

## CALAIS TOWN MEETING MINUTES

March 3, 2015

The 2015 town meeting was called to order at the Calais Elementary School on Tuesday, March 3, 2015 at 10:20am by Gus Seelig, moderator. The ballot boxes had been officially opened by the town clerk at 7am and remained opened until 7pm for voting for town officers and school district officers under Article 2.

### **ARTICLE 1. To choose a moderator.**

Selectboard chair Denise Wheeler requested nominations for town moderator. Nedene Martin made a motion to nominate Gus Seelig. The motion was seconded by Wilson Hughes. Nominations were closed, and Gus Seelig was unanimously approved as moderator by voice vote.

### **ARTICLE 2. To elect by Australian ballot all town and school officers so required, including two members for the selectboard, two auditors, a lister, two Calais Elementary School directors, one U-32 school director.**

Incumbents running unopposed, Susanna Culver (3-year term) and Michael Giammusso (2-year term) were re-elected to the Calais Elementary School Board. Also running unopposed, C. Scott Thompson was re-elected to the U-32 School Board, and Denise Wheeler was elected to a 3-year term on the Selectboard. For a 2-year Selectboard term, incumbent Scott Bassage received 217 votes and Donald W. Mucherino, Jr. received 81 votes. Ginny Kern was elected auditor (3-year term). Laura Fillbach was elected lister (3-year term).

Gus reviewed Robert's Rules of Order.

### **ARTICLE 3. To provide the opportunity to ask questions regarding the reports in the town report, including but not limited to the Cemetery Commission, Conservation Commission, Planning Commission and Selectboard.**

Linda Gray requested the introduction of mic runners Luca Montore and Riley Mankin, students at U-32 Jr/Sr. High School. Selectboard Chair Denise Wheeler introduced herself and selectboard members Scott Bassage, Toby Talbot, and Rose Pelchuck. (John Brabant arrived later in the meeting.). She introduced Town Clerk and Treasurer Donna Fitch and Assistant Town Clerk and Treasurer Judy Fitch Robert, as well as "sound man" Artie Toulis.

Doug Lilley brought up the date of the special town meeting which was held in November 2014, insinuating it was intentionally held during hunting season to limit attendance. He gave a stuffed toy skunk as a "present" to John Brabant, saying, "If it looks like a skunk, and smells like a skunk..." Peter Harvey thanked the road commissioner and operations manager for their in-depth reports. Geraldine Gilman disagreed with the delinquent tax policy six-month cut-off for delinquent taxes to be paid before moving toward resolution through tax sale. Stephanie Kaplan pointed out a slide show display of the town's cemeteries that shows the disrepair in the cemeteries in support of increased funding for the cemeteries.

### **ARTICLE 4. Shall the voters approve total highway and general fund expenditures of \$1,300,028 of which \$1,001,053 shall be raised by taxes and \$298,975 by non-tax revenue? See "FY2016 Tax Request and Estimated Tax Rate" page in the town report for the expense and income figures making up this request. Additional monies appropriated in the Warning articles are in addition to these expenditures.**

The motion was moved and seconded.

Fletcher Dean asked about income from special projects relating to roads. Selectboard member and Highway Operations Manager Toby Talbot explained that state grants are applied for each year: A structures grant that has a 90/10 split (state pays 90%, town pays 10%) and a highway grant that has a 80/20% split. If the grant is not received, the matching grant funds approved by the voters are not spent.

In 2014, while grants for several projects were applied for, the only grant awarded was for the North Calais retaining wall. Bids for the wall were higher than expected and higher than voters had approved. The grant for this project was given back to the Agency of Transportation and the town reapplied for funds to replace a culvert on Martin Road. Donna Fitch, Clerk and Treasurer, explained that previous town budgets showed the total cost and total income of a special project. To eliminate confusion, the FY2016 budget and future budgets will show only the town's portion of the expense and will not include the entire cost or the State grant income.

Andrew Nemethy questioned the cost of health insurance for office staff. Donna Fitch explained the assistant clerk will be receiving health care benefits in FY2016. The number of hours she works qualifies her as a full-time employee based on the town's personnel policy. If the town offers healthcare benefits, it must be offered to all full-time employees or the town faces a fine. The town pays into a health reimbursement account which has brought down the cost of providing health insurance to town employees. Employees pay 5% of the premium. The town also pays for dental insurance for employees. Employees may pay to add family members. Andrew said he thought it odd that the town would be

responsible for the health care benefits of an elected official.

Andrew asked how the Selectboard determines the town clerk's salary. Donna explained the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) does a comparison study across the state of municipal salaries. The study is available at the Town Office. Toby said the selectboard looks historically at what the town clerk salary has been. Previously, the clerk was paid a small salary and kept fees. The salary would fluctuate year to year. The current clerk salary is in line with current salaries in other towns. Andrew asked how the split between clerk and treasurer salaries in the budget was determined. Toby said the Selectboard determined the work of both jobs together is more than 40 hours per week, and they chose to split the jobs evenly in the budget. Andrew expressed concern that the town is paying the town clerk/treasurer more than other towns. Toby explained that Donna holds two position – clerk and treasurer – and in other towns that is often split between two people. Andrew listed the salaries and benefits of neighboring towns. He summarized that the town is paying 20-25% more than other towns. Donna clarified that East Montpelier has five employees doing what two people in Calais do.

