

**Town Of Charlotte
Annual Town Meeting
March 2, 2010**

Article 1: *To hear the reports of the Town Officers and to act upon the same.*

Teena Flood moved. Craig Reynolds seconded.

Clark Hinsdale requested a rundown of the legal expenditures since the budget was \$9K over last year. Charles Russell explained some of the legal fees. Discussion took place about possibly reducing legal fees for Planning and Zoning. Also mentioned was \$2K for the East Charlotte Planning that is still taking place.

Dan Rosen – point of order – states this is more of a budget discussion.

Discussion took place regarding the \$11K for the cemetery maintenance and \$20K for servers and computers for the Town Hall.

Alison Lockwood mentioned the revenue for Thompson's Point rent which is in arrears. Teena Flood mentioned a \$10K increase in court fines and a \$20K decrease for Fire and Rescue. Discussion took place about the number of hours Shelburne Police were putting in, and the reimbursement for the calls.

Nancy Sabin wanted an explanation of Special Investigations. Charles Russell explained. Also discussed was the \$8K for the ballpark maintenance and the Berry Farm.

Article 1 was voted by voice vote and passed.

Article 2: *Will the Town vote to have Property Taxes payable on or before November 15, 2010 and to have payments made to the Town Treasurer under 32 VSA Article 4773?*

Teena Flood moved. Craig Reynolds seconded.

No discussion.

Article 2 was voted by voice vote and passed.

Article 3: *Will the Town adopt the Selectboard's budget of \$2,504,178 for the fiscal year July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011 less anticipated revenues?*

Teena Flood moved. Craig Reynolds seconded.

The Selectboard went through some of the items briefly, explaining that most line items went down, with increases in cemetery, library and fire and rescue funds.

A question was raised about the fire and rescue collection rates and billing. Bob Stone explained what the collection process is and that the numbers can be based only on estimates, not knowing what the number of calls might be.

A question was also raised about the new pumper truck that was bought last year and if it has been used. Chris Davis then spoke to what was in the operating budget, what the increases were going to be used for and EMT payroll. Bob Stone also talked about EMT payroll, the number of calls last year and spoke again about the collection process.

Clark Hinsdale moved to level fund the budget. Megan Price seconded.

Most of the conversation on this amendment was focused on the cemetery and library budget and questioning if the Selectboard had the authority to make changes to these line items.

Dan Cole explained the need for the increase, talking to specific items that needed attention.

Discussion also took place regarding donations. Jenny Cole explained that the Selectboard has received recommendations from the Donations Committee. Elizabeth Bassett (Howard Center Trustee) stated the importance of the \$900 request stating that several Charlotte residents have been helped and also mentioned the National Guard resources that are not being funded and First Call services.

Moe Harvey moved to level fund the tax rate (secondary amendment) – seconded.

Comments on this secondary amendment started with the Selectboard explaining that the tax rate was low last year due to a surplus from back taxes and noted that a bottom line adjustment does not allow for salary discussions.

A question was raised about the legality of using this as a forum for voting on a tax rate vs. a budget.

The remainder of this discussion was focused again on the library and cemetery items and if the Selectboard could make these cuts if needed, and if not, where would the cuts come from.

Liam Murphy stated the Selectboard should be directed to reduce the budget by whatever means they see fit, or tell them specifically what line items you would like to see reduced.

Walter Gates moved to call the question to cease debate on the secondary amendment – motion carried.

Second amendment was voted by voice vote and failed.

Clark Hinsdale stated that the motion means to find cuts from the entire budget.

Robert Bloch moved to call the question to cease debate on the primary amendment – motion carried.

Vote on primary amendment to reduce the budget by \$71, 661 – call for a division of the house – 145 in favor – 80 opposed – motion carried.

Discussion on Article 3 as amended was still focused on the library and cemetery items and if the Selectboard could make these cuts if needed, and if not, where would the cuts come from.

Lucy Beck motioned for the Selectboard to approach the library and cemetery to look at the budget for cuts.

Clark Hinsdale - point of order stating that they had just voted to give them authority.

