

CALAIS TOWN MEETING MINUTES

March 4, 2014

The 2014 Town Meeting was called to order at the Calais Town Hall on Tuesday, March 4, 2014 at 10:36 a.m. by Gus Seelig, Moderator. The meeting followed the 9:00 a.m. school meeting which was to be continued after the town meeting. The ballot boxes had been officially opened by the town clerk at 7:00 a.m. and remained open until 7:00 p.m. for voting for town officers and school district officers under Article 2 and for voting on Land Use and Development Regulations under Article 3.

ARTICLE 1. To choose a moderator.

Gus Seelig was nominated moderator by Sarah Gallagher. The nomination was seconded and unanimously approved. Gus opened with statements about the town meeting process and reviewed Robert's Rules of Order.

ARTICLE 2. To elect by Australian ballot all town and school officers so required, including two members for the selectboard, an auditor, a lister, town clerk, town treasurer and two Calais Elementary School directors.

Incumbents running unopposed, John Brabant (2 year term) and Toby Talbot (3 year term) were elected to the selectboard. Janice Ohlsson was elected lister. No one ran for the position of auditor. Donna Fitch was elected town clerk and treasurer, running unopposed. Drew Lamb was elected elementary school director for a three-year term, and Chauntelle Eckhaus was elected to a two-year term, both running unopposed.

Marion Gray asked to be recognized and stated her concerns about the late mailing of the town reports. Donna Fitch reported that the Warning was printed in the Times Argus and posted in the town office and local stores 30 days before the meeting as required by statute. In addition, the Warning was posted on Front Porch Forum and the town web site.

ARTICLE 3. To vote by Australian ballot on the following question: Shall the Town of Calais Land Use and Development Regulations which were adopted by the voters of the town on March 1, 2005 and last amended on March 6, 2012 be further amended as recommended to the voters after public hearings by the Calais Planning Commission on September 13, 2013 and by the Calais Selectboard on January 13, 2014?

Article 3 passed by ballot vote of 213 "yes" and 110 "no."

ARTICLE 4. 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.

Peter Harvey asked why wages for highway workers are up 11% in the FY2015 budget and why the Selectboard purchased a grader without the town voting on it. Selectboard member Toby Talbot said the increase in the highway budget is for the highway supervisor position and to cover temporary employees. He said the grader was purchased when there was an opportunity to buy a used grader at a good price to replace the 1968 grader which had been used since that date. The grader was paid for with highway funds from the FY2013 budget.

Heather Scandale asked why Article 31 (regarding privacy of student information) was not on the school warning. Donna Fitch explained that the article was directed to the Selectboard and, after consulting with a lawyer, that meant it had to be placed on the town warning rather than the school warning.

Doug Lilley asked how much the secondhand grader cost. Selectboard Chair Denise Wheeler said the cost was \$77,000 plus the trade-in value of the town's 1968 grader (about \$17,000 to \$18,000). Calais has 80 miles of back roads and has always had two graders. Doug asked if the Selectboard had considered renting a grader. Denise said renting is not cost effective at \$6,000 per month. The Selectboard and Road Commissioner condemned the old grader. Doug requested the grader be sold and money put back into the budget. Moderator Gus Seelig stated that the amendment was not in order, but that a motion could be made when discussing the budget to lower the amount of the budget. Barry Bernstein stated that the Selectboard is elected to make decisions and people have control by voting them in and out. He commended those who serve on boards, both town and school, while not getting paid a lot. Tom McArdle questioned the Calais road standards described in the Selectboard's report. John Brabant explained the road standards were approved by the Selectboard and that the Agency of Transportation has been kept apprised of the revised Calais road standards as they were being developed.

Marion Gray said she was disappointed that she did not receive her town report by Friday, February 28. She said she found discrepancies on page 21 under "Other Operating Expenses," the total for "Town Hall." Donna Fitch explained that every year improvements are made to make the report more readable

and that the Town Hall category should be separated out from “Other Operating Expenses” so it is clear that the total refers to “Town Hall” and not “Other Operating Expenses.” Donna said she stood by the total expenses on page 22 of the budget, and the town’s accountant has reviewed the numbers. Ieva Bradley said she had trouble reconciling subtotals in the budget. Donna said the readability would be improved next year.

Steven Duke asked that the town plan and zoning regulations be more constant, with fewer changes. He suggested the town have a reparation board so that when zoning changes take away opportunities for landowners to build that landowners are able to receive damages. Arthur Gray asked about the cost of health insurance for the clerk. Donna Fitch explained that the \$16,000 listed in the budget included a \$4,000 Health Reimbursement Account which all employees have and which has helped to substantially bring down the total cost of insurance premiums to the town. Ed Walbridge asked how many people are covered by insurance. There are five: the road crew and the clerk/treasurer.