Donna pointed out that the town's healthcare costs have been reduced due to choosing a high deductible plan, opening an HRA account for each employee and employees paying 5% of the insurance premium. In FY2011, the cost of healthcare for the highway department was \$77,615 for premiums; in FY2012 the cost was \$61,829, which included \$18,000 deposited into HRA accounts; in FY 2013 the cost was \$47,304, and the town now pays \$43,259.

Eric Sorenson commented on the positive move of reducing interest on debt. He questioned the 10% increase in highway salaries and the increases in health insurance. Donna responded that highway salaries now include the highway operations manager position. Health care costs fluctuate based on whether road crew members are single or have families. The FY2016 figures are based on an estimate of who will be working on the road crew.

Doug Lilley questioned the town clerk's salary, suggesting she was receiving both recording fees and salary. Donna corrected Doug; she does not receive recording fees. Tina Golon said she thought the highest health insurance premium rates were lower than what the town is paying. Toby again explained the cost varies depending on whether individuals or families are covered. He also clarified that recording fees come in as town income and do not go to the clerk's salary.

Paul Rose asked for an explanation of the proposed cemetery budget of \$34,262. Cemetery Commissioner Randy Koch explained this amount pays the sexton and his crew for mowing and daily maintenance of seven cemeteries. It includes a small increase in wages for the workers and for repairs and deferred maintenance in the town's cemeteries. The additional \$14,000 being asked for in Article 16 is to repair tombstones, trim hedges and clean monuments. The Cemetery Commissioners developed a capital budget and determined how much money was needed. It is estimated there is about 20 years of deferred maintenance. In the future, the cemetery trust fund will yield enough interest to cover some of the expenses. Paul asked if any of the requested funds will be put into the trust fund. Randy said no. Steve Cusick questioned the increase in cemetery wages. Cemetery workers now make \$11/hour and have asked for an increase. Donna clarified that cemetery workers will also be hired for more hours this summer to work on the special projects as outlined in Article 16.

Geraldine Gilman brought up the neglected one-acre Bliss Family Cemetery (private) portion of Fairview Cemetery. The current trustees for the private cemetery are not doing their job, she said, and she wanted to know if the town was paying for the upkeep. Cemetery Commissioner John Simanskas said Cemetery Sexton Wyatt Healy mows that portion at no charge. John said he had checked with the Secretary of State and the private section is not registered with the state. Geraldine implored people to get the trustees of the Bliss Family Cemetery to take care of the cemetery. Doug Lilley agreed with the increased wages for cemetery workers, saying the cemeteries look terrible and need to be repaired.

Paul Rose referred to the cemetery trust fund report and the lack of interest earned. Rod Buck, Trustee of Public Funds, explained he has oversight with the other trustees of the cemetery funds. Over the past three years, long-term goals and investment strategies have been developed by the trustees for the cemetery endowment funds to produce greater returns which will fund future cemetery maintenance. The strategy is to invest the funds in a conservative allocation of investments that will produce greater returns over time through equities and bonds and conservative investments. Paul referred to a document presented to the Selectboard on June 13, 2014 by the trustees of public funds. Paul said his research led him to the conclusion that the investments lacked the requirements set by statute. He emphasized that interest earned needs to be reported to the voters. He implied that proper procedures had not been followed for reporting the interest earned and its use. Donna welcomed anyone to the town office to review a binder with all the details of the investments. The endowment report includes interest. She will break it out in the report next year.

The question was called. Debate was ended by a handcount vote. Article 4 passed by voice vote.

**ARTICLE 5. To see if the town will appropriate the sum of \$2,700 for the Calais Swim Program.**

The article was moved and seconded and passed by voice vote.

The moderator introduced Representative Janet Ancel.

Janet Ancel, representative to the state legislature and chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, spoke to the audience. This is her 11<sup>th</sup> year as representative. Janet reviewed the key issues confronting the legislature. She mentioned the health care bill which she realized many were disappointed did not result in major reform, saying the governor has introduced a new bill that proposes a payroll tax to cover health care costs. She said the water quality bill to clean up Lake Champlain and waterways will require revenue and is required by the federal government. Revenue needs to be raised for the budget gap of \$112,000,000; this is not a deficit but a difference between the projected spending and revenue. She assured voters the budget would be balanced. She said the school government funding bill arrived in her committee. The proposed 2% spending cap does not work in her view. She encouraged people to get in touch with her as she wants to hear their views on school funding.

