

**Bethel Town Meeting Committee  
Minutes of February 24, 2015 Meeting**

Present: Jean Burnham, Neil Brooks, Davis Dimock, Lucien Hinkle, Rick Benson, Victoria Weber, Ola O'Dell, Rebecca Stone.

Neil brought a copy of *The Hornet*, the school newsletter, which features a front page story titled "Neil Brooks Brings Fresh Take to Town Meeting Panel".

Rick Benson matched Davis' \$25 donation for the survey drawing. Neil will purchase two \$25 gift certificates and this eliminates the concern that local businesses are dunned for donations far too often.

Rick called the meeting to order at 3:10.  
We approved the minutes of the February 9<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Our preparations for town meeting seem to be complete. Some posters are up; Rick's letter to the editor appeared in the February 19<sup>th</sup> Herald of Randolph. Victoria has written four Bethel Front Porch Forum 'Town Meeting Notes' and will do a final one on childcare and the survey. Jean will make copies of the Survey and the Robert's Rules handouts.

#### Survey

The Selectboard gave us the go-ahead last night. Davis volunteered to help Lisa tabulate the results of the paper copies. Since the Surveys can be filled out until March 17<sup>th</sup> and then we must tabulate the paper ones and combine the results of the two formats, we don't feel we can realistically have the results for the Select Board until their April 13<sup>th</sup> meeting.

We are interested in hearing from our younger citizens too, so Neil will distribute paper copies to the high school students, as well as gather the completed surveys.

Rebecca pointed out that those who do not attend town meeting are the ones we really want to hear from.

[Post meeting: Given the desire to hear from non-attendees, Victoria will see if Jean can have some extra paper copies after town meeting for people to pick up until the March 17 deadline. Perhaps she can also mail copies to the survey on request to individuals who may not be able to easily pick one up. Victoria can write a brief letter to the editor encouraging people to fill in the surveys until March 17<sup>th</sup>.]

We discussed last night's Select Board meeting which was attended by 4 members of our committee plus about 8 other citizens asking questions about the town report. Chairman Hall intends to introduce several of the items, and the other board members and Keith Arlund will each speak as well. They were forthcoming about the reasoning behind the budget they have produced and one learned from hearing the responses to other attendees' questions.

## Future Goals and Plans

We had a general discussion about our goals and plans for the coming year. The Select board seemed to think we could be useful to expand discussions about the budget items over the year. Lucien felt we could talk about the budget before the new Town Report comes out by using the current year's budget. Victoria suggested posting drafts of the budget as it is being created on the Town website.

We hope to work on the Bethel Operator's Manual after town meeting, which will contain information about the town, and how people can become involved on committees and offices, getting items onto the town meeting warning, and general how-Bethel-works information for new citizens as well as people who have lived here for some time.

We have a goal of facilitating better communication between the school board and the select board, between the school and town budgets, and encouraging students to become knowledgeable about and to take part in civic activities.

We'd like to make the pre-town meeting question session that the Select board held last night an annual tradition that people would come to expect and to take part in. The school's pre-meeting on Feb. 16<sup>th</sup> was preceded by a pot luck supper and included a presentation on some new offerings at the school. It was very well attended.

Ola would like to organize transportation to town meeting.

As much as we are about making town meeting more 'efficient and engaging', we also want to foster general civic engagement.

Davis suggested we could serve as a sounding board for the Select board by reacting to their budget request as they develop it. He suggested improving the town report further by consolidating the entire budget down into one page for people to look at over the year. Lucien said that page 35 this year is a condensed summary of long term indebtedness, but needs to be labeled as the Capital Plan.

We will also use the results of the survey to determine how we can best support town meeting and civic engagement in Bethel in the future.

Meeting adjourned at 4:10

Minutes by Victoria Weber, Secretary, February 26, 2015