

Draft Minutes

Town of Marlboro Select Board Meeting

Thursday, December 19, 2024 @ 6:00pm – Town Office & Via Zoom

Attendees: Molly Welch – SB Chair; Jeff Skramstad – SB Vice-Chair; Kate Kirkwood – Member (via ZOOM); Nick Morgan – Town Admin/SB Assistant; Andrew Richardson – Road Supervisor; Jay Sparks – Marlboro EMD; Keats Dieffenbach – Candidate for Marlboro EM Coordinator; Forrest Holzapfel – Town Clerk; Rebecca Sevigny – Treasurer; Lynn Scheuermann – Asst. Treasurer; Leland Smith, Jean Boardman – Residents.

BEGIN ZOOM RECORDING:

Call to Order @ 6:02pm

Sign Guidelines of Conduct - Done

Regular Select Board Meeting Agenda

Identify Any Changes to Agenda: Due to potential arrival of participants, there could be slight changes in the order of items discussed.

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

6:00-6:10p Unscheduled Open Public Comment: None

6:11p Approval of Minutes from December 7, 2024 – (Welch/Skramstad – Passed Unanimously)

6:11p Signature of Pay Orders – Done (a couple of items needed clarification – Molly to discuss with Treasurers.

New Business

Discussion with Jay Sparks & Keats Dieffenbach about EM Coordinator for Marlboro:

Marlboro EMD, Jay Sparks, came before the Board to request the appointment of an Emergency Management Coordinator for Marlboro and introduced Keats Dieffenbach as his candidate. Jay stressed that such an appointment would provide him with a local “boots on the ground” EM person to assist him in emergency situations. He noted that Keats had discussed this with him and that Keats had expressed a real interest in using the position as training towards becoming a qualified EM Director in the future. The Board discussed the position with Keats who expressed their interest and willingness to help the town in any way possible and learn the ins and outs of Emergency Management. Finally, Jay also noted that with his growing responsibilities both with the town and his position with Dartmouth-Hitchcock, he could definitely use the help and was willing to put in the time in training Keats. Compensation was discussed and it was decided to hold off on any compensation for the time being and to review the situation again later in 2025.

Motion: Appoint Keats Dieffenbach to be Emergency Management Coordinator for Marlboro, VT to assist EMD Jay Sparks in his role for Marlboro. (Skramstad/Welch – Passed Unanimously)

Review 1/11/25 Info Meeting Agenda & Draft of Town Warning:

The Board reviewed the agenda for the 1/11/25 “Info” meeting and noted no changes at this time. A review of the Draft Warning was tabled as changes since the last review had not been incorporated into the Warning at this time.

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Select Board and Town Administration Budgets:

Nick reported that he had not yet completed the budgets for the Board and the Town Admin department but would have them ready for the 1/2/25 budget review meeting. Nick did ask if it was acceptable for him to include cell phones for Road Supervisor and Town Administrator in the budget at which time the Board could provide their approval or denial of these minimal costs. The Board advised Nick to go ahead and include this in the budgets that would be reviewed at 1/2/25 meeting.

As the meeting was ahead of schedule and those people coming to discuss the Upper Houghton Road issue were not yet present, the Board decided to move the report from Town Clerk Forrest Holzapfel up into this spot.

Town Clerk Update:

Wireless Internet Connect for Town House – Forrest reported that during the recent election (11/5/24) the internet signal in the Town House, using the Wi-Fi connection from the main signal in the Town Office, was inconsistent at best and it would be greatly advantageous to have an actual router connected to the main connection to ensure adequate signal. The cost for this would be ~\$952.00, of which \$500 would come from the remaining “Election Grant” funds the town received and the remainder from the “Town House Fund” (currently around \$5,000.00). Jeff asked if a “repeater” might be a better option, but was advised that over this distance (and separate buildings) it would not greatly increase the signal strength. **Motion: Approve the use of the “election grant funds” and the “Town House Fund” to “hard wire” the Town House for internet connectivity. (Welch/Skramstad – Passed unanimously)**

New Boiler for the Town Office – Forrest advised that he had spoken with Guy E. Nido (our fuel and maintenance company) and the quote they provided & the Board approved earlier in the year (Approx. \$14,000) for a new Boiler for the Town Office to replace the old (~25 years) one, was still “good”, but due to work schedules would not be able to install until the Spring. Forrest asked whether the Board wanted to pay part of the cost now (as the cost was included in the 2024 budget) or wait. The general sense of the Board was to wait until the installation was imminent or completed (and put this cost into the 2025 budget). Forrest noted that he would reach out to Nido and confirm that this was acceptable to them and advise them of the Town’s intention to move forward with the new boiler.

