

Minutes of the Informational Meeting
February 27 & 28, 2021 **Conducted remotely using Zoom**

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this year's Town Meeting was held as an informational meeting only. It was conducted remotely with no in person participation. All articles will be voted on by Australian ballot at the polls on Tuesday March 2, 2021 from 7:00AM to 7:00PM.

The informational meeting was scheduled for 2:00PM on Saturday February 27, 2021. Due to the interruptions of many outside parties intent on disrupting the meeting, it was recessed with a date of Sunday February 28, 2021 at 2:00PM for continuation. Below are the minutes of each portion of the informational meeting:

Saturday February 27, 2021

As far as was possible to count 40 residents/households joined the February 27 meeting. The list of names is attached in the town record. The meeting was called to order at 2:00 PM. This portion lasted for approximately 30 minutes. All three of Salisbury's legislators were in attendance.

Representative Peter Conlon began by mentioning that it is cross over time, the halfway point of the session where lawmakers in the House and Senate send policy bills to the other chamber. He talked about the impact of federal dollars coming into the State, around 3 to 4 million, creating a more optimistic, although temporary, picture than was otherwise expected. There was a concern about a major deficit in the education budget, but money continues to come in. The current expectation is that the end of the fiscal year will show a surplus to carry forward.

Senator Ruth Hardy talked about the fast-track bill (federal funding) coming to the Senate from the House. She is currently serving on both the Health & Welfare and Finance Committees. In Health & Welfare, they are working on extending flexibility to hospitals/health care providers as well as providing more funding to the designated agencies for mental health and for treatment and prevention programs for substance abuse; both needs of which have spiked during the pandemic. Senator Hardy talked about the Finance Committee's work on long term funding for broadband. Lack of access to broadband has been very visible throughout the pandemic. In closing, Senator Hardy encouraged folks to sign up for and get vaccinated against Covid.

Senator Chris Bray began his presentation amid increasing interruptions. While he had the floor, Senator Bray talked about the impacts Covid has had, stating that all committees are working (remotely) in their various areas to respond to the issues Covid presents. He talked about the work of the Natural Resources Committee on issues such as trash, water quality and toxic substance exposure. Additionally, he mentioned the work Government Operations Committee has done to allow government to effectively operate remotely during this time.

Interruptions spiked and Senator Bray was cut off. The meeting carried on with Jim Andrews and Ken Tichacek working in concert to remove disruptive intruders.

Moderator Wayne Smith began with **Article 1**: Shall the Town authorize the Town Treasurer to receive all taxes on or before date of delinquency? There was no discussion on this article.

Article 2: Shall the Town apply the General Budget surplus from the current year, if any, to the next fiscal year before setting the tax rate? There was no discussion on this article.

Article 3: Shall the voters authorize the sum of **\$285,828.00** to defray the General Expenses of the Town for the fiscal year July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022? Paul Vaczy began to present on this article but interruptions were too great to carry on in any effective manner. He did succeed in mentioning the work the Select Board has done with the Delinquent Tax Collector to increase collections of back taxes. There will be a tax sale coming up soon.

At this point, the meeting was recessed for approximately 10 minutes for the Zoom operators to try to establish a waiting room situation which would allow them to prevent intruders gaining access into the meeting. Once resumed it was clear that intruders could get around the waiting room restrictions put in place. At approximately 3:10 PM, the decision was made to recess the meeting and continue tomorrow, Sunday February 28, 2021 at 2PM with a requirement in place for pre-registration.

Sunday February 28, 2021

51 people/households pre-registered for this meeting continuation. The pre-registration list is attached in the town record. The meeting was called back into session at 2:00PM. Moderator Smith began with Article 3.

Article 3: (As stated above) Select Board Chair Paul Vaczy went over the increases in the budget by category, noting that the Select Board has been working to improve the accuracy of the budget, basing figures on past actual costs.

- Increase in Listers salary to reflect the possibility of having a full Board of three
- Increase in equipment purchase to deal with the needed upgrades to computer equipment
- Increase to the Cemetery line to reflect the actual cost of mowing.

Heidi Willis asked if there has been any thought about the website, making it more interactive and user friendly? Paul answered no, but it is an item the Select Board could discuss.

Article 4: Shall the voters authorize total Highway expenditures of **\$505,669.00** of which **\$406,594.00** shall be raised by taxes; and **\$99,075.00** by non-tax revenues for the fiscal year July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022? Paul Vaczy spoke noting that mid-way through 2020 the Town hired Willem Jaring as our new Road Foreman. He and Mike Lackard are a fantastic crew for our roads. They are both skilled and work well together resulting in good forward movement for our highway department. Budget wise, there is an:

- Increase for chloride & winter sand, both reflecting the need to get closer to actual costs.
- Increase for maintenance, as more is being done in house which is a cost saver.
- Decrease in fuel cost due to pre-buy option
- Decrease in workers comp due to receiving better rates.

Article 5: Shall the voters appropriate the sum of **\$25,411.75** to the Brandon-Leicester-Salisbury-Goshen-Pittsford (BLSG) Insect Control District for the purpose of mosquito control?

