

CABOT ANNUAL SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING MINUTES – MARCH 4, 2013

Pursuant to the Warning as recorded and legally posted, the legal voters did meet at the time and place indicated and the following business was transacted:

The March 4, 2013 Cabot Annual School Meeting was called to order at 6:04 pm by the School Board Chairperson, Chris Tormey.

Article 1 – Motion made and seconded to elect a Moderator for the ensuing year. Ed Smith nominated; seconded. Declared nominations closed; Ed Smith elected Moderator unanimously by voice vote. Moderator began the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by a moment of silence. The Moderator then made opening remarks concerning the meeting.

Article 2 – To elect two school directors by Australian ballot – one for 2 years and one for 3 years; Moderator read the Article. Australian ballot results: School Director ballot results for 2 year, Ry Hoffman with 231 votes; for 3 years, Chris Tormey with 227 votes.

Article 3 - Shall the voters of the Town School District approve the minutes of the March 5, 2012 Annual School District Meeting? Moderator read the Article; moved and seconded. No discussion. Moderator stated the question. Article 3 adopted by unanimous voice vote.

Article 4 – To hear a report by the School Directors. Moderator read the Article; moved and seconded. Sharon O'Connor discussed project based learning program. Paul Stecker discussed the budget for needed repairs for school facilities. Chris described estimated costs of proposed building repairs, efforts to broaden communication and community, policy revisions, collaborations with the Twinfield School, and the school budget. The Moderator instructed the meeting on Roberts Rules of Order and began to read Article 5; Point of Order from RD Eno – the Moderator had not entertained questions from voters for Article 4. Brigitte Codling asked how repair expenses will be incorporated into future budgets. Chris responded that it is a conversation that will be held in the coming months. Ted how can we be assured that money appropriated for maintenance will go to maintenance? Chris responded that large projects hold higher accountability that need to be followed more rigidly. Melissa Yu asked what was the status of courses available to our children were not presented in the school report and the status of our partnership with VSAC? Chris asked to suspend the rules in order to allow the Principal, Superintendent and Business Manager, not residing in Cabot, to address the assembly; no objections. Karen Stewart responded that there are over 100 online classes available to Cabot students and they apply yearly for VSAC Reach-up grants. Jill Alexander questions the number of attending students presented on Page 69, and how many high school age children live in Cabot? Jessica Miller asked for an explanation of the school board salary? Chris responded that this is the Cabot's contribution to the services provided by the Washington Northeast Supervisory Union. Robert Billings further explained the necessity of this line item. Cedric Houston asked why maintenance was deferred? Chris responded that several years ago the voters rejected funding those needs. Andrew Churchill asked to finish the discussion. Brigitte asked why the school has not made plans to lure more children to the Cabot School? Point of Order from Janet VanFleet – the speaker is addressing issues not subject of the report; Brigitte responded that it is relevant as it effects the tax rate. The Moderator ruled that the question of the drop of enrollment is relevant to the issue. Chris responded that it is a goal in the coming years to open communications to better serve all school age children. No further discussion.

Article 5 – Shall the Cabot School Board be directed to close the Cabot High School prior to July 1, 2013 and to provide for the high school education of the high school pupils (grades 9 through 12) residing in the District by paying tuition in accordance with law to one or more public high schools in one or more school districts, to an approved independent high school, or to an independent school meeting school quality standards, to be selected by the parents or guardians of the pupil, within or without the state? Moderator read the Article; moved and seconded. Brigitte Codling stated that a large group of parents in the Town would prefer to have the school choice option for various reasons; feels that the comparison budget for closing the school was grossly inflated and didn't reflect building repairs that would no longer be needed; and by offering school choice children in Town who are not currently enrolled would come back into the pupil count and reduce the tax rate. Mary Carpenter stated that she preferred education property taxes to stay in the Cabot community where voters have a choice in how it is spent. Cedric Houston stated that he fought hard for the school and would keep it,

but costs for maintaining the satellite buildings have become too prohibitive and many cannot afford the tax increase to make those improvements; children should have the choice to go to a school where they can get the education they need not just those sponsored here. Carlyle Nunn called the question; approved by show of hands two-thirds majority vote. No further discussion. Moderator called for paper ballot; no objections. Results from paper ballot: Yes – 147, No – 322. Article 5 defeated by paper ballot.