ARTICLE 5. 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, 2014, and the second installment will be due on or before 4:00 p.m. on November 17, 2014.

The Article was moved and seconded. Ieva Bradley asked what the response was to the change of two equal property tax payments rather than payments divided by education and town amounts. Donna Fitch said feedback was positive. Geraldine Gilman said she believed there should be quarterly payments. Donna explained that she would be against quarterly payments as this would require more staff time. With taxpayers filing Homestead Declaration forms late, there are often as many as three revised tax bills being mailed to property owners. There are also multiple layers of banks, escrow companies and other companies that service tax payments that further add to the complexity of processing tax payments. Linda Gray asked if taxpayers could make early payments, and Donna said early payments are accepted.

The article, to have two equal tax payments, passed by voice vote.

ARTICLE 6. To see if the town will vote to institute a two-week grace period after the established due dates of payments of property taxes as provided in 32 V.S.A. § 1674(3)(B).

The article was moved, seconded and approved by voice vote.

ARTICLE 7. To see if the town will vote to levy an interest charge on all late or delinquent taxes of .5 percent per month from the due date of each installment as provided in 32 V.S.A. § 4873.
Moved and seconded.

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

ARTICLE 8. To see what penalty the town will levy on all tax payments received after December 2 (the due date of November 17 plus the two-week grace period). No penalty amount may be levied prior to this final installment date. Historically, the penalty has been 8%.

The motion was moved and seconded. Doug Lilley made an amendment that the penalty be reduced to 1% more than the town’s borrowing interest rate at the bank. The amendment was moved and seconded. Doug suggested the tax collector be paid \$35 or \$25 an hour. Toby Talbot noted that the cost of borrowing changes and that the amount of the penalty will need to be set. Dorothy Naylor stated that with the penalty reduced to 1% she is afraid there will be a lot of late taxes. “The town cannot be everyone’s banker. The 8% is a one-time penalty fee; the .5% is per month. This will motivate taxpayers to pay their property tax bill.” Donna Fitch said the Selectboard discussed putting an article on the warning asking voters if they wanted the tax collector paid by the hour. However, since the long-time tax collector is not running again, the Selectboard decided to keep the same pay process in place during the transition. Sharon Winn Fannon asked if the new grace periods decreased the number of late taxes. Donna said 57 taxpayers paid during the grace period, with 16 (of the 57) paying on the last day. During the second grace period, 96 bills were paid. Peter Backman said he would prefer seeing no penalty at all, asking if the penalty paid the tax collector. Paul Hannan said he was concerned that if the town didn’t set the penalty high enough, people wouldn’t pay. Craig Line noted there may be confusion about one percent: one percent above the cost of borrowing, which is about five percent, would come to a six percent penalty. Mike Loignan said his law firm collected taxes over the years for a few towns and that most people didn’t pay because they couldn’t afford to. The interest and penalty fees penalize people who can’t afford it. He said it would be good to eliminate or keep a low penalty.

The amendment of 1% above borrowing was called to a vote. The voice vote was unclear, and there was a call for division. Point of information was called asking if the one percent was on top of the town cost to borrow versus public borrowing which is approximately 3.5%. The moderator said yes, that is correct. The amendment passed to lower the penalty to 1% above the cost of the town’s borrowing rate. The main

article as amended was passed by voice vote.

ARTICLE 9. 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.

Dorothy Naylor nominated Nedene Martin for delinquent tax collector. The nomination was moved and seconded. Nedene was elected delinquent tax collector. Kristina Bielenberg was nominated for town law agent. The nomination was moved and seconded and Tina was elected town law agent. Doug Lilley questioned why Attorney Gloria Rice was paid \$1,000 when his taxes were delinquent and went to tax sale. He asked about using a town attorney for tax sales. Donna Fitch explained that there is no "town attorney" and that the Selectboard hires attorneys as needed and with expertise as determined by the issue at hand. She said Vermont statute sets the rate for how much a lawyer is paid for a tax sale. Kristina Bielenberg was nominated for town grand juror. The nomination was moved and seconded, and Kristina was elected Town Grand Juror. Incumbent Rod Buck was nominated for Trustee of Public Funds, and the nomination was moved and seconded. Rod Buck was elected to the position. Incumbent John Simanskas was nominated for Cemetery Commissioner. The nomination was moved and seconded, and he was elected by a voice vote. Donna Fitch was nominated as Agent to Convey Real Estate. The nomination was moved and seconded. She was elected by voice vote.

ARTICLE 10. Shall the voters approve total general fund expenditures of \$1,240,469 of which \$914,483 shall be raised by taxes and \$325,986 by non-tax revenue? This amount does not include the additional monies voted on in the Warning articles. (See "FY2015 Tax Request and Estimated Tax Rate" page in the town report for the expense and income figures making up this request.)

