## TOWN OF HARDWICK ANNUAL TOWN MEETING MARCH 5, 2019

Orise Ainsworth, Moderator, called the meeting to order at 10 o'clock a.m. and began by reading the Warning. The voting audience included approximately 126 people.

The legal voters of the Town of Hardwick, Vermont are hereby notified and warned to meet at the Hardwick Elementary School in said Town of Hardwick on Tuesday, March 5, 2019 at 10 o'clock in the forenoon to act on the following business:

(Election of Town Select Board, Town Clerk, Town Treasurer, Hardwick Town School District Directors, and Union School District No. 26 Directors shall be voted on by Australian ballot. The polls will be open from 9:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m.). If special accommodations are necessary because of physical disabilities, please contact the Town Clerk's Office (472-5971).

Orise also mentioned that Hazen Union's school budget and the Bond for the Bridgman Hill Reservoir Roof project were also being voted upon by Australian Ballot on this day.

In the front entry the Sixth Graders had a table where they were selling food to raise money for their class trip.

There were flyers explaining the organizational meeting on March 15, 2019 for the new Orleans Southwest Union Elementary School District.

The Hardwick Food Panty had a flyer in the front with information regarding items needed to help support the food pantry.

There was also a flyer from the Select Board with information regarding the Bridgman Hill Reservoir Roof Bond.

The front table was asked to introduce themselves.

Since Shaun Fielder, Town Manager, is not a Hardwick resident, Orise asked for permission from the crowd for Shaun to speak on behalf of the Town.

Shaun Fielder, Town Manager, thanked the crowd for letting him speak. He thanked the business manager, Casey Rowell, and Payroll Administrator, Amanda Fecteau, for helping him with the transition.

The front table included Eric Remick – SB Chair, Shari Cornish - SB, Elizabeth Dow - SB, Lucian Avery - SB, Danny Hale – SB Vice Chair, Aaron Cochran – Police Chief and Tom Fadden – Road Foreman and Fire Chief.

Article 1. To elect a moderator to govern said Town Meeting and for the year ensuing.

Orise Ainsworth, nominated by Karen Collier Motion passed unanimously

Article 2. Shall the Town accept the Town Report, year ending June 30, 2018?

Moved by Kevin Moore Jr. Seconded by Jean Hackett Motion passed unanimously

Article 3. To elect all Town Officers and School District Directors as required by the public laws of Vermont and the Town Charter. (Select Board, Town Clerk, Town Treasurer Hardwick Town School District Directors, and Union School District No. 26 Directors, to be voted by Australian Ballot).

One Auditor......3 year term passed over

First Constable......1 year term Arthur Chase nominated by Karen Collier

Second Constable......1 year term Erwin Gilcris nominated by Karen Collier

One Town Agent......1 year term Karen Holmes nominated by Kevin Moore, Jr.

Surveyor of Wood, Bark and Lumber......1 year term Lucian Avery nominated by Kevin Moore, Jr.

Tree Warden.....1 year term Lucian Avery nominated by Kevin Moore, Jr.

Cemetery Trustees.....1 year term Main Street, Maple Street, Fairview, Sanborn, Hardwick Street

Orise requested that we add West Hill Cemetery and Hardwick Center Cemetery to our list.

Moved as a slate by David Shepard Seconded by Kevin Moore, Jr. Motion passed unanimously

Fire Dept. Officers (can be voted as one vote)......1 year term

Moved as a slate by Karen Collier Seconded by Kevin Moore, Jr. Motion passed unanimously

One Library Trustee1 year remaining on a 3 year term Elizabeth Rossano nominated by Jodi Lew-Smith
One Library Trustee
One Library Trustee
One Library Trustee
Grand Juror 1 year term George Whitney nominated by David Shepard
Trustee of Public Funds1 year term George Whitney nominated by David Shepard
Trustee of Public Funds1 year term Mario Fradette nominated by David Shepard
Trustee of Public Funds1 year term Lorraine Hussey nominated by David Shepard
Fence Viewers

Article 4. Shall the Town have its current taxes collected by the Town Treasurer?

