 year                      Jon Mowry

Stewart Beattie made a correction to the Justice of the Peace term to end January of 2017 thus being two years. The JP's elected in November at the general election include; Gary Ameden, Vickie Beattie, Stewart Beattie, Will Crandall, and Karen Utiger.

Article 3:

- A) To see if the Town will vote a tax to defray the expenses of the Town for the fiscal year of July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016, as set forth in the budgets submitted in the 2014 Town Report, subject to such modifications as this meeting may vote.

Vickie asked if this article is a vote on the Town Budget and Gary replied with an affirmative.

Upon being recognized by Gary, the following raised questions.

Chuck Black made a motion to move Article 3A as printed. John Maher seconded, all in favor, motion passed. Chuck asked about the increase in the equipment fund. Todd Williams explained it is due to various factors, a few including switching the rotation of purchasing new equipment, the replacement of the 550 earlier than expected and the purchase of a chipper. The Backhoe was scheduled to be replaced in 2015, but since the 2007 International truck has a weak motor Todd thought it was best to replace the Backhoe in 2020 and replace the 2007 International truck in 2016.

Chuck also asked about the increase in expenses at the Town garage. Charlie conveyed a couple improvements that will occur. A bathroom will be installed and at the suggestion of the fire marshal, both heating units will be replaced. A representative from efficiency Vermont will also be called in to discuss possible energy conservation suggestions and ideas.

Bob Stelz questioned the decrease in funds for rental of facilities. Grant explained Jeff Duda's plumping business is no longer renting the garage area at the Community House, it is being utilized by the Peru Fair Committee. Suzanne Ragone, owner of The Makery, is not charged rent because of the out of pocket capital improvements she made to the facility.

Margaret Wood inquired about line 344, miscellaneous income. Charlie said there was unexpected logging income this year.

Chuck Black moved to amend the budget by increasing the surplus amount applied to the tax rate to total \$150,000. Consequently, changing the total amount to be raised by taxes to \$524,650. This motion was seconded by John Maher.

Stewart Beattie made a motion to amend the amendment to include \$10,000, changing the \$150,000 surplus amount to \$140,000, for a fire escape on the top floor of the Community House. Bob Stelz seconded this motion.

Charlie said the \$10,000 was a rough estimate on the price of exit stairs and did not include installation, shipping or maintenance. He also stated the Fire Marshal filed a report advising an exit stairway is not required. Discussion ensued.

Gary gained control of the situation by reminding everyone that the community has always done well and held level headed meets by addressing questions to the moderator. He will recognize the speaker to maintain order and civility.

Alex Sheets explained that excess money from the previous years' budget goes into the surplus fund. Increasing the amount applied to taxes achieves a reduction in the amount of money raised by taxes, cause and effect. Several individuals suggested various ideas and opinions concerning the surplus. Ben Freeman said it might be worth considering investing in energy efficiency in the form of a community solar array initiative.

Chuck resumed the fire escape proposal by stating the State Fire Marshal would never error on the side of danger. The heating systems have been updated to three fairly modern gas furnaces. Rebecca Williams suggested an alternative solution of a fire escape latter. Stewart replied, the Historical Society is housed on the top floor, with mostly older people attending functions and he could not envision them using a latter. Bob suggested, at least purchasing multiple fire extinguishers.

Grant reminded everyone that a vote can only be on money and not use of dollars and/or specific allocations.

Gary summarized the amendment to the amended motion, to take \$10,000 from the \$150,000 surplus allocated to reduce tax the rate to use towards the fire exit stairs at the Community House. Vote taken, nay's carried.

Then the vote to amend the budget by increasing the total surplus to be applied to tax rate to \$150,000 thus decreasing amount to be raised by taxes to \$524,650, was taken. Motion passed.

Vote on the budget as amended passed.

Representative Patti Komline was recognized by Gary. She thanked everyone for their votes and reelected her in as our State Representative in November. She discussed a multitude of issue occurring at the State level;

- Budget short fall. Major cuts need to be made and new revenue raised.
- Cleaning up the lakes and waterways.
- New education bill and property tax reform. Thirty six school budgets were voted down last year.
- She sponsored a bill banning the sale of products containing micro beads. This will help keep our waters free of toxins.
- Working on a bill that will expand the market for our poultry farmers and grocers.

Gary recognized Dr Roger Fox. Dr Fox said the Mountain Valley Medical Clinic is approaching its 40<sup>th</sup> year of medical service and this is his 39<sup>th</sup> year of coming to expose himself at the Town Meeting. The clinic has never made a profit and they are grateful for the ongoing community support. MVMC is researching and pursuing an alliance with Springfield Medical Care Systems.

- B) To authorize the Selectmen to set the rate for the 2015 grand list meet the budget voted. Chuck moved the article, John Maher seconded, article approved.
- C) To establish the date of payment of such Taxes. Previous year's dates: July 1 – September 30. Bob Stelz moved the article, Gary Sharon seconded, article approved.

