BARRE TOWN SELECTBOARD AGENDA
October 28, 2014

P.I.L.O.T. Budget Process review 6:30 p.m.

1. Call to order 7:00 p.m.
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Announce changes to agenda.
5. Announcements
6. Receive guests (for non-agenda items).
7. Discussion about state education tax rate.
8. Consider adopting Resolution #7-14 calling for a two year freeze on the state education tax rate.
9. Consider authorizing a state Ecosystem (stormwater) Restoration program grant application.
10. Public hearing about the Central Vermont Public Safety Authority ballot question.
11. Consider closing the Town Offices on Friday, December 26, 2014.
12. Consider giving authority to close a section of Sterling Hill Road for the winter.
13. Consider approving weekly accounts payable warrants.
14. Miscellaneous, including permits and licenses.
15. “Round the table”
16. Executive Session – (if needed).
17. Adjourn.

BARRE TOWN SELECTBOARD MINUTES
October 28, 2014

The duly warned meeting of the Barre Town Selectboard of October 28, 2014 was held at the Barre Town Municipal Building, Selectboard Room, Lower Websterville at 7:00 p.m.

The following members were in attendance: Jeff Blow, Robert LaClair, Tom White, Rolland Tessier, and W. John “Jack” Mitchell.


CALL TO ORDER - The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Those present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

On a motion by Tessier, seconded by White, the Selectboard voted unanimously to amend the agenda as follows:

1. Item #9 will be heard after Item #12.

MINUTES

On a motion by LaClair, seconded by White, the Selectboard voted unanimously to approve the Selectboard Meeting Minutes of October 21, 2014.
Selectboard Minutes of October 28, 2014 continued:

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Halloween is Friday the 31st, please drive extra careful and watch for children and pedestrians.
- Beginning Saturday, November 1st the Holden Road lawn waste site will be open on Wednesdays 3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.; Thursday, 9:00 a.m. - Noon; and Saturday, 8:00 a.m. - Noon. The site will be closed beginning November 9th until next spring.
- The General Election and Special Town Meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 4th. Early ballots are now available. The deadline to vote early is Monday, November 3, 2014 at 4:30 p.m.
- The winter on street parking ban starts on November 1st, 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. regardless of the weather.
- November is National Adoption Month . . a time to learn more about children in our community who need families or to learn more about adoption in general. For additional information contact Chrissie Pollard at the Department of Children and Family Services at 802-479-4260.

GUESTS - None

DISCUSS STATE EDUCATION TAX RATE

Background: A couple weeks ago the Selectboard had a request to adopt a Resolution asking that the State Education Tax Rates be frozen for 3 years. The Board asked if the Chairs of the two school boards would come to a meeting to explain the potential ramifications of the resolution.

School Board Chairs Brenda Buzzell (Elementary School), Norma Malone (SUHS) and Superintendent John Bacon were present. A poster outlining the 12 steps to calculate the state education tax rate was very useful in pointing out the various pieces of information needed. The freezing of the Homestead tax rate could result in the State running a deficit in the education fund. However, probably the most important factor in the tax rate equation is the budget. Unfortunately many school districts are unable to keep annual budget increases at reasonable levels for a variety of reasons which include unfunded mandates. Other factors impacting a local tax rate are grant funding, special education funding, the per pupil rate, and our Equalized Education Grand List CLA. The only factor in the education tax rate the School has control over is the budget (expenses). Other topics briefly addressed were the average classroom size in Vermont (2 -9 students), 2/3 of property tax owners received a state education tax credit which means the other 1/3 get to pay the remaining balance, teacher health care costs, school consolidation, and the inequity for those school districts doing their due diligence to "tighten their belts."

Signing the Resolution would in-fact send a message to the State letting them know they need to resolve the education property tax burden for property owners.

CENTRAL VERMONT PUBLIC SAFETY AUTHORITY - PUBLIC HEARING

Background: This is the final hearing before the Special Town Election on November 4, 2014 regarding the ballot question for joining the Central Vermont Public Safety Authority.