Moved by Kevin Moore Jr. Seconded by David Shepard Motion passed unanimously

Article 5. Shall the Town vote a budget of three million three hundred fifty-nine thousand six hundred sixteen dollars (\$3,359,616.00) to meet the expenses and liabilities of the Town and authorize the Select Board to set a new tax rate sufficient to provide the same?

Moved by Karen Collier Seconded by Norma Wiesen Shaun Fielder began the discussion by thanking the Select Board for the opportunity to serve as Town Manager for the Town of Hardwick. For those who were not aware, Jon Jewett retired in December 2018. Shaun thanked Amanda Fecteau, Payroll Administrator, and Casey Rowell, Business Manager, for helping with his transition.

In June 2018 the Town added \$43,301 to our fund balance. That increased the fund balance to just over \$400,000 which is 13% of our total budget. The recognized standard is 15% of a Town's annual budget. We are approaching that number. The fund balance is similar to a savings account which assists in years where the budget is surpassed.

We have nearly a year under our belts with the new Water / Waste Water meter rates. After June 30 we will be doing a full review to see if the rates are fair and equitable for everyone. We do have to run the Water / Waste Water system as an enterprise fund so it is managed like a business.

We completed several paving projects in 2018 and have several more scheduled for summer 2019. Some of the planned projects will be Glenside, Sumner Street, Holton Hill and Dewey Street.

In 2018 we purchased a new PD cruiser, additional Fire Department Safety Gear, the New F-550 for the Highway department and a new snow machine for the Recreation Department.

As everyone was aware, there was a partial collapse at the Bridgman Hill Reservoir roof last week which caused some issues for the water system customers. For the record, it was not just the buildup of snow that contributed to the collapse. There had been high winds that weekend and the roof structure was already compromised. We were already prepared to have a bond vote at Town Meeting as the structure was in need of repair.

The boil water order was the decision of the Town Manager and Select Board to verify that the public was protected. We received clearance from the water tests and lifted the ban within 4 days.

The important point Shaun wanted to be sure everyone realized was that the Select Board had done an excellent job of putting money aside to prepare for funding of such projects.

He stated that this bond will only be paid for by the Water system connection customers.

We will be working on some Waste Water Treatment plant upgrades in 2019. Good Water/ Waste Water Capacity is necessary for the agricultural economy and recreational economy of Hardwick.

Shaun will continue Jon Jewett's work with the Center for Agriculture and NVDA on the Yellow Barn Project. Jon Jewett has been serving as a special projects' manager with CAE since his retirement.

Paul Fixx thanked Shaun for his comments, then questioned the special rate for water and waste water that was set for the Hardwick Elementary School. He wondered if there were issues with their system that need to be corrected.

Jennifer Fliegelman, Chair of HTSD Board, explained that the school staff is working with Efficiency Vermont to isolate where there may be issues in their system. They are planning to purchase new coolers that will not be water-cooled.

Eric explained that not all of the fee was based upon use. There is a large part of their rate that is infrastructure based.

Shaun stated that he has been collaborating with the OSSU to discover if there are issues and to see if the institutional rate is fair.

Emily Lanxner explained that as a low-income resident who lives in the village and pays for Water and Waste Water, she feels that the rates are too high.

At 10:38 Eric Remick took the podium to explain the 2019-2020 proposed Hardwick Town Budget.

Eric thanked Shaun for accepting the job and becoming the new Town Manager.

Eric gave an overview of the FY 20 budget. He touched upon the increases in revenues, expenses and the percentage of the increase between the two.

The board proposed a budget that keeps services at their current level.

On Page 9 you could see that the revenues are going up 1.77%, the budget is up 4.72% which made the tax rate reflect an increase of 6.15%.

The Highway budget was up by 8.14%.

Most of that increase was relative to the increases in health insurance, moving from single plans to family plans.

The cost of road salt was up this year so we increased the budget to accommodate that aspect.

We also increased the budget for gravel.

The Office budget saw an increase due to health insurance changes.

Line items were also increased for FY20 as we put more money aside for the Capital Equipment and Capital Road Budgets.

Eric opened the floor to questions.

Jan Howard asked if we have made changes to our salt policy.