The article was moved and seconded. Doug Lilley made a motion to amend the budget by \$75,000 (to make up for the price of the grader purchased in June 2013). The motion was moved and seconded. John Brabant said that grader usage time is now being tracked by Road Commissioner Alfred Larrabee and Temporary Operations Manager Toby Talbot. "When one grader is down," John explained, "you need more than one. Rainy summers mean we may need to go at grading double-time with two graders between rainstorms. We now have a temporary employee, and we hope this will reduce the amount of overtime and save money. If one grader needs maintenance, we can put it up on the lift and keep running the other grader. We want to run it through another season. Mr. Lilley may be right, but let us try it another season to see."

Tim Azarian asked if it would make sense to rent a grader one month a year for \$3,000 to \$6,000 rather than have one grader on standby all the time. Gail Graham agreed with Tim Azarian's comments, noting there are a lot of roads to cover. Toby Talbot said he had reviewed the records of the town graders and the number of total hours grading is 13,000 hours, 800 hours per year. He said a grader should be replaced at about 15,000 hours. "If we put one grader to work, it would need to be replaced in five and a half years. We would have to come up with replacement funds." He noted that with only one grader on muddy roads, it would take two months to grade all the roads.

John Rosenblum asked if the budget was reduced by \$75,000, forcing the board to sell the grader, would there need to be a change in the highway budget to accommodate renting a second grader. Peter Harvey said he did not know of any other town that has a second grader, however, when the town did rent a grader, it rained all month. "It isn't a simple solution," Peter said. "I was on the Calais Advisory Roads Committee. We wanted to find the real costs and not go by the seat of our pants. I think we should try for a year to go with one grader."

The amendment to reduce the budget was defeated by voice vote.

By voice vote, Article 10, to fund general fund expenditures of \$1,240,469 of which \$914,483 shall be raised by taxes and \$325,986 by non-tax revenue, was approved.

ARTICLE 11. Shall the Town of Calais vote on future funding requests from Kellogg Hubbard Library by Australian ballot?

Geraldine Gilman moved to pass over the article and address it at the same time as considering funding for Kellogg Hubbard. Her motion was seconded, but was defeated by voice vote.

The original article was moved and seconded. Speaking to the article, Geraldine said Kellogg Hubbard was asking for level funding of \$27,950; the library served 792 Calais patrons in the past year. She suggested people buy their own membership at \$35 each. "I started this petition to see how folks felt in the town of Calais." As a Point of Order, Craig Line stated the need to stay focused on the issue of Australian ballot. Geraldine said a lot of people have to work or lose a day of pay. She said, "I want everyone to be able to vote." David Hinton stated that this was the first of three proposals regarding the end of town meeting and wondered if all three Australian ballot articles should be considered together. Gus pointed out that each of the articles had different impacts.

Ginny Sassaman said that quite a few library supporters were at work and unable to vote. Warner Shedd said he was sensitive to the issue that many people work and can't be at town meeting. "In theory," he said, "the Australian ballot would allow people to vote. Whether they will or not, we don't know. Town meeting is a creator of community. We get a chance for people to see each other from the various villages and share their views. If these articles pass, this would effectively eliminate town meeting. I would like to suggest an alternative. Starksboro now has their meeting on Saturday. The vast majority of people do not have to work on Saturday. We can't vote on it this year, but with a warned community meeting we can discuss moving town meeting to Saturday."

Pat Finnie asked how many voters were in Calais. Donna Fitch said there are 1,300 voters. Pat asked how many can fit here? "About this number," Donna said, noting the large crowd. She said town meeting had been held in the school in a previous year on a Saturday and attendance did not increase.

Art Edelstein said that participatory democracy is extremely important. "This town meeting is exclusionary because of the number of people here. It's Tuesday and March. Maybe on a Saturday in May when it's not freezing more people would be able to attend. Australian ballot allows a lot of people to participate. I am for Australian ballot." Chuck Davin said, "I believe in participatory democracy. This is what it looks like. There is always someone who cannot make a meeting. I am not sure a larger space would increase the number of participants. I enjoy the debate. You can impose limits on debate. It requires a two-thirds vote. In Berlin, they took the Kellogg Hubbard Library budget off the ballot. If voting Australian ballot, you could end up misinformed because information can get lost in the mail or information does not get through or is suppressed. Here at town meeting we can find out about issues directly. I encourage you to vote against Australian ballot."

It was voted to end debate. A voice vote on the article was unclear. A division was requested. By hand count, 75 people voted in favor of the article and 121 voted against. The article was defeated.

ARTICLE 12: Shall the Town of Calais adopt its budget and other monetary articles by Australian ballot pursuant to 17 V.S.A. 2680(c)?

