

Bellows Falls Village Corporation  
Annual Village Meeting

May 16 & 17, 2016

Present: Moderator Michael Harty; Village President Nancy McAuliffe; Trustees - Sanford Martin, Colin James, Stefan Golec, Evelyn Weeks; Village Clerk Kerry Bennett; Police/Fire Chief Ronald Lake; Water Department Chief Operator Raymond Perry; Wastewater Department Chief Operator Robert Wheeler; Municipal Manager Willis D. Stearns, II

Press: FACT8 TV Joey Powers, Alex Stradling, Alan Fowler, Brian Bashaw; Rutland Herald Susan Smallheer; Tory

Meeting was called to order at 7:06 p.m. by Moderator Michael Harty. Harty requested that cell phones be either turned off or put on vibrate. Harty also noted that anyone standing behind the back railing would not be recognized and should take a seat in the audience. Harty then read the warning as follows: *The legal voters of the Bellows Falls Village Corporation are hereby notified and warned to meet at the Bellows Falls Opera House in the Rockingham Town Hall located at 7 Square in said Village on Monday, May 16, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. to act upon matters which may be voted upon by acclamation and not otherwise to be voted upon by Australian ballot, and then adjourn to the Masonic Temple (61 Westminster Street) in said Village 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, May 17, 2016, to vote by Australian ballot on Article 1 and Article 2. (The polls will open at 9:00 a.m. and will close at 7:00 p.m.)*

ARTICLE 1: To elect Village officers, as required by law. (by Australian ballot)

ARTICLE 2: Shall general obligation bonds or other indebtedness of the Bellows Falls Village Corporation in an amount not to exceed One Million, Eight Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$1,800,000.00), subject to direct reduction on a dollar per dollar basis from available construction grants-in-aid, reserves, and other sources of funding be issued for the purpose of financing the Bellows Falls Village Corporation's share of making certain wastewater system improvements, viz: Wastewater Collection within the Wastewater Collection System of the Bellows Falls Wastewater Facility. (by Australian ballot).

ARTICLE 3: To receive and act upon the reports of the Village Officers for the past year. *Colin James made the motion to accept the reports of the Village Officers for the past year as printed. Motion was seconded by Sanford Martin.*

Douglas MacPhee noted that the delinquent water/wastewater list is significant at \$118,452.01 and asked what the most recent amount was. Municipal Manager Stearns stated that as of 5:00 today the amount was \$47,266.60.

*Harty called for a vote on the motion. Motion passed.*

ARTICLE 4: To see if the voters of the Bellows Falls Village Corporation will vote to authorize its Treasurer, with the approval of the Trustees, to borrow money from time to time in anticipation of tax collection or payment of money due the Village from the State of Vermont or the Federal Government. *Stefan Golec made the motion that the voters of the Bellows Falls Village Corporation authorize its Treasurer, with the approval of the Trustees, to borrow money from time to time in anticipation of tax collection or payment of money due the Village from the State of Vermont or the Federal Government. Motion was seconded by Nancy McAuliffe. Motion passed.*

ARTICLE 5: To see if the voters of the Bellows Falls Village Corporation will raise and appropriate money to pay the indebtedness of the Village and pay all other general and regular expenses of the Village beginning July 1, 2016, through June 30, 2017 in the amount of One Million Eight Hundred Ninety Two Thousand Two Hundred Dollars (\$1,892,200.00) in expenditures, of which One Million Seven Hundred Eighty Five Thousand Eight Hundred Fifty Dollars (\$1,785,850.00) will be raised by taxes. *Nancy McAuliffe made the motion that the voters of the Bellows Falls Village Corporation will raise and appropriate money to pay the indebtedness of the Village and pay all other general and regular expenses of the Village beginning July 1, 2016, through June 30, 2017 in the amount of One Million Eight Hundred Ninety Two Thousand Two Hundred Dollars (\$1,892,200.00) in expenditures, of which One Million Seven Hundred Eighty Five Thousand Eight Hundred Fifty Dollars (\$1,785,850.00) will be raised by taxes. Motion was seconded by Sanford Martin.*

McAuliffe stated that the Trustees have been working on the budget since December 2015 and it has been an agenda item at every meeting through March and had reduced the tax rate by 3¢. McAuliffe noted that the Board also decided to use some of the fund balance to further reduce taxes in the Village from 3¢ to a 5¢ reduction.

James Mitchell made an amendment to the motion that the budget be reduced to One Million Four Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$1,400,000.00). There was no second to the motion to amend.

Harty also noted that Mitchell requested that the budget be voted by paper ballot. Harty stated that this needs at least 6 other voters and asked for those who agree to raise their hand. There were not 6 other voters and this failed.

Robin Storey noted that she did not see anything in the budget for code enforcement. Stearns directed her to page 24 in the Village Report under ordinance enforcement and the amount was \$2,000.00. Storey asked if there was a reserve fund for code enforcement. Stearns stated that there was not. Stearns explained that should the Trustees vote to take action and funds in this line item were depleted the fund balance could be used. *Robin Storey made the motion to amend the original motion to increase the budget by \$30,000.00 and suggest that this be used for code enforcement. Motion was seconded by Andrew Smith.*

Brad Weeks asked if this line item was only for the unsafe building ordinance or any ordinance. Stearns stated that it would be for any ordinance enforcement.

