



**Town of Berlin
Municipal Office Building
108 Shed Road
Berlin, VT. 05602**

**Charter Changes Public Hearing
Berlin Elementary School**

**SPECIAL MEETING
Thursday, February 9, 2009
7:00 PM**

Selectboard Members: Pat McDonald, Chair; Brad Towne, Vice Chair; Secretary; Susan Gretkowski, Roberta Haskin. Absent: Kitty Langlois. Also Present: Robert Wernecke, Charter Change Committee; Jeff Schulz, Town Administrator.

Pat McDonald called the hearing to order at 7:10 PM.

Pat McDonald reviewed the Warning of the Charter Changes for Town Meeting and explained that this is the second public hearing on the changes. The Selectboard has 20 days in which to amend the Charter Changes, which will be on the March ballot as a yes or no vote. **Pat** stated that the Selectboard will be meeting at 7:00 PM on Tuesday, February 10 to deliberate and make possible amendments to the proposed charter changes. Next, **Pat** reviewed the proposed charter changes.

Pat then opened the floor for public comments on the proposed charter changes. A resident stated that he thought it was very important to have a separation of power between the Selectboard and Treasurer and Lister. He also stated that the elected Auditors position should not be eliminated. The Board commented that in the past very few people have been interested in this position. **Roberta Haskin** gave some background on the Treasurer's position in the transition between hand written ledgers to a computerized system. **Roberta** also stated that interior auditors would be superfluous because everything is computerized. **Dr. Burns** commented that in putting this change in Treasurer forward that the Selectboard is more competent in choosing a Treasurer than the voters.

Valerie Cyr asked if there were job descriptions for these positions and if was possible that residents sit on a hiring board along with the Selectboard. **Pat McDonald** stated that she thought it was a great idea to have residents on a hiring committee. The point was made that if the Town could ensure that an appointed individual had certain qualifications and also invite anyone running for election to these positions to a meet the candidate forum where the voters could ask these questions as well. Robert Wernecke stated that as it stands there are no qualifications in writing for these elected positions.

Mike Domingue, Town Lister, stated that he had received many telephone calls asking questions that he could not answer and he would like to ask the Board to answer some of these questions. **Mike** asked the Board to please explain the term professional in the charter changes. **Robert Wernecke** stated that the idea of a professional has to do with training and experience. **Mike** asked if any of the officials in question were asked for their input at the Charter Change Committee meetings. **Patti Lewis** stated that she attended a few of the meetings pertaining to her position as Treasurer. **Robert Wernecke** stated that several past Auditors attended these meetings. **Robert Wernecke** also stated that the Committee did not specifically invite anyone to their meetings as the meetings were all open to the public and warned that way. **Mike Domingue** asked if there had been any discussion on the cost to the taxpayers if these changes take effect. **Pat McDonald** stated that the Selectboard sets the salaries for the elected positions. **Rebecca Richardson** asked if the Board thought that the salaries the Board sets are competitive in today's market. **Pat McDonald** stated that according to Vermont League of Cities and Towns, these salaries are competitive to other towns. **Pat McDonald** stated that the voters will be voting on the budget as a whole, and these positions would be included in the budget. **Mike** asked if these positions were going to be full-time or part-time positions if appointed. **Jeff Schulz** stated that if these positions were part-time, the salaries would be very competitive. **Mike** asked the Boards if they had any idea what work the Listers office entails. No one

could directly answer that question. **Mike** brought forward a concern that if these positions were appointed, majority of the Selectboard would rule in the appointment.

Rebecca Richardson stated that with everything that she heard from both of the public meetings and from people around town, people are not attending these meetings because they have made up their minds to vote the charter changes down. **Rebecca** urged the Board to consider amending the charter changes to leave out the changes to the offices of Treasurer and Lister to allow a better chance that the remaining changes will be approved. **Rebecca** stated that with every discussion she has heard those are the two most debated proposed changes in the charter change document. **Paul Irons** asked if was possible to have three questions on the ballot. **Pat McDonald** stated that with a lengthy discussion with **Rosemary Morse**, Town Clerk and **Rob Halpert**, Town Attorney, it was decided to go ahead with one article with an either yes or no answer for all charter changes so that the changes may be amended before Town Meeting.

Kyle Faye Mooney stated that in the past year three towns have had financial problems with Treasurers and she firmly believed there should be separation of power between the Selectboard and Treasurer. However, what she heard tonight regarding a hiring committee consisting of voters and Selectboard members could sway her vote at election time. She suggested that as a safety net the Selectboard bring this decision to the voters if a committee cannot be formed.

Patti Lewis stated that this move is not about power, it is about communication and working together. These positions being appointed would ensure that communication and cooperation.

Pat McDonald stated that the Selectboard had a hiring committee with residents from Town when hiring the new Police Chief. A resident stated that this wording should be put into the Charter rather than at the invitation of the Selectboard. **Pat McDonald** stated that is a good idea and stated that she would talk to **Rob Halpert** regarding the wording of that issue.

Motion by **Brad Towne** to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 PM. Second by **Susan Gretkowski**.
Motion carried 4-0.

For the Selectboard:

Rebecca Richardson, Administrative Assistant