

TOWN OF MARLBORO, VERMONT
MINUTES OF ANNUAL TOWN MEETING - MARCH 3, 2020

Moderator Steven John called the meeting to order at 9:02 A.M. and read out the warning:

The legal voters of the Town of Marlboro, Vermont are hereby notified and warned to meet in the Town House of said Marlboro on Tuesday, March 3, 2020 at 9:00 A.M. to consider and act upon the following Articles:

He noted that the polls will be open on Tuesday, March 3, 2020, from 10:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M. in the Marlboro Town Office for the purpose of electing by Australian ballot the officers listed in Article 3.

Article 1. To elect a Moderator for a one year term.

Steven John nominated by Clarence Boston, seconded by Paul Butler.

Moved by Clarence Boston and seconded by Nora Wilson that the nominations be closed and that the Clerk cast a single ballot.

So voted by unanimous voice vote.

Steven John elected as Moderator for a one year term. +/- 90 in attendance

Moderator Steven John explains that Roberts' Rules of Order is the guiding procedure for the meeting, limit to 2 minutes speaking time and the person making the motion gets to speak first. Amendments to articles procedure was outlined. The Moderator appointed Justice of the Peace T Hunter Wilson as Parliamentarian. Those in attendance who are not voters of the town are told they may not vote by voice. The Moderator asked that those speaking identify themselves and the road they live on.

Article 2. To act upon the Auditors' Report.

So moved by Gail MacArthur, seconded by Brent Seabrook.

Discussion on errors and omissions from the Auditors report:

- David Elliott pointed out that inside the front cover, he is no longer the person to call for burn permits, and that on page 35 he clarified that he resigned as Chief, not retired.

So voted by unanimous voice vote.

Auditors Report accepted, with corrections.

Article 3. To elect all town officers required by law to be elected at the Annual Town Meeting: Select Board, one three-year term; Town Clerk, one three-year term; Lister, one three-year term; Auditor, one three-year term; Constable, one one-year term; Town Agent, one one-year term; School Director, one three-year term; School Directors, two one-year terms; Trustee of Public Funds, one three-year term (two years remaining); Trustee of Public Funds, one two-year term; Trustee of Public Funds, one one-year term.

At the invitation of the Moderator the candidates were named and those present were identified: Aaron Betts for Select Board, Forrest Holzapfel for Town Clerk, Eric Matt for Lister, S. Rose Watson for Auditor, Clarence E. Boston for Constable, Mimi Brill for Town Agent, Dan MacArthur for School Director, Celena Romo for School Director, David Holzapfel for School Director, Hollis P. Carlisle for Trustee of Public Funds, Patricia Mangan for Trustee of Public Funds, Carol Ann Johnson for Trustee of

Public Funds. +/- 115 people present

~ Motion made to move to School District meeting ~

Moved by Nora Wilson and seconded by Clarence Boston to recess the Town Meeting in order to convene the School District Meeting at 9:15 A.M.

So voted by unanimous voice vote.

~ Town Meeting reconvened at 11:36 A.M. ~ +/- 90 people present

Article 4. To see if the town will vote to appropriate and expend \$3,000.00 to pay the yearly stipend for the Town's three member Select Board.

So moved by T Hunter Wilson, seconded by Nancy Anderson.

Discussion:

- Tyler Gibbons, Select Board Chair, spoke about how the assembled body last year requested the stipend of \$1,000 per Select Board member be put on the warning as an article, and so it appears.

So voted by unanimous voice vote.

Select Board compensation set at \$3,000.00 per year.

Article 5. To see if the town will set Friday October 2, 2020 as the due date for property taxes, payable to the Treasurer.

So moved by Catharine Hamilton and seconded by Lauren Poster.

