

Minutes

Town Of Marlboro Select Board Meeting

Thursday, December 22, 2022, 6:00pm

Attendees: Aaron Betts, Chair; Jim Agate, Vice-Chair; Molly Welch, Member; Nick Morgan, Assistant/Town Admin; Andrew Richardson, Road Foreman; Forrest Holzapfel, Town Clerk; Nadar Hashim, Windham County State Senator

Call to order – 6:00p

Regular Select Board Meeting Agenda

Scheduled Business

Unscheduled Open Public Comment - None

Motion to approve of Minutes from 12/8/22 Select Board Meeting (Betts/Agate – Passed unanimously)

Signature of Pay Orders - Done

New Business

State Senator Nader Hashim

New Windham County State Senator Nader Hashim attended the meeting via Zoom to introduce himself, discuss some of his preliminary goals in the Senate for this session, and answer any questions from the Select Board and Marlboro residents. Senator Hashim discussed his goals of joining the Judiciary Committee to address the issue of the backlog in the Vermont Court system, which is a major concern not only for the Senator but for many in the legislature. The Senator has had several meetings with the smaller towns in the county as he feels that issues that impact the smaller towns tend to “get lost in the shuffle” and he wants to be an advocate for those issues. Many times, he stressed that he is always available to the towns to discuss issues of concern and that his door is always open, not only to Select Boards, but also to residents as well.

Senator Hashim also noted that he will be seeking a seat on the Education committee with a target of increasing the educational benefits for children by ensuring that schools are being funded appropriately and that all children have access to the best educational experience.

Further, the Senator noted that he has a special interest in addressing the mental health crisis that is impacting not only Vermont but the country as a whole. With the closing of the State’s Mental Health Hospital, the Senator sees this as a major issue that needs to be vigorously addressed.

Several issues were brought up to the Senator including the following:

- The need for the VT State Police needs to be more involved in local situations, specifically assisting the local volunteer Fire Department(s) when they are addressing automotive accidents, fires, etc. by taking over the traffic control issues that arise in these situations.
- Funding issues for local schools.
- Funding for Fiber Internet.
- The decision by the legislature to not include municipalities in the Covid Sick Leave funding.

The Senator noted these concerns and assured those present that he would pass along and advocate for these issues with the appropriate Committee Chairs and maintain an open line of communication to keep the Town apprised of the movement on these issues.

The Board thanked Senator Hashim for his time and noted that he is welcome anytime to address the Board with updates and the Senator also thanked the Board and reiterated his willingness to communicate on any issue of import to the Board and the Town in general.

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Marlboro Highway Department

Andrew Richardson, Marlboro Road Foreman, came before the Board to discuss the potential blacktopping for the roughly 1.5 miles of unpaved Higley Hill Road. He noted that this was not a simple or quick process. The Town does receive funding for Blacktop, but the funding, while substantial, may not cover the entire expense. Andrew stressed that prior to Blacktopping this section of road and great deal of work needs to be done on the road base and that the road base needs to be addressed regardless of whether paving will be attempted. Bottom line is that the paving would not be able to be done in 2023 but work on the road base could be accomplished.

Andrew suggested that the best first step would be to draw up specs for the work and put the improvement of the road base out for bid. In this way, firm costs could be assessed, and State & Federal funding sources could be sought. Andrew noted that he will reach out to the State to see what funding is available.

As the Select Board has been discussing an article for Town Meeting on the Town's thoughts and approval of paving this section of Higley Hill Road, Andrew suggested wording that would note the overall scope of the project and the three-to-five-year time frame the complete project may take. The Board will consider this suggestion as it finalizes the 2023 Town Meeting Warning and ballot.

Andrew requested some time to discuss some Highway Department scheduling issues that he was working on. Specifically, the benefits of a pure 40-hour work week for the crew (with overtime as needed). All involved at the Highway Department feel that this is a positive move, noting that the amount of overtime built up during the winter more than makes up for the "required weekly overtime" that has been the norm for many years.

The Board felt that Andrew's proposal had great merit and that as the Road Foreman, Andrew should be able to put his plan into effect. Motion: Approve the change to the Road Crew schedule to a pure 40-hour work week (with OT as needed) with the Crew working five eight-hour days during the Winter and four ten-hour days during the summer. (Betts/Agate – Passed unanimously)

Discussion of Town Meeting Methodology

Forrest and the Board discussed voting methodology (in person Town Meeting – Australian Ballot) with Forrest noting that he had put a discussion of this issue in the current issue of the Marlboro Mixer in which he discussed the pros & cons of both methods. Forrest noted his belief that the Australian Ballot method is a positive as it greatly increases access and participation. The Board noted that this is a major question and will continue discussions at the 1/12/23 meeting and subsequent meetings.

Review and Discussion of First Draft of 2023 Town Meeting Warning

Nick presented the Board with a first draft of the 2023 Town Meeting Warning, with the goal to review several items, identify those items that need further discussion or research, and prepare the Warning for a final approval at the 1/12/23 meeting. Nick noted that several Budget items still need to be processed by the Treasurer, but that most of the requests for funding from area service organizations were in house and included. The Board decided not to present an article to fund the town joining the Windham County Sheriff's ACO co-operative as it seems to be an unnecessary expense at this time. The Board also made an adjustment to the article regarding the Select Board member's yearly stipend.

Nick noted he would provide the updated Draft Warning to the Board for their review in advance of the 1/12/23 meeting so formal adoption of the Warning could be conducted within the mandated deadline.

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Old Business

Town Administrator Report

Nick noted that in regard to the National Grid Tower Contract negotiation would move into high gear in February and that the Town would be using Lawyer Bob Fisher (who as the Brattleboro Town Attorney) will be able to provide excellent assistance in this effort.

Also, Nick also advised the Board that Jesse Krietzer, who was on the Select Board during the last negotiations would be attending the 1/26/23 Board meeting to provide his knowledge of the process and provide any help he can.

The Board also discussed the change to the Dog Ordinance concerning the setting of the “impoundment fee” will need to go through the full “ordinance change” process: The change will be voted on at the 1/26/23 meeting (with full announcement that this well be considered at the meeting); if adopted at the Board meeting, the change will be “publicly noticed” with appropriate time for public comment; if so requested by petition, the change will be brought before a “special town meeting – live & zoom – for an up or down vote.

Nick advised the Board that there had still not been any response from the HPC regarding a proposal for handling the First Aid Building mitigation and stated that he would reach out to them again to see if this project can be moved forward.

Discussion on which Planning Commission Goal to Prioritize

Tabled till next meeting

Motion to Adjourn at 7:45p – (Betts/Agate – Passed unanimously)