

TOWN OF MARLBORO
REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING
Thursday, October 24, 2019
5:00 PM

ATTENDANCE: Present were Select Board members Tyler Gibbons, Chair; Jesse Kreitzer, Vice Chair; Julia von Ranson, Member; Forrest Holzapfel, Town Clerk; Marcia Hamilton, Augusta Bartlett, Beth McDermet, Staley McDermet, Jean Boardman, Francie Marbury, Town Residents; Steven John, Chair of Marlboro Committee for Universal Broadband (MCUB); Mark Francillon, MCUB Member; Diana Todd, HMCA Board President; and Lauren MacArthur, Select Board Assistant.

CALL TO ORDER: Tyler Gibbons, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:05 pm.

Changes to the Agenda: “Appointment: Sarah Robb-Grieco as Green Up Day Coordinator” was added to “New Business.”

Public Forum: Those present introduced themselves and Tyler gave a brief introduction and clarified that the focus of this public forum was to be on how Town Meeting is working now and if it is fulfilling the needs of the town. Jean Boardman asked about attendance numbers and Tyler stated that 90-120 people consistently attend Town Meeting. (There are 700 registered voters.) Tyler pointed out that attendance seems tied to “hot-button issues” with more people attending when controversial issues are on the agenda. Forrest Holzapfel, Town Clerk, spoke about the challenge of trying to educate people about the complexities of what’s happening in town government. Jean asked if there’s been any movement in the legislature about changing the date and/or time of Town Meeting or making it a state holiday. Tyler stated that the town votes every year to ask the legislature to make Town Meeting Day a state holiday and the Select Board sends a letter to the legislature to this effect. Marcia Hamilton said that state employees have the day off, but private businesses can make their own decision about whether to give employees the day off or not. Staley McDermet asked what the difference is between the number of people who attend Town Meeting and vote. Forrest responded that the number of voters is usually double the number of those who attend Town Meeting. Beth McDermet asked if other towns have moved meetings to evenings or weekends and what have they noticed about attendance. Beth also asked if articles could be voted by paper ballot. Forrest explained that paper ballots can be used for any vote at Town Meeting, if requested, and he is always prepared for that eventuality. Australian ballot is currently only used to vote in town officers, but could also be used for voting on the budget. Beth stated concern that people may feel pressure to vote about issues on the spot, even if they are confused or unsure about the issues. Forrest suggested figuring out ways to educate people about what would be coming up at Town Meeting and explaining what is at stake, possibly by sending out a postcard to voters.

Tyler referenced the book “All Those in Favor: Rediscovering the Secrets of Town Meeting and Community” by Susan Clark and Frank Byran. He noted that the book explained that some towns had tried changing times and dates of Town Meeting, but it had not changed attendance numbers. Marlboro tried having Town Meeting at the Outback at MES for a few years and it did not change attendance numbers. Forrest stated

other town clerks had shared the results of changing Town Meeting times and dates; they'd found no difference in attendance. Steven John shared that the Wardsboro School Board meeting is held the night before Town Meeting. He also stated that changes to Town Meeting should be voted on at the next Town Meeting and could not go into effect until the following year.

Tyler read a letter sent by Carol Ann Johnson. She advocated for an evening or weekend meeting when more working people could have a voice and supported the idea of moving to Australian ballot for more articles. Tyler also read an email from Peggy Tiffany. She stated that the Town House is not large enough. She believes that a Saturday or evening time would accommodate more people and believes the school gym would be a more appropriate venue. Tyler also read an email from Michelle Holzapfel, who wrote with the suggestion of moving the meeting to the Community Center and a plea to consider the fate of the potluck lunch if the venue is to change. Jean wondered about meeting upstairs in the sanctuary area of the Meeting House because there are a lot of seats there. Augusta Bartlett asked about using Whittemore Theater at the college. Forrest mentioned the burdens that would put on the college (plowing, sanding, preparing enough parking, providing space, etc.).

Marcia Hamilton shared her prepared statement in support of adhering to the traditional date and time of Town Meeting. This was supported by data that she had collected about voter turnout. Steven John also spoke in support of the Town House as a space conducive to participation and spoke to people's comfort with the space and its familiarity as a Town Meeting venue.

Forrest brought up the challenge of choosing which items would go on the ballot if there was a move to Australian ballot for more articles. He has spoken with the Secretary of State about this issue. While it is legal to pick and choose articles to include on an Australian ballot, the challenge of deciding which to include remains.

