

**TOWN MEETING MINUTES
PERU, VT
MARCH 3, 2020**

Peru's Moderator, Gary Ameden, called the meeting to order at 10:00am. Gary welcomed everyone to the 2020 Peru Town Meeting. Gary asked all those who are new to the community or to Town Meeting to stand and introduce themselves. The following guests joined us this year: Laurie Cabis, The Collaborative. Claire Stetson and Kyle Isherwood. The Mountain Campus Spring 2020 students. Andy Dahlstrom, Head of Mountain Campus. Claudia Harris. Gary asked all to stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

Warning: As read by Gary - The legal voters of Peru are hereby warned and notified to meet at the Peru Town Center on Tuesday March 3, 2020 at the hour of 10:00am to act on the following articles:

ARTICLE 1: To hear and act on the reports of the Town Officers. Gary asked if there was any discussion or comments. Ivanna Reed moved. Seconded by Gary Sharon. Discussion – Jay Ouellette corrected the Clerk's Report – We did have one birth in 2019. Iyla Marie Ouellette was born on June 25, 2019. Barbara Pierce thanked everyone who writes the report and we are lucky to have this type of government. Barbara suggested more communication between residents and Selectboard with the goal of positive growth and visions for our community. Jon Mowry reminded the community that the Selectboard meets every other week to conduct town business and invited everyone to attend to help share community needs and ideas as well as to hear what the Selectboard's priorities are.

Discussion regarding the Constable's Report ensued with clarification from community members, Selectboard and Stewart Beattie. Bob Stelz questioned what security measures do exist that add to the safety of the town. Todd referenced his conversation with State Police and their increased presence in the area over the past year.

Sally Ogden thanked David Utiger for his wonderful artwork.

Gary asked if those assembled were ready to accept reports of various officers. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

ARTICLE 2: To elect Town Officers as the law directs.

Moderator: Todd Williams, Selectboard Chair, asked for nominations for Town Moderator. Alex Sheets nominated Gary Ameden and Gary Sharon seconded the motion. Hearing no other nominations Gary asked if all are in favor. Motion passed by voice vote.

- Moderator - 1 year Gary Ameden

Town Clerk: Jon Mowry nominated Jennie Freeman and Jay Ouellette seconded the motion. Hearing no other nominations Proposition B was moved by Tracy Black and seconded by Chuck Black. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

- Town Clerk - 1 year Jennie Freeman

Treasurer: Jon Mowry nominated Donna Williams and Karen Utiger seconded the motion. Hearing no other nominations Proposition B was moved by Chuck Black and seconded by Jay Ouellette. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

- Town Treasurer - 1 year Donna Williams

Selectboard: Jay Ouellette nominated Todd Williams and Jon Mowry seconded. Hearing no other nominations Proposition B was moved by Chuck Black and seconded by Gary Sharon. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

- Selectboard - 3 year Todd Williams

Lister: Tracy Black nominated Jack Pennypacker and Todd Williams seconded. Hearing no other nominations Proposition B was moved by Jay Ouellette and seconded by Chuck Black. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

- Lister - 3 year Jack Pennypacker

Auditor: Karen Utiger nominated Alex Sheets and Tracy Black seconded the motion. Hearing no other nominations Proposition B was moved by Todd Williams and seconded by Jay Ouellette. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

- Auditor - 3 year Alex Sheets

Cemetery Commission: Todd Williams nominated Jeremy Lapan and Tracy Black seconded the motion. Hearing no other nominations Proposition B was moved by Jay Ouellette and seconded by Alex Sheets. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote. Gary asked for additional nominations. Alex Sheets nominated Tim Britton and Jay Ouellette seconded the motion. Hearing no other nominations Proposition B was moved. Motion passed.

