

**TOWN OF MARLBORO, VERMONT**  
**MARLBORO SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING ELECTION**  
**~ MINUTES of the Non-binding Informational Meeting ~**

**February 24, 2024 @ 1:00 pm in the Marlboro Community Center & by video conference**

Legal voters of the Town of Marlboro, County of Windham, State of Vermont, are hereby warned and notified that **all articles (1 - 12)** will be voted by Australian ballot. A ballot and voting instructions were mailed to all active voters of this municipality on February 14, 2024. Additionally, the polls will be open for in-person voting on Tuesday, March 5, 2024, from **9:00 A.M. – 7:00 P.M.** in the Marlboro Town House.

Informational meeting:

The legal voters and interested persons are further warned and notified that an informational meeting (discussion and information, no voting) on Articles 1 - 12 will meet in-person & via ZOOM on **Saturday, February 24, 2024**, from **1:00-2:30pm** at the Marlboro Community Center (in-person) OR for those who prefer joining remotely via ZOOM, can use the following link and/or phone number:

Link: <https://Us02web.Zoom.us/j/89755939733> Meeting Id: 897 5593 9733

To Join by Phone: 1-646-558-8656

**Present:** Marlboro School Board members Douglas Korb, Rachel Boyden (zoom), Daniel MacArthur, Andrea Burke & Natasha Russo, Town Treasurer Linda Peters, Assistant Town Treasurer Rebecca Sevigny, Town Administrator Nick Morgan, Town Clerk Forrest Holzapfel, Megan Littlehales (zoom), Keely Eastley (zoom), Nancy Anderson (zoom), Andra Horton (zoom), Lauren Poster, Eva Kopacz, Fred Kopacz, Carol Ann Johnson, David & Michelle Holzapfel, Staley McDermet, T Hunter Wilson, Jonathan Morse, Lou & Nancy Tognan, Philip Johansson, Jeremy Kirk, Jude Robinson, Patty Webster, Lucy Gratwick, Peggy Tiffany, Mark Schauber (non-voter & Executive Director for Coalition for Education Equity), Marcia Hamilton, Steven John (zoom), Catharine Rhodes, Gussie Bartlett (zoom), Peggy Tiffany (zoom), Edith Mas (zoom), Jean Boardman (zoom), Linda & Don Fuhrman (zoom), (30 participants on Zoom, fluid participation) Approximately 70 participants total.

Called to order at 1:06 PM by School Board Chair Dan MacArthur. He will guide the discussion of the articles below, going through them one at a time and he encourages questions from anyone at any time.

**Article 1:** To elect -

One (1) School Director for a three-year term ending 2027.

One (1) School Director to fill the remainder of a 3-year term ending in 2026.

Two (2) School Directors for one-year terms ending 2025.

Discussion: *Rachel Boyden and Andrea Burke are the two candidates for the two positions given the passing of Article 2 below.*

**Article 2:** To see if the voters of the Marlboro School District will approve the change from a 5-person School Board to a 3-person School Board, as of March 6 2024, with three 3-year terms one of which is elected each year.

Discussion:

- *David Holzapfel asked about how to count the inevitable write-ins, and Forrest Holzapfel responded that the passing of article 2 will make any write-ins null.*
- *Catherine Rhodes and Eva Kopacz asked if the current board members are OK with going to a three person board. Andrea Burke stated that finding new board members is very difficult.*
- *Lauren Poster asked about raising the compensation for the members with the smaller board, suggesting going back to \$1,000 per member.*
- *Rachel Boyden spoke on zoom in favor of the potential three person board.*
- *Jeremy Kirk spoke about the need to include more compensation as an equity piece that allows more diverse participation on the board.*

**Article 3:** To compensate the Directors of the Marlboro School District **\$500** each.

Discussion: See discussion of Article 2 above.

**Article 4:** To see if the voters of the Town School District will authorize the School Directors to borrow in anticipation of revenue.

Discussion:

- *Dan MacArthur detailed the contrast in the town fiscal year and the school fiscal year and the fact that the municipality usually needs to get a line of credit to meet expenses until tax money flows in in September and October.*

**Article 5:** “Shall the voters of the Marlboro School District approve the school board to expend **\$3,846,620** which is the amount the school board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year and which is approximately 2% less than the current year budget.”