The Article was moved and seconded. Barry Bernstein spoke in opposition to Australian ballot, stating, "We did move to Saturday and attendance was lower than on a Tuesday. I suggest the Selectboard hold meetings for options and ask Janet Ancel to ask the legislature to make town meeting a state holiday. Debate is important. When we moved it to the school, people complained because the sound wasn't good." Gail Graham said there seems to be confusion with people thinking there will no longer be town meeting if major items are on Australian ballot. "I've grown up with town meeting and agree with having it," she said. "But the major dollar items should be voted by ballot so that all taxpayers have the ability to vote. This venue is no longer large enough for town meeting." Cindy Gardner-Morse asked how many people come to vote but don't attend the meeting. Donna Fitch said the figures were available at the town office and that presidential elections increase the turnout. Heather Scandale said, "I have kids and it makes it difficult. I want to vote on articles, but may not be able to stay today. I want Australian ballot. Providing daycare for three kids is okay, but not ideal."

Craig Line said, "This is it—the give and take, the debate. We witnessed history today. Doug Lilley proposed an amendment and it passed. Doug has made me change my mind on many topics. I said thank you to Doug on the Calais Roads Committee. Discussions helped me understand things differently. Legislature and city councils have a quorum. Work can still get done voting in the moment as to what we want to do." Eva Gumprecht said, "I see the age demographic is skewed in this room. I would like to see more young people here and part of the process. Let's see what we can do to get more young people involved." Jennifer Whitman said she appreciated the young ones helping with the microphones and saw this as part of building a new generation. She said, "I am new, and no one has really reached out to me. It's nice to see everyone here in a harsh winter."

Gus Seelig directed the speakers back to article. Dan Singleton said, "What I hear is that people are worried that town meeting is going to go away with Australian ballot. Just voting was a joke when I didn't attend town meeting. Town meeting can be held and then voting on a different date." Rick Kehne said, "I have attended many town meetings. Discussions are good. Decisions are good. Not everyone needs to be here. A major part of this is the discussion." Marion Gray said, "If you want a social gathering, have it at another time. We are here to vote on money and issues. My son died so people could have a voice. I like the idea of a town meeting, beating issues to death, and then voting on another day."

Jack Russell said, "When I'm here, I'm not earning money. I make that sacrifice. I served 28 years in the army and saw combat. Marion spoke of the ultimate sacrifice. I am on the Planning Commission and every group in town is struggling because we don't hear from you. We hear from you once a year. There are other times when the Selectboard, Planning and Conservation Commission and other groups need to hear from you. I say there are 50 people running this town, many with double duty. Participation is year

round. It is not about Australian ballot. I haven't seen a study that says this will increase participation."

The article was defeated by voice vote.

ARTICLE: 13: Shall the town of Calais vote on all public questions by Australian ballot pursuant to 17 V.S.A. 2680(d)? Public questions are any non-monetary questions that come before the voters.

The article was moved and seconded. The request was made to call the question. Article 13 was defeated by voice vote.

Legislative representative Janet Ancel was invited to speak. She mentioned the newsletter she writes and pointed out the Doyle survey. Phil Tonks stated that at the school meeting it was made clear that the increase in taxes is related to adjustments in Montpelier of a 15% increase. He said, "You need to go back and say that this is going on and it's not a good situation." Louis Cherry asked what the chances were that the legislature would make town meeting day a state holiday. Janet said that the push back would be from businesses that would have to pay people to be gone that day. She said this issue would go before the Operations Committee, not the committee she serves on (Ways and Means). She invited people to speak to her over lunch and provide her with contact information for future communication.

ARTICLE 14. To see if the town will appropriate the sum of \$13,250 for the use of the Woodbury Fire Department for its truck replacement fund.

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

The meeting recessed at 12:46 p.m. for lunch to reconvene at 1:45 p.m.

Gus Seelig called the meeting to order and the meeting reconvened at 2 p.m.

ARTICLE 15. To see if the town will appropriate a sum not to exceed \$50,000 to match a grant from the Town Highway Class 2 Grant Program to pave the final 1.1 mile of the County Road. The total project cost is \$225,000 with the grant paying \$175,000.

The article was moved and seconded. Mack Gardner-Morse asked if there was money left over from last year. Denise Wheeler explained the shim coating was done so there was no money left over. Donna Fitch clarified that in the previous year the town voted to shim coat or do the whole project if the grant was received. The grant was not received.

The article passed by voice vote.

ARTICLE 16. To see if the town will appropriate a sum not to exceed \$42,000 to complete construction of the North Calais retaining wall. The total project cost is \$140,000. The town has received a structures grant for \$98,000. At town meeting 2013 voters approved \$23,978 for this project. However, the bids came in higher than expected and the project was put on hold. The town has until December 2015 to complete the project and take advantage of the grant money.