Stephen Brooks questioned if Town Meeting is precluded from voting on the budget today. Answer is no, explaining that Article 3 is still open for amendments and will pass or fail with the new figure, but specific cuts will not be discussed.

Dan Rosen moved for a secondary amendment with the following cuts:

\$11,500 from cemetery

\$855 from donations

\$3168 from intramural sports

\$15000 from traffic enforcement

Seconded.

Jill Abolock questioned the \$25K for the Trails Committee and it was explained that that was not in this budget, but in a separate Article.

Dan Rosen suggested revising the amendment by removing intramural sports.

Seconded.

Lee Weisman – point of order.

Lucy Beck withdrew primary amendment.

Dan Rosen also withdrew amendment.

Clarification was requested.

Walter Gates called to move the question to cease debate.

Josh Flore told the Selectboard to cut the \$12K increase for fire and rescue, but asked for volunteers or they may need to request additional funding later in the year.

Proceed to vote to cease debate – carried.

Article 3 as amended (\$2,432,517) was voted by voice and carried.

Article 4: *Will the Town vote to authorize the Selectboard to borrow money by issuance of bonds or notes not in excess of anticipated revenues for the next fiscal year?*

Teena Flood moved. Craig Reynolds seconded.

David Miskell asked if this passed and the LeBoeuf article does not pass, can the Selectboard use this article to purchase the LeBoeuf property. Selectboard answered no.

Article 4 was voted by voice and carried.

Article 5: *Will the Town vote to authorize the Selectboard to increase the municipal tax rate by on half cents (.015) for deposit in the Fire and Rescue Capital Reserve Fund in fiscal year 2010-2011?*

Teena Flood moved. Craig Reynolds seconded.

Chris Davis talked about the equipment replacement fund and the need for this funding to keep that in the plus, allowing for cash payment for some items. He also answered questions about fund raising, donations and how funds are spent.

Article 5 was voted by voice and carried.

Article 6: *Will the Town vote to authorize the Selectboard to increase the municipal tax rate in order to deposit \$40K per year into the Charlotte Housing Trust Fund for a period of 5 years commencing with FY 10/11?*

Teena Flood moved. Craig Reynolds seconded.

The Selectboard noted that a little less than ½ cent will raise the \$40K.

John Owen from the Affordable Housing Commission talked about the purpose of the fund being to try and stimulate affordable housing and went over a hand-out detailing the grants. He also defined affordable housing and explained how affordability is monitored.

Gerald Bouchard motioned to amend the article to 1 year instead of 5. Megan Price seconded.

Alison Lockwood called the question to cease debate – carried.

Amendment was voted by voice and carried.

Additional discussion was centered on Charlotte land prices, home prices, tax rate and the amount of land reserved for conservation.

Ellie Russell noted that affordable housing is needed in Charlotte and Robin Reid was concerned that the money is being spent more on studies than building.

Marion Paris called the question to cease debate – carried.

Article 6 as amended (to be funded for 1 year) was voted on – call for a division of the house – 153 in favor – 46 opposed – motion carried.

12:00 PM break for lunch and Schoolboard meeting.

Reconvened at 3:15 PM.

Article 7: *Will the Town vote to create a reserve fund (Charlotte Trails Fund) for the purpose of providing funds for the development of trails for recreational use?*

Stephen Brooks moved. Sylvia Knight seconded.

Trails Committee made a presentation.

Charles Russell noted they had received a grant in the previous year, but it did not carry over. This fund will allow the Town to put money away to allow for more flexible spending.

Costs and methods of trail maintenance were discussed.

Some residents expressed opposition to this trail system due to easements placed on their property, bikes ruining property and spending too much money. Other, more important budget items should not be cut to allow for this fund.

Enough trails already exist in Charlotte.

Some residents expressed support for creating the fund, but not with Town funds.

Charles Russell pointed out again that the purpose if this fund is to have money to carry over.

Tunnel funding is not part of this. That is part of the Route 7 upgrade that has been planned by the state. Pros and cons of tunnel were discussed; safety issues and the wildlife benefit.

Moderator stated that creation of the tunnel is not germane to the article. Topic of ancient roads brought up; also not germane to the article.