Tyler stated that he feels that there are some major hurdles to changing the time and date of Town Meeting, especially the fact that Forrest is running both the election at the official polling place, the Town Office, and also taking minutes at Town Meeting. Live-streaming of Town Meeting on Facebook Live would allow residents to follow Town Meeting proceedings from their homes, although it would not allow them to vote. Tyler said that he has heard from many people that it does not seem fair to hold Town Meeting in a venue that would not accommodate all voters in town. A solution to this could be live-streaming Town Meeting in the Community Center.

There was a suggestion to purchase cushions for the chairs in the Town House, as many people complain of how cold and uncomfortable it can be.

At the conclusion of the public forum, Forrest asked that the Select Board work with him to get the word out about Town Meeting issues. Tyler stated that he would follow up on the idea of live-streaming Town Meeting in the Community Center.

Unscheduled Public Comment:

Sue Bert and Francie Marbury visited the Select Board to speak about the protection of beavers on Lower Dover Road. Sue showed a picture of the Beaver Deceiver that Skip

Lisle has just installed on Lower Dover Road (at the request of the Select Board). A member of the road crew, Andrew Richardson, spoke to Sue and her husband, sharing his intention to trap the beavers, with permission of the property owners. Sue shared concerns about traps being set so close to a network of trails where people hike and walk their dogs. Julia stated that she spoke with Sue, Andrew (twice), and David Elliott, Road Foreman. Andrew had stated to Julia that he had obtained the landowner's permission and he had assured Julia that he would be trapping on his own time and not as a road crew member, but as an individual. The Select Board will clarify with Andrew, Jesse will try to contact the landowners, and Julia will also speak with David Elliott, Road Foreman.

Steven John, Chair of MCUB, presented an application for the Broadband Innovation Grant (BIG). MCUB is asking for \$5000 to pay consulting fees (plus 2% for administrative tasks completed by Linda Peters). MCUB is hoping the consultant would help assess the feasibility of a business model that doesn't affect the tax base in Marlboro and would advise in preparing an RFP to entities who might be interested in working with the Town of Marlboro. The committee feels strongly that, with or without the grant, they would like to move towards putting out an RFP. The Select Board stated support for the grant proposal and signed it.

Scheduled Business:

Diana Todd, President of the HMCA, came to the Select Board to ask for some help in dealing with an oil leak on Ed Metcalfe's land adjacent to the Hogback Mountain Conservation Area land. When the leak was discovered in early May, 2019, Ed immediately contacted the State and inspectors from the State came out, evaluated the site and prepared for work, but have not begun work yet. Diana asked if the Select Board would be willing to call the State and ask for the mitigation plan, as well as ask an update. Diana will also ask Jennifer Garrett at Vermont Land Trust to call the State.

APPROVAL AND SIGNATURE OF PAY ORDERS: The Pay Orders were approved and signed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The Select Board approved minutes from the regular meeting on 10/10/19. (von Ranson, Kreitzer)

OLD BUSINESS:

Jesse sent two emails to the tick-testing subsidy program coordinator at UMass, asking \ for materials and the coupon code, but has not heard back yet.

The discussion of beavers on Lower Dover Road was covered during unscheduled public comment earlier in the meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

The Select Board re-appointed Sarah Robb Grieco as Green Up Day Coordinator. (Kreitzer, Gibbons) The Select Board also agreed to suggest to Town Meeting that \$100 be appropriated to Green Up Day, the same amount appropriated last year (per Green Up Day's guidelines for donations based on population numbers).

The Select Board received the Facilities Use Agreement from Ariel Poster and Alexandro Ramirez, who are requesting to rent the Town Park for their wedding on June 27, 2020. The Select Board added this to the November 14, 2019 meeting agenda as there were several details that needed to be considered. While the Select Board anticipated approving the agreement, more time is required to address questions associated with the application.

INFORMATION ITEMS AND MAIL:

The Select Board received a request for a donation to Front Porch Forum and voted to donate the same amount as donated last year (\$100). (Gibbons, Kreitzer)

The Select Board received a request from the Marlboro Mixer to submit profiles for the next issue.

The Select Board received information about the Better Roads Grant Program. Lauren will check in with David Elliott and ask him to bring any proposal ideas to the next Select Board meeting.

The Select Board received information about VLCT's Fall Zoning and Planning Forum on October 23, 2019.

The Select Board acknowledged receipt of an email containing a recording of Rescue, Inc.'s Select Board Open House Meeting on September 24, 2019.

The Select Board confirmed that the Thanksgiving week meeting will be changed from Thursday, November 28 to Tuesday, November 26, 2019 at 5pm.

The Select Board received notification of a meeting of the Town Clerk and Trustee of Public Funds with HMCA and HPC representatives on October 30 regarding the Hogback Endowment Fund and related topics.

The Select Board received an email from a Lower Dover Road resident stating concern about the welfare of the beavers.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Lauren B. MacArthur, Assistant to the Select Board