Paul Vaczy, as a Select Board member, stated that the differences of opinion in the town as to whether we should fund the BLSG prompted the board to pull the funding out of the budget and put it to a vote. In response to a question, Paul, as Salisbury's representative on the BLSG

board, acknowledged that the BLSG is still an organization in flux. There is new leadership, reasonable with a good approach, working to bring some transparency to what the Board is doing and how the budget is managed.

Discussion, comments and questions echoed those of the past couple of years. Strong opposition to funding the BLSG based especially on the Endangered Species Committee's findings that adulticide application harms bats, was voiced by many of the participants in one way or another. Questions regarding what will happen if Salisbury votes not to fund the BLSG/what is our plan B were asked several times. Organizational transparency, both in the actions and in the budgeting of the BLSG, was a concern of several participants and there were several comments and questions in this regard. Finally, concerns about paying for services we, as a town, don't seem to receive, emerged again as a strong theme. As Jeff Schumann, Salisbury's other representative to the BLSG board was unable to attend today, Paul handled all of these questions/issues.

Article 6: Shall the town establish a reserve fund to be called the Computer Equipment Reserve Fund, to be used for necessary upgrades of computer equipment in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 2804? Said reserve fund will be financed at the end of each fiscal year with any surplus monies in the general budget which were earmarked for computer equipment purchase. Paul Vaczy explained that we need to upgrade our computer equipment and any money we can put in reserve for that purpose will help us in the future.

Article 7: Shall the town authorize cannabis retailers and integrated licensees in town pursuant to 7 V.S.A. § 863? Paul explained that the town would not gain any revenue, beyond potential increased business for merchants in town such as restaurants, should any retail establishments choose to sell cannabis products. The State has it as an opt in situation for towns, so it is on the ballot for voters' consideration. Several questions were asked regarding applicable zoning regulations and potential costs to the town. A specific concern was voiced regarding the harm and potential problems cannabis sales could bring to our town, in particular around acquisition and consumption by teens.

Article 8: Shall the voters of the Town of Salisbury ratify the Town of Ripton's vote of January 12, 2021 to withdraw from the Addison Central School District? Molly Witters, a Ripton resident and member of Save our Schools, spoke briefly and answered questions regarding Ripton's decisive vote to withdraw from the Addison Central School District (ACSD). Several comments were voiced in support of Ripton's decision to withdraw.

Article 9: Shall the voters appropriate \$ 89,625.00 to be raised by taxes to the following organizations as shown:

- (1) \$ 1,900.00 Addison Central Teens (ACT): No one spoke
- (2) \$ 500.00 Addison Co. Economic Development Corp. (ACEDC) to provide assistance and resources to the community which promote economic development. Fred Kenney, as a Salisbury resident and Executive Director of ACEDC, spoke in favor noting that ACEDC, primarily works with businesses, both start-ups and established businesses providing one on one services in project development and management, advising, mentoring and consulting as well as collaboration and coordination with federal, state and regional organizations to advance community and economic development.

- (3) \$ 1,310.00 Addison County Home Health & Hospice: No one spoke.
- (4) \$ 750.00 Addison County Humane Society (Homeward Bound): No one spoke
- (5) \$ 1,400.00 Addison County Parent Child Center: No one spoke
- (6) \$ 300.00 Addison County Readers, Inc.: No one spoke
- (7) \$ 350.00 Addison County Restorative Justice Services, Inc.: No one spoke.
- (8) \$ 400.00 Addison County River Watch Collaborative: Heidi Willis spoke in favor noting that River Watch monitors water quality on six area streams and rivers. Covid affected the sampling program this past year, but E.coli sampling was done.
- (9) \$ 1,100.00 Age Well: As a volunteer Meal on Wheels driver, John Metcalf spoke in favor. Covid sparked an increase in requests for services, so the organization is definitely in need of support.
- (10) \$ 700.00 Charter House Coalition (CHC) to provide services to individuals and families who are homeless. John Metcalf spoke in favor noting that CHC services are strained due to Covid. They are preparing and delivering 3 meals a day to 80 people homeless, living in motels. CHC is definitely in need of funding.
- (11) \$ 1,350.00 Counseling Service of Addison County (CSAC): No one spoke
- (12) \$ 800.00 Elderly Services Inc.: No one spoke
- (13) \$ 500.00 End of Life Services (formerly Hospice Volunteer Services): Volunteer Jake Jacobs spoke in favor noting that EOLS provides counseling and bereavement services, both vital for folks nearing the end of life and their families. Heidi Willis seconded Jake's support of this organization. Wayne Smith added his support as well.
- (14) \$ 1,350.00 HOPE (Helping Overcome Poverty's Effects): No one spoke
- (15) \$ 700.00 John Graham Emergency Shelter: No one spoke.
- (16) \$ 25,000.00 Lake Dunmore/Fern Lake Association Milfoil Prevention Program: Jeff Schumann was prepared to speak on behalf of LDFLA yesterday but could not make the meeting today. Wayne Smith stated his support for the milfoil prevention program noting that 5 boats/crews were out on the lake last year hand pulling milfoil, a section of the lake received an herbicide treatment and the greeter program worked to decrease the spread of milfoil by educating boaters/lake users. Heidi Willis added her support noting that LDFLA has undertaken a shoreline protection study and is forming an action plan which will help improve lake health.
- (17) \$ 750.00 Open Door Clinic (ODC) to provide health services for uninsured and under-insured adults in Addison County. Jody Brakeley spoke in support of the ODC, noting that the organization continues to do good work. Through Covid, the clinic continued to see patients remotely, 900 this past year. This has worked out well as transportation is a major barrier for folks who use their services. Other good works include distributing boxes of food and the continuation of the Vermont Health Connect Navigator program.
- (18) \$ 325.00 Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP): No one spoke.
- (19) \$ 300.00 Salisbury Historical Society: No one spoke.
- (20) \$ 750.00 Salisbury Little League: No one spoke