- Megan MacArthur wondered about ways to help us pay property taxes, and could the town bill quarterly.
- Linda Peters said the body can decide how the taxes are paid, but before changing the schedule a study would be needed before action could be taken.
- Discussion of the ways other towns accept tax payments, four times a year, two times a year, and other possibilities.
- Forrest Holzapfel stated that to alter our billing cycle, we would need first to move both municipal and education taxes to a fiscal year, which would mean one year with an 18 month municipal budget. Given the current increase, this is not the time.

So voted by unanimous voice vote.

Friday, October 2, 2020 set as due date for property taxes, payable to the Treasurer.

Article 6. To see if the town will vote to appropriate and expend \$408.00 to support the Animal Resource Fund (ARF).

So moved by Gail MacArthur, seconded by Celena Romo.

Discussion:

- Tyler spoke to the article. He thanked Peggy Tiffany for her work as Animal Control Officer, and stated that Peggy has not charged the town for her services, but wanted to put the equivalent amount of money into this fund to help those in need of care for their pets.
- Peggy Tiffany spoke to the article and explained how it is set up through the Windham County Humane Society's program for people with an inability to pay for pet care. The Marlboro Alliance will receive the \$408 from the town and fund individual cases which have proven their need through Windham County Humane Society.

So voted by unanimous voice vote.

\$408.00 voted for Animal Resource Fund.

~ Clarence Boston moved and seconded by T Hunter Wilson to suspend the rules to allow our State Representative Emily Long to speak to the assembly, who took the dais at 11:53 A.M. ~

Opening statements from Emily

- She thanked the voters and townspeople for their engagement at her monthly second Saturday open house at 10 am at the Marlboro Community Center.
- Emily reports that in the House of Representatives, there was tri-partisan support for the climate goals from the energy and technology committees. Emily spoke about the recent veto override for the minimum wage bill which Governor Scott had vetoed. Also passed was a cannabis bill and Act 250 reforms which relieves some of the restrictions around development in villages and town centers. These bills will go to the Senate and will hopefully be acted upon. Emily asked for feedback and thoughts from voters at any time.
- Questions from the floor:
 - Pupil Weighting Study questions were brought up by Dan MacArthur. Wide ranging discussion of these issues followed up on the School District Meeting. Douglas Korb spoke about the inequity of the weighting system.
 - Andrew Richardson wondered if in fact the changes to the pupil weighting system would lower our tax rates. There is no way to know without specifics. Emily is aware of the issue and thinks that changes should be made.
 - Act 173, regarding implementation of Special Education, was discussed by Celena Romo. Emily stated that there is a lack of financial support and resources from the Agency of Education.
 - Ashley Bies spoke in appreciation of the recent climate bill passed in the House and brought up details addressing climate change, including the link between natural systems and biodiversity.

~ Moderator Steven John recesses the meeting at 12:20 pm to return at 1:20 pm ~

~ Moderator Steven John reconvenes the meeting at 1:23 pm, +/- 40 people in attendance ~

Article 7. To see if the town will vote to appropriate and expend \$275,000.00 for the General Fund.

So moved by Nora Wilson and seconded by Andrew Richardson.

Select Board members Tyler Gibbons, Jesse Kreitzer, and Julia von Ranson take the dais.

Discussion:

- Tyler stated that the budget is the same as last year.
- Bennett Grout of the Planning Commission asked to amend the article from \$275,000 up to \$276,000 to cover the costs of producing the Town Plan.

Amendment proposed by Bennett Grout and seconded by Tim Segar to make the budget \$276,000.

- Gail MacArthur stated the budget should have been proposed earlier when planning for this meeting, and Bennett acknowledged this knowingly.
- Tim Segar stated that the Planning Commission has more than expected costs with producing the Town Plan.
- Tyler wanted to know if this was an ongoing budget increase or a one-time cost, and Bennett replied that it is a one time cost.

No further discussion.

Amendment increases the General Fund to \$276,000, amendment passed by unanimous voice vote.

Article as amended passed by unanimous voice vote.

\$276,000.00 voted for the General Fund.

Article 8. To see if the town will vote to appropriate and expend \$360,000.00 for town highways, summer and winter maintenance.

