

Town of Fairfax



12 Buck Hollow Road
Fairfax, VT 05454
(802) 849-6111

ABSTRACT/MINUTES OF THE 2020 ANNUAL TOWN DISTRICT MEETING

The 2020 Annual Town District Meeting was called to order at the Elementary Auditorium at Bellows Free Academy, Fairfax, Vermont by Moderator Roberta (Robby) Rodimer shortly after 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, February 29, 2020. She thanked the set-up crew for the wonderful job they did setting up for Town Meeting. She thanked the Ladies of the United Church of Fairfax for providing snacks. Robby welcomed everyone and read Robert's Rules as modified by VT State Statute. She set a three-minute speaking limit allowing speakers to speak twice on an issue.

ARTICLES 1 through ARTICLE 5 were voted upon using the official Australian ballot on Tuesday, March 3, 2020 at the Middle School Gymnasium of Bellows Free Academy, Fairfax, Vermont. The polls opened at 7:00 a.m. and closed at 7:00 p.m.

Barbara Murphy, State Representative, spoke in sympathy of the absence of long-time resident Sharon's Horr. Sharon was recognized in the front cover of the Town Report. Barbara spoke about Sharon's accomplishments given to the town in numerous ways including being our Community Librarian for over 30 years. Barbara talked about the 2020 Unclaimed Property Listing for Fairfax through the Vermont State Treasurer which was in the Lobby and posted in the Town Office entrance. Check it out to see if there are any funds that are entitled to you. Barbara thanks Newt Garland for his extraordinary generosity to the Town with preserving Fairfax land through the Vermont Land Trust.

Steve Cormier, Select Board Chair introduced the Select Board: Randy DeVine; Sheri Rainville; Duane Leach; and Stephen Bessette, Select Board Assistant, Amy Sears and Town Manager, Brad Docheff. Brad thanked the Select Board; Town Staff; and especially his daughter that helped put this presentation in place.

Brad spoke about celebrating the past, looking to the future. He looked through the highlights of 2019 which included the completion of Phase 1 of the sidewalk plan; the Party in the Park that was put on by Brian LaClair our Recreation Director; and our new Community Corner Lot across from Stones Throw. He thanked the helpers that helped accomplish that. Transportation improvement goals consist of Main Street Crosswalks; Sidewalk Master Plan Phases 2&3; and the review of the 104/128 Intersection. The road safety audit is upcoming. Some upcoming construction projects consist of the Shephardson Hollow Bridge construction beginning this Summer. It will be a single lane bridge. Utility infrastructure on Fletcher Road will begin the Spring of 2021. The Utility Department Meters are almost all installed. The Wastewater Treatment Facility will be evaluated soon. We are doing Broadband Network Exploring.

Brad spoke stating that the 2020 United States Census is safe; easy; and important. This is a source for allocating federal funds. To earn income, go to <https://2020census.gov/jobs>. We have a waste removal contract that is adding composting service. This is in compliance with Act 148. Brad discussed the upcoming increased communication with using the recollect App. The contract cost is stable.

Brad continued the presentation of where Fairfax is going from municipal planning; public transportation; the energy committee and the bike/pedestrian advisory committees starting up; to developing assets and investing in our future.

The floor was opened to discussion. Out of towners were allowed to speak. Tom Traber asked what the Town's plan for the Coronavirus is. We will follow the State Public Health plan.

Brian LaClair, the director of the Fairfax Parks & Recreation Department talked about the changes with this department since he first came into this position. Our new vision consists of programs, events, and facilities that build community and healthy happy people. Brian's presentation consisted of the Community Park & Bike Path. We saw a great increase in usage of our park from sports to the first annual Party in the Park in July which included fireworks. An estimated attendance of over 1500 people. We will be bringing this back for a second year on June 27th with more fun, food and fireworks. This Summer we will introduce a short series of movies in the park on Wednesday nights. Also, the park entrance on Hunt Street will be redesigned to be more welcoming and accessible for pedestrians. We are working to repave a sizable stretch of the path. The latest addition to the Recreation Department was to develop the Community Corner Park in the heart of our village after funding from a grant and local donations within our Town. We worked with amazing volunteers to achieve the first milestone of this project. We work with the Fairfax Arts Council and others to promote wonderful events at this space. The 100 Acre Woods in North Fairfax now has new road signage including a brand-new message board funded by Rise Vermont. Additional grant funding for this project from Rise Vermont will allow us to implement trail way finding signage and purchase tools necessary for cutting new trails by leveraging the interest we have for community volunteers! The Fairfax Community Center project has dedicated and passionate folks working on it for a very long time bringing this project to fruition. There have been events from the United Church of Fairfax; the Historical Society's Pie and Ice Cream Social; the Haunted House from the FFCC; the Fairfax Tree Lighting celebration along with private parties. The Farmers Market on the front lawn was a great success. We are working on a grant to have the building accessible to the standard that the ADA specifies. There is a possibility of a future Teen Center in the basement. The Farmers' Market is returning as part of an event we are calling Fairfax Fridays, consisting of hosting a concert series in front of the Community Center every Friday during the Summer from 5 – 8 p.m. Stop by to enjoy the evening with local vendors, a special food truck each week, and fantastic music. Rise Vermont will be funding the entire series. Fantastic fitness classes were offered. Brian thanked the instructors for what they have given to our community. Brian also thanked BFA Fairfax and the United Church of Fairfax for the spaces they provided. The calendar of these programs is on our website. We are hoping you are enjoying the clear sidewalks and the recreation path this Winter. We are adding a new position in the Recreation Department that will allow us to expand our capacity to better serve you. Some things to expect by this time next year are in-house affordable summer camps; more educational programs for all ages; low impact fitness programs for seniors; one large scale community event every month; with addition trail projects.

