Important Vote Coming Up

Vote “No” on Monadnock School Article 9

By Jim Rousmaniere

In a disturbing echo from one year ago, voters in the Monadnock School District will be asked this March to change the formula by which the costs of running public schools are spread among the district’s six member towns.

And, just as they did last year, Roxbury voters should vote “NO”!

The voting will take place Tuesday, March 12 in Roxbury Town Hall. The polls are customarily open from 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. – although at 7 p.m. voting is temporarily suspended when the Town Meeting is brought to order.

Under the current system of sharing school costs, Roxbury pays more dollars per student than any other town in the district; the proposed change in cost-sharing (which is not supported by the school board) would result in even higher per-pupil costs for Roxbury.

This uneven and unfair situation needs fixing. And, in fact, for much of last year a citizens group that included representatives from most Monadnock School District towns worked hard to come up with a way to share the burden of school funding that was acceptable to all. Despite a lot of collaboration and imaginative thinking, that effort did not lead to formal action by the Monadnock School Board. Roxbury’s selectmen have asked that the School Board take up the matter this year and propose a fair-to-all formula on the warrant in 2020.

Meanwhile, this year the district’s voters are left to decide at the polls whether to keep the existing system – flawed as it may seem – or adopt an even worse cost-sharing formula. Here’s the current law under which roughly $18 million in school operating costs are shouldered by the district’s six member towns.

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Volunteers Keep Roxbury Running
There are lots of ways to help out in town

Dear Citizens of Roxbury,

I think most of us agree that Roxbury is a special town – and a wonderful place to live and raise a family.

As one of the smallest and greenest towns in the state, Roxbury has many attributes, including small government. However, this means that the town relies on volunteers to handle many of our important tasks – and the selectmen are often struggling to find people to help.

Over the past few years, it’s become apparent that the same few people keep stepping up to help – over and over again.

And these people are just as busy as everyone else – and have lots of other things that they would prefer to be doing. But they volunteer because they realize we’re all in this together – and that a key component of being a part of a community that runs smoothly is carrying some of the weight. But we can’t always expect other people to do all the work for us.

So, my question for you is: if you don’t do so already, would you consider volunteering to help the town?

It doesn’t have to be very time-consuming. For example, you might consider serving on a town board, like the planning or zoning board. Or you might join a more periodic endeavor, like volunteering to help paint the rest of town hall next summer, or offering to help keep the cemeteries looking good. Or… maybe you can help out with elections on primary and election days – or during the town meetings? Or maybe you can write for the Roxbury Report?

All of these tasks take time, but each in itself doesn’t take a huge amount of time – and it’s often fun to work with and get to know your fellow community members a bit better.

Please consider stopping by town hall and asking the Selectmen how you can help.

“Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in.”

— (author unknown)

Hopefully see you at Town Hall!

Sharon Rousmaniere,
Editor
Notes from the Selectmen

2018 was another busy year on many fronts:

The selectmen bade farewell to Gerry Davis, who had served as selectman for a good number of years, and welcomed as his successor Mark Funk, who handed his long-held moderator’s gavel to Marcy White.

On Selectman Funk’s inspired proposal, the weekly selectmen’s hours at Town Hall were shifted to from 7-9 p.m. on Mondays to 5-7 p.m.

The selectmen proposed expanding the population of military veterans who qualify for a Legislatively-designated $100 property tax credit to include all honorably discharged veterans, regardless of whether they served in wartime. Voters at the March 13 Town Meeting approved, and two residents stepped forward, lifting the number of veteran tax credit recipients to 14.

Selectman Tim O’Brien put in a great many hours, along with Town Clerk Robin Buffum, in accommodating new state government software for motor vehicle registrations. The work underscored in yet another way the need for town officials in the 21st century to be fluent and flexible on matters of information technology.

The selectmen took up many road issues, including but not limited to (1) ordering repairs to road damage from logging activity, (2) controlling runoff from driveways on public roads, (3) fielding concerns about state construction work on and near Houghton Ledge Road, (4) scheduling road repairs, (5) soliciting bids for winter road maintenance, (6) inspecting culverts with Road Agent Ken Buffum and (7) voting to change the classification of Woodward Pond Road from Class V to Class VI, since the Town had not maintained that road for many years.

The selectmen revised the terms of renting Town Hall by eliminating the $50 rental fee, leaving only an insurance requirement; the selectmen will seek voter approval of the change in March.

