

**MINUTES  
TOWNS OF HALIFAX AND READSBORO  
SOUTHERN VALLEY UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT ANNUAL MEETING**

Pursuant to notice the inhabitants of the Town of Halifax and the Town of Readsboro, Vermont, who are legal voters in the Southern Valley Unified Union School District (SVUUSD) met at the Twin Valley Middle High School Auditorium in Whitingham, Vermont, on the evening of Thursday, February 28, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting of the Southern Valley Unified Union School District.

Moderator Paul G. Blais called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

Moderator Blais called for a moment of silence in memory of those who had passed away and who have extended kindness.

Homer Sumner, Chairman to the Board led the voters in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

The town officers were introduced: Clerk of the Board – Tina Blais, Chairman of the Board, Homer Sumner; Stephanie Powers; Mary King; Sue Bailey and Caroline Sprague. At this time Principal, Sandy Pentak-Cohen; Superintendent Of Schools, Barbara Anne Komons-Montroll; and WSWSU Business Manager, Karen Atwood were also introduced. Moderator Blais gave the guidelines for the conduct of the meeting and read the Southern Valley Unified Union School District Warning in its entirety.

The following business was transacted:

- ARTICLE I** To elect a Moderator, by Australian Ballot.
- ARTICLE II** To elect a Clerk, by Australian Ballot.
- ARTICLE III** To elect a Treasurer, by Australian Ballot
- ARTICLE IV** To elect (2) School Directors for three (3) years terms each, by Australian Ballot.
- ARTICLE V** To see if the voters of the SVUUSD will authorize the school board to pay the School District Treasurer \$3,000 annually for his/her duties with the School District, by Australian Ballot.
- ARTICLE VI** To see if the voters of the SVUUSD will authorize the school board to pay the School District Clerk \$20 per hour not to exceed \$250 annually for his/her duties with the School District, by Australian ballot.
- ARTICLE VII** To see if the voters of the SVUUSD approve the School Board to expend \$2,819,314, which is the amount the School Board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year. It is estimated that this proposed budget, if approved, will result in education spending of \$13,596 per equalized pupil. This projected spending per equalized pupil is 5.45% lower than spending for the current year. To be voted on by Australian Ballot.
- ARTICLE VIII** Lewis Sumner moved that the towns hear the reports of the SVUUSD Officers and act thereon. Marylou Parkhurst seconded the motion. Hearing no discussion Moderator Blais moved on to Article IX.
- ARTICLE IX** Lewis Sumner moved that the SVUUSD will vote to authorize the School Directors to borrow money in anticipation of taxes. Patricia Dow seconded the motion. Article IX was so voted and Moderator Blais declared Article IX so passed.

## **ARTICAL X**

Larry Hopkins moved to pass over to see if the SVUUSD will vote to authorize the School directors to deposit into a reserve fund, anticipated surplus funds at June 30, 2019, for the purpose of maintaining the facilities and/or emergency repairs, pursuant to 24 VSA § 2804. Moderator Blais explained that this is called suspend the rules and a second is needed as well as two thirds vote. Dave Marchegiani seconded the motion. The motion to suspend the rules for Article X was so voted and declared defeated by Moderator Blais. Lewis Sumner moved to see if the SVUUSD will vote to authorize the School Directors to deposit into a reserve fund, anticipated surplus funds at June 30, 2019, for the purpose of maintaining the facilities and/or emergency repairs, pursuant to 24 VSA § 2804. The motion was seconded by Patricia Dow.

Marylou Parkhurst asked for an explanation/clarification of the reserve fund.

Sumner explained that there is no fund yet but if there is a fund balance part of that fund balance could be established into a reserve fund on its own to be used in case of building repairs or emergencies.

Parkhurst asked if it would be able to roll over from year to year.

Sumner replied that yes it would roll over from year to year.