The article was moved and seconded. John Brabant provided information about the project and the bidding process, explaining that it is a collapsing stone wall for which the town received a State structures grant. Dorothy Naylor asked about the approximately \$23,000 in last year's budget for this project. Donna Fitch explained that the bids for repair of the wall came in higher than expected so the Selectboard is coming back to the voters for additional funding and the original \$23,000 voted on at 2013 town meeting will be used. The town has two years to complete the repairs.

The article passed by voice vote.

ARTICLE 17. To see if the town will appropriate the sum of \$6,754 to replace the culvert on Center Road in Adamant? Total cost of the project is \$67,537 with a structures grant paying 90% of the cost.

The article was moved and seconded. Doug Lilley asked if the culvert would be put out to bid and if the lowest bid would be taken. Denise Wheeler and John Brabant explained that it depends on the specs of the bids and, all things being equal, they would probably go with the lower bid. Doug said he wanted the town to take the lowest bid and not take a bid just because the bidder lived in Calais. John explained that the Selectboard prefers to provide work to people within the town if at all possible and that he was not going to lock in his vote to always go with the low bid. Barry Bernstein reminded voters that the town took the lowest bid for the woodchip system at Calais Elementary School but it cost more money to supervise and repair the work that was done. "We need to use reasonable judgment. Lowest isn't always cheapest," he said. John explained the culvert is at the intersection between the town lines of East

Montpelier and Calais in Adamant. The culvert is undersized and is being replaced as a flood mitigation project.

Article 17 passed by voice vote.

ARTICLE 18. To see if the town will appropriate the sum of \$2,700 for the Calais Swim Program.

The article was moved and seconded. Barry Bernstein and Peter Harvey spoke in favor of supporting the swim program. Sage Kennedy noted that the swim program is used by many children and that the town benefits from water testing provided by the program for Curtis Pond to ensure healthy water for all swimmers.

The article passed by voice vote.

ARTICLE 19. 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, seconded and passed by voice vote.

ARTICLE 20. To see if the town will authorize the selectboard to apply any general fund surplus as of June 30, 2014 in the following manner:

1. An amount of the general fund balance, not to exceed 3% of the general fund budget, will be applied to the "Calais General Fund Contingency Reserve Fund" to cover unanticipated revenue shortfalls and to pay nonrecurring and unanticipated general fund expenses.
2. Any surplus amount remaining will go toward reducing FY 2016 taxes.

The article was moved and seconded. Donna Fitch said the town voted for this last year, but there was some confusion at the time and the Selectboard put it on the Warning again to make sure it was clear. There was a surplus this year, and the money went into this fund. Dorothy Naylor asked if the fund would grow and grow. Denise Wheeler said there is no cap on the fund, but a cap could be voted on in a future meeting. Gus Seelig clarified that the cap is 3% of the budget each year. Denise said the fund was for future shortfalls. Donna said, "What you voted for was that not more than 3% of the general fund budget in any one year would go into this fund. I took 3% of the general fund, and what was left over went to reduce taxes. You are voting on any excess to reduce taxes." Rose Hayes asked for examples of what the fund would be used for. Denise said there had not been any unanticipated shortfalls in Calais, but other towns who suffered from Hurricane Irene and who had reserve funds to use were better off than towns that did not have reserve funds. Jack Russell said this gives the Selectboard flexibility for unanticipated costs. Barry Bernstein said it would be helpful if the town report had the figures for the fund, and Donna Fitch referred him to page 17 of the town report which shows \$16,594 dollars being used to reduce taxes in fiscal year 2015.

The article passed by voice vote.

ARTICLE 21. To see if the town will authorize the selectboard to apply any highway fund balance as of June 30, 2014 to the "Calais Highway Heavy Equipment Reserve Fund."

The article was moved and seconded.

Doug Lilley recommended that the town sell the grader and put the money in the fund. Donna Fitch reviewed the Highway Equipment Fund Report on page 26 of the town report. Rolf Mueller asked how much is in the fund. Donna said she thought it was around \$50,000. (After Town Meeting, Donna confirmed that the correct figure is \$29,904.) Conrad Smith expressed concern that voters would not be voting on major purchases and the Selectboard would be making those decisions. Ginny Kern said she was concerned with the town having a bunch of funds when people are having trouble paying taxes. "The money is in the hands of the few making decisions and not enhancing the town."

Rick Kehne explained that building a fund over years means you don't have to pay interest on sudden purchases of expensive equipment. The town can rely on these funds and build interest and it makes it possible to control line items in the budget, he said. Peter Backman asked if money could be put into the fund, but the voters continue to authorize equipment purchases. Donna Fitch said the Selectboard does ask voters to vote on these purchases and referred to the Highway Equipment Fund Report which indicates the articles voted on to spend the money, stating that the grader was an exception.

