

**BRATTLEBORO SELECTBOARD
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2018
EXECUTIVE SESSION – 5:00PM
SPECIAL MEETING – 6:15PM
SELECTBOARD MEETING ROOM, MUNICIPAL CENTER
MINUTES**

Selectboard members present: Kate O'Connor, Brandie, Starr, Tim Wessel, David Schoales, and Shanta Lee Gander.

Staff Present: Town Manager Peter Elwell, Town Attorney Robert Fisher, and Executive Secretary Jan Anderson.

Media present: BCTV staff and volunteers.

Others present: Brian Monaghan, Spoon Agave, Rio Daims, Kurt Daims, MacLean Gander, Mark Tully, Waylon Adams, Alexander Meima, Nunya, Mia King, ASL interpreter Janet Dickinson, and others who did not sign the attendance sheet.

Chair O'Connor called the meeting to order at 5:00pm. She confirmed that the meeting was properly warned.

MOTION BY KATE O'CONNOR TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS PENDING OR PROBABLE CIVIL LITIGATION OR A PROSECUTION TO WHICH THE PUBLIC BODY IS OR MAY BE A PARTY, WHERE THE BOARD HAS DETERMINED THAT PREMATURE GENERAL PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE WOULD CLEARLY PLACE THE SELECTBOARD OR PEOPLE INVOLVED AT A SUBSTANTIAL DISADVANTAGE. THE TOWN MANAGER, TOWN ATTORNEY, AND BRIAN MONAGHAN WERE INVITED INTO THE EXECUTIVE SESSION. MOTION CARRIED 4-0 (STARR WAS NOT PRESENT AT THE TIME OF THE VOTE).

Chair O'Connor reconvened the meeting at 6:15pm.

PETITION FOR CHARTER AMENDMENT – *Public Hearing re: Youth Vote.* O'Connor said that the Town had received a petition signed by 5% of the legal voters asking for an amendment to the Town Charter in order to allow 16 and 17 year-olds to vote in local elections. She said that a Charter change required two public hearings and that this meeting was the second public hearing.

Chair O'Connor opened the public hearing.

Rio Daims, Youth Vote Coordinator, said that involving youth was especially important now because youth were getting involved in politics and voicing their concerns and political views around the world. She said that youth voices were valid and had an effect on public processes and government, and for those reasons they should have voices in Representative Town Meeting and on the School Board, as set forth in the petition.

Mac Gander disclosed that he was married to Selectboard member Shanta Lee Gander, but said that he was speaking as a member of the public. He spoke in support of the youth vote and said that he was energized by young people who spoke at the last Selectboard meeting and who wanted to become involved. He mentioned gradations in adulthood between ages 16 and 24, and equated involving youth as a process similar to learning to drive. He suggested this could be a way to educate young people about civic engagement and a way to support education and civic education.

Alexander Meima, a student at BUHS and part of a school program connected with the Brattleboro Conservative League, suggested that lowering the voting age was an irresponsible idea. He said that young people were able to be manipulated and the matter could bring in liberal progressives.

Waylon Adams, a BUHS student and member of the Brattleboro Conservative League, questioned when someone would be mature enough to vote. He said that youth should be able to participate in politics but that they did not have the life experience necessary to participate in democratic elections. He said that experience was tied to age and being able to participate in elections should be reserved for people with experience in cause and effects.

Rio Daims responded that liberals may be in support of the youth vote but that she was not trying to make it a party issue. She said that adults (including 18 year-olds) could also be easily influenced. She suggested that 16 year-olds had the same basic amount of life experience and were at the same maturity level as 18 year-olds.

Spoon Agave said that he had slowly moved to support the youth vote. He said it was difficult to define maturity and suggested that the youth vote may not be a question of maturity but rather a question of education and preparation. He said that it was difficult to bring citizens into civic life and that youth who were interested in politics may cast better votes than many "mature" voters. He suggested that schools rebuild social studies, including democracy, community, and history, so young people could better understand the current situation. He said that allowing the youth to vote may have a small effect on the numbers, but he did not see that as a threat or significant concern.