Hopkins raised his concern over the Article, it seems as if it is giving the board a blank check to do whatever they want with. Thinks that the Board would have to establish fund, report the fund to the voters, then put it into an article to be voted on each year at the annual meeting. Thinks the reserve fund is a good idea article just needs to be written in a different order. Moderator Blais explained that he talked with JP Isabelle, from the Vermont Secretary of State's office, to get a better understanding of the Article. It was explained to him that the Article could be amended to two parts and he was pointed to the VLCT Model Article. If it were an Australian ballot, it would have to be worded as one Article to both create the account and to fund the account. For a floor vote an amendment is still permissible to split the article into two parts. It is up to the discretion of the moderator as to whether they would permit the amendment. There is no law that requires a dollar amount. A new Article would have to be voted on each year as it is only good for one year.

Dave Marchegiani brought up how the Readsboro Select Board handles their reserve fund. Moderator Blais stated that the Article was Drafted by the attorney for the Southern Valley Unified Union School District in conjunction with the VT Secretary of State's office, and he will consider it germane. Sumner explained when you do a Town budget you are using line items which allow the residents to vote on them and when doing the school budget there are no line items.

Sumner explained that the fund balance is for use for two years from now.

Hopkins asked how they came up with what the fund number was going to be.

Sumner replied that they have no idea what the number is going to be that is why it is anticipated surplus. We really have no idea what is going to happen during the year, that is why it is anticipated. Hopkins asked if they knew they were going to have this fund why didn't they just put a dollar amount in such as \$50,000 and make it clear and simple? Moderator Blais asked if he was still referring to the Article that was written by DA J.P. the answer was yes.

Sumner went on to explain that Halifax had never had a reserve fund before and that he was going into it blind. If you have a fund balance and you don't put it into a reserve fund by June 30, as of July 1 it turns into revenue because you have missed the deadline. Paul N. Blais motioned to call the question and Patricia Dow seconded ending Debate. It was voted to end the debate on Article X. Article X was so voted and Moderator Blais declared Article X so passed.

## **Article XI**

Patricia Dow moved to transact any other business that may legally come before the meeting. Paul N. Blais seconded. Hopkins expressed his concern over the fact that the numbers in the warrant had changed from the time it was posted in Readsboro, to the Readsboro informational meeting and they were even different when read by Moderator Blais at the Annual meeting tonight.

Also, that the warrant was not correctly posted in Readsboro. Moderator Blais asked what he read wrong and was told that is was the total for the expenditure in Article VII. Also, that the School report said that we would be discussing Articles VII, VIII, IX, X, and XI. We only discussed VIII, IX, X, and XI. Hopkins also stated that there were errors on page 11 of the School Report. Hopkins read out examples for the people. Parkhurst asked Sumner if a postcard could be mailed out with the date and time of the informational meeting as they were not aware of it. That is something that the board will consider next year. Sumner asked Marchegiani if the Readsboro Select Board sent out informational post cards to the voters for their annual Town Meeting and Marchegiani said no they just post in the legal places required. Marchegiani explained how the Readsboro Select Board has handled reserve funds in the past but understands that the select Board and School Board operate differently. More discussion ensued about Article X with members sharing ideas as to how to handle it. Sumner tried to clarify details. At this time moderator Blais read 24 VSA § 2804. Hopkins asked how the tax payers would know if they were getting good results from the students for their tax money. Homer explained that at the E Board meeting he just attended, he heard very positive results. Sandy Pentak-Cohen explained about the schools having a flier that goes out weekly with information on the projects the students were involved in as well as a Principal's report that gives little more info into about the academic side. She stated that anyone can sign up for it to be either emailed or mailed to them.

Lewis Sumner moved to adjourn this meeting until Tuesday, March 5, 2019 at 10:00 a.m. to vote on the remaining Australian Ballot Questions. Paul N. Blais seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Town Clerk

We, the undersigned, approve and attest that the record of the Southern Valley Unified Union Annual School District Meeting of the Towns of Halifax and Readsboro held at the Twin Valley Middle High School in the Auditorium on Thursday, February 28, 2019 is a true record of all action taken at that meeting.

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Unified Union School District Moderator

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Other Election Official