Barry Bernstein said that the town can borrow at 2 to 3% interest. "When you take money out of the tax base, you are taking money from the tax base where the borrowing rate is around 7%. The idea of building up a fund doesn't work the same way when you are a town. The town can borrow so cheaply. We need to watch how much the fund builds up. We need some guidelines for the funds." Doug Lilley

said the town can put the money in the bank but it won't earn much interest and it would be better for the town to buy what it needs.

An amendment was made and seconded to cap the fund at \$80,000. Denise Wheeler said she would prefer to have money in the bank and be able to pay cash and not have to take out a loan and pay interest. She said the Selectboard would come to the voters to decide how to spend the Highway Equipment Fund money. Rick Kehne said, "Let's say you spend \$300,000 for a grader. Every year it depreciates and loses value. Depositing money into an equipment fund generates money over time; it saves you money when you are not bonding for a \$300,000 piece of equipment. It makes it a predictable expense." Paul Hannan said his concern is with the non-specificity of some of the contingency funds. He said the cap of \$80,000 was too low for these kinds of purchases. Toby Talbot said he has been working on a capital budget for equipment.

The question was called and debated was ended. The amendment to cap the amount of the fund was defeated by voice vote.

Conrad Smith asked what would happen if the article was voted down. Denise answered that the fund would just stay there; nothing would be put into the fund. Conrad said he was in favor of a capital fund, but was concerned with the Selectboard not coming to the voters for their approval of equipment purchases. Peter Harvey asked the Selectboard to come back next year with more specifics about the use of the fund. John Brabant said, "The town has a 550 pick-up truck. It's tired and tender. Because of the high school taxes, the Selectboard decided not to buy a new the truck, even though we need it. You are worried about the Selectboard spending money, but we are cautious. If that truck dies, we have to make decisions on the fly. We can't have our hands tied. We have heard opinions about the grader, whether or not that was wise. The old grader was not safe. We can put caps on the fund and we will abide by that, but it may not serve you well."

Article 21 passed by a voice vote.

ARTICLE 22. 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. Craig Line proposed a \$200,000 cap on the fund. Rolf Mueller asked if it makes sense to cap it when only a certain amount of money will flow into the fund from appropriations by the voters and from surpluses from the highway budget.

The amendment to cap the fund was defeated by voice vote.

Article 22 passed by voice vote.

ARTICLE 23. To see if the town will establish a Town Office and Town Hall Reserve Fund for repairs and maintenance of these town buildings.

The article was moved and seconded. Mack Gardner-Morse asked if the town had set aside money for the roof last year. Scott Bassage explained that the town voted to put a new roof on the Town Hall at the 2013 Town Meeting. There has been a delay due to bad weather, but the roofing company would begin tomorrow. Sarah Gallagher asked if there had been an effort to obtain grant funding. Scott explained that a grant of \$10,000 covered an architectural firm's research to determine the needs for the Town Hall, but that grants are hard to get. Doug Lilley said there is a specific grant for buildings that are hit three times by floods. "If we just hang in there, having been hit twice, we may be in luck." Scott Bassage said the building is no longer officially in a flood zone. Rose Pelchuck stated that government buildings are harder to fund with grants than cultural buildings. Peter Harvey stated that putting money into a fund for future repairs is about paying a little bit constantly rather than having taxes suddenly go up because of a large request. Cornelia Carey asked about the total expenses for repairs. Scott Bassage said about two million dollars. Michael Loignon pointed out that the town has a perfectly good school building and that the town should consider holding Town Meeting at the school as the Town Hall is not worth two million dollars, and the town should retire it. Mack Gardner-Morse said the current town hall is over-full and cold, and the town needs to look at other places.

Scott Bassage clarified that the two million was a quick answer that assumes the "Cadillac version" of repairs. He said that for quite a bit less, the town can keep this building standing in our lifetime.

Article 23 was approved by voice vote.

ARTICLE 24. 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. Barry Bernstein said people need to be respectful of hearing problems and use the microphones correctly. He added that he thought it important to put away money rather than borrowing. He asked the Selectboard in the future to provide more information and guidance

for weighing decisions. Toby Talbot said he would be working on a capital plan for the next ten years and it would include the town buildings.

Article 24 passed by voice vote.

ARTICLE 25. 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 2014.

The article was moved and seconded. Wilson Hughes representing the Calais Lakes and Streams Committee said that Washington County has more lakes and streams than any other county in Vermont and Calais is second among towns with the most ponds and streams. The committee has been funding its newsletter through grants but is now asking the town for support. Heather Scandale said the information is useful, but the paper is fancy and expensive. She asked why the newsletter can't be on the website with links from Front Porch Forum. Wilson explained that the glossy paper was not that much more expensive. The group mailed out newsletters to all registered voters and uses Front Porch Forum, but mailing is most effective.

The article passed by voice vote.

