

SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING

March 12, 2016

Pursuant to the Warning for the Special Town Meeting recorded in the Town Records, Volume 20, page 391, the legal voters qualified to vote in Representative Town Meeting met at the Brattleboro Area Middle School multi-purpose room on March 12 at 8:30 a.m.

The meeting was called to order at 8:35 a. m. by Moderator Lawrin Crispe.

Checklist Attendant and Assistant Town Clerk Jane Fletcher, announced that 102 Town Meeting Members were present. Moderator Crispe stated that 78 members constitute a quorum. Later in the day, 128 were present.

Following brief announcements, the Moderator explained the procedural rules of the meeting.

PRELIMINARY MOTIONS

Selectboard Chair David Gartenstein moved: That the following persons be authorized to sit in the reserved section with the Selectboard: Town Manager Peter Elwell, Assistant Town Manager Patrick Moreland, Town Attorney Robert Fisher, Police Chief Michael Fitzgerald, Police Captain Mark Carignan, Fire Chief Michael Bucossi, Assistant Fire Chief Peter Lynch and Town Assessor Russ Rice. The motion was seconded and, on a standing voice vote, unanimously carried.

Vice Chair Kate O'Connor moved: That the electronic media be permitted to remain in the reserved section. The motion was seconded and, on a standing voice vote, unanimously carried.

The Moderator read the article into the record as follows:

ARTICLE 1: Shall an amount not to exceed Four Million, Five Hundred Thousand (\$4,500,000.00) dollars of the proceeds of bonds authorized at the October 20, 2012 special representative town meeting of the Town of Brattleboro be expended for the purpose of purchasing land and buildings at 62 Black Mountain Road, Brattleboro, Vermont and renovating said lands and buildings into a Town of Brattleboro Police Station instead of constructing the police station renovations at the Brattleboro Municipal Center as authorized at said special representative town meeting. Voting on this article is to be done by Australian ballot.

Selectboard Chairperson David Gartenstein began the discussion by presenting the history of the decision to relocate the Police Department to Black Mountain Road. He stated that the topic first presented itself in 2014 after the Town budget was rejected at a referendum and the budget was rewritten for subsequent vote. He stated that the proposal to move the Police Department to Black Mountain Road rather than renovate the existing station in the Municipal Center came from the Police Department itself and the Police Fire Renovation Committee. He added that he was at first skeptical of the new proposal. However, over the course of a year and a half, and as he learned more information, he came to reconsider his opinion and favor the move. He explained while he favored the relocation, he continued to have reservations. He remained committed to the downtown vitality as it is the town's center and felt it was important for the police to have a presence in the area where the most activity occurs.

Accessibility was also a concern as was the uncertainty of the future of the Municipal Center should the Police Department no longer be occupying space in there. But he noted that here were substantial problems with the Police Department being in the Municipal Center. The space was not optimally suited to house the department. To renovate the Center to accommodate the department would cause the police to be working out of three floors; basement first and second floor. This arrangement was

not optimal work space, especially in light of the fact that it would cost 5,000,000.00 to do the work.

Mr. Gartenstein also noted that there were additional problems with the space as well. The current location lacked long term storage space for not only documents and evidence, but equipment as well. Much of the Department's equipment is stored at various locations throughout the town. In the Black Mountain Road proposal, there would be enough space to allow for an efficient work flow and long term storage for all of the department's needs.

The parking area was also cause for concern. If the current proposal to renovate the existing Department were to be realized, the already cramped lot would be become even more challenged.

The Chair acknowledged that one of the concerns of moving to the Black Mountain location, was emergency response time and the worry that officers responding to situations would have a longer drive and therefore longer response time. Mr. Gartenstein advised that officers in reality spend little time at the station. Most respond to incidents while on patrol from their vehicles.

He also addressed the concern of accessibility if the Department were to move to the proposed location; based on reports and information gathered over time, he felt that most visitors at the police station did not walk and those who did were not reporting emergency situations. He also commented that currently there were daily check-in situations for offenders of county-wide court related matters and while that was technically a responsibility of the court system, the local police department has performed that function for many years.

Town Manager Peter Elwell added that while he agreed that it would be a long walk from downtown to the Black Mt. Road location, it was directly on the route of public transportation which passes six times daily.

Mr. Elwell also added, that he was aware that there were concerns about not having a safe refuge, such as the Police Department, in the downtown area, Central Fire Station on Elliot Street has always and will always serve as a haven for someone in crisis; a safe place for someone in emergency situations. He also stated that while this has always been the case, more effort would be put forth to promote that information.

David Gartenstein addressed the issue of the Town being a commercial landlord by stating that the town already rents space in the Transportation Center and Municipal Center. However, he stressed that it was not the Town's goal to become commercial landlords but renting the vacated space would be the best opportunity for reuse of the Municipal Center in a way that would continue its purpose going forward. He announced that the Town had been approach by both the State of Vermont and the Brattleboro Housing Authority expressing interest to move into any possible available space at the Municipal Center which would generate approximately \$60,000 in annual income. The cost of the Putney Road project would cost approximately 4.1 Million Dollars while the capital costs to renovate the existing location would be 5.1 Million Dollars.

He concluded that at this point, given the Town's constraints the optimal location for the Police Department would be the Black Mountain Road proposal.

At 10:00 a.m. the Moderator announced that the polls were open and would remain open until 30 minutes after the meeting recessed. He also announced a 10 minute break.

At 10:10 a.m. the meeting reconvened.

Discussion among members ranged from echoing the sentiments of the Selectboard to continued concerns regarding the issues Mr. Gartenstein enumerated. There were several comments and questions that continued until all members wishing a voice were addressed.

OTHER BUSINESS: Under Article 2, with less than a quorum present, there was no further business to come before the meeting. The Moderator reminded members that the polls would be open for 30 minutes past the recess of the meeting. At 11:40 a.m. he called a recess until 12:10 p.m., at which time the ballot box would be opened and the vote count for Article 1 would commence.

At 12:10 p.m., the polls were declared closed. After declaring the polls closed, the ballot box was unlocked, and the box emptied. Ballots were counted by the town clerk and two assistant clerks. Upon completion of the count, all voted ballots were sealed in a ballot bag for storage.

The results of the vote of Article 1 were as follows:

POLICE STATION RELOCATION TO BLACK MOUNTAIN ROAD – Article 1

YES	111
NO	27

Attest:

Annette L. Cappy
Town Clerk

Approved:

David Gartenstein
Selectboard Chairperson

Lawrin Crispe
Moderator