The floor was opened to discussion. Some questions consisted of, is there 100 Acres Woods signage on route 104, Main Street. Yes, there is. Where will be the location of the Farmers Market? It will be in front of the Community Center.

Stephen Bessette, Emergency Management Coordinator spoke about the 2019 Halloween Storm. He is working with FEMA. We should receive 87.5% of our cost of the Town from the FEMA rates. Check out our table in the Lobby. Hand outs are available to better prepare you for an emergency. Fairfax is working on a Vermont Alert program to better inform the Town with emergency messages. You will be able to sign up online to get a response through your phone, email, or text message. The floor was opened to discussion. There was none.

Wendy Alger and Renee Francis from Casella spoke about the upcoming food scraps state mandate that is going into place July 1, 2020. Casella added food scrapes collection to our trash contract. They will be providing seven-gallon containers. They are also working on sending out alerts on service delays through an App that we will be able to sign up for to receive these alerts by phone, email, or text message. They will also be providing two hazardous waste days this year.

The floor was opened for discussion. Some discussion consisted of; will the new App inform you daily? The trash should be put out by 7 a.m. You will not be notified if your trash pickup is delayed by a couple of hours. This App is for more extreme delays or issues that arise. Can the trash bin can be turned around on windy days, so they do not tip over? Yes, if you think that the bin will blow over then it is fine to turn the bin in the opposite direction. Steve Cothalis asked about the quality in Fairfax's recycling. They will be doing testing on March 6, 2020 to get those answers. Tom Traber asked how to sign up for the new App and how to receive this information. You can call Casella or submit through email to receive this information through a phone call, email, or text message.

Pat McNall, Assessor spoke about the upcoming Town Reappraisal that will begin at the end of the Summer. This will reflect on the 2022 Grand List. This will make the home values accurate. We have monies set aside in a special fund account that is given to Fairfax over the years to fully fund this reappraisal. It will not cost the taxpayers anything. This will bring the assessed land values up, lowering the property tax rate. The floor was opened to discussion. There was none.

Patsy Parker spoke about the two electric school buses that is included in the School Meeting Article 2 budget request. The Vermont Energy Investment Corporation funded a pilot program to get school buses on the road to see how well they will function in our climate and on our geography. The cost of the buses through this program is \$90,000 each, totaling \$180,000. These buses typically run around \$35,000 each. \$90,000 is the same cost as a new diesel bus. The school likes to purchase a new bus each year but got behind and we are short a bus, needing two buses this year. There is a 75-80% reduction on maintenance on these buses. We can save \$5000 per year on fuel. Hook ups are included in this program. These buses reduce carbon. The floor was opened to discussion. Some discussion consisted of Tom Traber being concerned about the buses being a fire hazard as it was with the electric cars and airplanes in the past. These buses were made different and will not have the defects with our updated technology. How long will the batteries last for? They last eight – ten years. How long do these batteries go on a charge and how long is the warranty on these buses? The buses can go 130 miles on a charge. It takes eight – ten hours to charge. They have an eight-year warranty. David Shea asked about the battery disposal. The batteries still have 60% of usage when done. This usage can be used for something within the School or Town. He also asked about the disposal cost which Patsy was not sure of. She would get back to us with the answer.

