

UNAPPROVED
PRE-TOWN INFORMATIONAL MEETING
FEB. 28, 2022

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tom Wilson, Charles Rockwell, Phil Mazzucco, Deborah Baker, Linda Montague

Town Clerk : Andrea Lenhardt

Moderator: Mark Lourie

Audience: Approximately 27 townspeople

Meeting was called to order by Moderator Mark Lourie at 7:00 P.M.

Due to technical difficulties, the ZOOM portion of this meeting was not available. Rep. Sally Achey was scheduled to appear via ZOOM but instead sent her presentation to the town office to be read. Rep. Achey's statement was read by the town clerk which touched on the following subjects –

1. Statewide Redistricting Project – according to the proposed statewide map, there is only a slight change to the Rutland-Bennington District which Rupert is a part of. The change involves the Town of Poultney because of a decrease in their population.
2. Community Broadband – the state created Vermont Community Broadband Board has committed \$116 million of Federal funds to a construction grant program. Rep. Achey invites CUD members to contact her with any questions concerning this project.
3. Weatherization and other Municipal programs – the State has received a large fund of money to be directed towards weatherization and climate related measures. The Legislature is presently working on what initiatives will be available to municipalities. Many of these will be implemented through the Regional Planning Commissions.

The warning was then read by the Moderator who asked for any comments from the audience.

Article 1. –

Comment – Suggestion was made that the town look into including a copy of the ballots, to be consider for voter approval, to be published in the town report. This way it would give voters a chance to see the names of candidates up for election.

Article 2. – No comments

Article 3. – No comments

Article 4. – No comments

Article 5. – No comments

Article 6. - No comments

Article 7. – No comments

Article 8. – Comment – in referring to the renovation to the Rupert Town Office, the Selectboard was asked to give an update on the progress and future timeline of renovations. Tom Wilson responded that the radiant heat system in the flooring is up and running. Scheduled for this year is a vestibule at the front entrance of the building and repairs to the roof.

Article 9. – No comments

Article 10. – No comments

Article 11. – Question – The request from Vermont Family Network for \$250 – what does that agency do ? Town Clerk responded that they offer assistance to families in need. Tom Wilson explained that since is a new appropriation request, it needs to have the approval from the voters before the Selectboard would add it to the budget.

Article 12. – Question – What are the future plans for the sidewalk installation in the village of Rupert ? Answer – Two sections are now completed, and the Board would like to continue the expansion of the sidewalks. They also hope to topsoil and seed the area and plan to apply for a grant to help with that cost.

Article 13. – Question – What does the Rural Fire Protection Program do ? Answer – They help provide grant funding to Fire Companies for dry hydrants.

Article 14. - This is a non-binding article looking to see how much support there would be from area towns to build a new facility at the Dana Thompson Rec. Park Field House in Manchester. Hallie Lovett addressed the audience giving

her support for this project and pointed out that there is no money attached to this article they are just seeking support. Nicole McKeighan questioned just how many Rupert residents would actually use this facility. She also pointed out that VTDigger had put approximate figures for each towns contribution on their website and they listed Rupert's as being approximately \$300,000.

Article 15, - The 2022/2023 budget. Charlie Rockwell addressed the audience explaining the reasons why the Board needed to increase the highway budget. With two highway employee's nearing retirement, the Board felt it is now necessary to consider the hiring of new employees to help with the future transition and to see that they are properly trained. Tom Wilson explained there is still funding left in the budget to help with the completion of the sidewalks and the town office renovations. He also announced that the town will receive approximately \$100,000 through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) but the use of these funds is limited to certain requirements. For Rupert, it looks like the highest and best use would be for broadband. There is also funding coming to be used for infrastructure projects. Tom also reminded the audience that the Selectboard is always available for comments and concerns.

Public Questions :

1. How much has the Rupert Grand List grown this year ? Lister Jed Rubin answered that there has been some new construction and additions but does not feel that it will result is much of an increase.
2. What are the job descriptions of the First and Second Constables ? Town Clerk answered that they are here to be called on for any emergencies, family disputes and dog issues. Further description might be found in the Vermont State Statues.
3. Comment on the necessary expansion for cell service. Town Clerk stated that Rep. Achey did say the Vermont Legislature is aware of this need and is working to provide better service throughout the state. Comment was also made that land lines are still a good option to have.
4. Comment made that broadband service should go beyond using copper and go to fiberoptic. Tom Wilson stated that there is fiberoptic now in town, but it has not been extended out to other areas.
5. Question on Town Green plans. Mark Lourie stated that a survey still needs to be done to put in the walking path. Plans for a pavilion type structure needs to be considered. The possibility of using the beams from the barn located on the Hatch property for its construction, is now on the table.
6. Question on who to contact for a dry hydrant location. Answer – possibly the Fire Company.
7. Doug Armstrong commended the Highway Department on the excellent service they provide. Rupert roads are in better shape than most ! This was followed a round of applause.

At this time, Moderator Lourie acknowledged Skipper Wilson who has retired after 45 years of service on the Rupert Highway Department. This too was followed by a round of applause.

With no further business or comments, Moderator Lourie adjourned this meeting at 7:40 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea Lenhardt, Rupert Town Clerk