- Cemetery Commission 5 years Jeremy Lapan
Tim Britton

First Constable: Iwana Reed nominated Stuart and Gary Sharon seconded the motion. Stuart declined the nomination. Jon Mowry nominated Mike Gayda and Todd Williams seconded the motion. Hearing no other nominations Proposition B was moved by Gary Sharon and seconded by Jay Ouellette. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

- First Constable - 1 year Mike Gayda

Second Constable: Chuck nominated Chris Felion and Alex Sheets seconded the motion. Hearing no other nominations Proposition B was moved by Todd Williams and Jay Ouellette. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

- Second Constable - 1 year Chris Felion

Delinquent Tax Collector: Karen Utiger nominated Tracy Black and Todd Williams seconded the motion. Hearing no other nominations Proposition B was moved by Jay Ouellette and seconded by Gary Sharon. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

- Delinquent Tax Collector - 1 year Tracy Black

Grand Juror: Tracy Black nominated Hope Richardson. Hope declined. Susan Bradford nominated Iwana Reed and Alex Sheets seconded the motion. Hearing no other nominations Proposition B was moved by Alex Sheets and seconded by Jay Ouellette. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

- Grand Juror - 1 year Iwana Reed

Town Agent: Donna Williams nominated Tracy Black and Sally Ogden seconded the motion. Hearing no other nominations Proposition B was moved by Jay Ouellette and seconded by Jon Mowry. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

- Town Agent - 1 year Tracy Black

Trustee of Public Funds: Tracy Black nominated Mike Gayda and Alex Sheets seconded the motion. Hearing no other nominations Proposition B was moved by Jay Ouellette and seconded by Gary Sharon. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

- Trustee of Public Funds - 1 year Mike Gayda

ARTICLE 3: a) To see if the town will vote to defray the expenses of the town for the fiscal year of July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021, as set forth in the budgets submitted in the 2019 Town Report, subject to such modifications as this meeting may vote.

Alex Sheets made a motion to move the article and Jay Ouellette seconded. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

Bob Stelz inquired as to the additional funds collected from delinquent taxes and why they do not all go to the town. The only compensation for the delinquent tax collector in Peru is through the penalty percentage. There is no other compensation by the town. The town does receive the interest collected which is 1% per month. Jay Ouellette questioned the reasons why people do not pay their taxes. The response was that people may not be able to do so, or simply do not do so. No other questions or comments on the budget.

b) To authorize the selectmen to set the rate on the 2020 Grand List to meet the budgets voted. Alex Sheets made a motion to move the article and Jay Ouellette seconded. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

c) To establish the date of payment of such taxes. Previous years dates July 1-September 30. Alex Sheets made a motion to move the article and Jay Ouellette seconded. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

ARTICLE 4: To see if the Town will vote to accept the provisions made by law for payment of taxes to the Town Treasurer. Iwanna Reed made a motion to move the article and Gary Sharon seconded. All in favor; motion passed by voice vote.

ARTICLE 5: Shall the voters vote a sum of money to the following organizations which serve the community

Bennington County Child Advocacy Ctr.(petition)	\$ 500.00
Project Against Violent Encounters	\$ 150.00
Mountain Valley Medical Center	\$ 3,000.00
Londonderry Volunteer Rescue Squad	\$ 4,000.00
Visiting Nurse Assn. of VT/NH	\$ 2,700.00
Bennington County Conservation District	\$ 300.00
BROC	\$ 200.00
VT Center for Independent Living	\$ 140.00
SW Vermont Council on Aging	\$ 200.00
Center for Restorative Justice	\$ 300.00
Neighborhood Connections	\$ 1,000.00
Green Up Vermont	\$ 50.00
The Collaborative	\$ 750.00
Flood Brook Athletic Association	\$ 1,000.00
Peru Cemetery Commission	\$ 4,500.00
Green Mtn. Club-Bromley lookout	\$ 1,000.00
Rural Fire Protection Task Force	\$ 100.00
Total	\$19,890.00

Jon Mowry made a motion to move the article and Iwana Reed seconded.
Gary asked if there were any comments or discussion. All in favor; motion passed with a voice vote.

ARTICLE 6: To see if the town will vote a veteran's exemption to include an amount up to \$30,000. The State of Vermont currently provides a maximum exemption of \$40,000 with the first \$10,000 provided by the state. The total exemption is deducted from the appraised value of the parcel.