On a motion by LaClair, seconded by Tessier, the Selectboard voted unanimously to open the public hearing at 7:54 p.m.
Selectboard Minutes of October 28, 2014 continued:

Chair Blow informed those present that a finalized Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) had been signed by Barre City and Montpelier. Changes made to this document since our last public hearing include addressing the issue of a municipality rejecting the tentative MOU (town would not pay any expenses until next version of MOU is approved) and that if the vote is affirmative Barre Town would be a member of the CVPSA and would have to pay 16.1% of the administrative expenses until such time as a permanent MOU is written and approved by the Selectboard. Attorney Monte confirmed these changes.

Jon Valsangiacomo stated he supports joining the CVPSA. He currently sees our Public Safety Departments working together all the time, we constantly cross municipal boundaries regularly to provide service(s) to residents and it wastes precious time, and eventually we will have to come together. This has been an on-going discussion for many years and now is the time to commit.

Chris Violette is opposed to joining the CVPSA. He noted the Town does not know what exactly we would be joining, the MOU keeps changing (it feels as though it is to appease Barre Town just so we will join), this MOU is only one of many which the Selectboard will approve NOT the voters, the Selectboard will also decide what departments would be merged into the CVPSA - NOT the voters, and Barre Town voters are being asked to take a leap of faith with too many unknowns (type of service, cost, and how will it work).

Bertil Agell supports joining the CVPSA. He stated his definition of local means Barre Town, Barre City, Montpelier, and Berlin. This area is party of everyday life for us. He pointed to other agencies which have merged to provide services for us. These Board members understand they represent all communities. Public Safety services are evolving and by joining forces we will be better equipped to deal with things like Ebola and school violence. Do not vote no because of fear as it is the enemy of change.

Gordon Booth is opposed to joining the CVPSA. He has lived in Barre Town for 70 years. Good citizens have worked hard putting their heart and soul into making Barre Town services what they are today, the best in Vermont. We have always looked ahead and challenged the future. Our services can grow and we will continue to help our neighbors like Williamstown, Orange, etc. Why do we want to join something with which we have so little control, especially on the expense side? For now he is voting no. Perhaps in 5 years the Town could look at the project again and there will be more answers.

Linda Leu spoke to Jeff Blows’ article “Fact versus Fear.” She contacted Berlin to find out for herself what the chances are for losing the Berlin ambulance service. Yes that is always a possibility, but the CVPSA will not be active enough to bid in June 2016. Berlin stated they were very happy with Barre Town EMS service and that is why they opted to stay even though Barre Town was not the low bidder for services. Her research show that regionalization works well for urban areas such as Barre City and Montpelier but tends to fail in rural areas like Barre Town. We currently have fully functional mutual aid right down to loaning equipment and it is quite effective. Her big concern is that the resources of CVPSA will be pulled to where they are needed instead of being in Town. She wants to be the priority when she needs the services.

Jay Perkins (prior Selectboard member) has been very involved with the CVPSA study and votes. His concern is to ensure his family is safe and can afford to live in this community. As for the MOU, why is Barre Town paying 16.1% when the study indicates that adding Barre City, Montpelier, and Barre Town’s expenses our portion of the total is 15.2%. The 16.1%, if agreed to, would be above what we are currently paying. However, he agrees the concept is good but knows there will be an eventual cost shift to Barre Town. He is voting no.
Selectboard Minutes of October 28, 2014 continued:

Lori and Marc Bernier stated the information sheet from the Central Vermont Chamber of Commerce should have been available at the first public hearing. Receiving it tonight does not allow individuals to do their homework. Ms. Bernier feels that the changes made to the MOU are meant to entice voters to say yes at the ballot box.

Carl Rogers, Town Manager read a prepared statement. He noted that he believes in intergovernmental cooperation when it was beneficial to all parties. The CVPSA Charter and MOU do not lend itself to this feeling. Rogers noted the various ways communities are working together without being regionalized. Our services are “right sized and fit the town. We are well equipped, staffed, and run a very cost-effective public safety service operation.” He is not opposed to regionalization in general but does not support Barre Town joining the CVPSA.

On a motion by Mitchell, seconded by LaClair, the Selectboard voted unanimously to close the public hearing at 9:07 p.m.