So moved by Clarence Boston and seconded by Nora Wilson.

Gail MacArthur asked that we acknowledge the death of Road Crew member Jesse Hamilton on December 30, 2019. All present sustained a standing ovation in his honor.

Discussion:

- Nora Wilson wondered if the town will have trouble getting applicants for the open road crew position if the pay we are offering is below surrounding towns. Nora also asked about the ditch maintenance around town.
- David Elliott talked about the new state standards for ditches on hydrologically connected roads.
- Jesse Kreitzer looked at benefits and hourly wages for the Road Crew and found that our hourly rate is a bit lower than surrounding towns, but our benefits are superior.
- David Elliott stated that when current crew member Andrew Richardson was hired there were 27 applicants for the job, so it is difficult to predict when someone will apply for the job.

No further discussion ended.

Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

\$360,000.00 voted for town highways, summer and winter maintenance.

Article 9. To see if the town will vote to appropriate and expend \$10,000.00 to the Marlboro Volunteer Fire Company, Inc. to help defray operating expenses.

So moved by T Hunter Wilson and seconded by Brent Seabrook.

- Amendment proposed by Lisa Hecht and seconded by David Elliott to add to the article that the Trustees of the Volunteer Fire Company be subject to the Open Meeting Law with the following language:
 - **To see if the town will vote to appropriate and expend \$10,000.00 to the Marlboro Volunteer Fire Company, Inc. to help defray operating expenses, conditioned upon the trustees following the Open Meeting Law.**
- Nora Wilson wants a legal opinion about this before we vote on the Amendment.
- Lauren Poster wonders about consequences of applying the Open Meeting Law to this organization which the town financially supports yearly. Would we place the same strictures on all the entities that the town financially supports?
- Nickolas Katrick stated he did not want to support the amendment if it endangers funding for a service vital to the town.
- David Elliott stated that there is no town representative on the Volunteer Fire Company Board and wonders if this is in the best interest of the town.

- No further discussion on the merit of the amendment.
 - Voice vote on the amendment too close to call
 - A count of raised hands shows the amendment is defeated.
- Brent Seabrook states that this is not a good time to make this decision without more information of a legal and procedural nature.
- Moderator advised that a decision be made about what action the Select Board could take to address the Open Meeting Law as it pertains to the Marlboro Volunteer Fire Company (MVFC).
- Rusty Sage, MVFC Chief, spoke about the improvements being made in the Fire House, to equipment, and to the services provided. He thanked people for their support and any additional amounts that could be offered.
- Ashley Bies proposed the following amendment, seconded by Chris Landin
 - **To see if the town will vote to appropriate and expend \$52,000.00 to the Marlboro Volunteer Fire Company, Inc. to help defray operating expenses.**
 - Rusty Sage spoke about what actual costs are and stated that \$52,000 is the amount needed to fully run the department.
 - Carol Brooke-deBock wondered why the \$52,000 is being sprung on us now, and Rusty stated he was not done with the budget at the time of printing the Warning.
 - Former Chief David Elliott stated that in the past the annual appeal, along with donations would bring in close to the \$52,000.
 - Ann Bartlett stated that the department is extremely deficient in equipment and personnel and can not maintain this level of service without more funding.
 - Andrew Richardson stated that this appears to be a bad year to ask for this funding however, we just voted in a 3 million dollar school budget. This service is also vital. He discussed the challenge of having a 50 year-old truck, and the limitations of the fire department. He supported an increase in funding.
- Andy Reichsman amends the amendment, seconded by Nora Wilson to read
 - **To see if the town will vote to appropriate and expend \$32,000.00 to the Marlboro Volunteer Fire Company, Inc. to help defray operating expenses.**
- Eric Matt, who is on the MVFC as a new firefighter, stated that the full \$52,000 is badly needed by the fire company as the old truck has broken down on the scene of a fire and has broken down in the yard while attempting to go to a call. It does not inspire confidence.
- Lauren Poster asked that there be much more information from the MVFC about their financial position and that this huge jump with very few voters present is not fair.
- Andrea Matthews stated that her husband Tom Toleno asked to join the Board, but was sent away and told the department board was by invitation only.
- Treasurer Linda Peters stated that the \$52,000 would increase the tax rate by two cents per thousand.
- David Elliott says the Town also pays for the mutual aid (\$17,000 or so) and supports the MVFC by property tax exemption.
- Nickolas Katrick supports the full \$52,000 since the MVFC is in a crisis.
- Ashley Bies calls the question to end discussion, seconded by Nora Wilson.

