

## **Minutes**

### **Town of Marlboro Select Board Meeting**

**Thursday, December 7, 2024 @ 2:00pm – Town Office & Via Zoom**

*Note: due to weather conditions the meeting was moved from Thursday, 12/5/24, the move was properly notified.*

**Attendees:** Molly Welch – SB Chair; Jeff Skramstad – SB Vice-Chair; Kate Kirkwood – Member; Nick Morgan – Town Admin/SB Assistant; Andrew Richardson – Road Supervisor.

### **BEGIN ZOOM RECORDING:**

**Call to Order @ 2:07pm**

**Sign Guidelines of Conduct - Done**

### **Regular Select Board Meeting Agenda**

Identify Any Changes to Agenda: None

**Scheduled Business** (*Note: Times are approximate -early arrival-15-20 minutes- is suggested*):

Unscheduled Open Public Comment: None

Approval of Minutes from November 25, 2024 (Welch/Kirkwood – Passed unanimously)

Signature of Pay Orders – Done (1 item needed clarification – Welch to discuss with Treasurer)

### **New Business**

Rescue Inc Contract – Nick reported that while the new contract is in hand and needs to be signed by 12/31/24, he is working with the Rescue, Inc. board to see if there is a possibility of a rate reduction. The Rescue Inc. Board will be taking this up at their next meeting (the week of 12/16/24) and have told Nick that they will advise in time for the next Select Board meeting on 12/19/24, at which time the Board can decide how to proceed.

### Town Warning:

*Select Board Yearly Stipend (Article 3)*– The Board discussed increasing the stipend to \$1,500 per Board Member (per year) for 2025 on the Warning for residents to vote on, and discussed setting up a plan to increase to \$1,500 in 2025, \$1,800 in 2026, and \$2,000 in 2027, which would be put to a vote each year. The thoughts here are that more and more is being put on the Board and such increases are overdue. Of course, the voters will have the ultimate say.

*Review of Other Articles* – The Board went through the draft Warning, noting that final numbers are not yet available for town budgets, the funding request by the MVFD; Nick noted that the Rescue Inc. number could change based on the possible reduction in the contracted rate; Nick noted he would reach out to Deerfield Valley Rescue to check on their request; Nick also reported that most of the funding requests have been received and all numbers will be verified and checked prior to the finalization of the Warning.

*Review of Funding Request Articles* – The Board noted that spurred by resident interactions at the Info Meetings, the Funding requests will mostly be grouped into three (3) relatively equal (in terms of funds) groups that will be voted on as a group. As part of this plan, each year a different group will have the fund requests split out to be voted on separately. The Board agreed that there should be three (3) groups, one that is very Marlboro centric (6 organizations), and two others (8 Organizations each) covering more regional operations, such as Health Care and Rehabilitation Services for SE VT, Groundworks Collaborative, and Grace Cottage Hospital. The Board liked the way the organizations were grouped and noted that as the process moves forward changes could be made to the groupings.

## **Marlboro Select Board Minutes – December 7, 2024 – Page Two**

### **New Business (continued)**

#### Town Warning: (continued)

*Potential Additional Articles* – Nick advised that Town Clerk Forrest Holzapfel will be bringing to the Board three (3) additional potential articles for discussion at the 12/19/24 Select Board Meeting and may be brought to the 1/11/25 Info meeting for input and opinions from residents.

These items are as follows:

- Moving to breaking up Town property taxes into two (2) installments per year commencing in 2026, which would be highly beneficial in managing Town funds and potentially limiting the need to take “revenue anticipation” loans as currently occurs with single tax payment installments. As well, having two installments could be helpful to taxpayers to budget/pay a smaller amount at two different scheduled times during the year.
- Look into implementing a Local Option Tax of 1%. This LOT can be levied on Rooms, Alcohol, Meals, and sales (including online purchases). Nick advised that Forrest is researching the issue (speaking with the state and other similar towns in Vermont) and will present that information to the Board. There was some discussion on this, noting that there is a good possibility of the Town raising significant funds through this LOT which could allow for some relief on property tax rates. The Board noted that they looked forward to hearing the research and strongly felt that this would be a good topic for discussion at the 1/11/25 Info meeting. The Board noted that prior to the info meeting and ultimately the elections, they & Forrest should put together some numbers to show some projections as to the amount of revenue gained from the LOT and what that “extra” could do to property tax rates so that the voters are fully informed. The Board also had some discussion on the mechanisms of implementing this LOT but noted that much more information from the Dept of Revenue would be needed. It was also brought up that both neighboring towns, Brattleboro and Wilmington, have this LOT.
- The third potential article would be to allocate in the Town Budget an amount to facilitate the razing of the First Aid Building on Hogback and the consequential mediation of the hazardous material (i.e. Vermiculite and Asbestos). The Board felt that at this time an amount of around \$40,000 could be the number (subject to change), and that if this was done, approach the HMCA and the HPC to advise that this would be the Town’s contribution and if the cost was higher than the amount ultimately allocated, would work with the HMCA and HPC in raising the additional needed funds. At this time the sense of the Board was to include such an article but would wait to discuss it with Forrest before making a final decision. There was also a discussion regarding the possibility of finding grants to help fund this project. Nick noted that he pursued several “Brownfield type” grants as was shot down due to issues arising from the initial transfer of the property. Kate noted that a reinvestigation of this issue could be worthwhile as well as continuing to look for grants that could help in funding this project and offered her help and expertise. One suggestion Kate offered was to look into “conservation” grants instead of “brownfield” grants. All agreed that this was a good idea.

