

**Special Town Meeting Minutes
November 8, 2014, 10am
Calais Elementary School**

Moderator Gus Seelig called the meeting to order at 10:12 a.m.

Article 1: To elect a moderator.

Article 1 was passed over as irrelevant as Gus had been voted moderator for one year at 2014 Town Meeting. Gus reviewed Roberts Rules of Order and the voting procedures. Looking out at the 224 attendees, Gus noted, "Democracy is alive and well. Usually special meetings have fewer attendees."

Article 2: Shall the Town of Calais vote on future funding requests from KelloggHubbard Library by Australian ballot? If the article passes, the vote by ballot would commence at Town Meeting 2015.

Doug Lilley moved the article. The motion was seconded, and Doug spoke to the article saying it is not a money issue or a vote against Kellogg Hubbard Library, it is about the right to vote for people who cannot get to town meeting. Reviewing the process he went through to bring the petition to the Selectboard, Doug said he did not realize that a vote for reconsideration must take place 30 days after town meeting. There were 119 names on the petition. Doug said that all members of the Selectboard voted to hold the special meeting except for Toby Talbot.

Donna Fitch, Town Clerk, clarified the Selectboard's vote. Scott Bassage was not in attendance and did not vote. John Brabant, Rose Pelchuck, Toby Talbot and Denise Wheeler voted to hold a special meeting.

Craig Line said he saw a "take back" attitude developing in town and said this is not an "us vs. them" issue. Craig said he was against the Selectboard's vote to hold the special meeting as the petition had the same wording as the article voted on at town meeting, and it was presented to the Selectboard well outside the window of reconsideration. Stating that the Kellogg Hubbard Library is under good management, Craig reported the library's 2015 request will be \$2,000 less than last year's request. Noting the discussions people were having prior to the start of today's meeting, Craig pointed out that Australian ballot does away with that right.

Michael Fullerton stated this *is* a democracy right here. All people here on a *Saturday* can vote.

Gail Graham read a prepared statement about growing up in Calais and going to town meeting when most people were farmers. Democracy is equal opportunity and a ballot allows everyone to vote, she said. She thinks voting by ballot will increase participation.

Everyone's opportunity to vote is what this is about, said Lesley Fitch, who noted she had been voting in Calais since 1976. If the article is voted down, she said, we are voting down the right to vote.

Pointing out that Vermont is one of the last places to hold town meeting, Susan Shedd said there is more than one way to support the right to vote. She referred to University of Vermont Professor Frank Bryan's extensive research over several decades on town meeting votes which show that when votes go to Australian ballot, the total number of voters plummets. She said there was a good discussion at town meeting about the reasons why some people cannot attend town meeting. A committee was formed after town meeting to work with the Board of Civil Authority to explore options that would encourage more voters, including location and day of the week. She said that the committee decided to hold Town Meeting on a Saturday at the elementary school. [Town Clerk's note: the Board of Civil Authority voted to hold 2015 Town Meeting at the school, but has not voted to change the date.]

Geraldine Gilman spoke in favor of Australian ballot, saying she would like more money to stay in Calais to directly help Calais residents, citing the Calais/Woodbury Foodshelf and Central VT Home Health and Hospice as organizations that serve Calais residents. She noted that some people have lost jobs.

Chuck Davin pointed out that democracy is the people in the room, that other substantive issues besides money are addressed at town meeting and that it is important to

keep this access to government and its officials. He noted that a budget can be voted down at town meeting, but that Australian ballot reduces control over the budget.

Paul Hannan made a motion to vote the article. The motion to cease debate carried by voice vote. Nedene Martin asked for a paper ballot, and more than the requisite seven people raised their hands in support of a paper ballot. Gus restated the article, "Shall the Town of Calais vote on future funding requests from Kellogg Hubbard Library by Australian ballot?" A "yes" vote supports voting by ballot. A "no" vote does not support a ballot vote.

At 11:15 am, Gus reported the vote: 131 no. 93 yes. The article was defeated.

Article 3: To adjourn the meeting.

A motion was made and seconded and passed unanimously by voice vote to adjourn the meeting at 11:20 am.

A true record of the meeting,

Attest,

Donna Fitch, Town Clerk

Attest,

Selectboard

Attest,

Selectboard