Voice vote approved closing discussion.

Regarding the \$32,000 amendment, the Moderator called for show of hands.

Yes 21 No 26, amendment to set contribution at \$32,000 is defeated.

The Moderator returns to the original \$52,000 amendment.

- Jesse Kreitzer asked if \$52,000 would be a one time expense or an annual expense, which Rusty Sage replied to that this is the annual cost of running the MVFC.

~ At the urging of Moderator Steven John, Clarence Boston moved and seconded by Patricia Webster to suspend the rules to allow our State Senator Jeanette White to speak to the assembly, who took the dais at 2:39 p.m. ~

- She detailed changes in the Senate to bills regarding criminal justice and prescription drug costs.
- Our election system is very secure, and the Secretary of State works very hard, as do Town Clerks. Paper ballots also help our reliability in elections. A round of applause for the Town Clerk.
- Discussion of Vermont as a Dillon's Rule state, which only allows town to do what the legislature delegates through law. The Senate is working on allowing towns to take more local control.
- State-wide funding for rescue services and volunteerism is looking bleak, but these are vital components to rural life.
- The 2020 Census is happening and participation is vital because it will allot money to Vermont. No citizen should be left behind.
- More money is needed state-wide for all services provided, and we are always lagging behind costs.
- Jeanette thinks the Pupil Weighting system which was discussed at length in the School District Meeting is important to many towns. Speed in acting on this is hoped for in the Senate.
- Jeanette White leaves dais to round of applause at 2:57 pm

~ Moderator Steven John reconvenes the meeting at 2:58 pm ~

Return to the discussion of the \$52,000 amendment to Article 9.

- Select Board Chair Tyler Gibbons spoke about the communications with the Fire Department echoed by Jesse Kreitzer. Since MVFC is a 501c3 organization, more questions remain. Jesse stated that having a town representative on the MVFC Board would be advisable.
 - Clarence Boston asked that we all think carefully about those who are not present before spending.
 - Gail MacArthur said this increase was not warned and is a big jump which will catch people off guard.
 - Ashley Bies wonders about short-term planning versus long-term planning including everyone involved.
 - Jacob Smith thinks more information would be important to have before spending.
 - Andrew Richardson talked about upcoming fund-raising by the Fire Department to help.
 - David Elliott talked about mutual aid and how each of the surrounding towns will help us in crisis.

No further discussion. The Clerk was asked to read the article if amended:

Amended article: To see if the town will vote to appropriate and expend \$52,000.00 to the Marlboro Volunteer Fire Company, Inc. to help defray operating expenses.

Show of hands called for to vote on the amendment as voice vote was too close to call.

Yes 21 No 23. Amendment is defeated.

New amendment proposed by Ashley Bies, seconded by Lauren MacArthur to read as follows:

To see if the town will vote to appropriate and expend \$35,000.00 to the Marlboro Volunteer Fire Company, Inc. to help defray operating expenses.

Discussion of amendment for \$35,000 as follows:

- Nikolas Katrick strongly urges the voters to support the \$35,000.
- Clarence Boston disapproves of adding this kind of money without it being on the warning.
- David Elliott spoke again in opposition.
- Lisa Hecht spoke again in opposition.
- Dan MacArthur speaks in favor of the amendment.
- David Holzapfel spoke in favor of the amendment.

