

## **Bethel Town Meeting Committee Minutes of April 6, 2015 Meeting**

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

The Minutes of the February 24<sup>th</sup> meeting were approved.

Rick Benson brought up the Open Meetings Law which allows the use of email to set up meetings and other organizational activities, but precludes a quorum of a committee from discussing substantive issues via email, as that would be construed as a meeting. Since there are 9 members of this committee, a quorum is 5.

We asked a non-committee member to draw slips for the drawing for the Town Meeting Survey. Joann Marshall won a \$25 gift certificate to the Bethel Village Sandwich Shop, and Nicholas Scott won a \$25 certificate to Cockadoodle Pizza. The money to fund the certificates was donated by committee members and no town funds were involved.

### **Preliminary Town Meeting Survey Results**

Rebecca, Lisa and Davis were thanked for their parts in transcribing and analyzing the survey results and comments. Rebecca said there were some firm conclusions that we can make from the results we have and other aspects are open to interpretation. 131 surveys were filled out, of which 9 were electronic, and the rest in paper. Only 17 people characterized themselves as 'infrequent attendees' at town Meeting. Our main conclusion is that we have not reached enough infrequent attendees so we cannot really draw conclusions about them.

The 8 main conclusions we can draw at this time are:

- 1- We did not reach many non-regular-attendees.
- 2- We reached a disproportionately older audience than census figures show for Bethel.
- 3- New residents are relatively infrequent attendees at town meeting.
- 4- Citizens who attend do so most years.
- 5- The main reasons people attend are: to vote and have a voice in town decisions, to learn about important town issues, and because it is their civic duty.
- 6- The main reasons people do not attend are: that they don't have time, they can't get out of work, and other.
- 7- There is no strong preference on meeting times, although people would like to have the town and school meetings 'together', possibly with a meal between them.
- 8- The favored Town Topics are: School spending/budget & school taxes; Town spending/budget and property taxes; school system, educational quality and offerings, and Community visioning & planning for future.

We want to try to reach more people who we have not heard from and who do not attend town meeting. Then we will be able to begin to identify solutions and ways of informing people and increasing attendance at, and participation in, town meeting.

Lucien made a motion which passed to ask the select board to post the agendas and minutes of their meetings on the Town Facebook page and on Front Porch Forum, as well as on the town web site. Overall, having more clear information was a theme repeated in the survey and comments. This could be in the town report, the 'Bethel Operator's Manual', and/or other sources.

We will share with the Selectboard the charts and graphs that Rebecca generated with the survey results that we have, as well as the comments that were added to a number of the questions. Rick and Lucien volunteered to attend the April 13<sup>th</sup> Selectboard meeting to answer any questions the board may have at this time.

Our next task is to further analyze the survey results and identify steps that can be taken to make Town Meeting more accessible to all Bethel citizens.

Meeting adjourned at 4:55pm.

Next meeting: Monday April 27<sup>th</sup> at 3:30pm.

Minutes by Victoria Weber, Secretary, April 8, 2015.ccessible