

**MINUTES
ANNUAL SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING
TOWN OF BARNET
MARCH 5, 2013**

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. at the Barnet Elementary School gymnasium by Moderator Dennis McLam.

ARTICLE 1. To elect a Moderator.

- Moderator stated that one-year term of Dennis McLam is expiring.
- Dennis McLam nominated by Rosemary Kinerson.
- William Biddle moved that nominations cease. Seconded by Rosemary Kinerson.
- Moderator instructed Town Clerk to cast one ballot for Dennis McLam.

ARTICLE 2. To elect a School Director for a term of 3 years.

- Moderator stated that three-year term originally held by Shannon Larocque is expiring. This seat is currently held by David Warden, who was appointed to replace Mr. Larocque when he resigned in October 2012.
- David Warden nominated by James Schenck.
 - o James Schenck spoke in endorsement of Mr. Warden's candidacy: he has always been a good resource for the School Board; the Board appreciated his willingness to fill in for Mr. Larocque.
- John Cook nominated by Jeremy Roberts.
 - o John Cook declined the nomination.
- Hearing no further nominations, Moderator announced that nominations would cease.
- Moderator instructed Town Clerk to cast one ballot for David Warden.

To elect a School Director for a term of 2 years.

- Moderator stated that two-year term of James Schenck is expiring.
- John Cook nominated by Sarah Cook.
- Mary Skovsted nominated by Shellie Samuels.
- Mona Marceau moved that nominations cease. Seconded by Rosemary Kinerson.
- Mary Skovsted spoke, stating that she has fond memories of attending Barnet School, and that she would be honored to serve if elected.
- John Cook spoke, stating that he has been a resident of Barnet since 2005, that he has been a critic of the School Board, and would be willing to serve if elected in order to apply his experience as a Selectman (in another Vermont town) and business owner.
- A vote by paper ballot was had, as required by state statute for the office of School Director.
- While paper ballots were being tabulated by the Board of Civil Authority, the School Board presented an informational slideshow regarding the school and the school district budget.
 - o Louis Bushey spoke regarding the following: implementation the school's mission and strategic plan through consistent implementation of school policies, improved communication within the school and community, instruction aligned with learning, creating new programs to enrich the curriculum, and increasingly integrating technology in all aspects of school life.
 - o David Warden spoke regarding the following: implementation the school's mission and strategic plan through insuring adequate space for all school programs, recognizing the importance of small class sizes, and maintaining and upgrading school facilities and equipment.
 - o Lori Werdenschlag spoke regarding the following: the school administration being responsive to changing needs of the students and the community, continued directions for

- growth, reflecting a balanced view of assessments, providing professional development to elevate instructional effectiveness, and remaining fiscally responsible.
- o Shellie Samuels spoke regarding the following: general information regarding the supervisory union, services provided by the supervisory union, and upward fiscal pressures.
 - o James Schenck spoke regarding the following: the student census, budget reductions, 2014 budget notes, why the tax rate is increasing more than the budget, tax rate calculation details, kindergarten through eighth grade staffing levels, high school tuition rates, and school budget growth.
 - The Moderator announced the tabulated results of the paper ballot vote: Mary Skovsted elected (Mary Skovsted: 90 votes, John Cook: 36 votes).

ARTICLE 3. The total proposed budget of \$4,633,115 is the amount determined by the school board to be necessary to support the school district’s educational program. State law requires that the vote on this budget be divided because (i) the school district’s spending per equalized pupil last year was more than the statewide average and (ii) this year’s proposed budget is greater than last year’s budget adjusted for inflation.

(School Budget)

Part A. Shall the voters of the Barnet School District authorize the school board to expend \$4,534,402, which is a portion of the amount the school board has determined to be necessary?