Janet touched on the 16 cent increase in Calais taxes. She asked the fiscal staff why Calais taxes were so high, with school spending kept relatively low. Eleven cents of the increase is related to the increase in property values. The higher land values affect the common level of appraisal (CLA), resulting in a 6.3% increase in Calais property values, which is much higher than the average increase per town of 3/10ths of a percent. About four cents is a consequence of per pupil funding at U-32 High School. One cent of the increase comes from the increase in the homestead tax. Legislators will be looking for ways to reduce taxes and improve the situation moving forward, but nothing will change this year. Paul Hannan said, in his opinion, the CLA should not be blamed for higher taxes. When the listers do their work appraising properties accurately, the result will do away with the adjustment penalty applied to tax rates by the State for the town's CLA being inaccurate, but the resulting new appraisals will only result in higher taxes based on the appraised values. He applauded the listers for their work. Janet agreed, saying the property values have increased, and this increase affects the CLA. Doug Lilley raised the issue of water quality on Lake Champlain and pollution coming from farming in New York versus farming in Vermont.

**ARTICLE 6. To see if the town will vote to appropriate the sum of \$9,500 for the first phase of a two-phase natural resource inventory to identify the town's significant natural resources to support the planning process.**

The article was moved and seconded.

Conservation Commission co-chair Stephanie Kaplan stated that mapping from this inventory will be used in the Town Plan. The Selectboard, Planning Commission and Conservation Commission (CC) have all wanted an inventory of natural resources for several years. It is common for towns to identify natural resources, find out what and where they are, and decide which ones will need to be protected through planning and zoning. The CC has applied for grants to cover the cost of an inventory, but no grants have been awarded due to a highly competitive process. In frustration, the CC has come to the voters, Stephanie explained.

The cost of the inventory is \$17,000 to be spread over two years: \$9,500 the first year and \$7,500 the second year. The \$17,000 request would amount to a \$4.50 cent increase on a \$100,000 appraisal. The State Agency of Natural Resources has done some of the inventory work, but the results are not specific enough and there are other areas that need to be inventoried (wetlands, wildlife crossings, habitats, etc.) A report and maps detailing these areas will be produced and will be used for planning purposes.

Conservation Commission member Pam DeAndrea, environmental scientist and GIS specialist, explained the inventory is not just for locating natural resources, it is absolutely necessary for the town planning process. It will be a scientific study and a participatory study that will include landowners. It will be educational as well. It will impact flood resiliency, as required by the State in the town plan. We must know where the wetlands are to make a flood resiliency plan and have it be effective, she said. Philanthropists supported a Woodbury inventory study. Other surrounding towns have had this inventory done: Worcester, Waitsfield, Fayston, Warren, and Montpelier. Pam stated the natural resources are important to her, it's what brought her to Vermont, and she wants to save wildlife for her children and grandchildren

Dan Singleton questioned why the money was being requested when there is \$77,000 in the Conservation Commission fund. He asked for more information about the logistics of the study and assumed it is contingent on private citizens giving permission for others to enter their property. Tim Celley expressed concerns about the amount of land that is already conserved and the erosion of property rights. He said taxes are high enough that property owners should be able to make their own decisions wisely about their land. He stated he was concerned that projects like this might further erode property rights.

Steve Cusick, previous chair of the CC, emphasized the benefits that will be received from the inventory. For example, if a big developer comes to town, the Selectboard will have a database to reference when making decisions about a proposed development. It will provide information for making wise decisions. It doesn't necessarily mean the town will propose a great deal of conservation based on the inventory. This

information is critical, he said, and right now the information is in many different places; it is good government to have this information in one place.

Pam explained that Conservation Fund money is set aside for attaining land for conservation and can't be used for research. In terms of eroding property rights, Pam said this is a scientific study needed for the Selectboard and Planning Commission. Permission will need to be attained for the natural inventory researchers to go on private land. Landowners can deny access. Property rights will not be violated at all. Jim Hogue said he liked that school children would learn through this study. He said he has invasive species on his property. Stephanie Kaplan clarified that public meetings will work out the details of the study and it would be good to have an inventory of invasive species. Tina Golon asked if state scientists would be involved, expressing concern that property values would decrease if, for example, a wetland was found on a property. Eric Sorenson, who works with the State Fish and Wildlife Department, clarified the research process, saying the information is invaluable for the town. He will be involved through his job. He said \$17,000 is cheap for the amount of work being done.

Marge Garfield asked about the status of the Town Plan and how the study will dovetail with the Plan. Denise Wheeler explained the Selectboard has worked with the Planning and Conservation Commissions on wording in the Town Plan. Jack Russell, Planning Commission Chair, said there have been two public hearings receiving lots of positive responses from many people. The Town Plan draft will be sent to the Selectboard within a week or two. The Selectboard then has 60 days to hold a public hearing. Jack explained that over a period of ten years, the Planning Commission has been carefully developing a flexible plan that is based on "smart growth." He said the Planning Commission has been accused of being anti-development, however, it is not out to stop anyone from building on their property. We want to help people to put a house on their property if they want to do so, he said. In order to do this, you need to know - we need to know - what is on that property. This takes into consideration the natural resources and future generations. Planning is very complex, he said, and it involves not just natural resources, but also roads and curb cuts and the impact on schools. We have wanted this inventory for years, he stated. Jack said the goal of the natural resource study, its report, and maps is to put all the information online, and on maps so the property owners could have access to all the information in less than five minutes. Then the town can help landowners figure out where to build.

