

**SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
TOWN OF COLUMBIA
November 9, 2010
7:00 PM**

A Special Town Meeting of the electors and citizens qualified to vote in the Town of Columbia, Connecticut was held in Yeomans Hall, Tuesday November 9, 2010.

Present were Carmen Vance, First Selectman, Richard J. Szegda, William O'Brien, Rob Hellstrom, and Rebecca Stearns, Selectmen, Henry Beck, Town Attorney, Duncan J Forsyth, Town Attorney, Jonathan Luiz, Town Administrator.

Others present were Nelson Petrone Chairman, Columbia Board of Education , Lisa Jurovaty, Lauren Perrotti-Verboven, James Thorn, John Schroder, Paula Belekewicz and William Mulcahy, Board members and Francine Coss, Superintendent of Columbia schools.

The meeting began at 7:00pm; The Moderator announced the meeting would be moved to the Horace W. Porter Cafetorium due to the size of the crowd and would reconvene at 7:15pm.

The meeting was called to order by First Selectman Carman Vance at 7:15pm. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. The meeting was turned over to the Moderator, who explained the procedures and rules of this meeting.

MODERATOR: Stephen B. Arnsten
TOWN CLERK: Robin M. Kenefick
CITIZENS: 225 Present

CLAUSE 1: Motion was made by Carmen Vance:

“I MOVE that the Town REJECT the Professional Agreement between the Columbia Board of Education and the Columbia Teachers’ Association, as submitted to the Town Clerk’s office on October 14, 2010.”

Motion was seconded. The floor was opened to First Selectman Carmen Vance who spoke on the clause and explained that the Board of Selectmen voted on October 19, 2010 to bring this contract to a town meeting. The process is to act on the contract within 30 days after it has been filed with the Town Clerk. The motion to reject the contract has no reflection on the teachers, but everything to do with the financial cost to the town and the present economy that the State is in. A power point presentation gave information sited from CUBE (CT Association of Board of Education Inc). The CCM (CT Conference of Municipalities) expects a 14% cut in State aid for Education which the Town will have to make up. Columbia residents are facing difficult times with the present economy. Lis Pendens and Foreclosures are up in town, showing signs that things are becoming more

difficult for people to be able to pay their bills. I urge you to vote YES and REJECT this contract.

Mr. Nelson Petrone, Chairman of the Columbia Board of Education explained a NO vote will keep the contract as presented and a YES vote will reject the contract. He went over the negotiation team and the process that took place to come up with this agreement. He identified that their goal was to increase educational value. The contract covered stipends to compensate cost, steps and raises and over the next three years would provide a savings to the Town in insurance costs. Mr. Petrone urged a NO vote to accept the contract.

The floor was opened for discussion. Many residents spoke in favor of a YES vote to reject the contract due to difficult times. Many residents spoke in favor of a NO vote in support of the Teacher's contract.

Millie Ramsey called the question while having the floor. Point of order was called from the floor. (Millie Ramsey was not called on from the floor by the moderator to call the question).

A resident called the question. The moderator explained that a yes vote would call the question and a no vote would continue the discussion. Vote 216 Yes; 8 No. The motion passed to call the question.

Motion by Bob Baldwin for secret ballot (2 votes or 10% yes vote to pass for secret ballot). Vote: 12 Yes. The motion passed for secret (paper) ballot.

Vote on Clause 1 Yes – 102 No – 122 Motion failed

Motion failed

CLAUSE 2: Motion made by Carmen Vance, First Selectman.

“I move that the Town accept a reimbursable Small Town Economic Development Assistant Program Grant from the State of Connecticut in the amount of \$150,000 to be spent on the design, renovation and expansion of Columbia’s library building, and that the Town create a new capital expenditure account the purpose of which will be to pay expenses associated with the design, renovation and expansion of Columbia’s library, and that the Town transfer into said capital expenditure account an amount up to \$150,000 from the undesignated fund balance account.”

Motion was seconded. Carmen Vance, First Selectman explained the motion. This grant is for \$150,000 to be used over three years or if we go to phase 3 of the Library renovation. If we decide not to go to phase 3, we give the grant money back. We are only voting to accept the grant.

The floor was open for discussion: none followed.

Vote: Unanimous yes vote 0 no vote Motion passed

CLAUSE 3: Motion made by Carmen Vance, First Selectman.

“I move that the Town accept a gift of fee simple title to approximately 2,600 square feet of land located on the western side of Wells Woods Road, approximately 230’ south of the intersection with Lake Ridge Drive, and containing the foundation of the Ira Root Homestead for the purposes of historic and cultural resource protection consistent with the Town Plan of Conservation and Development, subject to such conditions as the Board of Selectmen may deem necessary or appropriate.”

Motion was seconded. Carmen Vance, First Selectman explained that the developer wishes to give this parcel of land to the town. After discussion with the Town Historical Society, the Town Historian, and the Open Space committee it would be a shame for the Town to lose this historical piece of property.

Floor was opened for discussion. None followed.

Vote: Unanimous yes vote 0 no vote Motion passed

Meeting adjourned at 9:17 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin M. Kenefick,
Town Clerk