

**TOWN OF THETFORD, VERMONT**  
**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**  
March 3, 2012

Mark McMahon, Town Moderator, called the meeting to order at 9:13am. The warning was read: The legal voters of the Town of Thetford in the County of Orange and the State of Vermont are hereby warned to meet in the gym of Thetford Elementary School, in the Town of Thetford, on Saturday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2012 at 9:00 am to transact the following business. The Moderator suspended the rules of the meeting for the presentation the Civic Pride Award.

Tig Tillinghast, Selectboard, presented the Civic Pride Award to Roberta Howard. He commented on her decades of consistent civic service as Town Clerk and Treasurer, Town Service Officer and several local non-profit groups. Roberta's work as the Food Shelf Manager has multiplied the diversity of who is served and she offers them help with a welcoming smile.

Meeting called back to order at 9:17 am.

**ARTICLE 1 To hear and act on the reports of the Town. Article was moved and seconded.** Donn Downey, Selectboard, outlined a couple errors in the report indicating these corrections do not affect the total taxes to be raised. Elisheva Landman offered thanks to volunteers listed in the town report. Article 1 passed by show of voter cards.

**ARTICLE 2 Shall the Town have all taxes raised in the Treasurer's Office on or before October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012 by 8:00 pm. After this deadline, interest of 1% per month or fraction thereof for the first three months and thereafter 1.5% per month or fraction and 8% penalty will be due the Town?** The article was moved and seconded. Article 2 passed by show of voter cards.

**ARTICLE 3 Shall the Town authorize the Selectboard to pay off any outstanding debts ahead of schedule if funds are available and the authority to spend unanticipated funds, such as grants and gifts?** Article was moved and seconded. Article 3 passed by show of voter cards.

**ARTICLE 4 Shall the Town vote to exempt for a period of 5 years the properties located in Post Mills and Thetford Hill that are owned by the Thetford Volunteer Fire Department and are used exclusively for the purposes of such organization?** Article was moved and seconded. Tig spoke to the article; the state statute allows us to exempt the Fire Department from school and town taxes in five year increments. No further discussion. Article 4 passed by show of voter cards.

**ARTICLE 5 Shall the Town raise the sum of \$922,839 for the budgeted expenditures of the Town General Fund?** The article was moved and seconded. Donn Downey spoke to the article. He relayed that the Irene Storm damage expenses impact the highway budget and will be discussed with that article. On the town budget, he spoke about the department managers and their very conscientious work to stay within their budgets. The Selectboard continues to look at efficiencies and plan to increase technology with tax maps, documentation, and public interface. Tax rates and total spending has been fairly stable, grant opportunities have helped cover expenses and keep tax rates down; he suggested we don't expect that trend to continue. No further discussion. Article 5 passed by show of voter cards.

**ARTICLE 6 Shall the Town raise the sum of \$456,487 for the budgeted expenditures of the Highway Department?** The article was moved and seconded. John Bacon, Selectboard, spoke to

the article, particularly the Irene Storm damages last fall. He commended the Highway department, Gary Ulman (private contractor), Police department and the Fast Squad on a phenomenal job and the crowd gave a round of appreciative applause. He also noted fuel costs are over budget and there is great concern for this years anticipated cost of fuel and diesel. Article 6 passed by show of voters cards.

**ARTICLE 7**           **Shall the Town raise the sum of \$109,000 to be added to the Highway Capital Equipment Replacement Fund and \$63,000 to be added to the Fire Capital Equipment Replacement Fund and \$12,500 to be added to the Police Cruiser Fund?** Article was moved and seconded. Mike Pomeroy spoke to the article, pointed to page 69 of the Annual Town Report which, the Capital Equipment Funds, which added police cruisers to this fund for the first time. Article 7 passed by show of voter cards.

**ARTICLE 8**           **Shall the Town use the Police Cruiser Fund to purchase a new cruiser to cost no more than \$25,000?** Moved and seconded. Casey Huling, Selectboard, spoke to the article, explained that this article follows the plan to replace a cruiser as per the schedule. With no discussion, Article 8 passed by show of voter cards.