Craig Line said this was a fascinating discussion but he would like to move the question. The moderator called to end debate and it passed by voice vote. The moderator asked for a voice vote on Article 6. There was a call for division by Mac Gardner-Morse. Cards were raised and the moderator determined Article 6 passed by hand count.

**ARTICLE 7. To see if the town will appropriate the sum of \$4,000 for the ensuing tax year, to be transferred to the reserve fund established pursuant to 24 V.S.A. 2804 for conservation and other lawful purposes of the fund.**

The article was moved and seconded.

Matt Gardner-Morse urged that Article 7 be voted down expressing concern for the most vulnerable taxpayers in the town as a priority over funding this request. Ruth Coppersmith asked for the meaning of "other lawful purposes." Stephanie Kaplan explained 24 V.S.A. 2804 refers to the powers of the Conservation Commission which includes doing inventories, advising the selectboard on buying property and accepting grants related to conservation. "Other lawful purposes" refers to the town guidelines approved by the Selectboard for use of the conservation funds. The purpose is to conserve land, and each year the voters put \$4000 into this fund. When property comes up for sale or development easements are for sale, the town has the funds to purchase the land or to match funds required by other entities.

The moderator asked for a voice vote and ruled that the article passed. Mac Gardner-Morse called for a division. Article 7 passed by hand count.

**ARTICLE 8. To see if the town will appropriate the sum of \$17,000, contingent on the awarding of a structures grant from the State of Vermont, for construction of the North Calais retaining wall. The total estimated project cost is \$170,000 with the State paying 90% and the town paying 10%.**

The article was moved and seconded.

Marge Garfield asked for clarification on budget line item #6942 North Calais Retaining Wall on page 25 of the town report for FY2015. Toby explained that because the cost estimates for the project were too low in an earlier grant application, the grant that was awarded was given back to the VT Agency of Transportation (AOT). The estimated figures in the town report for FY2015 are now obsolete. Instead of working on the wall, the town reapplied for funding from AOT for replacement of the Martin Road culvert (budget line item #6959). The grant was awarded and the Martin Road culvert was completed. The town is applying again for the AOT grant for the North Calais Wall with an updated construction estimate. Paul Rose asked for clarification of the bidding process. Toby explained the town advertises for "requests for proposals," opens the bids as required by law, and then votes at a selectboard meeting.

Article 8 passed by voice vote.

**ARTICLE 9: To see if the town will appropriate the sum of \$22,500, contingent on the awarding of a Town Highway Class 2 Grant from the State of Vermont, for paving the final 1.1 mile of the County Road. The total estimated project cost is \$225,000 with the State paying 90% and the town paying 10%.**

The article was moved and seconded.

Toby moved to make an amendment, changing the request from \$22,500 to \$45,000. The grant match is 80/20 with the state paying 80% and the town paying 20% of the construction cost. Previously, these grants were a 90/10 split and that is why the article originally had the \$22,500 figure.

The amendment was moved and seconded. The moderator moved the amendment. The amendment passed by voice vote.

The main article, as amended to \$45,000, passed by voice vote.

**ARTICLE 10. To see if the town will authorize the selectboard to apply any highway fund balance at the end of the fiscal year to the “Calais Highway Heavy Equipment Reserve Fund” and do so each year until the voters of the town vote otherwise.**

The article was moved and seconded.

Mac Gardner-Morse made an amendment to remove the words “and do so each year until the voters of the town vote otherwise.” The amendment was moved and seconded. The amendment passed by voice vote.

Article 10 passed by voice vote as amended.

**ARTICLE 11. To see if the town will appropriate the sum of \$25,000 to be deposited to the “Calais Highway Heavy Equipment Reserve Fund.”**

The article was moved and seconded.

Article 11 passed by voice vote.

At 12:30pm the moderator called for a recess for lunch, a potluck served by Historic Kents Corner, Inc.

Town meeting reconvened at 1:40 pm. The moderator introduced the Energy Committee and pointed out their table of information. The committee is not an official governmental town group, but is working for the benefit of town residents. Committee member Tim Maker spoke for the committee, outlined its work supporting the State goal of 90% renewable energy by 2050, and asked for new members.

**ARTICLE 12. To see if the town will authorize the selectboard to purchase a six-wheel truck, at a cost not to exceed \$165,000 to be financed over a period of five years, to replace the seven-year-old six-wheel truck.**

The article was moved and seconded.