(21) \$ 1,500.00 Salisbury Swim Program: A question was raised regarding the funding received by the program last year as there was no swim program due to Covid. Will the program run this summer? Barrie Bailey spoke in favor, noting that, as a safety measure, all children should learn to swim.

(22) \$ 43,240.00 Salisbury Volunteer Fire Department: Chief Ryan Emilio stated that all members of SVFD are fully vaccinated noting that last year was a bit rocky for first responders. The coming year budget is level funded, as it has been for the past two years. Suzi Quesnel, Crispin Butler and Becky Haydock all spoke in support noting SVFD's outstanding response to incidents they each experienced/witnessed this past year.

(23) \$ 1,700.00 Tri Valley Transit (formerly ACTR): No one spoke.

(24) \$ 1,000.00 Turning Point Center to provide a safe, friendly and substance use free environment for people in recovery. No one spoke.

(25) \$ 400.00 Vermont Adult Learning: No one spoke

(26) \$ 1,250.00 WomenSafe: Heidi Willis spoke on behalf of Carol Rule noting that WomenSafe's programs continued during Covid. Specifically they provided advocacy services for 17 (possibly more) Salisbury residents, which included parents and caregivers of 28 children, WomenSafe offered 35 prevention program presentations to 85 students and 15 adults at the school and 33 prevention program presentations to 206 students and 32 staff at Middlebury Union Middle and High Schools.

Completing the regular articles for discussion, Moderator Smith went on to introduce and thank Select Board members for all their hard work, in particular Pedie O'Brien and Sheila Conroy who are leaving the Board. Paul Vaczy added his thanks to Sheila, for her input and participation on the Select Board over the past two years. Sheila remarked that her work as a mental health clinician has returned to full time due to Covid, giving her less time for other things. Paul thanked, and urged residents to thank, Pedie for her involvement "in a million things over the years from the landfill to the Select Board to chairing the Select Board in past times" noting that she has given a lot of time and effort to the town of Salisbury and should be thanked profusely by all of us in town.

Moderator Smith moved on to Article 10, reading through the open positions on the ballot.

Article 10: To elect Town Officers for the following:

Collector of Delinquent Taxes	1 year term
First Constable	1 year term
Lister	3 year term
Lister	1 year remaining of an unexpired 3 year term
Moderator	1 year term
Select board	2 year term
Select board	3 year term
Town Clerk	1 year term

Paul Vaczy added that Kip Andres and John Nuceder are running to fill the spots on the Select Board being vacated by Sheila and Pedie. In addition, Jill Dunn is a write in candidate for the open Lister 3 year term.

On to any other business to come before the meeting. There was a question asked about the possibility of having budget items of integral town services, such as the Salisbury Volunteer Fire Department, added to the main town budget in the future. As regards the SVFD, it is, and was set up as, a stand alone corporation so it is not part of the town budget.

Heartfelt thanks were expressed by many individuals for the work of many others. Thank you to:

- Christine Turner for another outstanding job putting together the Town Report.
- Wayne Smith for doing a super job moderating this unusual town meeting, on both days.
- Jim Andrews for all his time and effort on the technology end of running this meeting.
- Heidi Willis for her assistance with the planning of town meeting.
- Town officials for all the work in preparing for this meeting.
- Salisbury Conservation Commission for the new Pitch Pine Trail.
- Town staff for keeping the town office/services open and running this past year.

Paul expressed a need for a primary representative to the Maple Broadband Board, noting that it would be terrific if a town resident with fundraising and/or technology skill was willing to step up and represent Salisbury.


Senator Chris Bray, through an email to Jim Andrews, wanted to let folks know that he was nearing the end of his presentation yesterday before being cut off. However, he did not get a chance to say that residents could contact him directly if they have questions, concerns or topics they wish to discuss.

Lindsey Hescocock introduced herself and let residents know she is running for a seat on the ACSD board. Even though she is running for a Middlebury seat, she will be working to represent all of the students of ACSD. Please contact her if you have questions.

Seeing no other comments, Moderator Smith noted that voting by Australian ballot will take place at the Salisbury Town Office on Tuesday March 2, 2021 from 7:00AM to 7:00PM.


The meeting was closed at 4:17PM.

Respectfully submitted:



Susan Scott, Town Clerk

Approved:



Wayne D. Smith, Town Moderator

Received for Recording: December 28 2021  Town Clerk