ARTICLE 1 To following officials were elected by the legal voters of the Town:

Town Moderator	One Year Term	Roberta Rodimer	1327 votes
Selectperson	Three Year Term	Steve Cormier	1293 votes
Selectperson	Two Year Term	Duane Leach	1313 votes
Town Agent	One Year Term	Deborah Woodward	1309 votes
Community Library Trustee	Three Year Term	Rev Elizabeth Griffin	1012 votes
Community Library Trustee	Three Year Term	Carol Vallett	781 votes
First Constable	Two Years Remaining Of A Three-Year Term	Matthew Burstein	1261 votes
Cemetery Commissioner	Five Year Term	Trevor Howard	1296 votes
Cemetery Commissioner	Four Years Remaining Of A Five-Year Term	Sally Sweet	1312 votes

Robby read Article 1. The floor was opened to discussion. There was none.

ARTICLE 2 Shall the registered voters of the Town of Fairfax approve the **FY2021 (twelve (12) month Fiscal Budget)** covering the period from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021, as recommended by the Select Board, of \$3,354,321.00 of which \$2,335,672.00 is to be raised by taxes and \$678,831.00 to be raised by fees associated with the approved trash contract?

Robby read Article 2. The floor was opened to discussion. David Shea wanted to know if the Casella trash contract was in the best interest for the Town with the high cost associated with it. Steve Cormier stated yes, the price isn't much different than the past and mentioned that Casella did a great job for the Town. Dave was concerned with the contract giving Casella the right for first refusal. Brad stated the goal is to get the best low price and quality for the Town.

In Favor: 973

Opposed: 489

ARTICLE 3 Shall the registered voters of the Town of Fairfax approve the **FY2021 (twelve (12) month Fiscal Budget)** of \$111,700.00 covering the period from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021 in support of the Fairfax Rescue toward operation expense and the purchase of two (2) Zoll defibrillators?

Robby read Article 3. Kathy Jochim, Fairfax Rescue Squad President and Bambi Dane, Director of Operations did a presentation stating they did 485 calls in 2019 with 284 of the calls from Fairfax residents. They have 26,000 volunteer hours. They are also available 24/7/365. The team consist of all nationally certified paramedic level of education and service to serve our community and Fire Department. They do CPR trainings. The ambulance was at the Party in the Park. The Rescue Squad is asking for two Zoll defibrillators in this article at a cost of \$70,000. They are working on grants and fundraising. It is an honor to be here today and to help. The floor was opened to discussion. Some questions consisted that people were questioning if Fairfax Rescue would be doing an outside audit for transparency reasons as the Town of Fairfax does? The people recommended having an audit added in the next budget year. Kathy

replied, Carrie Germaine was the Treasurer at the time who found the discrepancy and hired an auditor to come in that went through policy and procedures. At that time, the Auditor said they did not see any financial discrepancies. Carrie responded that the audit was specific for policy and procedure and the document they have from the Auditor specifies that Auditor suggested a financial audit to be done and offered her services to do so. Kathy advised that the Rescue Board felt there was no financial discrepancy. Another concern was why the price for CPR and First Aid classes has risen so high, especially for Child Care Providers? The prices are at half the price when going out of town. The Rescue stated they would work on getting a better price for these classes. Carrie Germaine stated that it was not accurate with her calculation that Rescue provided service 24/7/365 days a year. The significant increase of incoming 911 calls for Fairfax Rescue where there was no schedule crew respond. The lapse in time to respond is upward of 15-20 minutes. This time could be a difference in whether a person lives or dies. Rescue stated they have updated their policies and procedures and only had two occurrences. Rescue stated that we are primarily a volunteer service. Our volunteers provide 81% of our courage, donating over 20,000 hours in 2019. Carrie reported that the calculation did not add up with Rescue's response. Rescue stated they need 26,000 volunteers and out of the 7 per diems on the schedule, two are volunteer paramedics. More discussion consisted of why Fairfax's contribution in Article 3 is so much higher than the surrounding towns. The Rescue calculates from the number of calls per town to get that figure. Tom Traber ask what was being done to protect us from the Coronavirus. The State Department of Health has guidelines we will follow and are working on getting all the items that will be needed.

In Favor: 1187

Opposed: 280

ARTICLE 4

Shall the registered voters of the Town of Fairfax vote to raise, appropriate and expend the sum of \$23,427.00 for the support of social contributions to provide services to the residents of the Town?

