**TOWN MEETING MINUTES**

**PERU, VT**

**MARCH 7, 2023**

Peru’s Moderator, Gary Ameden, called the meeting to order at 10:00am. Gary welcomed everyone to the 2023 Town Meeting. Gary asked that anyone new to the area introduce themselves. Ben Tuff introduced himself and his wife Gretchen. Also in attendance was the spring class from the BBA Mountain Campus accompanied by teachers Tina Hartwell, Scott Clausen, Mia Smith and Director Andy Dahlstrom. Beth Knox thanked David Utiger for his outstanding artwork. Also joining us was our State Representative Mike Rice. Gary asked all to stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

**WARNING:** As readby Gary – The legal voters of Peru are herby warned and notified to

meet at the Peru Town Center on Tuesday March 7, 2023 at the hour of 10:00am to act

on the following articles:

**ARTICLE 1:** To elect a Town Moderator. Chuck Black nominated Gary Ameden. Sally Ogden seconded. Hearing no other nominations Proposition B was moved by Chuck Black. Iwanna Reed seconded. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

* Moderator – 1 year Gary Ameden

**ARTICLE 2:** To hear and act on the reports of the Town Officers. Motion made by Jay Reichman to accept the reports. Garry Sharon seconded.

Gary asked if there was any discussion or comments.

Discussion – Jon Mowry explained that the reports in the Town Report from the Selectboard and the Zoning administrator were from last year. Handouts of this year’s reports are available to voters.

Gary asked if those assembled were ready to accept reports of various Officers. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

**ARTICLE 3:** To elect Town Officers as the law directs.

**Town Clerk:** Iwanna Reed nominated Melinda Beebe. Sally Ogden seconded. Hearing no other nominations. Hearing no other nominations Karen Utiger moved Proposition B. Garry Sharon seconded. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

* Town Clerk – 1 year Melinda Beebe

**Treasurer:** Sally Ogdennominated Cheryl Fox. Chuck Black seconded. Hearing no other nominations Garry Sharon moved Proposition B. Beth Knox seconded. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

* Treasurer – 1 year Cheryl Fox

**Select Board:** Jon Mowry nominated Alex Sheets. Iwanna Reed seconded. Hearing no other nominations Sally Ogden moved Proposition B. Heidi Healy seconded. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

* Selectboard – 3 years Alex Sheets

**Lister:** Jane Worley nominated Jay Reichman. Jennie Freeman seconded.

Sally Ogden nominated Ruth Ann Barrick. Ruth Ann respectfully declined as she didn’t want to run against Jay. Hearing no other nominations Chuck Black moved Proposition B. Garry Sharon seconded. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

* Lister - 1 year Jay Reichman

Jon Mowry nominates Jack Pennypacker. Garry Sharon seconded. Hearing no other nominations Garry Sharon moved Proposition B. Laurie Black seconded. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

* Lister – 3 years Jack Pennypacker

**Auditors:** Jon Mowry spoke to the need to fill these positions as we will only have one person in this position otherwise. Karin Utiger gave an overview of the time commitment of these positions.

Garry Sharon nominates Heidi Healy. Jon Mowry seconded. Hearing no other nominations Garry Sharon moved Proposition B. Laurie Black seconded. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

* Auditor – 3 years Heidi Healy

Sally Ogden nominated Ruth Ann Barrick. Jennie Freeman seconded. Hearing no other nominations Iwanna Reed moved Proposition B. Garry Sharon seconded. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

* Auditor - years Ruth Ann Barrick

**Cemetery Commission:** Iwanna Reed nominated Melinda Beebe. Sally Ogden seconded. Melinda respectfully declined nomination.

Jon Mowry nominated Beth Knox. Sarah Hamlett seconded. Hearing no other nominations

Jon Mowry moved Proposition B. Garry Sharon seconded. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

* Cemetery Commission – 5 years Beth Knox

**First Constable:** Andy Dahlstrom nominated Mike Gayda**.** Barbara Petra seconded.

Hearing no other nominations Jon Mowry moved Proposition B. John Murphy seconded.

All in favor; Motion passed by voice vote.

* First constable – 1 year Mike Gayda

**Second Constable:** Andy Dahlstrom nominated Josh Witkin. Eric Hanson seconded**.**

Hearing no other nominations John Murphy moves Proposition B. Jay Reichman seconded. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

* Second Constable – 1 year Josh Witkin

**Delinquent Tax Collector:** Garry Sharon nominates Tracy Black. Laurie Black seconded. Hearing no other nominations Laurie Black moved Proposition B. Garry Sharon seconded.

All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

* Delinquent Tax Collector – 1 year Tracy Black

**Grand Juror:** Chuck Black nominated Iwanna Reed. Andy Dahlstrom seconded. Hearing no other nominations Jay Reichman moved Proposition B. John Mowry seconded. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

* Grand Juror – 1-year Iwanna Reed

**Trustee of Public Funds:** Sally Ogden nominated Josh Witkin. Heidi Healy seconded.

Hearing no other nominations Jon Mowry moved Proposition B. Garry Sharon seconded. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

* Trustee of Public Funds 1 – year Josh Witkin

**Article 4:**

1. To see if the town will vote a tax to defray the expenses of the town for the fiscal year

Of July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024, as set forth in the budget submitted in the Town Report, subject to such modifications as this meeting may vote.

Jay Reichman motions to move the article. Chuck Black seconded.