Andrew Richardson called the question, seconded by Nora Wilson.

Voice vote closes discussion on amendment.

Voice vote on amendment of \$35,000 appeared to approve.

Andrew Richardson asks for a show of hands **YES 41 NO 7**

Amendment passed. **To see if the town will vote to appropriate and expend \$35,000.00 to the Marlboro Volunteer Fire Company, Inc. to help defray operating expenses.**

Article as amended passed by unanimous voice vote.

\$35,000.00 voted to the Marlboro Volunteer Fire Company, Inc. to help defray operating expenses.

Article 10. To see if the town will vote to appropriate and expend \$12,817.42 to Rescue, Inc. for services.

So moved by Gail MacArthur and seconded by Francie Marbury.

Discussion:

- Didi Prignano spoke and is the town's Rescue representative. Rescue, Inc mostly serves the eastern side of Marlboro. In the last year they responded to around 45 calls in town. There is no increase in the amount over last year.

Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

\$12,817.42 voted to Rescue, Inc. for services.

Article 11. To see if the town will vote to appropriate and expend \$1,500.00 to Deerfield Valley Rescue, Inc. for services.

So moved by Gail MacArthur and seconded by Nancy Anderson.

Discussion:

- Allison Turner spoke about the difference between Deerfield Valley Rescue, Inc and Rescue, Inc.

Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

\$1,500.00 voted to Deerfield Valley Rescue, Inc. for services.

Article 12. To see if the town will vote to appropriate and expend \$1,000.00 to Grace Cottage Hospital.

So moved by Nora Wilson and seconded by David Elliott.

No discussion.

Motion passed by voice vote, one nay.

\$1,000.00 voted to Grace Cottage Hospital.

Article 13. To see if the town will vote to appropriate and expend \$100.00 for the support of Green Up Vermont to provide services to residents of the town.

So moved by Nora Wilson and seconded by Andrew Richardson.

Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

\$100.00 voted for the support of GreenUp Vermont.

Article 14. To see if the town will vote to appropriate and expend up to \$3,000.00 to support the production of the *Marlboro Mixer* newsletter.

So moved by Brent Seabrook and seconded by Joseph Prignano.

Discussion:

- Francie Marbury spoke to the question by saying the Alliance is covering any additional costs without asking for more from the town.

Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

\$3,000.00 voted to Marlboro Mixer newsletter.

Article 15. To see if the town will vote to appropriate and expend \$500.00 to help the American Red Cross Green Mountain in support of their mission and the work they do in Marlboro and the State of Vermont.

So moved by Andy Reichsman and seconded by Andrew Richardson.

No discussion.

Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

\$500.00 voted to help the American Red Cross, Green Mountain.

Article 16. To see if the town will vote to appropriate and expend \$3,234.00 for the support of Southeastern Vermont Economic Development Strategies (SeVEDS) to provide workforce and economic coordination services to residents of the town.

So moved by Andrew Richardson and seconded by Andy Reichsman.

Discussion:

- Lauren Poster makes an amendment to lower the amount to \$1 per person. Seconded by Gail MacArthur. **Amendment proposed: To see if the town will vote to appropriate and expend \$1,078.00 for the support of Southeastern Vermont Economic Development Strategies (SeVEDS) to provide workforce and economic coordination services to residents of the town.**

Discussion:

- Casey Haynes of SeVEDS spoke about programming and investment of public money in this organization.
- SeVEDS internship placements help people of all ages to find jobs in this area supporting the area workforce. They have also worked with drawing attention to broadband improvements.
- Adam Grinold of BDCC wondered if the lower amount that is being proposed is the result of concerns about transparency and accountability. Adam stated both organizations are federally audited.

Carol Brooke-deBock called the question.

Amendment defeated by unanimous voice vote.

Return to the original article.