Comments: more important to just create the fund and decide later how much money to put it in. A fund could be funded by means other than public money...donations, fund raisers, etc.

What happens if the fund is not created? Could put money with recreation fund, but easier to keep separate.

Stephen Brooks - call the question to cease debate – seconded.

Article 7 was voted on – call for division of the house - 69 in favor – 56 opposed – motion carried.

Article 8: *Will the Town vote to authorize the Selectboard to increase the municipal tax rate in order to deposit \$25,000 per year into the Charlotte Trails Fund for a period of three years commencing with FY 10/11?*

Teena Flood moved. John Rosenthal seconded.

Gerald Bouchard moved to amend the article to \$5K for 1 year to be used as matching funds for the grant. Moderator states the grant portion of the motion changes the article and would be considered out of order.

Walter Gates seconded the motion.

Motion to challenge the moderator – seconded. Is the chair's ruling that the portion of the motion to apply the \$5K to match the grant is not germane to Article 8 correct?

Discussion about matching the grant – noted that the grant application is occurring this year; therefore there is nothing to match in next year's budget. Charles Russell stated that the Town will be applying for grants for several years.

Gerald Bouchard withdrew the requirement that the \$5K be used for a grant match.

Comment: trail systems can be created and maintained without town money.

Vote on amendment – call for division of the house – 31 yes no 85 – failed.

Joe Blanchette moved to amend to \$1 for 1 year – seconded.

Most of this discussion centered around the already too high taxes and over spending. Should not be using Town funds to support a trail system which is not a vital need for the town.

Already looking to cut budget on vital services.

Marion Paris - call the question to cease debate on the amendment – seconded – carried.

Amendment was voted by voice vote and failed.

Walter Gates moved to call the question to cease debate – seconded – carried.

Article 8 was voted by voice vote and failed.

Article 9: *Advisory motion only: Will the Town investigate locating a staffed Chittenden Solid Waste District drop-off facility within Charlotte to receive trash, recyclables and re-useables directly from households (commercial waste haulers will be prohibited)?*

Teena Flood moved. John Rosenthal seconded.

Charles Russell explained that the current CSWD site in Hinesburg that is open 1 day per week is being asked to move because Hinesburg wants the property for other uses.

Stephen Brooks presented – just investigating the possibility – discuss particulars at a later date.

If this happens, will it produce revenue or cost the town money? Stephen Brooks answered: no revenue and no cost.

Land is typically leased to CSWD at a rate of \$1/year by a municipality.

Need to follow same process as any other residential request, plus Act 250.

Size would be less than 2 acres.

CSWD will be leaving Hinesburg.

Charles Russell – hard to say at this time if this will need to come back for vote – CSWD could use eminent domain powers. Historically they do not do this.

Need to consider traffic and contamination, this site will be used by other towns.

Catherine Hughes moved to amend the article to only approve if it comes back to the town for a vote – seconded.

Charles Russell explained that if the facility is placed in the approved industrial area west of Charlotte it would go to the Planning Commission and Zoning Board with no town wide vote. Otherwise, it would be a long-term town lease with a 1061 Notice that the Town could petition to appeal. This amendment would allow for the town wide vote before that happens.

Discussion took place about the timing of the town vote and it was explained the vote would happen before the project got submitted.

There was also additional discussion about possible negative environmental effects and Stephen Brooks explained there are historically no complaints about noise, smell, etc.

If motion to investigate fails, will they come in anyway? Stephen Brooks answered no.

Kay Gault called to move the question to cease debate on the amendment – seconded – carried.

Amendment was voted by voice vote and carried.

Stephen Brooks explained the benefits of the facility include convenience, the state of the art technology used that allows for recycling of batteries, tires, light bulbs and hazardous waste products. He also mentioned the “re-use shed” that allows items to be re-purposed.

Motion to move the question to cease debate – seconded – carried.

Article 9 was voted by voice vote and carried.

Article 10: *To transact any other business proper to come before said meeting.*

Question was raised about the status of Article 8 that was passed last year for construction of a facility for wastewater disposal. Selectboard explained it has been started, but not completed.

Motion to adjourn – seconded – carried.

Minutes submitted by Sarah Guilmette