- Rosemary Kinerson moved the article as warned. Seconded by Joyce Evans.
- Marvin Bailey moved to reduce the expenditures amount by three percent from the warned amount of \$4,534,402 to \$4,398,370. Seconded by Jeffrey Riley.
- Mary Jean Thielen spoke: The School Board should consider larger class sizes; the school has an experienced staff that should be able to accommodate this change. The school should also attempt to raise money from other sources, such as direct solicitation, to ease the burden of funding placed on the taxpayer. It is good to hear that the school is pursuing grants, but the School Board needs to do more to suggest that they identify with the taxpayers in Barnet, which is not a wealthy town. Does the budget reflect finalized teacher contracts, or are these still being negotiated?
 - o James Schenck responded: The budget does reflect negotiated teacher contracts.
- Mona Marceau spoke: The Town of Peacham is considering closing their school. If Barnet was to absorb their students, what would we charge for tuition?
 - o Shellie Samuels responded: The “announced tuition” would be \$11,000. This figure, however, would be adjusted at the end of the school year once the actual cost per student is calculated.
- Mona Marceau spoke: Based on the School Board’s presentation, St. Johnsbury Academy’s tuition is increasing from \$14,570 to \$15,300, but there nine fewer high school students. How does this result in an increase in high school tuition expense?
 - o Shellie Samuel responded: The high school census numbers are three-year rolling averages, including home-schooled and private-schooled students. The figures presented by the School Board are accurate, but do not include special education students.
- Gail Warnaar spoke, addressing three separate points: 1) It would not be wise for the school to spend their time trying to raise funds, as suggested by Mary Jean Thielen, rather than on education. 2) The School Board has no control over much of the budget – most is composed of state requirements - so the three percent proposed cut would come at the expense of

enriching the learning experience. 3) It is a shame that so few voters are deciding this important matter. Australian ballot would allow more voters to participate.

- Jeffrey Riley spoke, addressing four separate matters:
 - Ms. Warnaar makes a good point regarding Australian ballot.
 - The proposal to cut three percent from the budget is a good one. This will force the School Board and the supervisory unions to find ways of cutting the budget. The salaries and benefits of taxpayers are not increasing to accommodate the school budget increases.
 - What is the status of the Barnet's request for a waiver from No Child Left Behind?
 - Shellie Samuels responded: There is no update to report. The Act, however, expires next year, so it will become a moot point soon.
 - What are the figures for home school and private school students?
 - Shellie Samuels responded: There are approximately thirteen students who attend private schools, and seven who are home schooled.
 - Sherry Tolle spoke: There thirty-nine private and home schooled students in kindergarten through eighth grade according to a count conducted by Ms. Tolle.
- Jeffrey Riley spoke: It seems that some students are schooled at home because of bullying. Is anything being done to address bullying?
 - Principal Shawn Gonyaw, who is not a Barnet voter, spoke with the permission of the voters: The School has a bullying policy. When there are student infractions the school communicates with the parents and applies a consequence for the student. The bullying problem is improving, as evidenced by data.
- Bridget Ferrin-Smith spoke: Experience of teaching at the St. Johnsbury School suggests that larger class sizes are detrimental. Also, the St. Johnsbury School has also implemented the same behavioral support system as Barnet, and it seems to be effective.
- Mary Mallon asked what effect the proposed three percent decrease would have on the educational program of the school.
 - Shellie Samuels responded: The School Board does not know exactly what changes would be made without first meeting and discussing the matter with the exact budget amount in mind.
 - Louis Bushey responded: The School Board did discuss possible cuts if the second vote was to fail, but not specific amendments to the first vote.
 - Lori Werdenschlag responded: The School Board would have to make cuts to important programs. The budget as presented is already scaled back as far as the School Board felt comfortable with. There is no space in the school for larger classroom sizes.
- Marian Wagner spoke: As a retired teacher, the School Board's presentation was impressive. The voters voted the School Board into office, and should trust their advice, not the advice of non-Directors.
- Barbara Warden spoke: Speakers should not present the voters with rumors without citing their source. Also, voters should volunteer at the school before they criticize the school.
- Susan Jensen, a teacher at Barnet School, spoke: What is happening with preschool funding?
 - Shellie Samuels responded: Preschool was funded from a grant for twenty years. This grant has expired, so we now must pay for one hundred percent of the program. It is unclear whether preschool will at some time be mandated. Preschool funding is a part of the increase in the school budget.
- Susan Jensen spoke, indicating that as a Tier II reading instructor half of the students she sees are two years behind in reading; new standards are increasing the reading proficiency required. Ms. Jensen also spoke in support of Ms. Warden's encouragement to voters to volunteer at the school.
- John Cook spoke: The state education funding formula results in penalties for schools that spend above the state's base per pupil spending level. These penalties include \$130,000 going to the state education fund from which Barnet School does not receive any benefit. It

also reduces the income-sensitive tax “prebate” that taxpayers receive as a reduction of their net taxes due. Mr. Cook indicated that he is in support of the three percent decrease.

