

DRAFT MINUTES

Select Board Special Meeting

Saturday, October 5, 2019

11:30 a.m.

Members present: Jim Benoit, Rick Ebel, Clark Hinsdale, Jessica James and Michael "Red" Muir

Town officials present: Gloria Warden

Visitors present: Chris Campbell, Melanie Clark, Jeanne T. Coumouche, George Gardner, Carolinne Griffin, Dylan Griffin, Brad Hargett, Marionne Hargett, Chris Hill, Mark Koenig, Kristina MacKulin, Mary Neffinger, Benjamin Rule, Jena Santa Maria, Stephen Tremblay, Raissa Venables, Matt Vogel, Rebekah Whitehurst

Rick Ebel called the meeting to order at 11:30 a.m.

Jim Benoit made the motion to approve and sign Warning Addison Northwest School District on November 5, 2019, the legal voters of the Town of Ferrisburgh, Vermont, are hereby notified and warned to meet at the Ferrisburgh Town Hall in Ferrisburgh, VT on Tuesday, November 5, 2019 between the hours of 7:00 AM and 7:00 PM to transact the following Article of business: Article 1: Shall the voters of the Town of Ferrisburgh agree to the Addison Northwest School District's plan to close the Ferrisburgh Central School for use as an elementary school on June 30, 2020? . Motion seconded by Rick Ebel.

Discussion ensued with Rick Ebel stating that we have been asking for more information and answers and Glory Martin ANWSD directed him to helpful financial information on the district website. Rick Ebel stated that he shared this to Jim Benoit, however we are still in need of financials and more information surrounding the school building and grounds. Rick Ebel stated that he had been in communication with the town attorney regarding this topic. Clark Hinsdale stated that we have had a lot of contemplation and civil disobedience going on and a procedure to follow and the correct thing to do is cooperate. Discussion surrounding lack of budgetary information. Discussion on planning out future as a group of communities. Jim Benoit stated that there are a lot of unknowns, including the property information, debts and maintenance. Discussion on taxes and property value risks. Jim Benoit stated that the responsibility of the selectboard is to make fiscally responsible decisions for our town. Red Muir discussed the process of the warning and the 30 to 40 days it needs to be posted, the warning signatures and applicable state statutes. Rick Ebel stated that the warning is the selectboard's responsibility because we have the voter checklists and that we have a significant role in performing the election and counting ballots at our town hall. Discussion on the State penalty for not including the warning on a ballot being \$20.00 per day. Clark Hinsdale stated that we need regional cooperation and more future planning with the school district, fire, emergency services that reach all 5 communities.

Rick Ebel shared his career history in education and personal connections to Ferrisburgh Central School. Jessica James stated that she has stated many times to the school board during public meetings that the process of closing Ferrisburgh Central School seems rushed, she has met with many people in the community that are parents, grandparents, residents without children, people with all ages and they have concerns on the hurried process and lack of information as well. Jessica James stated that it is the selectboard's responsibility as elected officials to listen to the residents of Ferrisburgh and inform them as well. Carolinne Griffin stated that there is a grassroots effort group growing and to contact her to be involved in this group. Mark Koenig from the ANWSD school board stated that the State statute is clear that the Town must warn the vote. Discussion regarding the possible school closure will continue to be on the selectboard agenda and an upcoming community engagement meeting at VUES. Gloria Warden stated this warning process is similar to signing a petition, in that it does not mean you support it or not, it only means that there can be a vote. Michelle Houghton stated that there are costs that we don't know and the expenses of reconfiguration are unknown. Mark Koenig stated that he was unsure around the expenses of the reconfiguration but the closure of 2 schools would result in an approximately 2 million in savings if both Ferrisburgh Central and Addison Central Schools are sold. Rick Ebel invited ANWSD school board representatives to our selectboard meetings and stated that would give the community time to ask questions and work together. Red Muir stated that he would like to see a plan and stated that he supported the article from the VUHS middle school teachers, there needs to be a plan to fully understand how the students will be organized in the school classrooms, and the loss of 36 jobs. Raissa Venables stated that there are no calculations on surrounding the known expenses of the building costs and reconfiguration of the buildings. Mark Koenig stated that the school board plans on cutting 33 to 36 positions across the board. Kristina MacKulen stated that the school board will have an informational meeting in Ferrisburgh prior to the vote on November 5th. Chris Campbell stated that the square footage of the building per student has been stated, but the where, how and the overall concept of the time needed for the renovations has not been discussed by the school board. Discussion on the average turnout of voters during a special election, and the petition of approximately 260 signatures asking to vote no to closing Ferrisburgh Central School. Discussion on voter demographics and aging population. Melanie Clark asked if the selectboard could publicize the lack on information and any new information that occurs before the vote. Rick stated that we have more time to discuss during our next regular selectboard meeting.

A roll call vote was held, Rick Ebel voted yes, Jim Benoit voted yes, Clark Hinsdale voted yes, Jessica James voted yes, Red Muir voted no. MOTION PASSED.

Motion to adjourn at 12:06 p.m. made by Jessica James and seconded by Jim Benoit. All voted in favor. MOTION PASSED.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica James