

**Public Information Hearing  
Thursday, February 27, 2020  
Willey Building Meeting Room**

Those present: Selectboard: Fred Ducharme, Ruth Goodrich, Mike Hogan and Matthew Nally

Town: Betty Ritter, Michelle Leclerc

Other: RD Eno, Beth Wade, Paul Wade, Rose Bothfeld, Ken Klinger, Niels Larsen, Dawn Andrews, Diane Klinger, Adam Overbay, Karen Larsen, Stephen Gregg, John Grovsner, Deborah Peterson, Cecilia Gulka, Gary Gulka, Catherine Besch, Larry Gochey, Will Ameden, Jeanne Johnson, Chris Duff, Jeff Haslett, Jen Miner, Charles Miner

We reviewed the Articles that will be voted on by Australian Ballot on Town Meeting, Tuesday, March 3, 2020.

Art. 9. Shall the voters of the Town of Cabot appropriate the sum of \$669,701 to defray the General Expenses of the Town, with an estimated \$84,300 to come from income and \$585,401 from local taxes? [Australian Ballot]

Cecilia Gulka has questions on Social Services appropriation not visible or subject to any discussion by the town. It looks like the Selectboard made cuts to the organizations. In the past they were voted separately and now they are lumped together. She feels she has been denied her voice to support her neighbors. Fred is wondering what Cecilia would recommend. She doesn't know how other towns do their appropriations. We changed the policy to make it simpler. She's not arguing any certain one but she thinks it should be sent to the voters. Ruth said we talk about these at length during the budget meetings and the budget meetings are open to the public. Cecilia in the past we had access in the town meeting to discuss these. Beth would like it to be placed in the agenda for appropriations. Karen is looking for a general understanding why social services have been cut. Matt it comes down how much money is there and if the voters wish to donate more the voters need to attend the meetings. Fred said that all of these should be level funded. Ruth explained the budget cuts process. Karen thinks shifting the budget rights on these. Jeanne said the listers have been cut way more. RD order of the budget first and decide what the town needs and then set the rate accordingly. Never has been done before is the Selectboard cutting the social services. No one knew that the Selectboard would be cutting the social services appropriations. Larry would like to put all on the ballot to vote on. Mike said if you want 26 or 27 articles that we could do that. Cecilia would like an article just for social services. The ones under \$500 would lumped together and then the larger ones voted on individually. Cecilia when she was an auditor and noticed what other towns do. Some towns have a committee and the Selectboard has an amount on how much they will give for the total amount. Fred said this year we can't do anything this year but work on a different way for next year.

Art. 10. Shall the voters of the Town of Cabot appropriate the sum of \$1,766,306 to repair and maintain the Highways of the Town including summer, winter and special treatment, of which an estimated \$1,084,255 is to come from income and \$682,051 from local taxes? [Australian Ballot]

Rd – Would like to discuss this after we vote on Art. 15

Art. 11. Shall the voters of the Town of Cabot authorize the Selectboard to sell a piece of property located on VT Route 215 North, Parcel Id #01-002.100, estimated to be 0.80 acres in size and Grader Shed, current assessed value of \$52,500 with the proceeds of the sale to be deposited in the Highway Fund as sale of land? [Australian Ballot]

Larry said the skid steer and the lawn mower are in there and where will the hay go. They would also like to put there plows in there. In his opinion he wouldn't think of selling that building. He think if we buy a storage sheds it won't be enough room.

Art. 12. Shall the voters of the Town of Cabot authorize the Selectboard to sell a piece of property located on 973 South Walden Road, Parcel Id #05-007.000, referred to as the Gary Curtis Property estimated to be 4.00 acres in size and a dwelling, current assessed value of \$93,500 with the proceeds of the sale to be deposited in the General Fund as sale of land? [Australian Ballot]

Larry wants to know the price. Fred is saying to get what we get for an amount. Michelle said around \$10,000. RD is wondering if these sales are included in the budget. Fred said no they are not. Ruth said we should be noted that we have a large deficit and that is where the grader shed property. Fred stated that we were using 400 tons of salt and now we are using 700 or more a year. Fred wants the voters to understand that the tons of salt is going up. RD noticed the debt and is in the general and highway fund. Mike said that is over five years.

Art. 13. Shall the voters of the Town of Cabot authorize the Selectboard to grant Faith in Action the sum of \$2,500 to support that non-profit entity providing services to Cabot residents? [Australian Ballot]

There were no comments.

Art. 14. Shall the voters of the Town of Cabot appropriate the sum of \$1,000 to support the Cabot Conservation Fund? [Australian Ballot]

Gary mentioned on page 50 of the Town Report and what they do with the fund. Mike asked if Marshfield has a fund for that. Gary thinks other towns have this fund but did not believe Marshfield has a fund.

Art. 15. Shall the voters of the Town of Cabot approve a grant the sum of \$300,000 from CCIF funds to be used to pay off the remaining leases for highway equipment saving the town over \$46,000 in interest? [Australian Ballot].

RD does not know what the wisdom going from purchase to lease. But the code of the UDAG prohibits fund to spend it on equipment or reduce the tax rate. Also, that you are seriously depleting the fund and the fund may not be able to meet the obligations. It is not president to have this large amount granted. Mike said the \$200,000 for the roof at the school. RD would like the Willey Building to be granted and he has been turned down. This fund is for Economic Development. He is hoping people reject this article. Mike then deferred to Adam Overbay a member of the CCIF Committee.

Adam from CCIF committee will not take a position on this. In terms if it is prohibited use, at this stage these are no longer UDAG funds whenever that grant was paid back. It then became Town funds. RD says this is not true. Adam would like him to show him where they are federal funds. RD said they are not federal funds but under federal regulations. In all these years we have never heard from the feds that we are not released from the obligation. Adam said I will leave that as you say. The money is being a depletion. The credits from the fund will be more than the debit. If this article passes the fund will keep going down. We will need to know what the town will be willing to do. It is up to the voters. Jeanne says the \$46,000 interest will be saved for the highway but has anyone looked at the CCIF total will effect. Adam said we are still obligated to do the loans and pay for the garage loan. The money will not increase in income. The education scholarship fund will be unchanged. It will still continue. Mike said if it passes we will look at ways to use the money. The Town has no rainy day fund. We might look at another way that is more secure and less risk. Karen thought that the interest on these funds that \$45,000 to 50,000 a year. The payment of the town garage comes out of that and there is other moneys that get distributed. If we vote for something that is illegal under federal regulations what is the legal ramifications. Adam can't answer that but when the money was paid back to the town it was relieved from the federal obligations. RD explained his thoughts on the federal funds. Karen is wondering if the Selectboard has contacted an attorney. Fred said in the past we have used funds to defray cost to the school roof. The voters picked and choose. Ruth explained that one point they tried to contact the people who original did the UDAG loan. Basically what they

were told is what Adam said. Fred said that if we keep discussing we will not have an answer if it is legal or not legal. We will leave it up to the voters. Larry asked when the lease runs out do you own it. Ruth said that if we do this loan we lower the interest to 2.17% over five years. Jeff thinks that this will not be diminishing the fund. RD said these funds could be invested in this town and we have never done that. Ruth would like to invite RD into the next CCIF and Selectboard meeting. The reason we got into the leases is because there was many years when we had old equipment. The Selectboard went to leasing and rotating the equipment.

Art. 16. Shall the Town of Cabot eliminate the position of Auditor as allowed by the Legislature under 17 V.S.A. § 2651b, passed in 1998. The Towns financial statements are currently audited by a certified public accounting firm. The Town reports and other related documents will be prepared by the Town Clerk's office. [Australian Ballot]

There were no comments.

Art. 17. Shall the voters of the Town of Cabot authorize the Northeast Kingdom Waste Management District to appropriate and expend a budget of \$794,823, at no expense to the Town of Cabot? [Australian Ballot]

There were no comments.

Art. 18. Shall the Town of Cabot approve appropriate a sum of \$5,469.63 to the Cabot Public Library, to support library services and cultural programs in the Town of Cabot? This is an addition to the \$80,000 already in the general budget and would cost taxpayers an additional \$2.75/\$100,000 household worth. The total amount (\$85,469.63) has been approved by the Library Trustees. [Australian Ballot]

Beth made a fact sheet on the percentages where the money goes to.

Art. 19. Shall the voters of the Town of Cabot approve a grant to the Cabot Conservation Committee the sum of no more than \$6,980 from CCIF funds available for Town Meeting grants in the year 2020, for the purpose of providing funding for the proposed "Managing Your Land with Nature in Mind" project? [Australian Ballot]

Gary is on the ballot. Fred it's on the ballot and this article. Gary explained the grant.

Other items:

Deborah Peterson from the Ambulance. They would like Cabot Ambulance to have their separate line.

Cathleen is looking at the handout and the Selectboard didn't look at a cost of living increase for the librarian. Fred said we get a whole total. The library trustees are the ones who come up with the total budget amount. Cecilia asked when they didn't have the article of their own. Beth was disappointed on the timing of knowing what their budget would be. Beth said this position requires a master's degree and we are lower than surrounding towns. We think the Towns people should be able to vote on it. Cecilia thinks the Town should go back to the library having its own article. Mike said next year we start the budget sessions earlier.

Ruth has one announcement: Jeff Haslett has info on Coronavirus and the information is on Front Porch Forum. Please do what's necessary to stock up and be prepared.

The public hearing was adjourned 8:30 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Betty Ritter, Town Clerk/Treasurer