Alexander Meima said that the previous speaker suggested that democracy was failing to a certain degree and Meima questioned whether bringing in the youth would make it better. He said that bringing in more progressives, and increasing social studies, math and science in schools, would not build an economy that provided a better life.

Mark Tully spoke in support of the youth vote and said there was a "massive gulf" between decisions made by the School Board and the students' beliefs about what was working. He said that the School Board may eliminate an effective program because of cost and that the students did not have a voice or vote. He said that having the youth vote on the School Board was an important part of the petition. He said that youth were citizens heavily affected by School and Town policies. He said that youth pay taxes (sales tax, employment tax, and gas tax) but did not have representation. He said that opinions were valued differently when the speaker had a vote.

Kurt Daims said that he was not concerned about the youth vote bringing in any particular party or way of thinking and that the petition was uniquely a non-partisan measure. He said that youth voting would enliven our democracy with new people and thinkers. He said they would only be allowed to vote on local issues so their vote would not affect votes on U.S. senators, the president, or wars. They would only have an effect on the community.

Mia King spoke in support of the youth vote and the impact they would have on the community and School Board. She said the youth would stir up questions and cause people to think more. She also suggested giving elementary school students a voice.

Nunya asked that a sign be displayed outside to inform the public of meetings. They said that youth could think for themselves and put an end to voter suppression and suffrage.

Waylon Adams responded to a previous speaker and said that local government was not the place to provide a preliminary learner's permit. He questioned whether the youth would be mature enough to participate in democracy as suggested.

Rio Daims responded that the youth vote would help democracy and that studies showed that parents were more likely to vote if a youth in the household voted, which result in an increase in voter turnout. She responded to a comment by a previous speaker referencing a failing democracy and suggested that youth could strengthen democracy because the youth would continue to vote for rest of their lives and help others to continue to vote. She said the youth vote would be an increase of the effectiveness of democracy. She also suggested that 18 year-olds were in the process of moving on in their lives but people at age 16 were more stable and more familiar with their communities.

Kurt Daims stated that teenagers were not exempt from paying taxes and it was unfair and unconstitutional to tax people without representation. He referred to a federal statute (Federal Voting Act of 1965) that stated anyone who had completed sixth grade would have enough sufficiency to vote. (He noted that that legislation was framed to ensure that Blacks in the south were not disenfranchised from voting.) He said that the youth voice perked up politics because it was new and youthful.

Board member Dave Schoales said that debates could take place but that the voters would make the decision. He added that the Seventh Amendment gave citizens the right to trial and outlined due process.

Board member Brandie Starr said that she was pleased to have the youth in the audience participating and voicing different opinions. She said that she hoped they would stay involved.

Board member Tim Wessel said he agreed with Starr. He said it was especially brave of Alexander Meima and Waylon Adams to express their opinions even though they were not in agreement with the preponderance of supporters. He invited all of the participants to Selectboard meetings where everyone had a voice and would be heard. He said that he would also like to hear from the youth about economic development issues.

Board member Shanta Lee Gander thanked the audience for participating in the debate and petition. She said it was refreshing to hear different voices and that age did not equal wisdom. She spoke of some of her past experiences as a youth and said that the population in Vermont and in Brattleboro was aging. She said she was concerned that no succession plan was being discussed so it was important to include youth in meaningful ways especially with the shifting of social issues.

Chair O'Connor confirmed that the Selectboard did not have a vote on this matter, but that the matter would go before the voters on March 5, 2019.

Chair O'Connor closed the public hearing.

Rio Daims thanked the Selectboard for holding the hearings and for everyone's participation

There was no further business.

MOTION BY BRANDIE STARR AT 7:03PM TO ADJOURN. MOTION CARRIED 5-0.

Tim Wessel, Clerk