

**TOWN OF CHARLOTTE  
SPECIAL TOWN MEETING  
CHARLOTTE CENTRAL SCHOOL  
MAY 16, 2012**

***APPROVED***

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Charles Russell, Chair; Ed Stone, Winslow Ladue, John Owen, Dennis Delaney.

**ADMINISTRATION:** Dean Bloch, Selectboard Clerk.

**MODERATOR:** Jerry Schwarz.

As per the Town Registered Voter checklist, 489 Charlotte voters attended the meeting.

Mr. Schwarz, Moderator, called the 2012 March Town Meeting to order at 7:07 p.m. Mr. Schwarz reviewed rules and procedures regarding Article 1, to reconsider a vote of Article 5 at the 2012 March Town Meeting. Article 1 was a two-part vote, explained Mr. Schwarz.

**Article 1, Part 1:** Will the Town vote to reconsider Article 5, which was approved by the voters at the Annual Meeting on March 6, 2012.

**MOTION by Jim Donovan, seconded by Craig Reynolds, to vote to reconsider Article 5, which was approved by the voters at the Annual Meeting on March 6, 2012.**

**Charles Proutt moved, and was seconded, to call the question.**

**VOTE to cease debate: carried by voice vote.**

**VOTE on Article 1 by division of the house (standing count): 252 ayes, 161 nays; motion carried.**

**Article 1, Part 2:** To authorize the Selectboard to have a sidewalk constructed adjacent to the north side of Ferry Road, depicted as Segments A and B in a plan entitled "Sidewalk Planning, Overall Site Plan" by Civil Engineering Associates, Inc., dated January 12, 2012, at a cost not to exceed \$77,000 and authorizes the Selectboard to increase the municipal tax rate sufficiently to pay for said construction.

**MOTION by Tina Flood, seconded by Craig Reynolds, to authorize the Selectboard to have a sidewalk constructed adjacent to the north side of Ferry Road, depicted as Segments A and B in a plan entitled "Sidewalk Planning, Overall Site Plan" by Civil Engineering Associates, Inc., dated January 12, 2012, at a cost not to exceed \$77,000 and authorizes the Selectboard to increase the municipal tax rate sufficiently to pay for said construction.**

**DISCUSSION:**

**Mr. Donovan, Sidewalk Committee representative, narrated a power point presentation regarding a proposed sidewalk project in the West Charlotte Village.**

**Robin Simpson, Lake Road resident, said that she represented a group of residents who were proposing an alternative sidewalk plan for Town consideration. The word 'walkways' should replace the word 'sidewalks', and gravel walkways should be used in place of concrete sidewalks, explained Simpson.**

**Stephen Brooks asked for a point of order – if the proposed alternate project was germane to Article 5. Jerry Schwarz replied yes. Ms. Simpson was commenting on Article 5. No motion was made to change the discussion, clarified Mr. Schwarz.**

**Robin Simpson said that the group was suggesting to put the walkways on the south side of Ferry Road and to continue it across Route 7 to the Denton garage, installing a bench for a bus stop at that area; reduce the number of crosswalks from three to two, which would eliminate the one proposed in front of the Charlotte Fire and Rescue building; install a bike rack by the east side of the monument; eliminate painting stripes for parking spaces by the Old Brick Store; install a walkway from the Children's Center to the Little Garden Market; eliminate the proposed sidewalk in front of the Charlotte Fire and Rescue building; and no concrete or curbs, said Ms. Simpson.**

**Rick Pete, resident, stated that a wider roadway would cause cars to travel faster. Gravel sidewalks were less costly than concrete. There should be no walkway in front of the Charlotte Fire and Rescue building, said Mr. Pete.**

**Shirley Bean, resident, spoke in opposition of sidewalks. The sidewalks that showed in the 1911 photographs of the Village were in the horse and buggy days and the roads were narrow. The Police said that sidewalks wouldn't address traffic problems, but enforcement was a better solution. She did not want a sidewalk taking more of her property. There was more space available on the south side of the road, said Ms. Bean.**

**Barry Fredette, resident, pediatrician and father, read two medical journal articles regarding the role of physical sidewalks and distractions related to safety. Speed humps/bumps were safer than sidewalks, said Dr. Fredette. Mr. Donovan pointed out that the sidewalk proposal did not include road widening.**

**Tom Nola, resident, spoke in opposition to Article 5. Safety was a personal responsibility. The proposed sidewalks didn't go anywhere. Bikers, runners and walkers used the roads safely. The proposal addressed an issue for a minority of people. Traffic speeding was a law enforcement issue. Put in speed bumps. Vermont is a rural state, said Mr. Nola.**

**Marion Paris moved, and was seconded, to call the question.  
VOTE to cease debate: carried by voice vote.**

**Valarie Graham, resident, noted that Jim Donovan said that this proposal was not a definitive plan. The sidewalk route and materials were not set in stone. It was the**

amount of \$77,000 that would be voted on, said Ms. Graham. Mr. Schwarz explained that Article 5 demanded an aye or nay vote.