Discussion:

- Ashley Bies spoke at length about his concerns.
- Adam Grinold of BDCC spoke to many of Ashley’s concerns.
- Chris Landin spoke about the big picture and the need for economic development.
- The reps from SeVEDS and BDCC explained the link between the two organizations and their coordinated efforts to promote the local economy.

Gail MacArthur called the question, seconded by Andrew Richardson.

Voice vote closed discussion.

Article passed by voice vote with some nays and one abstention.

\$3,234.00 voted for the purpose of supporting Southeastern Vermont Economic Development Strategies (SeVEDS) activities.

Article 17. To see if the town will vote to appropriate and expend the sum of \$9,929.00 for the following social service agencies:

Brattleboro Area Hospice, Inc.....	\$ 250.00
The Current.....	\$ 250.00
Deerfield Valley Food Pantry.....	\$ 500.00
Gathering Place for Adult Day Services.....	\$ 500.00
Green Mountain RSVP & Volunteer Center.....	\$ 230.00
Health Care and Rehabilitation Services of Southeastern Vermont...	\$1,050.00
Marlboro Cares.....	\$ 400.00
Senior Solutions.....	\$ 400.00
Southeastern Vermont Community Action, Inc.....	\$ 970.00
Visiting Nurse Association & Hospice of VT and NH.....	\$3,179.00
Women’s Freedom Center.....	\$1,200.00
Youth Services.....	\$1,000.00

So moved T Hunter Wilson and seconded by Tim Segar.

- Question from Francie Marbury about the Current and if it funds the Moover bus. The answer is yes.
- Nora Wilson asked about HCRS and if they charge for their services. The answer depends on the individual's insurance coverage but no one pays out of pocket.

So voted by unanimous voice vote.

\$9,929 voted for the social service agencies listed above.

Article 18. To see if the Town of Marlboro will enter into a communications union district to be known as Deerfield Valley Communications Union District, under the provisions of 30 V.S.A. Chapter 82.

So moved Andrew Richardson and seconded by Carol Brooke-deBock.

- Discussion: Bill Esses and Joe Prignano stated that joining will not cost us money and we will be able to get out if needed in the future.
- Steven John stepped down as Moderator to speak as Chair of the Marlboro Committee for Universal Broadband. He spoke about CUDs and the impact increased connectivity will have on our town with optic fiber as opposed to the current copper wire for telephone and internet. Ideally, residents would subscribe for faster broadband service within a CUD. This improvement would not require town bonding nor increase the local tax rate.
- Andrew Richardson called the question, seconded by Clarence Boston.

Discussion closed by voice vote.

Article approved by unanimous voice vote.

Town of Marlboro will enter the Deerfield Valley Communications Union District.

Article 19. To see if the voters of the Town will authorize the town to borrow funds in anticipation of tax revenue.

So moved by Andy Reichsman and seconded by Clarence Boston.

No discussion.

So voted by unanimous voice vote.

The Town of Marlboro will authorize the town to borrow funds in anticipation of tax revenue.

Article 20. To discuss any other non-binding business.

- T Hunter Wilson spoke about Marlboro College, and that *ibelieveinmarlborocollege.org* is a new website which has much more information about the current situation than the College website.
- Gail MacArthur spoke thanking Tyler Gibbons for his 6 years on the Select Board and for continuing as Ty the Recycling Guy to a round of applause.
- Clarence Boston asked that the Select Board should advise the State to make Town Meeting Day a paid state holiday, seconded by T Hunter Wilson.
 - Nancy Anderson wonders how many towns have a representative Town Meeting e.g., Brattleboro.
 - David Elliott stated that the Marlboro Road Crew has a paid holiday for Town Meeting Day.
 - Non-binding motion was unanimously approved.
- Andrew Richardson thanked David Elliott for his 25 years of service to the Marlboro Volunteer Fire Company to a rousing round of applause.

➤ **Moved to adjourn by Clarence Boston, seconded by Andrew Richardson at 4:22 p.m.
Attendance ~ 45 people**

Subject to additions and revisions presented which may come up after the posting date, according to law.