The selectmen addressed an effort to revise the existing formula for apportioning costs within the Monadnock School District. The proposed change would substantially increase property taxes for Roxbury residents. The proposal was defeated at the polls in March 2013, with Roxbury voters going 93-0 against the plan. Selectman Rousmaniere then joined a citizens group to craft an alternative formula; that effort ended without fruit, assuring more struggles over cost sharing.

The selectmen along with the following volunteers put paint brushes to Town Hall: Fred White, Alice Funk, Sue Benik, Anthony Kline, Roland Beauchemin, Gale Russell, and Tim Mason.

The following citizens helped assure smooth functioning at the polls in 2018: Moderator Marcy White, Town Clerk Robin Buffum, Supervisors of the Checklist Lisa Ellis, Alice Funk, and Ginny Shepardson, plus Marika Stulhsatz, Diana Sebert, Karen Schwindt, and Joy Richards.

The selectmen hired Tyler Arlen to clear brush and otherwise spiff up the Upper Cemetery.

Your selectmen:

Tim O’Brien, selectman
Mark Funk, selectman
Jim Rousmaniere, selectman

Don’t miss the

POTLUCK SUPPER

immediately before the Town Meeting

TUESDAY, MARCH 12 at 5 PM

Bring a plate, utensils and a dish to share.
The Vietnamese Buddhist monk and peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh wrote “Waking up this morning, I smile. Twenty-four brand new hours are before me. I vow to live fully in each moment and to look at all beings with eyes of compassion.” All beings. Within the overarching philosophy of Nye Hill Farm, we have aspired to provide sanctuary for arthritic and asthmatic horses. An unwanted mule. Abandoned and disfigured pigs. Relinquished goats. Sheep who outlived their 4-H projects or their aging owners’ health. Llamas who simply needed a new home. A pair of oxen that no longer fit their owner’s plans and a young Holstein cow no longer necessary to help wean horses. All beings.

All of the animals here have names. A drift of four American Guinea Hogs originally slated for commercial breeding and slaughter now saunter about as sisters Flopsie and Fionna with their brothers Flatts and Scruggs. Today they share their large, clean, passively solar heated shelter with Cheyanne, an enormous Hampshire Sow who outgrew her owner’s interest. Perhaps the most apropos name belongs to one of four pigs rescued from an abandoned farm in a nearby town. Arriving with a badly mutilated ear, which eventually fell off, this pig required surgery to close the open wound and a regimen of antibiotics to stave off infection. Today, “Vincent” lives happily alongside his three fellow survivors, also in a large, clean, passively solar heated shelter.
A Safe Life...

All of the animals here have safe, secure, clean shelter, healthy food and clean water. All of them. When we offered to adopt seven goats of some thirty or so relinquished to the Massachusetts SPCA, that agency required a “home visit” to confirm we were a suitable placement. Shortly after her arrival, the woman conducting the visit looked around and asked “Could you also take four pot belly pigs we took in last week?” When they arrived, one was in such bad condition an old timer suggested putting him down. Today, “Wilbur” seems the happiest, and is the funniest, animal on the farm, and that includes the human kind.

While here to live out healthy, peaceful lives, all of the animals play an integral role in Nye Hill’s commitment to certified organic farming. Proscribed from using synthetic fertilizers, we aren’t just mucking out shelters, run-ins and stalls, we are gathering the natural fertilizers that help us restore and maintain the fertility of our orchards and fields.

We are but stewards of Nye Hill Farm, and providing sanctuary to animals in need of loving care is part of that stewardship, a part we take as seriously as the keeping of our bees and hens, the nurturing of our fruit trees and blueberry bushes, the cultivation of our fields, the tending to our gardens which attract and support the pollinators upon which we all depend. We are a working farm that aspires to see all beings with eyes of compassion. All beings.