- The amendment to the warned expense amount was defeated by voice vote.
- The article as warned was passed by voice vote.

Part B. If Part A. is approved by the voters, shall the voters of the Barnet School District also authorize the school board to expend \$98,713, which is the remainder of the amount the school board has determined to be necessary?

- Marian Wagner moved the article as warned. Seconded by Susan Persson.
- Mary Jean Thielen spoke: If, as John Cook stated, passing this article will result in \$130,000 being sent to the State, we should not pass this article, and keep the \$130,000.
 - o John Cook responded: The \$130,000 sent to the state is a result of the entire state education funding formula. Voting down this article will not simply result in keeping the funds at Barnet. It would cause a recalculation of the formula, which would still result in funds being sent to the State.
- Gregory Jackmauh spoke: It would give voters more confidence in the efforts of the School Board to control costs if the administration budget (page ninety-five in the Town Report) increased at the same rate or less than the rest of the expenditures budget.
- Robert Roos spoke: It would be helpful if the financial reports appearing in the Town Report indicated the percentage increase (or decrease) from one budget year to the next. What is the overall expenditure budget increase percentage?
 - o James Schenck responded: The total expenditure budget increase from 2013 to 2014 is 5.7%.
- Robert Roos spoke: The School Board should make a better effort to keep the percentage increase more in line with the increase of incomes in the economy at large.
- Mona Marceau spoke addressing three points: 1) Mr. Roos makes a good suggestion regarding simplicity in the presentation of the Town Report financials. 2) Most employers, and Social Security, awarded only a three percent increase this year. The School Board should make a better effort to keep budget increases in line with salary increases. 3) The Town should vote by Australian ballot on this matter, as it would elicit more participation.
- Edward Ryan spoke in support of the School District budget, stating the voters elected the School Board to craft the budget, and they should trust them to do this job.
- Robert Farlice-Rubio spoke: The School Board made painful decisions at their budget meetings, and did admirably to increase the budget by only 5.7%.
- Stephanie Giese spoke: Ms. Giese has two children who attend the Barnet School, and wishes to thank and commend the Principal and School Board for a job well done.
- Margaret Clayton, a teacher at the Barnet School, spoke: The School Board is not asking for more than what the children need for a good education. There are new standards to which the school must adhere, and the school must act in the best interest of the children to help them keep up with these standards.
- Rosemarie Spinelli spoke: There are many taxes about which to complain, but education taxes are the most important taxes we pay, and should not be where we make cuts.
- Philo Marcotte spoke: New preschool funding, at approximately \$90,000, accounts for the majority of expenditures associated with this second vote. This is an invaluable program that has helped Mr. Marcotte’s children.
- Motion was passed by voice vote.

ARTICLE 4. To see if the school district will authorize its Board of Directors to borrow money to pay its lawful debts and expenses for the fiscal year which ends June 30, 2014 in the amount not to exceed 90% of the anticipated collection of taxes and receipts of other funds to be used for those purposes?

- Mona Marceau moved the article as warned. Seconded by Robert Roos.
- Motion was passed by voice vote.

ARTICLE 5. To transact any other non-binding business that may legally come before the meeting.

- Shirley Warden spoke regarding spoke regarding three matters: 1) The Australian ballot has been voted down in Barnet in the past. It does not result in more voter participation, and should not be supported. 2) The Town must adopt a new Town Plan by September 2013. The Planning Commission/Zoning Board will discuss this at their meeting to be held March 12, 2013. 3) Barnet will host a Household Hazardous Waste collection on August 7, 2013.
- Theodore Faris spoke: On page fifty of the Town Report the Town Clerk refers to himself as a greenhorn. If he is a greenhorn, he is a most qualified greenhorn, and is doing a good job.
- David Warden, Historical Society President, spoke regarding Barnet 250th anniversary events.
- Shellie Samuels spoke, urging public participation at School Board meetings.
- Mary Jean Thielen spoke, thanking the cafeteria workers for a delicious lunch, and the students who volunteered to be microphone-runners.
- John Cook spoke regarding new requirements for filing the Vermont Homestead Declaration.
- Meeting adjourned at 3:10 p.m.

Dennis McLam, Moderator

Shellie Samuels, School Director

Attest: Benjamin Heisholt, Town Clerk