

Lemington School District Meeting
March 7, 2017

Former school moderator Murray Duke began the annual Lemington School District meeting at 7:10 p.m. The 21 Registered voters present, one resident via-speaker phone and three non-residents in attendance stood and pledged allegiance to the flag of the United States of America. Mr. Duke then read the warning.

ARTICLE 1: Joseph Daley, Jr. motioned and Charles Patterson seconded to elect Mr. Duke as school moderator. He was elected unanimously. Mr. Duke then shared the meeting rules that voters and non-voters alike needed to follow.

ARTICLE 2: Joseph Daley, Jr. motioned and Charles Patterson seconded to elect Sharon Ellingwood for a three-year term as a school director. She was elected unanimously.

ARTICLE 3: Joseph Daley, Jr. motioned and Beth Ellingwood seconded to reelect Lucie Daley as school district treasurer. She was elected unanimously.

ARTICLE 4: Lucie Daley motioned and Dawn Duke seconded to authorize the school directors to borrow money in anticipation of taxes.

Voters gave Superintendent Christopher Masson permission to speak and explain the article. Many other school districts have the same article included in their warning annually, and Lemington used to, but it was removed for an unknown reason, he said. Mrs. Daley also said that it would have saved the school district from warning a second meeting to approve a loan this past year. The article passed.

ARTICLE 5: Sharon Ellingwood motioned and Lucie Daley seconded to approve the school board to expend \$386,188.00 in the ensuing fiscal year.

Myra Ellingwood asked why the district approved the total budget of \$386,188.00 without State revenue subtracted. Mr. Masson explained that the district must approve the total expenditures as the budget because it is the law. The district must spend the money on the students before the state will reimburse funds back to the district.

Joseph Daley, Jr. asked if the school tax rate is expected to be lower this coming year even though the district will raise more money than last year. Yes, Mr. Masson answered. The article passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 6: Mr. Duke reminded those in attendance that this article was non-binding and was open for discussion.

Joseph Daley, Jr. voiced a concern brought forward during the last informational meeting. Lemington has 300 acres of forested lots named "school lots." Voting to join the new Northeast Kingdom school district included transferring ownership of Lemington school property to the new district. Even though the selectmen are in charge of the lots and revenue from cutting the wood, they are unsure if the town or school district owns these lots. The ownership of the old school house, which was formerly used as a town hall, was also in question.

Vermont towns were chartered with nine separate lots, three of which were for the benefit of the town's schools. Lemington has kept these lots for more than 250 years, even buying a lease from one a few years ago. It would be unfair to pass a law that would take this away, Mr. Daley said. He had spoken with an attorney earlier that day and did not yet have any answers.

Mrs. Daley announced the result of the voting on whether to join the new, ten-town school district held earlier in the day. Twenty-three voters decided against the merger while seven voted for it. The two informational meetings were advertised in the newspaper. Schoolboard member Sharon Ellingwood shared her concern about the consolidation, the town's property, and the high tax rate this past year. Many voters also expressed that the promised savings over the next few years after consolidation was not enough.

She stepped forward to organize the next meeting or to get out general information about the district's next steps. The 23 "no" voters should unify and speak to lawyers, the Department of Education, Vermont School Board Association, someone suggested. Beth Ellingwood suggested meeting every other week to work on protecting the town's assets.

Voter Todd Nichols said this vote was just a pause, and people need these questions answered before the State's merger deadline in July. Mr. Masson said he would also look up answers to voters' concerns. Joseph Daley, Jr. motioned and Charles Patterson seconded to adjourn the meeting at 7:45. It passed.



Lucie Daley, School Clerk