— Anthony Kline, Nye Hill Farm
Robin Buffum
The welcoming face of Roxbury

(Continued from page 1)
Star news article in 2018 article tells of “frustration and out-
rage over large crowds, poor customer service” and the need
for multiple trips.
Thank goodness we live in Roxbury and thank goodness we
have Robin Buffum! Here we can smile, laugh, catch up on
each other’s news and get to know our neighbors. This is what
Robin loves about her jobs.
She is both our town clerk and our tax collector. She says she
is a people person – and clearly she is. She loves seeing eve-
everyone she knows, meeting new people, and helping out when
she’s needed. Sometimes the jobs can be frustrating, but for
the most part she really enjoys the work and always likes a
challenge.
Robin and her husband, Kenneth, moved to Roxbury in No-
vember of 2005 when they bought the house Kenneth’s father
had built. No stranger to Roxbury, Kenneth grew up here as
did both of his parents. And many of their extended family
still live in town.
Robin loves the “smallness” of Roxbury. She knows all or at
least most of the residents because of her town jobs. She was
born in Keene, but because her father was in the Navy, she
has lived in many places – returning to live in New Hamp-
shire in 1978. Over the years she has had various jobs, but
before taking on the town clerk position she was a stay-at-
home Grandma, caring for her grandkids. Now, in addition to
her town jobs, she works for Keene Housing, the affordable
housing agency, which she also enjoys.
I asked Robin how much extra time she needs to put in to ac-
complish all of her tasks for the town. Her official hours are
only from 5-7 p.m. on Monday nights (or on Tuesday, if Mon-
day happens to be a holiday). She replied that she hasn’t kept
track, but the job most definitely takes more than two hours
per week. Most Mondays she arrives before 5 to find at least
one person already waiting, so she opens as soon as she can -
and she is usually there until at least 7:30.
And, she sometimes has to stop at the office at other times
during the week, run town errands in Keene, or make business
phone calls between during the day, since most places aren’t
open at night.
Then there are the election days. Often Robin puts in extra
hours setting up the meeting room with voting booths and
posters, dealing with absentee ballots and other details. She is
happy that her job at Keene Housing allows her one paid vol-
unteer day per year and one paid personal day per quarter, so
she is not losing income by spending an entire Tuesday at the
polls. Elections involve long days but she enjoys them be-
cause so many voters come in and there is time to socialize
and get to know the town’s people.
In her free time Robin can be found riding her motorcycle or
sewing (she prefers to make things from start to finish such as
teddy bears, costumes, or curtains, but she is happy to do
mending, too). Most of all she enjoys spending time with her
family, especially Kenneth. She said, “We have been through
a lot together and I wouldn’t change a thing!” She added,
“Family means the world to me!”
And, apparently, the rest of us in Roxbury mean a lot to her as
well. The feeling is mutual.
Dam It!

Recently the city of Keene set out to fortify its two reservoir dams that are located in Roxbury, starting with Babbidge Dam. As illustrated by the before-and-after photos here, the change has been significant. The work on Babbidge, which was substantially completed in 2018, reflects new dam-safety design standards by the state government that are tied to recent intensifications of rainstorms in the Northeast. The main worry is that if Babbidge Dam, which was built in 1931, were to be significantly damaged, the water supply system for much of Keene would be endangered. Next up is work on the larger Woodward Pond dam upstream of Babbidge at the head of Roaring Brook. The Woodward dam, which dates to the late 19th century, will be reinforced in much the same way that Babbidge was reconfigured, including the installation of a 2-foot high reinforced concrete wall at the to help channel storm surges. Work on Woodward is tentatively scheduled for 2020. Access to that project will be over Dillingham Road in the eastern part of Roxbury.

Recent Arrivals to Town

By Alice Funk

Relative newcomers (December of 2016), John and Kate Yannacci and their two children, Nadia and Viggo, live in the Horse Hill neighborhood of Roxbury. They previously lived in Connecticut, where they had grown up.

John worked for 20 years as a corrections officer and Kate was employed by Pfizer before becoming a full time mom.

Seeking a more rural lifestyle not too far from extended family, they fell in love with their Roxbury property after looking at many others. What speaks to them most is the rural character here with easy access to amenities offered by Keene. They enjoy hiking the property and seeing such wildlife as moose and bear cubs, fishing, hunting, knitting, baking with the kids and family time.

They have one cat and hope someday to have chickens. Both John and Kate have expressed interest in the functioning of Roxbury as a town and town/school district issues. Kate has already gotten involved by helping to organize the 2018 Halloween Party at the Town Hall.

Thank you, Kate!

Relative newcomers (June 2017), Daniel Carberg and Matthew Leese, along with their black cat Jack, live in “downtown” Roxbury on Branch Road.