Toby Talbot explained the Highway Capital Plan (page 29 of the town report) and referred to the inventory of equipment on page 28. He described the ten-year plan for replacing equipment. Peter Harvey asked about the equipment purchasing process as related to voting. Article 12 is a vote to purchase the truck to be paid for using \$25,000 from the Highway Equipment Reserve Fund, \$60,000 from the FY2016 highway budget (line item “#5016 Equipment Purchases and Loans”) and the remainder being financed by a five-year loan. Jim Hogue asked about the revenue from trading in the old truck. Toby said the trade-in value is estimated at \$18,000. The goal is to build the Capital Fund over time in order to reduce the tax impact of vehicle purchases in one year.

Craig Line pointed out the six-wheel truck \$165,000 figure on page 29 in the Highway Capital Plan should be \$117,875 ( $\$23,575 \times 5 = \$117,875$ ). Toby said he cost of the truck will include the trade-in from the old truck. The Highway Capital Plan is a guide, not a crystal ball. The estimated costs are based on present-day prices, so the projected costs will change over time.

Article 12 passed by a voice vote.

**ARTICLE 13. To see if the town will authorize the selectboard to purchase a used ¾ ton 4x4 pickup with plow, at a cost not to exceed \$35,000, to be financed over five years.**

The article was moved and seconded.

Toby explained that the ten-year-old 2004 dump truck, purchased used, barely passes inspection. The request is to purchase a two-year old used truck with a plow. This is more efficient than using larger equipment for errands, light plowing and general every-day-of-the-week activities. The trade-in value of the old truck will go toward the purchase. There was discussion about whether it was more prudent to buy a new truck rather than a used one. Don Singleton, Jr., former road commissioner (2002-2009), said he did not see a need for a pick-up truck.

A voice vote led the moderator to determine the article did not pass. A division was called. A hand count showed 63 in favor of the article and 31 opposed. Article 13 passed.

**ARTICLE 14. To see if the Town will authorize the selectboard to use \$25,000 of the Calais Highway Heavy Equipment Reserve Fund to pay for fiscal year 2016 heavy equipment purchase and loans (budget line #5016).**

The article was moved and seconded.

Toby explained this article asks voters to authorize the Selectboard to use the Heavy Equipment Fund.

Article 14 passed by voice vote.

**ARTICLE 15. To see if the town will appropriate the sum of \$20,000 to be deposited into the Town Office and Town Hall Reserve Fund.**

The article was moved and seconded.

Mac Gardner-Morse asked, if we are holding Town Meeting at the school, do we need the Town Hall and should we sell it? Michael Fullerton asked what the town is planning to do with the Town Hall and asked about the need for extensive repairs. Scott Bassage said it is not clear yet and explained that the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) has received planning grants and grants are being applied for to improve the building. The Town Hall has a new roof but it needs a new foundation. We could not sell it the way it is, he said. Gail Graham, president of the Calais Historical Society, said she would like to see whatever funding is available be pursued to maintain the building and that additional uses for the building be found. Geraldine Gilman noted the similar issue with restoring the East Calais Church. Over \$12,000 has been raised through bakes sales and events. A new roof is needed and lead paint has to be dealt with. She said the Town Hall should be saved as a historical site, but fundraising should be done, not using tax money. Cindy Gardner-Morse suggested it might be time for another calendar (referring to the Men of Maple Corner calendar that raised \$500,000 for the Maple Corner Community Center). Gail England said she preferred the Town Hall kitchen and promoted preserving the Town Hall and using it for town meeting. Responding to a question about the Town Office portion of the article, Scott Bassage said maintenance is needed at the Town Office and the building needs painting. Maintaining the Town Office will prevent deferred maintenance. Scott pointed out that \$40,000 has been raised for the Town Hall in sales and grants. A question was asked about the projected costs of refurbishing the Town Hall. Donna said an architectural study was done in 2013 and is posted on the website. Scott said there is not enough information available at this time to project costs. He noted FEMA has determined the Town Hall is not in a flood plain.

Article 15 passed by voice vote.

**ARTICLE 16. To see if the town will appropriate the sum of \$14,000 for cemetery special projects, to include trimming the hedge at Fairview Cemetery and the cleaning and repair of monuments.**

The article was moved and seconded.