ARTICLE 26. To see if the town will spend \$3,000 for renovations to the Adamant Community Club to be used as matching grants funds. The organization has been working with Preservation Trust of Vermont (and other entities) to obtain grant funding to comply with accessibility requirements and make necessary building upgrades.

The article was moved and seconded.

Representing the Adamant Community Club, Rick Winston said there has been a revitalization of the club and it received a grant in 2007 for repairs and accessibility. Cindy Gardner-Morse said she thought it was a great idea to make the building accessible.

The article passed by voice vote.

ARTICLE 27. To see if the town will appropriate the sum of \$27,950 for the Kellogg Hubbard Library for its operating expenses.

The article was moved and seconded. Craig Line spoke as a new member of the board of trustees. He said that the Kellogg Hubbard Library is a "great resource, a jewel of the region." Ed Walbridge said he also was recently elected to the board. He read a list of activities offered by the library. Geraldine Gilman stated that with 792 patrons from Calais, the level funding amount divided by patrons means the patrons can pay \$35 dollars each, the library's out-of-town membership fee. Alice Blachly said she would be willing to serve on a committee to look into the question of funding of libraries in general as there are many other worthy libraries in the area.

Molly McCreedy, a U32 8th grader, said the Kellogg Hubbard Library is vital for Calais students, saying, "You can get books there that are unavailable at the elementary school or U-32. A free membership is important to me. I have other expensive activities and the money saved can support household expenses."

Marialisa Calta said that the Burlington library is paid for by taxpayers. She stated that Kellogg Hubbard is a community library and five towns signed up to be part of the library community. It is the third busiest in the state and the third lowest in terms of taxpayer funding. Scott Thompson said it is a perennial problem that this topic is buried at the end of the agenda. He asked people to view it as part of a broader part of funding education. "We considered investing four million dollars in the population of three to 18-year-olds. For \$27,000 we can invest in something for everyone in town. Then it seems more reasonable." He said promoting institutions of general knowledge was what George Washington supported – by and for the people.

Cornelia Carey said that Community Connections has been voted out of the U32 budget this year limiting community activities for kids and the library is a resource. David Schutz said that for the last 10 to 15 years libraries have experienced an explosion of "use and youth" due to the information age. "It is our duty to provide this for everyone," he said. Marion Gray said the voters did not get a full report from Kellogg Hubbard Library as to what other towns are providing. She said people can afford to pay their own fee. Linda Gray said that the room was full of teachers and researchers. Many people rely on libraries. Her students, some living in cars, depend on libraries. She is concerned about the 14-year-old kid who can't afford the library card.

Doug Lilley said \$27,000 is just another part of education and suggested the town buy everyone a Kindle Fire instead. Jack Russell said he uses the library and pays his way. "Writers, business owners, all kinds of people go there to work. It offers adult education, mental health activities—it is far more than a library. It is for connections, social and cultural. The payback is tremendous." Gail Graham asked for more transparency, requesting a better breakdown on how the 792 active users are defined and reported.

The article passed by voice vote.

ARTICLE 27. 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		\$1,200
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		\$ 2,700
Old West Church Association		\$ 100
Peoples Health and Wellness Clinic		\$1,250
Retired Seniors Volunteer Program		\$ 200
Sexual Assault Crisis Team		\$ 200
Twin Valley Senior Center		\$ 800
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		<u>\$ 620</u>
	TOTAL	\$18,544

The article was moved and seconded. Wilson Hughes, representing the committee that reviews the requests, said that a majority of requests were level funded. Five organizations have increased the amount of their request. The Central VT Memorial Civic Center, the Twin Valley Senior Center and the Calais Woodbury Food shelf increases were recommended for approval.

Two requests for increases were not approved by the review committee: the Montpelier Senior Center at \$2,700, the committee recommended \$2,000; and the Vermont Association for the Blind, the committee recommended level funding at \$500.

A motion was made and seconded to amend the article with the committee's recommended changes. The amendment passed by voice vote.

The original article with the amendment was approved by voice vote.

ARTICLE: 29: Shall the Town of Calais strongly encourage our elected officials to strengthen and update Vermont's Bottle Bill to include water bottles and other beverage containers and use unclaimed deposits to support recycling efforts? It is estimated that updating Vermont's Bottle Bill to cover additional single-use beverage containers would recycle 96.7 million more bottles and cans each year. In addition, allowing the State, rather than the beverage industry, to retain unclaimed deposits would allow the State to use this money (estimated at over \$3 million with an updated Bottle Bill) to support recycling and other conservation programs that might otherwise have to be cut due to budget constraints.

The article was moved and seconded. Craig Line moved to limit debate on the next three articles to ten minutes. The limit on debate passed by voice vote. John Brabant explained that water and other bottles don't carry deposits. Millions of dollars go back to companies with unclaimed bottle deposits.

The question was called. It was moved, seconded and voted to end debate.

Article 29 passed by voice vote.