Article 4: To see if the Town will vote to accept the provisions made by law for payment of taxes to the Town Treasurer. Alex Sheets moved the motion, John Maher seconded, motion passed.

Article 5: To see if the Town will vote a sum of money to the following organizations which serve the community:

Mountain Valley Medical Clinic	\$2,963.00
Londonderry Volunteer Rescue Squad	\$1,000.00
Visiting Nurse Association of VT/NH	\$2,700.00
South Londonderry Free Library	\$1,000.00
Bennington County Conservation District	\$300.00
BROC	\$200.00
VT Center for Independent Living	\$140.00
SW Vermont Council on Aging	\$200.00
Center for Restorative Justice	\$300.00
Neighborhood Connections	\$1,000.00
Green Up Vermont	\$50.00
The Collaborative	\$750.00
Flood Brook Athletic Association	\$500.00
West River Sports Association	\$375.00
Project Against Violent Encounters	\$150.00
Peru Cemetery Commission	\$3,000.00
Bennington County Regional Commission	\$1,875.00
Bennington County Coalition for the Homeless	\$500.00
Rural Fire Protection Task Force	<u>\$100.00</u>
TOTAL	\$17,103.00

Jon Mowry made a motion to vote \$17,103.00 to the organizations. Ben Freeman seconded, motion carried.

Grant said the request come in unfiltered and the Selectboard doesn't make any changes.

Article 6: To transact other business that may properly come before the meeting.

Alex Sheets wanted the minutes to reflect the colorful beauty of Gary Ameden's tie.

Carl Holcomb Jr. would like to see a ban on helium balloons. Hope Richardson would like the Town of Peru to ban plastic bags. It was suggested, attending Selectboard meetings to discuss the course of proceeding to implement such an action.

Gary Ameden thanked Grant Braddish for all his years of service as a Selectboard member. Charlie Howard complimented Grant for his good community service, his strong way of knowing when to stand tall and when to bend, his wit and good humor and his decision making skills.

Jon Mowry, Peru RED School Board Representative, gave a brief update. The school budget passed at Tuesday February 24<sup>th</sup> meeting by a 70% yes to 30% no vote. Education spending is up by 12-13%. Per pupil spending is up only 5%. Over the last two years the total increase in the budget has been 2.5%. This year the net result will be an increase of 5% for the education tax rate. Half of this is due to an increase in secondary students and the lagging methodology the State uses to count pupils. Plus, special education costs are up considerably and being consolidated at the supervisory union level. Student numbers at the elementary level have increased by more than 30 pupils from 250 to 280. The goal is to continue to make Flood Brook Union School a better school with quality education so families continue to move into the district.

A survey was distributed in the fall with the clearest feedback asking for an expanding health care curriculum so a health care teacher was added to the budget. Feedback also included more options in World languages, access to instrumental music instruction, and theater. These will be implemented in the after school program.

The State continues to push consolidation and we are held up as moving in the right direction. What we have done, as far as consolidating with other towns and supervisory unions, is what the State wants to see.

Barbara Pierce asked about the town wide reappraisal. Jack Pennypacker said the booklet containing every parcel with the reappraised values will be out in the spring. There is no clear answer as to when and how this will impact taxes.

Ben Freeman, headmaster of the Burr & Burton Mountain Campus, said school choice supported by the State provides a remarkable value and we should be sure our representatives at the State level contain to support this measure. The Mountain Campus is holding an open house tonight



between 6 and 7PM with all welcome. Ben also mentioned the school is considered a net zero campus with two solar arrays.

Jennie Freeman agreed it would be interesting to discuss environmental thoughts pertaining to solar energy and plastic bag bans for the Town.

Juliette Britton mentioned a survey with questions pertaining to Town Green usage was available and asked anyone interested to please fill it out.

Peter Berman said it was a shame when Tracy moved to have the auditor's report stricken from the 2013 Town Report. The question arose as to why all three auditors resigned last year. Charlie remarked that shortly after last year's town meeting two auditors attended an open selectboard meeting. Disappointment concerning the motion, how the situation was handled, concerns, roles and reaction were discussed. Then all three auditors submitted letters of resignation.

Peter also thanked Todd, Wayne and Brian, Peru's new road crew, for keeping the roads clear this winter and all their great work.

Hope Richardson said she is rated 9 out of 10 in energy efficiency from the State.

Cindy Mowry thanked Suzanne Ragone at The Makery for her wonderful projects and crafts and also thanked Juliette at the Hapgood General Store for the magnificent food and all her hard work. Both stores have helped to unify the Town of Peru.

Grant Braddish made a motion to adjourn at 11:45AM. All approved Gary Ameden concluded the town meeting.

Respectfully submitted, Dated March 6, 2015 Town of Peru

Margaret Cobb

Peru Town Clerk

Selectboard

\_\_\_\_\_ Charlie Howard

\_\_\_\_\_ Todd Williams

\_\_\_\_\_ Gail Acosta

*Subject to Approval*