Tom Fadden, Road Foreman, explained that we have not made any changes, except when we have really low temperatures and we add calcium chloride to help it stick. We did use more salt this year, due to the Winter being so long and salt prices were up \$11 per ton over last year.

Jan asked if the Town was aware of the large crack in Mackville Road.

Tom stated that they were aware, but the VT frost is raising heck all over the place this year.

Paul Fixx asked about the Line Item on Pg14 for the Jeudevine Library. He stated that over the past several years there have been endowments and contributions made to the Library. He is wondering where that money is reflected in their budget.

Eric explained that the only the operating expenses are reflected in the Town Report.

Jodi Lew-Smith stated that the endowments and donations are in separate building funds that the Town manages for the Library. None of those funds are impacted by tax dollars.

The Library committee increased employee salaries this year to bring them into line with other libraries in Vermont.

Rob Lewis questioned the percentage amount that Town Employees contribute for their health insurance.

Eric explained that it is currently 16.5% and will increase to 17% in July 1, 2019.

Mary Gagnon encouraged all fellow town folks to look into Federal Medical Insurance. This will offer a fairer rate to everyone.

Lorraine Hussey asked if there would be a place in Town for composting again.

Eric explained that the site went away when the funding from CVSWMD was depleted. Shari Cornish was our representative to the board so you could contact her to see what is being discussed for the future.

Brad Ferland questioned if the COPS grant that we agreed to take on last year has made a difference. He asked if we used the money to add an investigator.

Aaron Cochran, Police Chief, explained that we did not use the COPS grant for the investigator. We had an officer working part time as an investigator. The grant position was not filled, but we are in the process of filling that position this week with an already certified officer.

It was working very well to have a full-time investigator. He was working with merchants in the area to improve relations and customer service. It also allowed the patrol officers to focus on their jobs.

Paul Fixx asked for a show of hands of residents that would be interested in the Select Board going after a grant to open a composting center in Hardwick.

Orise suggested that we wait and do that under Article #22 the other business portion of the meeting.

## Motion carried

Article 6. Shall the Town vote to create a Conservation Commission pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 4501?

Moved by Kevin Moore Jr. Seconded by Ann Gilcris

Ann Gilcris questioned if there would be future funds requested from this commission beyond the \$50, they requested for start up costs.

Eric stated that his understanding is that the commission is there to inventory town lands and provide advice to various town agencies. He does not anticipate them needing more funding in the future. He also stated that the start up costs requested were \$300 not \$50.

Michael Lew-Smith stated that he was not involved with Hardwick's Commission, but he has worked with other towns and they usually don't require much money for the projects that they do.

Brad Ferland asked for the Select Board's opinion on the creation of this commission.

Eric stated that he feels it will be a valuable service.

Danny Hale stated that he has no problem with it and hopefully they will advise the Select Board of future improvements that can be made to Hardwick.

John Lussier stated that he has heard they are monitoring for invasive plants and insects. Does that mean that they have the right to enter private property without owner permission?

Eric stated that the Commission must follow Vermont State Statute and they will not be a regulatory body.

Rachel Kane was one of the sponsors of this commission and she said they will not enter private land without permission. They intend to monitor roadsides but not private land.

## Motion passed unanimously

Article 7. Shall the Town appropriate a sum of money not to exceed four thousand five hundred dollars (\$4,500.00) for the support of the Greensboro Nursing Home?

Moved by Kevin Moore Jr. Seconded by David Shepard Motion passed unanimously

Article 8. Shall the Town appropriate a sum of money not to exceed three thousand five hundred dollars (\$3,500.00) for the support of A.W.A.R.E.?

Moved by Robin Grant Seconded by Ann Gilcris Motion passed unanimously Article 9. Shall the Town appropriate a sum of money not to exceed one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500.00) for the support of the Lamoille Family Center?

Moved by Kevin Moore Jr. Seconded by Ann Gilcris Motion passed unanimously

Article 10. Shall the Town appropriate a sum of money not to exceed three thousand dollars (\$3,000.00) for the support of the Hardwick Historical Society?

Moved by Kevin Moore Jr. Seconded by Ronald Wiesen

Lorraine Hussey reminded the audience of the Historical Society's Corn beef and Cabbage dinner at the Hardwick American Legion on Saturday, March 16, 2019 at 6 p.m.