Tracy Black made a motion to move Article 6 and Gary Sharon seconded.
All in favor; motion passed by a voice vote.

ARTICLE 7: Shall the Town of Peru enter into a communications union district (CUD) to be known as the Southern Vermont Communication Union District, under the provisions of 30 V.S.A. Ch. 82.

Alex explained that effectively towns come together to form the CUD and that allows those towns to seek federal grants for a feasibility study. The question being examined is whether we can create a municipal internet service provider giving us more influence over the infrastructure of our internet. Jay Ouellette questioned what impact this could have on property values in the future. Jon Mowry responded we are considering this as it seems that it should only have positive effects. People would not be obligated to use the service.

Alex Sheets made a motion to pass Article 7 and Tracy Black seconded. All in favor; motion passed with a voice vote.

Article 8: To transact any other business that may properly come before the meeting.
\$10,000 exemption for personal property tax. Jack Pennypacker explained the policy that has been in place for 10 years. The town needs to vote to continue the contract for this exemption for another 10 years, to the year 2030. Because this article was not warned, the moderator said the town may not vote on it at Town Meeting. Jay Ouellette made a motion to overrule the moderator. Juliette Britton seconded. Jack Pennypacker was asked to read the motion again and it was voted on. Tracy Black seconded the motion. All in favor to pass Article 8; motion passed with a voice vote.

Peru Recreational Park Committee – Hope Richardson shared that there is a committee consisting of Olivia Rukat, Karen Utiger, Gail Acosta and herself to help revitalize the park on North Rd. The committee has discussed leveling the fields, acquiring new a soccer goal, volleyball court, and 2 pickleball courts. This effort would serve all age groups of the community.

Iwana Reed thanked the folks who built the skating rink in town.

Tracy Black proposed that we develop a vision for a pavilion on the town green. Collaborate efforts and visions for this community space that has brought great enthusiasm and interest this winter. Juliette reminded us that there may be a survey from 5 years ago about what the town wanted for this space. Todd added that he couldn't agree more with what Tracy is saying. It will only help the more people that come together. Todd thanked Olivia, Hope, Gail and Karen who have started this movement, as well as the folks who started the skating rink effort.

Mountain Valley Health Center - Dr. Fox and Elsie Smith spoke to residents regarding the Health Center's services that continue to serve our mountain town communities regardless of the challenges facing Springfield Hospital. Thank you for supporting the clinic. Barbara Pierce asked about preparation for Corona Virus. Dr. Fox said please stay at home and call. Wash hands frequently. It's going to spread. It's infectious. If you have a fever and you have been traveling, call us. Treatment recommendations are changing regularly.

Iwana Reed inquired as to why Peru doesn't start the meeting earlier than 10:00.

Jon Mowry followed up as Selectboard member, reminding folks that if they are active in attending meetings, then more individuals will be involved in decision making for funding and new projects. He encouraged people to look at agendas for Selectboard meetings. Show up and share opinions.

Currently there are two positions on the Planning Commission to be appointed by the Selectboard.

Bennington County Regional Commission – Peru is seeking one or two representatives to serve on the BCRC. This committee oversees energy plans, town plans, grant applications.

Selectboard agendas must be posted in three public places - typically PO, website, town office board.

Jay Ouellette spoke up encouraging folks to attend school board meetings.

Jack Pennypacker questioned salt reduction areas. Todd explained general efforts by the town to utilize less salt for environmental purposes and potential benefits to maintaining pavement.

Discussion ensued regarding placement and effectiveness of speed bumps in town as well as the redesigning of the entrances to town off of the highway.

Juliette asked about street light on South Road. We could happily say that there is a light there!

Alex expressed thanks and gratitude for Pastor Margaret's years of service to our community.

Stuart inquired about plans for road repair for road coming in from the west side. Todd responded we need a town wide estimate due to many roads in poor quality. We do not have enough funds in our resurfacing funds at the moment, and we would want to strategically plan before just resurfacing.

Chuck Black made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jay Ouellette seconded the motion. All in favor. Gary adjourned the meeting at 11:26am.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jennie Freeman
Peru Town Clerk
Dated March 3, 2020