**ARTICLE 9**           **Shall the Town, for the purposes of providing required matching funds for grants won, raise and place into an existing permanent fund the sum of \$50,000 for the replacement of the Route 132 bridge over the Ompompanoosuc River?** Article was moved and seconded. Tig Tillinghast, Selectboard chair, spoke to the article. This bridge project has been put off several times, but last year \$40,000 was spent in matching funds and we are at the contracting stage now. A bridge closure is expected this summer, six to eight weeks. Our expense could be higher than \$50,000 as it's a percentage number; if the project expenses go over budget, we'll be responsible to meet the percentage. Article 9 passed.

**ARTICLE 10**          **Shall the Town raise \$750 to contribute to SERG?** Article was moved and seconded. Bob Walker spoke to the article; he is the Director of SERG. The Thetford Energy committee was formed ten years ago; SERG helped them with many projects including raising \$98,000 in grants to the town over the past 4 years, Thetford Center Community Center building weatherization, street lights removed and upgrade to LED, door to door home weatherization information and helped establish Thetford's PACE district. Article 10 passed by show of voter cards.

**ARTICLE 11**          **Shall the Town raise \$1,800 to contribute to Stagecoach?** Article 11 was moved and seconded. There was not a representative from Stagecoach to speak to the article, and several voters commented on their disappointment with Stagecoach for not attending to disseminate information to the town. Several spoke to the services they use (the Stagecoach commuter bus) and commented that this is our only form of public transportation in Thetford. An amendment was offered to consider this next year; the moderator ruled the amendment out of order as it binds the future Selectboard to action.

Casey Huling offered an amendment to the article to "Shall we raise \$1 to contribute to Stagecoach" and Mike Pomeroy seconded. Mark McMahan, Moderator, ruled the amendment out of order as \$1 reduces the article to a negative article. The Moderator was charged as out of order. Vote to rule him out of order. The BCA counted by standing and the decision of the moderator was sustained: 95/yes 30/no

An amendment to Article 11 changing the amount to \$900 was moved and seconded. Many residents spoke to the article, expressing their support or disapproval of Article 11. Call the question was moved and seconded and the debate ceased. Vote to end discussion passed. Vote on the amendment:

amendment fails. We returned to the original article briefly; a motion to call the question passed. Article 11 passed.

**ARTICLE 12**      **Shall the Town raise \$1,300 to contribute to Safeline?** Article was moved and seconded. Charlie Buttery, Thetford resident and previous Safeline board member, spoke to the article. Safeline assists victims of sexual violence with peer support, counseling, etc. 149 services provided to Thetford residents. Article 12 passed by show of voter cards.

**ARTICLE 13**      **Shall the Town, in light of the United States Supreme Court *Citizens United* decision that equates money with speech and gives corporations rights constitutionally intended for natural persons, vote to urge the Vermont Congressional Delegation and the U.S. Congress to propose a U.S. Constitutional amendment for the States' consideration that provides that money is not speech, and that corporations are not persons under the U.S. Constitution; that the General Assembly of the State of Vermont pass a similar resolution; and that the Town send its resolution to the Vermont State and Federal representatives within thirty days of passage of this measure?**

Moved and seconded: Tim Briglin, Thetford resident, spoke to the article expressing that this article stems from a Supreme Court decision with negative connotations and is being considered in fifty other Vermont towns at their town meetings. 160 Thetford residents signed the petition to include this article on the Warning. A Supreme Court decision in 2010 overruled a century of federal campaign finance laws, the Tillman Act. This decision was intended to expand first amendment protection to corporations, unions and non-profit businesses but the effect was opposite as now these donations drown out average citizens choice. Corporate campaign spending increased five times after this decision. Corporate power has a huge influence on elections now.

Several residents spoke in favor of the article, Terry Longo spoke against it. Article 13 passed by show of voter cards.

**ARTICLE 14**      **To transact any other business.**

Article was moved and seconded. Remember to voting on Tuesday at town hall. A discussion followed regarding town meeting future plans, town meeting will alternate between Thetford Academy and Thetford Elementary School. A few voters spoke to organization tables being in the same room as town meeting while others preferred it be in a different room.

Suspend the rules and hear from state legislatures: Jim Masland and Margaret Cheney, Representatives, and Mark McDonald, Senator spoke.

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 am.

A true record, Attest:

Mark McMahan  
Town Moderator

Tig Tillinghast  
Selectboard Chair

Respectfully submitted: Tracy Borst, Town Clerk