Cemetery Commissioner John Simanskas listed the special projects planned, saying looking back over reports since the year 2000, it is clear that fences need to be repaired or replaced every ten years and need to be painted every five years to be preserved. The Commission is looking into purchasing granite posts with vinyl chain which fit the historic setting and last forever. Special projects include painting, trimming hedges and replacing fences. Michele Tofel-Murray pointed out that painting could be a great sixth grade service project. Paul Rose said he did not support the appropriation, saying the cemetery investment fund should be used for the cemeteries. Dot Naylor, member of the Women's Relief Corp, said she is one of the women who flag the cemeteries. She said she is appalled at the number of stones overturned in the Shortt cemetery, a small cemetery on George Road, many of whom are Civil War veterans and some older. She feels stones should be cleaned progressively through the years. She feels strongly that those who have chosen to be buried are the ancestors of our citizens and are due our respect. Sage Kennedy said painting fences at the Old West Church with her son Leland was a great experience and this is not the place to cut funds. Ainsworth Cemetery is a wreck, she said, and she encouraged everyone to approve the article and to get out and help. Cynthia Johnson described her daughter's history project which resulted in her newfound appreciation of the cemeteries. She asked about the town's responsibility related to private cemeteries or private land near cemeteries. Denise Wheeler clarified that the cemetery endowment cannot be spent, only the interest can be used. Denise responded to Cynthia's question saying that the town can encourage landowners to take responsibility to clean up private cemeteries, or to work with the cemetery commission to clean up, but it is not clear whether the town can use town funds toward private projects. Jennifer Whitman, cemetery commissioner, said this request is a tiny drop in the bucket; there is a great need for cemetery repairs, years and years of deferred maintenance, and a need for a long-term capital plan. She said there is very little turnout for volunteer events. She encouraged people to support the article. Paul Rose asked why this request is separated from the general fund. Donna said the request was put in the warning so that voters would be given a chance to vote the additional \$14,000 special project funding separate from the general maintenance budget. Denise clarified that the general fund covers

wages and this article is for special projects. Paul Rose asked for it to be repeated that the funds being voted on will not be put into the investment trust funds. Denise said she was not sure where he got this idea or what materials he was referring to.

The moderator restated the Article and repeated that the funds requested were not going to be put in any fund. He called the question. Article 16 passed by a voice vote.

**ARTICLE 17. To see if the town will appropriate a sum not to exceed \$9,000 for a professional audit.**

The article was moved and seconded.

Tina Bielenburg asked if the audit is required by statute. Donna explained audits should be done when there is a new town treasurer or a new delinquent tax collector. That has not been done.

Article 17 passed by voice vote.

**ARTICLE 18. To see if the town will appropriate the sum of \$25,760 for the Kellogg Hubbard Library for its operating expenses.**

The article was moved and seconded.

Craig Line, Calais representative to the board of trustees of the Kellogg Hubbard Library, spoke regarding the high morale at the library, the new director, fund raising efforts, the hundreds of programs offered, and the thousands of library users. A new head of library services has been hired. The library is employing more library science masters level credentialed staff. A new funding formula has been established to determine the amount per capita, which is \$16, resulting in a request from Calais of \$25,760. This is \$2,190 less than last year's request. Geraldine Gilman made an amendment to change the amount to \$25,000 to make it a round figure. The amendment was seconded. An unidentified speaker urged the amendment to be defeated and to fully fund the request, saying the library is a great resource for his family and for the community. He said it is as important as the school, as the resources of the library far exceed what is available at the school.

The question was called. A voice vote ended debate. The amendment was defeated by voice vote. There was a call for division. The moderator asked for hands to be raised. The Amendment was defeated by hand count.

The moderator restated the original Article. Peter Harvey said the library is a community asset and should be supported, even if not used by every person. Paul Rose emphasized there is a distinction between a library and a school, stating Kellogg Hubbard Library is not a public library, but a private non-profit institution. He said there are libraries closer to Calais than the Kellogg Hubbard Library. He asked that taxpayers not be forced to donate to a library that is not a government institution. Gail Graham agreed and stated this is an outlandish amount of taxpayer money going to this entity. Pat Finney said he is against the article; taxes are too high, and he resents people reaching into his pocket to support a nonprofit. Jackie Weyrauch said she can't imagine not supporting the library. She uses the library five times a week. Alice Blachly said the library is not equally accessible to all Calais citizens, not everyone can afford to drive into town or get transportation to the library. She said schools are required by the Vermont constitution to provide equal access, but libraries are not. She asked that the library make a presence more locally in Calais. She would personally volunteer to make the resources more accessible in Calais. Rose Hayes noted the library dispersement is higher than the amount being requested for the Town Hall fund, the heavy equipment fund, and the town portion of paving the County Road, and the money is not going to the town. John Rosenblum explained the purpose of libraries as making a viable democracy for all people and to support funding. Public or private does not make a difference in terms of whom it serves. Libraries provide the same access to knowledge and learning to all, promoting an educated citizenry. Gail England highlighted the many events and offerings of the Kellogg Hubbard Library of benefit to the entire region. She suggested using car pools to the library. David Schutz said Kellogg Hubbard Kellogg is the second busiest library in the State and is not a private library; it is a public library with a private endowment. That is the distinction. We are lucky that it has a private endowment, which reduces costs to the public, he said. Paul Hannan said this was cutting into his nap time, and he called the question.

The moderator asked for a voice vote to end debate. A voice vote ended discussion. The moderator restated the Article.

Article 18 passed by voice vote.

**ARTICLE 19. To see if the town will vote to have all property taxes paid to the treasurer, as provided by law and without discount, in two equal installments as follows: The first installment will be due on or before 4:00 p.m. 30 days after the tax bills are mailed, but not earlier than August 1, 2015, and the second installment will be due on or before 4:00 p.m. on November 16, 2015.**

The article was moved and seconded. Article 19 passed by voice vote.