Discussion:

- *Dan spoke about the budget being less than last year. Enrollment is down so MES will have fewer staff, which is a savings.*
- *Doug Korb pointed to page 57 of the Town Report and how the information displayed is already out of date due to State adjustments and other further adjustments may follow. The State is now following the new pupil weighting formulas and therefore the per pupil costs are now lower than prior years. The yield is a number used by the State to adjust school spending across all municipalities, and that number becomes final in June which leads to the State Homestead and Non-Homestead tax rates being released.*
- *Dan MacArthur spoke about the tax rate projection for the coming year.*
- *Forrest Holzapfel spoke about the Common Level of Appraisal (CLA) in Marlboro and the volatile real estate market which shows sales in town to typically have 30-40% higher sales prices than our Grand List values. To appraise the entire town will take two years.*
- *Gail MacArthur wondered if the yield would be adjusted due to the CLAs across the State.*
- *Carol Ann Johnson spoke about moving the tax burden to income rather than property taxes alone, and she would like to speak with our Senator and Representative.*
- *Steven John spoke about how the tax system currently is trying to be equitable and these measures are in place to be as fair as possible across all VT municipalities.*
- *Catharine Rhodes asked about the reduction of staff.*
- *Fred Kopacz wondered about last year's spending, will we spend the same amount? Dan MacArthur responded that he believes we will have a small surplus at the end of this year. Doug Korb stated that the small surplus is helpful when new legislation mandates new equipment, such as door locks, which otherwise funding might not be available to spend.*
- *Susan Kundhardt asked about the small schools grant, which is no longer offered but our school is helped by the new pupil weighting formulas.*

**Article 6:** “Beginning with the high school graduating Class of 2029 (currently in 7<sup>th</sup> Grade), shall the voters of the Marlboro School District change from an open tuition district and instead designate Twin Valley, Leland & Gray, and Brattleboro Union High School as the high schools of the District, meaning that the District shall pay tuition only to those designated schools thereafter, subject to 16 V.S.A. § 827? The District will continue to pay tuition to the high schools of Marlboro students’ choice through the high school graduating Class of 2028 (currently in 8<sup>th</sup> Grade).”

Discussion:

- *Dan MacArthur read the article as well as an explanation of what a YES vote means and what a NO vote means.*
- *On zoom, someone asked if a special needs student would be allowed to be transferred to a school that meets the child's needs but was not on the list of three receiving schools. This article appears for the voters because of a vote of the school board.*
- *Catharine Rhodes spoke that public schools need to educate children regardless of their needs whereas private schools are not required to provide these services.*

- *Fred Kopacz asked about the federal legislation which is discussing school choice, but this article only decides for our school district.*
- *Jeremy Kirk spoke to the article and articulated how all private schools are not all the same.*
- *On zoom, further questions from Celena Romo and Keely Eastley regarding the board's ideas behind the article.*
- *Rachel Boyden spoke about the complexity of choosing one private school and that State law at the moment dictates only 3 schools to receive this public money.*
- *Rebecca Sevigny spoke about the Career Center at BUHS, and how they support all children depending on their needs.*
- *Lauren Poster spoke about private schools and how she would hate to see this choice for children and families be removed.*
- *Adrian Segar made a statement about the school designation.*
- *School Board member Doug Korb spoke about a concerning trend toward more enrollments in private schools (22 in public school and 17 in private this past year), and further that he is concerned about the upcoming capital improvements needed on the school. He thinks paying for private education is not in good conscience something the town should continue with.*
- *Jude Robinson spoke about the diminishing funding for education and that more and more students are needing more services.*
- *Carol Ann Johnson spoke about the national trend towards private schools and less finding going toward public schools.*
- *Andrea Burke spoke about religious schools, conditions in our public schools, and further that many townspeople have benefitted from this school choice and that folks in town have moved here for this benefit.*
- *Steven John stated that he supports this article for public funds staying in public schools.*
- *Doug Korb spoke about the message this article sends to the State Legislature.*
- *Dan MacArthur spoke about the potential legal repercussions of this article, and that a Yes vote on this does potentially expose the School Board to lawsuits if a student's needs are not met, but such a lawsuit would be aggrieved parents versus the VT Agency of Education, Supervisory Union, and local school board. Doug Korb stated according to his understanding, the current article language would be our best chance of success.*

**Article 7:** To see if the voters of the Town School District will authorize the School Directors to spend any grants or other funds received by the District for school purposes.

**Discussion:** *None*

**Article 8:** To see if the voters of the Marlboro School District authorize moving the operational surplus, if any, from FY 2024 to the Capital Reserve Fund.

**Discussion:** *None*

**Article 9:** To see if the voters of the Marlboro School District will authorize the School Directors to establish an Operational Reserve Fund, to be used for such things as major building changes, emergency expenditures, or to reduce tax impact.

**Discussion:** *None*

**Article 10:** To see if the voters of the Marlboro School District will authorize the School Directors to move the balance from the Capital Reserve Fund to the Operational Reserve Fund.

**Discussion:** *None*

**Article 11:** To see if the voters of the Marlboro School District choose to return to an in-person Town Meeting pursuant to 17 V.S.A. 2640 for the purpose of adopting all budget articles by a floor vote in place of by Australian ballot.

**Discussion:** *None*

**Article 12:** To see if the voters of the Marlboro School District choose to return to an in-person Town Meeting pursuant to 17 V.S.A. 2640 for the purpose of adopting all public

questions by a floor vote in place of by Australian ballot.

Discussion: *None*

Adjournment at 2:44 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Forrest Holzapfel, Marlboro Town Clerk