#### Schedule Review of Town & Highway 2025 Budgets:

With the scheduled info meeting focusing on budgets scheduled for 1/11/25, the Board decided that in addition to any discussion at the regularly scheduled Select Board Meetings on 12/19 & 1/9/25, to hold a “special” budget review meeting on 1/2/25 at 3pm at the Town Office (residents are welcome to attend). The purpose being to review the budgets, make any adjustments and prepare for the info meeting.

#### Retirement Letter for Linda Peters:

Nick reported that Linda Peters requested a letter outlining all the aspects of her retirement package which he put together and needed the Select Board to sign prior to providing it to Linda. Nick noted that he also would have Linda sign and return a copy to him so it could go into Linda’s file and have a record that it was received by her. The Board was in agreement and signed the letter.

## **Marlboro Select Board Minutes – December 7, 2024 – Page Three**

### Review 1/11/25 Info Meeting agenda:

The Board reviewed the proposed agenda for the 1/11/25 info meeting, made some adjustments, additions, and changes. The Board was happy with the agenda as of now and requested Nick put it on the 12/19/24 meeting for another review and finalization.

### Review of Select Board 2025 Budget: (Tabled to 12/19 meeting)

### Discuss AAR from EM exercises:

The Board briefly discussed the After-Action Report from the Emergency Management Exercise in September 2024, noting that it was a bit discouraging, but that they were looking forward to discussing it fully with Jay Sparks (Marlboro EMD). Nick advised that he is working on meeting with Jay and VEM's Taiga Christie to do an initial review of the AAR, and that he has tentatively scheduled a 1/23/25 meeting for a full discussion of the AAR with the Board, Jay, and Taiga. He also asked the Board to review the copies of the AAR he provided and email him with any questions or areas that needed clarification. Nick confirmed that Keats Dieffenbach will be attending the 12/19/24 meeting with Jay to discuss Keats' creation at the EM Coordinator for Marlboro. The question of compensation was brought up and Nick noted that he was unsure but would investigate and report back.

### Request by EMD Jay Sparks for a "marlboroVT.US" email for increased security:

Nick reported that EMD Jay Sparks had requested that he be provided a "MarlboroVT.us" email for increased security. Nick checked with Forrest and was advised this was possible but there was a \$138.00 per year cost. **Motion: Approve the \$138.00 per year cost for a "MarlboroVT.us" email for EMD Jay Sparks. (Welch/Skramstad – Passed unanimously)**

Highway Department: No items for discussion at this meeting.

**Motion to move to Executive Session @ 3:08pm (Welch/Kirkwood – Passed Unanimously)**

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**Motion to return to regular order @ 4:30p (Welch/Kirkwood – Passed unanimously)**

### Any actions resulting from executive session:

After discussing various personnel issues, the Board considered and passed the following items:

- **Motion: Approve a \$325.00 year-end bonus for all town employees who are currently on payroll as of 12/22/24. (Welch/Skramstad – Passed unanimously)**
- **Motion: As of 1/1/25 all town employees will receive a 2.5% COLA increase in pay. (Welch/Skramstad – Passed unanimously)**
- **Motion: Approve a 2.0% merit pay increase and an increase in approved hours to 30 per week for Nicholas Morgan as of 1/1/25. (Welch/Skramstad – Passed unanimously)**
- **Motion: Approve Nicholas Morgan as eligible for the Town's Short Term Disability insurance as of 1/1/25. (Welch/Skramstad – Passed unanimously)**

### **Old Business**

#### Town Administrator Report

*Update on Keats Dieffenbach attending 12/19 meeting-* Keats and Jay will be attending.

*Update on GMP Battery Wall – All Contracts Signed – Work tentative to begin in late Feb or March'25.*

*Update on Blue Edge Health Insurance - All Documents signed, and enrollments sent.*

**Motion to Adjourn @ 4:36p (Welch/Kirkwood – Passed unanimously)**