Motion passed unanimously

Article 11. Shall the Town appropriate a sum of money not to exceed three thousand one hundred sixty-one dollars (\$3,161.00) for the support of the Northeast Kingdom Human Services?

Moved by Griffin Lussier Seconded by David Shepard Motion passed unanimously

Article 12. Shall the Town appropriate a sum of money not to exceed three thousand dollars (\$3,000.00) for the support of Hardwick Area Community Justice Center?

Moved by Robin Grant Seconded by David Shepard Motion passed unanimously

Article 13. Shall the Town appropriate a sum of money not to exceed two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500.00) for the support of Hardwick Area Food Pantry?

Moved by Griffin Lussier Seconded by Karen Collier Motion passed unanimously

Article 14. Shall the Town appropriate a sum of money not to exceed two thousand six hundred dollars (\$2,600.00) for the support of Caledonia Home Health Care and Hospice?

Moved by Griffin Lussier Seconded by David Shepard Motion passed unanimously

Article 15. Shall the Town appropriate a sum of money not to exceed three thousand dollars (\$3,000.00) for the support of the Hardwick Community Television (Channel 16)?

Moved by Griffin Lussier Seconded by David Shepard Motion passed unanimously

Article 16. Shall the Town appropriate a sum of money not to exceed three thousand four hundred dollars (\$3,400.00) for the support of Rural Community Transportation?

Moved by David Shepard Seconded by Kevin Moore, Jr. Motion passed unanimously Article 17. Shall the Town appropriate a sum of money not to exceed three thousand five hundred dollars (\$3,500.00) for the support of Northeast Kingdom Arts Council (the Hardwick Town House)?

Moved by David Shepard Seconded by Kevin Moore, Jr. Motion passed unanimously

Article 18. Shall the Town appropriate a sum of money not to exceed four thousand five hundred dollars (\$4,500.00) for the support of the Northeastern Kingdom Council on Aging?

Moved by David Shepard Seconded by Kevin Moore, Jr. Paul Fixx asked if the spelling of Article 18 was correct as he believed it was "Northeast" not Northeastern.

Orise checked the report on page 24-25 and found that Paul was correct. She read Article 18 again with the correction to the name.

Motion passed unanimously

Article 19. Shall the Town appropriate a sum of money not to exceed two thousand one hundred dollars (\$2,100.00) for the support of the North Country Animal League?

Moved by David Shepard Seconded by Robin Grant Motion passed unanimously

Article 20. Shall the Town authorize the Select Board, for the period of one year, to enter into contracts with new industrial and commercial owners, lessees, bailees, of real property, or with existing or new owners, lessees, bailees or operators who construct, acquire or renovate industrial and/or commercial real property, including additions to existing property for the purpose of fixing and maintaining the municipal rate applicable to such real property or for the purpose of fixing the amount of money which shall be paid as an annual municipal tax upon such real property pursuant to the provision of Title 24, VSA, Section 2741?

Moved by David Shepard Seconded by Kevin Moore, Jr. Motion passed unanimously

Article 21. Shall the Town authorize the Select Board, for the period of one year, to enter into contracts with operators of agricultural real property, or with existing or new owners, lessees, bailees, or operators who construct acquire or renovate, or who intend to construct, acquire or renovate agricultural real property for the purpose of fixing and maintaining the valuation of such real property in the Grand List for the purpose of fixing and maintaining the applicable to such real property or for the purpose of fixing the amount in money which shall be paid as an annual municipal tax upon such real property pursuant to provisions of Title 24, VSA, Section 2741?

Moved by David Shepard Seconded by Kevin Moore, Jr. Emily Lanxner asked for an explanation of this article.

Eric Remick explained that this gives the Select Board permission to enter into Tax Stabilization agreements with people who are potentially looking into opening a new business in the Town of Hardwick. A brief description of this is available on pages 6 and 7 of the Town Report.

Motion passed unanimously

Article 22. To transact any other nonbinding business proper to be brought before said meeting.

Orise asked for a show of hands of the voters who would like to see the Town of Hardwick have a composting place available.