**ARTICLE 20. To see if the town will vote to institute a grace period after the established due dates of payments of property taxes as provided in 32 V.S.A. § 1674(3)(B). The grace period for the first payment will be two weeks after the due date. The grace period for the second payment will extend through November 30, 2015.**

The article was moved and seconded. Article 20 passed by voice vote.

**ARTICLE 21. To see if the town will spend \$3,000 to print, publish and mail two editions of the Calais Lakes and Streams Committee newsletter in calendar year 2015.**

Wilson Hughes moved the article. Stephanie Kaplan seconded.

Wilson Hughes, Lakes and Streams Committee member (a sub committee of the Conservation Commission) explained that each year two newsletters are published. The newsletters explain changes in laws, how the Shoreland Protection Act will affect landowners, addresses invasive plants and how to enhance water quality in Washington County. There are more lakes, streams and ponds in Washington County than in any other county in the state. Calais is second in the number of bodies of water. Eric Oberg suggested that printing is very 20<sup>th</sup> century and asked if it is necessary to use printing to get the word out. David Ellenbogen said the print version goes to all new residents. An inquiry on Front Porch Forum asking who would like to receive it electronically only got 14 responses. He said a great deal of work goes into the newsletter. The entire cost is for the printing and mailing; the labor is volunteer. Geraldine says she gets it and doesn't want it. She asked if the committee could find out who really wants it and who doesn't. Stephanie Kaplan promoted the newsletter and its in-depth information about water quality. She said the committee works to make sure the cost is the lowest possible. Claudia Welch said she recycles it and would prefer electronic information. Wilson clarified that they use recycled paper and the cost is 28 cents.

The moderator called the question. The moderator determined the voice vote did not pass the article. A division was called. The moderator asked the voters to raise cards. Article 21 passed by hand count.

**ARTICLE 22. To see if the town will appropriate the sums of money requested by the following organizations in Calais and the Central Vermont area, as follows:**

Calais Community Connections	\$1,000
Central Vermont Basic Education	\$1,000
Central Vermont Community Action Council	\$ 300
Central Vermont Council on Aging	\$1,400
Central Vermont Economic Development Corp	\$ 500
Central Vermont Home Health and Hospice	\$3,000
Central Vermont Memorial Civic Center	\$ 800
Circle (formerly Battered Women's Services)	\$ 700
Family Center of Washington County	\$ 500
Friends of Winooski River	\$ 300
Good Beginnings of Central Vermont	\$ 300
Green Mountain Transit Agency	\$ 859
Greenup Vermont	\$ 100
Home Share Now	\$ 400
Montpelier Senior Center	\$3,200
Old West Church Association	\$ 100
Peoples Health and Wellness Clinic	\$1,500
Sexual Assault Crisis Team	\$ 200
Twin Valley Senior Center	\$2,000
Vermont Association for the Blind	\$ 650
Vermont Center for Independent Living	\$ 415
Washington Country Diversion Program	\$ 150
Washington County Youth Service Bureau	\$ 500
Woodbury/Calais Foodshelf	\$ 500
TOTAL	\$20,374

The article was moved and seconded.

Wilson Hughes spoke for the Nonprofit Review Committee that recommended the following changes:

- Vermont Economic Development Council: \$ 0
- Montpelier Senior Center level funded at the FY2015 amount: \$2,000
- Twin Valley Senior Center level funded at FY2015 amount: \$800 (Failed to provide financial statement.)
- VT Association for the Blind reduced to: \$500

Dot Naylor spoke in support of Twin Valley's request saying it is a much needed service for elderly people. She proposed an amendment to fully fund Twin Valley Senior Center. Georgia Meyer serves on the Washington County Hunger Council and helps run the Woodbury Food Shelf, and said Executive Directory Rita Copeland slaved to get the Twin Valley Senior Center where it is today. She suggested it

was because of overwork that the financial statement was not provided. The location is accessible for Calais residents. She supported the amendment to restore the funding to the requested amount. Dan Groberg (not a Calais resident) works at the Montpelier Senior Center, and he wanted to say that the Twin Valley Senior Center does tremendous work and he supports the amendment to restore funding. Geraldine Gilman spoke in support of the Senior Center, saying nutritional meals are delivered to shut-ins and she supports the amendment to fully fund.

The amendment to fully fund Twin Valley Senior Center at \$2,000 passed.

Rick Winston made a motion to amend the amendment to fully support the Montpelier Senior Center at \$3,200. As member and instructor at the center, he sees the value. He said the number of Calais participants has gone up 40%, leading to an increase in the requested amount. He said there is room for two senior centers.

The amendment was moved and seconded.