Article 6 - Shall the voters of the Town School District approve the sum of \$3,637,061 necessary for the support of its school for the year beginning July 1, 2013? Moderator read the Article; moved and seconded. Ted Domey stated that in reviewing Articles 6, 7 and 8, it would appear the budget isn't set and would like to know how to postpone the vote on Articles 6 through 9 until May 18, 2013, or until it can be determined whether a deficit or surplus exists. Rob Billings responded that Article 7 would allow the Board to transfer any 2013 fund balance to a reserve fund for a specific purpose at the end of the current fiscal year, although the amount is currently unknown, it does not affect the 2014 proposed budget; Article 8 is a provision within Article 6 to borrow money to retire the 2012 deficit per statute and to repay it over a three year period. Ted asked if the Board was attempting to reserve an unknown amount of money while retiring a deficit? Rob responded that it could be stated that way. Ted moved to postpone the vote of Article 6 through 8 until May 18, 2013 at 10:00 am ; seconded. Leonard Spencer stated these Articles are different issues with no advantage in postponing the vote, as budgets are always a moving target. Brigitte asked whether the paid bus bond funds were used to reduce the deficit? Rob responded that the Board found the current system more economical and chose a three year bond to pay off the deficit. Naill McCallum asked what the deadline was for the teacher's contract? Point of Order from Caleb Pitkin – There is a motion on the floor to suspend this Article and the discussion is not relevant; Naill responded that the contract deadline is directly relevant to the postponing of the budget. The Moderator ruled that the information would be beneficial to the discussion. Nancy Thomas responded that there is no deadline, but negotiations are currently underway. No further discussion. The Moderator read the motion to suspend Articles 6, 7, and 8 until May 18, 2013 at 10:00am. Moderator called for a show of hands; motion defeated. Moderator read the Article. Dale Newton stated that the financial burden of yearly increases in education taxes isn't sustainable. Karen Williams-Fox stated that the Vermont State property tax adjustment is in place for people who meet those financial limitations. Ken Gokey stated that he cannot afford the additional education taxes. Melissa Yu stated that despite the increase of the price of all commodities these past few years the school has been at a level budget; it is not the school per se that is increasing the tax rated, but how the equalized education tax rate is calculated. No further discussion. Meeting called for paper ballot; required seven people to stand. Results from paper ballot: Yes – 161 , No – 59. Article 6 adopted by paper ballot.

Article 7 – Shall the voters of the Town School District authorize transfer of any surplus audited fund balance as of June 30, 2013 to the Reserve Fund? Moderator read the Article; moved by Paul Yamamoto and seconded by Richard Hourihan. No discussion. Moderator stated the question. Article 7 adopted by voice vote.

Article 8 – Shall the voters of the Town School District authorize the Cabot Board to borrow an amount not to exceed ninety thousand dollars (\$90,000) for the purpose of retiring the accumulated deficit of the general fund? Moderator read the Article; moved by Paul Yamamoto and seconded by Richard Hourihan. No discussion. Moderator stated the question. Article 8 adopted by voice vote.

Article 9 - Shall the voters of the Town School District authorize the Cabot School Board to borrow money to pay its lawful debts and expenses for the fiscal year which ends June 30, 2014 in an amount not to exceed 90% of the anticipated collection of taxes and receipts of other funds to be used for those purposes? Moderator read the Article; moved by Paul Yamamoto and seconded by Richard Hourihan. No discussion. Moderator stated the question. Article 9 adopted by voice vote.

Article 10 – Shall the voters of the Town School District approve changing the start time of the Cabot School District meeting from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm beginning March 3, 2014? Moderator read the Article; moved by Paul Yamamoto and seconded by Richard Hourihan. No discussion. Moderator stated the question. Article 10 adopted by voice vote.

Article 11 - To transact any other business that may legally come before this meeting. Moderator read the Article; moved by Paul Yamamoto and seconded by Richard Hourihan. Jeanne Johnson suggested that future issues of import should be by Australian Ballot. Chris Tormey responded that the history of procedure at School Meetings dictates which method is used. Brigitte Codling moved to adopt an advisory Resolution for the voters of Cabot to authorize the School Board to

waive the regional school choice limits previously set for the 2013-2014 school year per Vermont State Statute, in turn allowing all Cabot High School students the opportunity to transfer to another public high school if they so wish by the regional school choice program; Amber Bothfeld seconded. Brigitte stated that her child had applied for regional school choice for two years and has not been accepted and this Resolution would be beneficial to those who want to leave. Bonnie Dannenberg asked if there is any validity to the rumor that the tax rates in other towns would go even higher if this is adopted? Leonard Spencer responded that he had read that the tax rate had risen 18-percent. Mark Codling stated that by allowing regional school choice students would enroll to take advantage of that program, which would lower our taxes. Unknown voter asked for more information about the school choice statute? Chris Tormey responded the Board is in favor of the required State limits and not raising the limits, in an effort to balance meeting the needs of those who seek alternative school choice and keeping a critical mass of students in Cabot. Joel Schumacher stated that the Christ Covenant Church congregation would not allow students to attend based on the adoption of school choice. Melissa Yu doesn't believe that sending children to other school is the best solution, and perhaps we can meet their needs at Cabot. Karen Alexander stated that a majority voted earlier to not close the school and choice is offered already and request that this Resolution not be supported at this time. Karen Meuller-Harder asked if priority is given to those not accepted in the school choice program in a previous year? Nancy Thomas responded that yes, preference is given the following year to those not selected. Jack Daniels stated that we should honor the sentiment of voters this year and put it on the agenda for next year. Ruth Goodrich suggested that we now put our energy toward pulling the community together. Jenny Gilbert spoke to scholarships given to Cabot students. Lars Torres asked whether headcount on a particular day drives enrollment numbers? Brigitte asked for the community to support her choice to send her children to another school by passing the Resolution. Jack Lague spoke in support of the Resolution. No further discussion. Moderator stated the question. The proposed advisory Resolution was defeated by a raise of hands- Yes – 29; No – 61.

Article 12 – To adjourn. Moderator read the Article; moved by Caleb Pitkin and seconded by Paul Yamamoto. No discussion. Motion passed unanimously and meeting was adjourned at 9:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Tara Rogerson, Town Clerk

Approved by:

Ed Smith, Moderator

Chris Tormey, School Board Chair