Shari explained that there are grants that are available to communities up to \$10,000 to set up composting stations. However, eventually these stations either have to be funded by the Town or they fail.

David Shepard stated that the popularity of these composting stations may increase as we get closer to the State mandates of next summer.

Deborah Hartt asked if anyone had spoken with the Center for Ag to see if they would be able to help set up a site.

Ann Batten stated that it is difficult for senior citizens to have to drive long distances just to compost. She stated she is amazed by how much is actually collected, she's afraid we may run out of dump space very soon.

Robin Grant stated that the all the collections from All Metals Recycling goes directly to Black Dirt Farm in Stannard.

Paul Fixx, the former representative to Central Vermont Solid Waste Management District, thanked Shari for keeping our connection to them. He stated that All Metals does charge for composting, and that maybe the Town of Hardwick could save everyone money if we opened our own location.

Danny Hale reminded everyone that nothing is free. Even if we get the grant, it will eventually cost the Town. It will be taxes or fees at the end. He said that the thing he would like to see a show hands as to how many people are willing to pay to compost if the Town opened a facility.

Robin Leslie asked why Black Dirt Farm is charging for collection if they are benefiting from the sale of composted soil ?

Eric stated that they are a business not a Non – Profit and that this is a part of their business plan. He then offered that the Select Board could create a task force to explore further options for the composting process.

Andrew Meyer spoke for the Center for Ag and thanked the Select Board for all their help with the Yellow Barn project.

He stated that as a board member for the Center for Ag, they have been discussing tearing down the old building at the Granite Street location and replacing it with a new community pavilion.

Andrew also believes that the Center for Ag would be willing to be involved in the composting process.

Deborah Hartt stated that she works for Buffalo Mountain Food Co-Op and they have been working to come up with ideas for composting options. They have had someone inspect the store and give them very specific examples of what can actually be recycled. She offered to be a resource for anyone with recycling questions or composting ideas, you can contact her at the Buffalo Mountain Co-Op.

Shari Cornish advised that there are several different flyers in the voting area regarding CVSWMD.

Robin Leslie suggested that the Town and The Hardwick Gazette attempt to work on ways to educate people on these recycling rules.

Orise reminded everyone that the Select Board is offering to set up the task force to see if we can find some solutions.

Mary Gagnon thanked Hardwick Community TV for covering the Select Board Meetings and reminded everyone that even if you don't have cable access you can watch meetings and events on line.

James Nudd had some questions regarding the work that the Road Crew did last fall on a section of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail.

- How much was spent on the work we did and where did that money come from?
- Is the rail trail open to snowmobiles?
- Did we seed that area at the time we did the work?

Eric explained that the road crew replaced culverts and brought in some Town gravel to fix up that area. We spent about \$4500 on the materials from the Highway budget.

Tom explained that the \$4500 was for the materials only and then there was the labor costs for the road crew to do the work.

Eric explained that we have some funds set aside in the Capital Fund that we are preparing to spend this year. The overall project costs for the rail trail are large but it will benefit the community.

Wendy Tanner asked it possibly some changes could be made to our winter parking policy. With the abundance of snow this year, cars parking on the sides of roads can lead to one-way traffic. Road crews are doing their best, but when we have this much snow, we have lots of correlating issues.

Ross Connelly explained that last year at Town Meeting he raised some concerns about the sidewalks being plowed on West Church Street. He thanked the road crew for working hard to keep them clear this year.

At 11:49 a.m. our State Representative, Chip Troiano took the podium to address the crowd.

Chip spoke about several important issues being debated in the House of Representatives this session.

Act 46 had been a topic of discussion in the first three weeks of the new session.

Chip told the crowd that he had been assured that the Orleans Southwest Supervisory Union would not need to consolidate. Two consultants had been hired to look over the OSSU structure and had assured everyone involved with the district that there would be no need to consolidate the OSSU district.

Chip stated that in November the Department of Education dropped the consolidation bomb. The Secretary of Education and the Chair of the Education Committee included the OSSU in the order requiring districts to consolidate.

The House has passed an amendment that is now in the Senate which will delay for one year the mandated July 1, 2019 consolidation launch date. The members of the House hope that this will give time to school boards to ask questions and get the answers that will have the most benefit to our students.