**VOTE on Article 5 by paper ballot: 172 ayes, 303 nays; motion failed.**

**Article 2:** Shall the Town adopt its budget article, or articles, by Australian ballot. **MOTION by Joe Blanchette, seconded by Craig Reynolds, shall the Town adopt its budget article, or articles, by Australian ballot.**

**DISCUSSION:**

**Joe Blanchette, Carpenter Road resident, read a lengthy written statement in support of the Australian ballot item.**

**A point of order regarding a limit to speeches was requested from an attendee. Mr. Schwarz explained that Mr. Blanchette was one of the authors of Article 2 and was being given extra leeway.**

**A gentleman from the audience asked if he could call the question. Mr. Schwarz suggested that the attendees let Mr. Blanchette complete his comments.**

**Joe Blanchette completed his comments and thanked the assemblage for their patience.**

**Lynne Jaunich, resident, said she has attended the annual Town Meeting for over 11 years. The Selectboard holds over 7 regular meetings discussing the town budget prior to January, which gave people plenty of time to have input. The Selectboard then presents a well vetted budget at Town Meeting. People can choose not to vote on it, can't, or won't attend Town Meeting, are in the military, etc. We have to accept the right of all to vote on a budget, said Ms. Jaunich.**

**Martha Keenan, resident, spoke in favor of keeping the budget vote at Town Meeting. The statement that a live Town Meeting was anti-democratic, or elitist, is wrong. There are alternative ways to find a solution, said Ms. Keenan.**

**John Hammer, resident, spoke in opposition of Article 2, and read a prepared statement that included several suggested solutions, including the use of technology.**

**Spin Richardson, resident, said that a concern was that there were only three people drafting a town budget. However, the Selectboard does a great job putting the budget together. Voting by Australian ballot means that you can't amend a budget that might have sidewalks in it, for example. Australian ballot does make it easier for people to vote, but it changes the way the Selectboard presents a budget, said Mr. Richardson.**

**Robert Chutter, resident, spoke in opposition of Article 2. Look at who is here tonight and the interest shown in two articles. If that much interest on 2 articles is indicative of a turnout then the Selectboard could adjust the meeting time to**

evening, or a Saturday. Look at alternatives before changing to Australian ballot, said Mr. Chutter.

Valarie Graham stated that a Town Meeting was the envy of the whole world. It is grass-roots democracy where we can vote on articles and is an opportunity to alter what has been presented. With the right to vote comes responsibility to see all sides to a question. Town Meeting creates community where people come together to do things. Regarding a budget, it is not just an amount of money; it is a sense of community to say 'yes, spend money on this, or no on that'. We all voted to put \$0.02 on the tax rate for the Conservation Fund for 10 years to conserve our land. Now we have community open spaces. If the Selectmen hadn't put it in the budget then we wouldn't have open spaces. These are directions and values that we need to talk about at Town Meeting, said Ms. Graham.

**SUBSIDIARY MOTION** by Valarie Graham, seconded by Linda Hamilton, to postpone indefinitely Article 2.

**DISCUSSION:**

Valarie Graham said that she was proposing a Subsidiary Motion for several reasons. She has heard of alternative solutions to consider holding Town Meeting at a different time, or day, and that people attend Town Meeting to participate in discussions on the articles. There are other ways to participate that should be considered. She was asking for time to allow the Selectboard to come up with alternatives with our guidance for the Town Meeting agenda for consideration at the next year's Town Meeting. If people don't come or show up at Town Meeting that is their choice, stated Ms. Graham.

Robert Mesaros, resident, asked for clarification on what a motion to postpone meant. We are voting on an Australian ballot issue. If there are 2,370 town voters and 1,500 showed up then how would they fit in this room. A question was, how many people would be a satisfactory number to make a representative vote. The March Town Meeting had 268 people that calculated to 9.1 percent of the registered voters. There are 475 people tonight for 16 percent of registered voters. The only fair vote would be to get as many involved and that was by Australian ballot, said Mr. Mesaros.

Eva Scatchard, resident, spoke in opposition to an Australian ballot.

Larry Hamilton, resident, spoke in favor of the proposed Subsidiary Motion to postpone. The Town needed more time to consider alternatives to the article, and for the Selectboard to come up with creative ways to increase participation. It may be inconvenient to come to Town Meeting to vote. The authors handout said that "...people are busy, but want to vote...". There are innovative ways to vote, including the internet, etc. He was afraid that people would not read the material. As an instructor, he used the internet to disseminate material with instructions to read it before class, but people don't read the material, said Mr. Hamilton.

**A MOTION was made and seconded to call the question on the Subsidiary Motion. VOTE to cease debate on the Subsidiary Motion: carried by voice vote.**

**Megan Price, Ferry Road resident, called a point of order regarding a concern that the ballot issue should be added to the November General Election agenda for people to vote on. Mr. Schwarz ruled that would require a Friendly Amendment, and was straying from a point of order.**

**Valarie Graham said she wanted a vote on the original Subsidiary Motion to postpone indefinitely.**

**VOTE on the Subsidiary Motion by paper ballot: 289 ayes, 116 nays; Subsidiary Motion carried.**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION made and seconded to adjourn the Special Town Meeting carried by voice vote.**

The Special Town Meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted, Kathlyn L. Furr, Recording Secretary