David Groberg, Montpelier Senior Center staff, explained that more than 30 hours of free programming is offered each week. There are also paid activities. Free activities are open to the public. Meals are free if you are 60 or over with suggested donation. Claudia Welch spoke in favor of the Montpelier Senior Center, which is beneficial to her mother who received a scholarship in order to attend. Judy Copa spoke in favor as a participant and teacher. Montpelier focuses on younger seniors, keeping them healthy and strong, delaying the need for more extensive services.

A voice vote approved amending the amendment to fund the Montpelier Senior Center at \$3,200.

The VT Association for the Blind was reduced because of the reduced number of Calais residents receiving services.

The moderator called the question with the two amendments:

- Vermont Economic Development Corporation at \$0;
- Vermont Association for the Blind at \$500,
- The total of the article itself reduced by \$650.

A voice vote approved the motion as amended.

The moderator called the question for a vote on the main article as printed with changes as noted. A voice vote passed Article 22 as amended.

**ARTICLE 23. To see if the town will appropriate the sum of \$5,000 to be deposited to the “Calais/East Montpelier Fire Department Capital Reserve Fund” for the Calais portion of future fire department equipment purchases in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 2804(a).**

The article was moved and seconded. Article 23 passed by voice vote.

**ARTICLE 24. Shall the town authorize the selectboard to appoint the delinquent tax collector to a one-year term as allowed under 17 V.S.A. § 2651(d)?**

The article was moved and seconded. Article 24 passed by voice vote.

**ARTICLE 25. To elect all other necessary officials for the year ensuing, including a collector of delinquent taxes, a law agent, a town grand juror, a trustee of public funds, a cemetery commissioner and an agent to convey real estate.** (The *delinquent tax collector* notifies taxpayers when taxes are overdue, makes arrangements for late payments, takes formal collection actions and keeps records of all delinquent accounts. The *law agent* assists in litigation at the request of the selectboard. The *town grand juror* helps to prosecute criminal offenses that occur in the town by giving information to law enforcement officials. The *trustees of public funds* are responsible for managing public funds, specifically cemetery funds. *Cemetery commissioners* are responsible for the care and management of cemeteries. Real estate owned by the town may be conveyed by an *agent* elected for that purpose.)

Wilson Hughes nominated Tina Bielenberg as law agent. The motion was moved and seconded. The moderator asked for further nominations. He asked for a motion to close nominations and instruct the town clerk to cast one ballot for Tina. The motion was moved and seconded and nominations were closed by voice vote. Tina Bielenberg was elected law agent

Wilson Hughes nominated Tina Bielenberg as town grand juror. The motion was moved and seconded. The moderator asked for further nominations. He asked for a motion to close nominations and instruct the town clerk to cast one ballot for Tina. The motion was moved and seconded and nominations were closed by voice vote. Tina Bielenberg was elected town grand juror.

The moderator opened nominations for trustee for public funds. He noted Bill Russell as the incumbent.

Denise Wheeler nominated incumbent Bill Russell. The nomination was seconded. Tina Beilenberg nominated Mat Barewicz. The nomination was seconded. Mat withdrew as a candidate and declined the nomination. A motion was made to have nominations cease and to instruct the town clerk to cast one ballot for Bill Russell. The motion was moved and seconded. Bill Russell was elected trustee of public funds.

The moderator asked for nominations for cemetery commissioner. Incumbent Randy Koch was nominated. The nomination was seconded. Denise Wheeler moved to close nominations. Gus instructed the town clerk to cast one ballot for Randy Koch. Randy Koch was elected cemetery commissioner.

The moderator asked for nomination for agent to convey real estate. Incumbent Donna Fitch was nominated and seconded. There was a motion to close nominations and instruct the town clerk to cast one ballot for herself. The motion was seconded and passed by voice vote. Donna Fitch was elected agent to convey real estate.

**ARTICLE 26. To transact any other business that may legally come before the meeting.**

- Wilson Hughes reminded attendees to register their dogs by April 1, 2015.
- Rose Pelchuck recognized and honored the work of Conrad Smith for his many years of service to the town in so many capacities. He is sorely missed.
- Rose announced the Rabies Clinic and dog license registration at the East Montpelier Fire Station, March 12, 6-8pm
- Dot Naylor thanked Donna and the town office staff for the additions to the annual town report. (Hearty applause.) Dot said she did a comparison of town reports and found the Calais report to be very well done and said we have a great staff. (Applause.)
- Fletcher Dean, Green Up Day coordinator, reminded people Green Up is May 2. It is the largest townwide volunteer event. Please join in.
- David Schultz, Historic Kents Corner, Inc., thanked people for bringing food. (Applause.)
- Chauntelle Eckhaus, school board member and parent, spoke about the sixth grade service projects, noting the many needs of the town may be opportunities for the children help and learn and be a part of the community. She asked people to get in touch with the principal.

**ARTICLE 27. To adjourn the meeting.**

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting. The motion was moved, seconded and passed.

The meeting adjourned at 3:45 pm.

A true record,

Attest,

Assistant Town Clerk and Treasurer

Attest,

Town Clerk

Attest,

Selectboard