Chip has meet with the Chair of the Senate Education Committee and he has invited Chip to testify before the committee.

The word from the Governor is that he will support the 1-year delay if the amendment passes out of the Senate.

There was no good news this year regarding the rules on vehicle inspections.

The DMV was supposed to be reviewing their rules and looking into changes that reflect safety issues rather than minor rust and wear and tear.

However, the focus of the Transportation Committee has been on subsidizing electric vehicles this session. Chip stated that the Agency of Transportation is not being realistic on the real issues especially those being faced by the senior citizens and low-income Vermonters who cannot afford these massive bills to repair their vehicles.

Vermont's Opoid crisis is still serious. But we are definitely making some inroads with our Hub and Spoke model of treatment. It is being noticed and copied nationwide.

In Vermont this year we found that 2,000 to 3,000 more people are in treatment and overdose deaths in Vermont are slightly down.

The question is still on the table as to how we can keep Vermonters from leaving the State. The New England States are losing their populations as residents move to southern states. However, Vermont actually has the highest % of inbound migration.

The understanding throughout the House and Senate is that we have to keep Vermont affordable to retain residents. This is the third year in a row that a balanced budget with no new fees has been passed.

Vermont has a small economy and small population to afford them.

When Chip asks residents what they need to keep them in Vermont, he always hears that they require better pay.

The House and Senate are working to raise the minimum wage.

Mental Health worker pay needs to increase as we are having difficulty in recruitment and retention is a struggle.

Child care needs to be more affordable, as some people are working solely to pay for their daycare costs.

The loan forgiveness for Medical Professionals is a great program. With a five-year commitment for doctors and nurses to Vermont medical centers, your education loans can be forgiven.

They passed the free tuition to in-state colleges for Vermont National Guard members and recruits.

Chip stated that his Town Meeting Reports are available on the table at the back of the room.

Chip opened the floor to questions.

Emily Lanxner questioned if the practice of charging fines to stores for selling E-cigarettes to children was the best way to stop it.

Chip explained that the revenue from the fines will go directly into prevention programs.

David Shepard asked what the status of the H-57 abortion bill was and where does Chip stand on that bill.

Chip explained that H-57 passed out of the house with a large margin in favor and is now in with the Senate. If the Senate passes the bill the Governor has indicated that he will support the bill. Chip stated that he did support and vote in favor of H-57. He cited many historical reasons why he was in support of this bill in Vermont.

Janice Davison questioned if minimum wage was being increased, will they also see an increase in SSI benefits? Because when you see an increase in minimum wage, things like fuel oil and groceries always seem to increase as well.

Chip stated that statistics show that local economies show an increase in profits as people tend to spend more after a pay increase.

At 12:18, with no further questions of Chip, he thanked the crowd.

Orise stated if there were no further questions, she would entertain a motion to adjourn.

Motion to adjourn at 12:18 p.m. made by Norma Wiesen Seconded by Ronald Wiesen.

Minutes prepared and submitted by \_\_\_\_\_\_Alberta Miller, Town Clerk

## RESULTS OF AUSTRALIAN BALLOT VOTE FOR TOWN & SCHOOL OFFICERS:

Total Votes Cast: 332 Select Board- 3-year term: Eric Remick......299 (elected) Select Board – 1 year terms: Lucien Avery......278 (elected) Shari Cornish ......256 (elected) Hardwick Town Clerk - 3 year term: Hardwick Town Treasurer - 3 year term: Hazen Union School Director #26 – 3 year term: Amy Rosenthal Holloway ......281 (elected) Hardwick Town School District Director – 3 year term: Jennifer Laundry...... 275 (elected) Hardwick Town School District Director -2 years remaining on a 3 year term: (No one elected) Hardwick Town School District Director - 1 year terms: Katharine Ingram ......261 (elected) Kevin Moore, Jr..... 242 (elected)

Bridgman Hill Reservoir Roof Bond Vote:

262 Yes 67 No

Hazen Union School District # 26 Budget of \$6,674,487.00

Total Votes 483 (Greensboro, Hardwick & Woodbury Co-Mingled)

335 Yes (Budget Passed) 145 No