ARTICLE: 30. Whereas the establishment of a Public Bank in Vermont will help towns reduce the local tax burden by offering low cost bonds for public works and a depository for their accounts with competitive interest; Whereas a Public Bank that makes loans and investments in Vermont's people and our economy will help create jobs, income and economic security for all Vermonters, we call on the State Legislature to create a Public Bank for Vermont that enhances the work of the Vermont Economic Development Authority, the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation, the Vermont Housing Finance Agency, the Municipal Bond Bank and Vermont chartered community banks and credit unions by accepting deposits from the state and municipal governments and making loan programs available for students, homeowners, municipalities and enterprises to make Vermont economically stable, self-reliant and successful.

The article was moved and seconded. Marion Gray said she did not want to see the State get into the banking businesses; the State is competing with private business. Cynthia Johnson provided a definition of a state bank and website address for research, saying a state bank is designed not to compete with community banks. The object is not to take business away but to enhance prosperity and enhance long terms projects. Gail English said that North Dakota has a state bank. "All of our money is going to another country and being loaned back to us. If we had a state bank, our tax money would go in and all of our money would come back to Vermont."

Jim Hogue said that this will save small banks. A state bank acts as a clearing house for community banks that are being gobbled up by larger banks. This provides a pool of capital that Vermont banks can share and establishes a mechanism for Vermont banks to thrive and prosper. The system will lower taxes with Vermonters doing business with Vermonters. The state will need less bonding for infrastructure. North Dakota has no bonding whatsoever, Jim said. Marion Gray said that Beth Pierce, State Treasurer, testified against a state bank saying it was riskier than depositing in large bank.

The results of a voice vote were unclear. Article 30 passed with a hand count.

ARTICLE 31. Shall the voters of the Town of Calais adopt the following resolution to protect our children's privacy and control over their own personal information? Whereas

1. Especially in the digital age, a child's personal information cannot easily be retracted once shared or seized; and
2. Existing law and school policy provide that individual student information belongs primarily to each student and his/her parents or guardian; and
3. Without consent or strict legal requirement, transferring student records outside the school offensively mocks and effectively denies students' ownership and privacy interests in their own information; and
4. Protecting our students' ownership and privacy interests in their own records is a solemn public trust that cannot credibly or effectively be fulfilled without direct, exclusive physical control of those records; and
5. Our school officials have publicly stated that local management of student data is technically feasible without significant cost or operational disruption; and
6. Widely reported data theft, information sharing, cyber attacks, and warrantless data collection threaten the security of student records, especially when pooled with millions of others;

Now therefore, be it resolved that the town strongly urges the Calais and U32 school boards to adopt firm policies requiring that all information about individual students be stored only on local school or district premises and not be shared outside school or district staff except

1. By specific vote of the local board for each release, or
2. To the least degree strictly necessary to comply with law, or
3. With the prior written consent of the student/parent/guardian.

The article was moved and seconded. Chuck Davin explained, "What our kids eat for lunch, their grades, payments, photographs, everything is stored in a computer in Minnesota." He asked, "Do kids own this personal information, or do officials?" He said moving the information back here will improve the operation of the information. Heather Scandale asked why this is in front of the Selectboard instead of the school board. She asked what information is stored. Did it include social security numbers or psychological evaluations? Rolf Mueller asked about the cost of storing the information. An identified speaker said she was a middle school teacher and found the information system called Infinite Campus very useful; it allows for collaboration. The library book system is also useful. Officials work hard to keep data safe. She said she liked parental access to information. Chuck Davin said nothing in the article prevents voluntary use of the internet. The cost of the current software is \$6,000 to \$7,000 dollars shared by U32 sending towns. Conrad Smith said he was sympathetic to the article. He suggested a friendly amendment to urge the supervisory union to review how this affects all the towns. He suggested omitting #1 and #3 of the article. Chuck Davin said he was pleased to accept the supervisory union amendment but not to omitting #1 and #3. The vote was called for, including the friendly amendment relating to the supervisory union review of this article's effect on towns.

The article passed by hand count.

ARTICLE 32. To transact any other business that may legally come before the meeting.

Marialisa Calta asked that, as people explore ways to encourage more involvement in town and school meetings, there not be school vacation at the time of town meeting as many families are gone. Barry Bernstein asked that a committee be formed to explore using the school and holding town meeting on different days. Cynthia Johnson said she is usually involved in the very last articles to come before town meeting and that the back end of the meeting is crunched and articles are not read completely. Wilson Hughes reminded people to license their dogs before April 1st. Craig Line thanked the voters for their support of the library and said the third Wednesday of the month is when the library board meets. He welcomed people to email him for more information.

ARTICLE 33. To adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:10 p.m.

A true record,	Attest,	Assistant Town Clerk
	Attest,	Town Clerk
	Attest,	Selectboard