Andrew Smith spoke in support of Storey's amendment noting that there are a lot of hazardous buildings in the Village.

James McAuliffe asked if the amount budgeted for ordinance enforcement would prohibit action by the Board. Stearns stated that it would not and that the Board could vote to use the fund balance if needed. McAuliffe noted that he believed the fund balance was now around \$200,000.00 and the Board could use this and an increase in the budget was not necessary.

Paul Reis stated that he felt that the Village needed investors with major money. Reis also stated that he felt the houses were assessed too high.

Myles Mickle noted that the Board has apparently not voted to take action and asked the Board to explain. McAuliffe stated that there is a process that has to be followed and the Board could not just take down buildings.

Peter Stolley asked if the budget was increased by \$30,000.00 and the Board was doing all they could then the increase would not matter. Stearns stated that this is correct.

Catherine Bergmann asked what buildings were being pursued. Stearns stated that there was no action being taken presently but some communication has occurred with mortgage companies.

Deborah Wright stated that she agreed with James McAuliffe and that a list of unsafe buildings was discussed at every meeting.

Andrew Smith noted that the ordinance was not just to tear down but to also rehab. Smith also noted that this Board has not taken any action.

Brian Storey asked what the correct venue would be to change the ordinance. Stearns stated that the Board could take action to change the ordinance to allow pursuit of addressing unsafe buildings.

Robin Storey noted that there are differences between a Town of Rockingham health order and the Bellows Falls Village Unsafe Building ordinance and a lot of money has to be spent before a building can be torn down.

*Harty called for a vote on the amendment to the main motion to increase the budget by \$30,000.00. Motion failed.*

*There being no further discussion, Harty called for a vote on the main motion. Motion passed unanimously.*

ARTICLE 6: To transact any other business deemed proper when not involving the expenditure of Village funds or any other business acted upon in the preceding articles.

Trustee Colin James presented certificates of appreciation to Village President Nancy McAuliffe and Trustee Sanford Martin. McAuliffe thanked the voters for electing her for 2 terms. Martin also thanked the voters stating that it had been a great experience. Martin also thanked his wife for her patience and understanding over the past 2 years.

Catherine Bergmann noted that people were under the impression that the merger vote was null and void due to a violation with the public hearing dates and wanted to remind everyone that this is not necessarily true and they should still vote on the merger question.

Doug MacPhee noted that there are a lot of lawns in the Village, including the Fairpoint lawn on Henry Street, that are extremely long and that this ordinance should be enforced.

Paul Reis stated that he felt the Board should have a 10 to 15 year plan to raise the grand list and also asked if there was a plan to hire a development director. Martin stated that the development director was a town function and this should be addressed to the Rockingham Selectboard.

Harty thanked Marty Gallagher and Mike Smith for running the microphones and FACT8 for covering the meeting.

*Colin James made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:53 p.m. Motion was seconded by Sanford Martin. Motion passed.*

Results of May 17, 2016 voting:

Moderator:	<b>Michael Harty</b>	<b>342</b>
	Write-ins	3
	Overvotes	0
	Undervotes	38
Clerk:	<b>Kerry Bennett</b>	<b>325</b>
	Write-ins	7
	Overvotes	0
	Undervotes	51
President	<b>Myles Mickle</b>	<b>212</b>
	Deborah Wright	147
	Write-ins	2
	Overvotes	0
	Undervotes	22

Trustee:	<b>Steven Adams</b>	<b>270</b>
	<b>Stefan Golec</b>	<b>240</b>
	Write-ins	13
	Overvotes	0
	Undervotes	243
Treasurer:	<b>Donna Harty</b>	<b>346</b>
	Write-ins	2
	Overvotes	0
	Undervotes	35
Auditor:	<b>Patricia Fowler</b>	<b>339</b>
	Write-ins	26
	Overvotes	0
	Undervotes	784

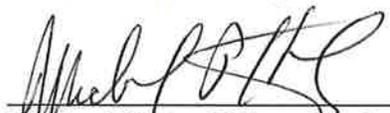
**ARTICLE 2:** Shall general obligation bonds or other indebtedness of the Bellows Falls Village Corporation in an amount not to exceed One Million, Eight Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$1,800,000.00), subject to direct reduction on a dollar per dollar basis from available construction grants-in-aid, reserves, and other sources of funding be issued for the purpose of financing the Bellows Falls Village Corporation’s share of making certain wastewater system improvements, viz: Wastewater Collection within the Wastewater Collection System of the Bellows Falls Wastewater Facility. (By Australian ballot)

<b>Yes</b>	<b>263</b>
No	103

**ARTICLE 1 SPECIAL MEETING:** Shall the voters of the Bellows Falls Village Corporation vote to approve the merger of the Town of Rockingham with the Bellows Falls Village Corporation as proposed in the Plan of Merger approved by the Board of Trustees on February 9, 2016. Said Plan of Merger requires the affirmative vote of both the voters of the Town of Rockingham and the Bellows Falls Village Corporation pursuant to 24 V.S.A. Chapter 49, Section 1485 (b): MERGER OF MUNICIPALITIES, Vote of Approval.

Yes	172
No	202

Attest:   
 Kerry Bennett, Village Clerk

Attest:   
 Michael Harty, Village Moderator