A. Age Well	\$1,500.00
B. American Red Cross	\$500.00
C. Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity	\$500.00
D. Fairfax Arts Council	\$750.00
E. Fairfax Historical Society	\$2,000.00
F. Franklin County Home Health Agency	\$8,998.00
G. Franklin County Industrial Development	\$500.00
H. Franklin Grand Isle Restorative Justice Center	\$500.00
I. Friends of Northern Lake Champlain	\$500.00
J. Green Mountain Transit	\$2229.00
K. Northwestern Counseling & Support Services	\$1800.00
L. Vermont Adult Learning	\$350.00
M. Vermont Assoc. for the Blind and Visually Impaired	\$300.00
N. Vermont Center for Independent Living	\$500.00
O. Vermont Council on Rural Development	\$400.00
P. Vermont Rural Fire Protection	\$100.00
Q. Vermont Family Network	\$500.00
R. Voices Against Violence / Laurie's House	\$1500.00

TOTAL

\$23,427.00

Brad stated that on page 35 in the Town Report, Support of Services, not all the 2019 agencies are listed, only the ones that submitted in 2020. The \$27,777.00 represents the total amount of article 4 on the 2019 Warning. The proposed 2020 for Franklin County Home Health of \$89,980.00 was AMENDED as \$8,998.00.

Amanda Duling, of Fairfax Arts Council spoke about the new council that started in August. It meets on a monthly basis. The Council is designed to enrich the lives in Fairfax. They are going to be providing music and painting the boxes at Community Corner. They are working on groups for photography and writing. They are looking for volunteers to help. Flyers are in the Lobby. The floor was opened to discussion. There was none.

Nicole Vance, Fairfax Historical Society President spoke about the work that has been started in our Town Museum. The mold has been completely removed from the inside. Volunteers are welcome to help work on the outside of the Museum. They are working on getting it completed so that the Museum can be opened to the public.

The floor was opened to discussion. It was asked who Vermont Rural Fire Protection is. They support grants for dry hydrants.

In Favor: 1176

Opposed: 313

ARTICLE 5 Shall the registered voters of the Town of Fairfax vote to apply any surplus from a fiscal year to reduce taxes in the next fiscal year?

The floor was opened to discussion. There was none.

In Favor: 1384

Opposed: 78

ARTICLE 6 Shall the registered voters of the Town of Fairfax accept the reports of the town Officers?

A motion was made by Chris Cota and seconded by Mary Kay Raymond. The floor was opened to discussion. Nick Hibbard asked about the adverse opinion on capital assets from our Auditors. Brad stated that NEMRC will be coming into the Town Office to install software to help with the depreciation process. This should resolve that opinion. Nick had a question on page 38 of the Town Report on the second of the last paragraph. Brad is going to reach out to our Auditors this week. The motion was passed by a show of cards.

ARTICLE 7 Shall the registered voters of the Town of Fairfax authorize the Select Board to place the tax bills in the hands of the Town Treasurer as heretofore?

A motion was made by Carol Vallett and seconded by Nick Hibbard. The floor was opened to discussion. There was none. The motion was passed by a show of cards.

ARTICLE 8 Shall the registered voters of the Town of Fairfax act on any other business?

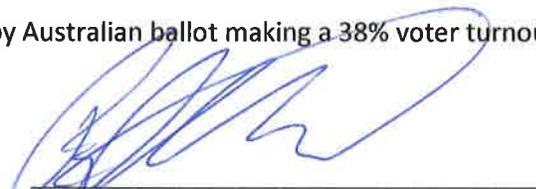
A motion was made by Carol Vallett and seconded by Carrie Germaine. The floor was opened to discussion. Some questions consisted of environmental impact on the Town with new businesses coming into town. The Zoning Review Board follows Fairfax's policies and procedures. There was concern with the vehicles driving way too fast in Fairfax. Speed on the Town roads are enforced by law enforcement. Dave questioned the purpose of Town Meeting. He and Carrie Germaine felt that they needed more time to be able to speak on their concerns. Robby suggested coming to Select Board Meetings. Those meetings are for all the Town's people. Meredith Roberts had question about the Energy Committee. Brad stated that we are working on getting grants for the Town through this committee; in groups; and for residents to assist to better this Town. All are invited to be a part of the committee. David Ginter would like safety signs to be put up in Town to caution drivers of horse riders. He is concerned about safety. motion was passed by a show of cards.

ARTICLE 9 Shall the registered voters of the Town of Fairfax recess Town Meeting until March 3, 2020 at 7:00 A.M.?

A motion was made Fred Holmes and seconded by Cathy Carlson. The floor was opened to discussion and there was none. The motion was passed by a show of cards at 12:20 p.m. to recess the Town until March 3, 2020 at 7 a.m.

There are 4007 registered voters with 1529 voting by Australian ballot making a 38% voter turnout.

Peter Fitzgerald, Justice of the Peace



Sheri Rainville, Selectperson



Attest:



Deborah Woodward, Town Clerk/Treasurer
March 11, 2020