RESOLUTION #7-14 - TWO YEAR FREEZE ON STATE EDUCATION TAX RATE

Background: The Selectboard heard earlier from the School Board Chairs and Superintendent regarding the impact of a two year freeze on the state education tax rate.

On a motion by Mitchell, seconded by White, the Selectboard voted to adopt Resolution #7-14 To Request a Two year Freeze on the State Education Tax Rate. Tessier voted no.

CLOSE TOWN OFFICES ON DECEMBER 26, 2014

Background: Christmas is on a Thursday this year. The 5 clerical union members are asking the Selectboard to close the Town Offices on Friday, December 26th. They will take a vacation or floater holiday. The administrative assistant (not part of the union) and Department Heads are also in agreement.

On a motion by White, seconded by Tessier, the Selectboard voted to approve the Clerical Union members request to close the Municipal Offices on Friday, December 26, 2014 with staff taking the date as a vacation or floater holiday. Mitchell voted no.

During discussion Mitchell stated he would like to give the staff the day.

CLOSING SECTION OF STERLING HILL ROAD FOR THE WINTER

Background: Any time a road is closed Selectboard authorization is required. Practice has been (since the 1990’s) that the gravel section of Sterling Hill Road close in November and remain closed until weather and road conditions were ready for it to be re-opened in April. In prior years a date certain for this road closure was set. Lately, however, it has been to keep it open the road open for as long as possible and let the DPW Superintendent close this section road when the first snow or ice storm makes it unsafe for travel. The Selectboard is being asked to decide how to proceed with the closure.

On a motion by Tessier, seconded by Mitchell, the Selectboard voted unanimously to authorize the DPW Superintendent to close the gravel section of Sterling Hill Road on November 14, 2014 at 8:00 a.m., or sooner if the weather requires.

STATE ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION PROGRAM GRANT APPLICATION.

Background: The Manager received a letter from Andres Torizzo regarding the area at the end of Pouliot Avenue which might be a good location for a new stormwater management design. Pouliot Avenue is in Barre City but the town line is not far away from the end of the street. The brook in that area is in Barre Town. The landowner is
Selectboard Minutes of October 28, 2014 continued:
“tentatively interested” in having the Friends of the Winooski go forward with a grant application which is due November 10, 2014.

The grant program is called Ecosystem Restoration Program. Mr. Torizzo wrote the grant that would fund the design and possibly implementation. The role of the Town is unclear. Should this stormwater system be constructed it is possible the Town would be responsible for maintaining the stormwater system. The request is for a letter of support to accompany the grant application.

Mitchell stated this area has always had drainage issues. It was not that long ago the Town did culvert/drainage work near the Dindo house. Board discussion was that more information is needed.

A motion was made by Mitchell, seconded by Tessier, to send a letter of support for the Ecosystem Restoration Program grant application for the area at the end of Pouliot Avenue. The motion failed with 4 voting no and Mitchell voting yes.

WEEKLY ACCOUNTS PAYABLE WARRANT

On a motion by LaClair, seconded by Tessier, the Selectboard voted unanimously to approve the accounts payable warrants for October 28, 2014.

MISCELLANEOUS

The Town Clerk reminded residents that on voting day, November 4th school is in session. This means the parking lot will be crowded. For individuals who have a hard time walking a great distance valet parking is available. Contact the Town Clerk’s office for more information (802-479-9391). Selectboard member Tessier encouraged everyone to get out and vote!

‘ROUND THE TABLE

Mitchell and White attended the VERI meeting regarding Gunner Brook. White stated it was a good meeting. This will be a joint municipality venture, starting in Plainfield and working its way through the Town and into the City. The final report should be available in March 2015.

White wished his little brother a Happy Birthday!

Blow noted the Town Reports for the year ending June 2013 (yes this is the correct date) will be available at the Municipal Building in a couple of days.

EXECUTIVE SESSION - None

ADJOURN

On a motion by White, seconded by Mitchell, the Selectboard voted unanimously to adjourn at 9:35 p.m.

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Donna J. Kelty, Town Clerk-Treasurer

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Selectboard Chair

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Barre Town Selectboard