Discussion: Jon Mowry explained the portion of the budget that was not in the town report, which does not change the budget as stated in the Town Report. He advised there was a handout to address this. Jay Reichman inquired what the item “Miscellaneous Income” was made up by. Jon advised that was income from the logging of the Peru Town Forest.

Jay Reichman made a motion to move the article. Chuck Black seconded. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

1. To authorize the selectboard members to set the rate on the 2023 Grand List to meet the budget voted.

Sally Ogden made a motion to move the article. Beth Knox seconded. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

1. To establish the date of payment of such taxes.

Jay Reichman moved we collect taxes from July 1, 2023, to September 30, 2023. Beth Knox Seconded. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

**Article 5:** To see if the town will vote to accept the provisions made by law for payment of taxes to the Town Treasurer.

Jon Mowry moved the article. Garry Sharon seconded. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

**Article 6:** Shall the voters vote a sum of money to the following organizations that serve our community.

South Londonderry Free Library $ 1000.00

Bennington County Child Advocacy $ 500.00

Bennington County Coalition for the Homeless $ 500.00

Project Against Violent Encounters $ 150.00

Mountain Valley Health Council $ 3000.00

Londonderry Volunteer Rescue Squad $ 5000.00

Visiting Nurse Assoc. of VT/NH $ 2700.00

Bennington County Conservation District $ 300.00

BROC $ 200.00

VT Center for Independent Living $ 140.00

SW Vermont Council on Ageing $ 200.00

Center for Restorative Justice $ 300.00

Neighborhood Connections $ 3000.00

Green Up Vermont $ 50.00

The Collaborative $ 750.00

Flood Brook Athletic Association $ 1000.00

Peru Cemetery Commission $ 5000.00

Rural Fire Protection Task Force $ 100.00

Total $23,890.00

**Article 7:** Shall the Town of Peru raise and appropriate a sum not to exceed $13,000.00

For the purpose of funding in part, a full time position of Mountain Towns Recreation Director to be hired by The Town of Londonderry, pursuant to an inter-local agreement as established in 24 V.S.A. 4901.

Discussion: Jennie Freeman spoke to the amount of monies being requested are in proportion to the population and the participants, so far, from Peru. This inter-local organization will be comprised of the towns of Londonderry, Peru, Landgrove, Weston

& Winhall. Discussion of programs not only being for the youth’s of the area, but for all community members. Iwanna Reed inquired about who the Rec. Director would report to. Jennie states there will be representatives from all communities involved, most likely they would report to that committee. Jane Worley suggests that someone from Peru’s Park & Green committee also participate. Iwanna Reed asked what will happen if not all towns vote “Yes”. Jennie responded that the powers that be would have to revisit that town. This would be a 2-year commitment. Inquiries about when this will all happen were addressed, hopefully by this summer.

Iwanna Reed moved the motion. Garry Sharon seconded. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

**Article 8:** To see if the town will vote a Veteran’s Exemption to include an amount up to $30,000.00. The State of Vermont currently provides a maximum exemption of $4,000.00.

With the first $10,000.00provided by the state. The total exemption is deducted from the appraised value of the parcel.

Discussion: Jay Reichman inquired as to whether or not there is a statute that states that this article does not need to be warned every year after it is originally passed by the voters. Jon Mowry states he will investigate this.

Iwanna Reed moves the motion. Jay Reichman seconded. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

Representative Mike Rice was invited to address the assembled voters. He brought us up to speed on what the legislature has been working on. Some of those issues are:

Building a balance budget for FY2024, Protecting School Choice, making Universal School Meals permanent, Strengthening Vermont’s workforce, Protecting Biodiversity & our Working Lands, building a better Child Care System and Preventing Suicides to name a few.

**Article 9:** To address any other business that may properly come before this meeting.

Jon Mowry expressed thanks to those Officers who are stepping down this year. Donna Williams, who has been our Town Treasurer for the past 9 years. Todd Williams, selectboard member for the past 6 years. Their time and talents have been much appreciated. Jon also recognized Jane Worley as an outgoing member of the school board as well as Andy Dahlstrom for stepping up to take Jane’s place. Wayne Blanchard and Brian Bills were thanked for their service as our Road Cre3w. They do an exemplary job.

Jon also advised The Southwestern Community Union District, which works with Consolidated Communications is in Phase 2 of providing all residents with fast, reliable broadband. There was a list posted of all addresses that will be getting service through this program. Some discussion on the verbiage “underserved”. Consensus is that if you don’t have internet, you are “underserved”.

Beth Knox has set up a list serve to create better communication between the townspeople of Peru. To subscribe go to: [peruvt+subscribe@groups.io](mailto:peruvt+subscribe@groups.io)

The ARPA funds were discussed. We have not spent any of this money yet. John Murphy has a handout to get people’s input on what we should use these funds for. Jane Worley reminded us to be mindful of the original reason that these ARPA funds became available.

Iwanna Reed thanked David Utiger again for his outstanding artwork in the Town Report.

Jim Potter addressed the issue of speeding through the center of town and also that people are not always stopping for the Stop sign by the church and the post office. Jon Mowry suggested that attending selectboard meeting could bring some resolution to these ongoing issues. Beth Knox inquired when the selectboard meets. Jon advised the first and third Wednesday of the month. All are welcome and encouraged to attend. Meetings are at

6:30 pm.

Chuck Black made a motion to adjourn, Laurie Black seconded. All in favor. Gary adjourned the meeting at 11:27am.

Respectfully submitted,

Melinda M. Beebe

Peru Town Clerk

Dated March 13, 2023

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