Dan grew up in Scituate, MA. He said that after spending a long time in the Midwest, it’s nice to be back in New England where he is associate professor of music and director of the vocal program in the School of Music at Keene State College. He’s also a professional singer and actor.

Matt grew up in New Zealand where most of his family still lives. He came to the USA for graduate school in Boston, Indiana and Illinois. After moving to Keene for Dan’s job Matt worked as a bartender at Burdick’s in Walpole and eventually began to get offers for music work. He now works full time teaching and performing, splitting his time between teaching music at Keene State, local choirs and singing with kids throughout the region. He also performs in regular gigs in Boston, New Brunswick, Kansas City and elsewhere.

The two lived in a condo in Keene for four years, and then Dan found the Roxbury house the same day it went on the market. He said that they couldn’t believe their luck in finding such an awesome spot, great neighbors, so close to Keene but without the hustle and bustle. He said, “every time I watch the Boston morning commute on TV I remember why we choose to live here!”

Now they have a bit of land for raised beds and other gardens as well as birds and wildlife to enjoy. They both love Roxbury and the Monadnock Region for the beauty, combination of lakes, rivers, mountains and forest which they explore by hiking, birdwatching, fishing, kayaking and being on or in the water whenever possible. They also love the region for its thriving Arts programs, both as contributors and audience members. Matt says, “When people ask I say I have two homes now: Roxbury, New Hampshire, and Dunedin, New Zealand!”
This and That....

The Painting Crew

During the summer of 2018 a small crew of volunteers painted the exterior of Roxbury’s Town Hall. The team included Fred White, Sue Benik, Anthony Kline, Roland Beauchemin, Gale Russell, Tim Mason and Selectmen Tim O’Brien, Mark Funk, and Jim Rousmaniere. Thanks everyone!!

Farm Stand

Each summer Nye Hill Farm has a Farm Stand one day each week at the Roxbury Town Hall. Watch for posted signs announcing the the start of the season sometime this coming June.

Story Ideas & Writers Wanted

For the Roxbury Report. Contact Sharon at editor@roxburyreport.net.

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Each town pays a sum that’s based 75 percent on how many children each town sends to Monadnock schools and 25 percent on total property values in each town.

Here’s the proposed change (which is identical to the article that was defeated at the polls last year): Each town pays a sum that’s based 50 percent on how many children each town sends to Monadnock schools and 50 percent on total property values in each town.

Under the current formula, last year Roxbury (population 211) paid about $345,000 in school taxes; based on its enrollment of 20 students, that means that Roxbury paid $16,200 to educate each of those students. Under the proposed 50-50 formula, Roxbury’s school tax bill would go up more than $80,000, and per pupil school costs would exceed $21,000.

On the other end of the scale, under the current formula the town of Troy (population 2,145) paid $2.2 million in school taxes; based on its enrollment of 290 students, that means that Troy paid $7,600 to educate each of those students. Under the proposed 50-50 formula, Troy’s school tax bill would fall to $6,552 for every student it sends to Monadnock schools.

Last March, when asked to get rid of the current formula, Roxbury citizens spoke loud and clear: They voted 93-0 against a change. At the other extreme, voters in Troy went 529-25 in favor of a new formula. The district as a whole went against changing the formula by a vote of 1,505-1,126. This March, you can expect a tough struggle. And, if the results go the wrong way, Roxbury residents can expect to see sharp rises in their property tax bills for the next five years. So, please vote against Article 9 of the Monadnock School District Warrant on March 12.

Here’s the article that will appear on the school district warrant:

“ARTICLE NINE: To see if the Monadnock Regional School District will vote to change the formula for apportionment of operational costs from 25% based on equalized valuation and 75% based on average daily membership to 50% based on equalized valuation and 50% based on average daily membership with no change being made in the present formula for apportioning capital expenses. RSAs 197:6, 195:7, 195:8. By petition.”

Spooky Times in Roxbury

Ordinarily a venue mainly for government business and voting, Town Hall hosted a distinctly different activity that involved costumes and candy last October 27. Roxbury’s community Halloween Party filled the building with sweetness and joy.

The gathering was organized by Michelle White and Kate Yannocci. They had a crowd of helpers and contributors who included Karen Schwindt, Lisa Ellis, Kristen Amends, Marika Stuhlsatz, Kathy Bedaw, Pearl McKeon, Fred White, and Pat Daniels. On behalf of the town, the selectmen donated $150.