State Accepted Marlboro’s Application to Complete Full Appraisal of Potash Hill Property – Forrest reported that Vermont State has approved and will conduct a full appraisal of the Potash Hill property. Forrest noted that because of this, the whole appraisal process would not be a situation that would pit the Town Listers and Potash “against” each other. Rather this is an outside entity conducting the process which should make the whole process more amicable. Forrest further advised that Brian Fogg would be conducting the appraisal, and the Assistant Vermont Attorney General would be providing legal control. Forrest was very positive about this as it will cost the town nothing and the State can work out the details of how the differences between Marlboro College and Potash Hill may impact and affect the appraisal. The Board expressed their appreciation to Forrest for spearheading and gaining this result.

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New Business (continued)

Town Clerk Update: (continued)

Question of Whether to Include an Article Seeking Voter Approval for Instituting a 1% Local Option Tax (LOT) – Forrest reported that he had contacted several Town Clerks in similar size towns to Marlboro around the State to see how much revenue they had generated with an LOT. Towns were not unanimous in how they applied the LOT, some did only an additional rooms tax (and generated a small amount of income), while other towns had instituted the full range of LOTs (Sales, Meals, Rooms, Alcohol), with one town yielding ~\$90,000. It was discussed that ultimately, while the State does take a “cut” of the funds, the town would receive 70% of the revenue, and very importantly, there would be very little to no impact on work for the town, as the State handles everything and simply sends a deposit into the town’s accounts. Forrest and the Board reviewed how other towns have fared with an LOT and which towns put it on the ballot and had it voted down. The sense of the Board was to proceed and put the question to the Voters on the March 2025 Warning/Ballot, and to continue to review other towns in Vermont and to work up numbers for what Marlboro might expect, considering the number of Airbnb’s are in the town, and what revenue might be generate through an LOT on sales. The Board acknowledged that a discussion of this will be held at the 1/11/25 info meeting and then also allow time at the statutory 2/22/25 informational meeting for a solid review and discussion so voters are well informed.

Working with the Marlboro School Board – There was a general discussion of working with the Marlboro Schoolboard and the best way to do so. It was discussed that a list of questions should be generated and also approach the School Board concerning what their “vision” is moving forward. The Board asked that as Forrest and Rebecca work up a list of questions, that it be sent to the Board members to review and add their thoughts.

Discontinuance of Upper Houghton Road:

Nick advised that he had received an email from Eric Velto, representing Linda Barber, and requesting that the town officially “discontinue” Upper Houghton Road as a town road. Leland Smith attended the meeting to act as a representative of Linda Barber at the meeting and be available to answer any questions. Nick reported that he had been in touch with Marlboro Town Lawyer and was advised of all the steps that needed to be taken and was starting the process. Bottom line is that the Board will need to notify all abutting land owners, hold a site visit and public hearing and then proceed with the process. The Board asked Leland to confirm that the request was to discontinue the entire road all the way to Cowpath, to which she answered in the affirmative, though she was unsure if Linda could make that request. It was noted that she could but was subject to abutters requesting something different. Jean asked if the road wasn’t already a private road, but it was mentioned that in actuality, many, many years ago it was a town road and was never officially changed. So, this process must now move forward. It was further discussed that the process would be moved forward, and that Nick would work with Bob Fisher and the Board to get everything started and site visits & hearings scheduled. As part of this, Forrest and Evan would get the official footage, and Nick would get this information to the attorneys to get everything moving. With this, the Board assured Leland that they would get the process going and get this done as soon as possible.

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New Business (continued)

Handling the Part of National Grid Payment “Earmarked” for Trail Maintenance:

Nick reported that Nancy Anderson (Town resident and member of the HMCA) had sent an email asking about how the funds paid by National Grid for the Tower Lease on Hogback Mountain were handled. Nick explained that during the negotiations with National Grid, it was determined that once the trail to the Tower was refurbished (paid for by National Grid), the town should consider \$1,000.00 of the yearly amount paid as funds for maintenance of the trail as in the contract, after the cost of refurbishing the trail, National Grid would not be responsible for any further payments. Nick also advised that Nancy had noted that since there was a 4% yearly “boost” included in the contract the amount segregated for maintenance should also increase, yearly. The Board asked Rebecca for her opinion of how best to segregate these funds. She advised that without actually opening a separate checking account, which is an unwieldy option, these funds (currently \$2,000) actually remain part of general funds. She further noted that she would take a look at using a line item to keep track of the amount earmarked and expended. The bottom line here is that the Town has to pay for the maintenance. The HPC is responsible for monitoring the trail and maintaining it. When the HPC notes a need for funds to do maintenance they advise the Treasurer and the Board, and those funds are approved (or not). If the funds needed are more than the earmarked funds, the town still has to pay for it, if its less than what has been earmarked, so much the better. Rebecca advised the Board that she would be able to create a “line item” for this over the next day or so, which the Board thanked her for doing. The Board then considered Nancy Anderson’s idea to include the 4% “boost” to these earmarks. Right now, the Town sees the “earmarked” funds at \$2,000, in her email, Nancy felt the total should be \$2,040. The Board felt this was not appropriate at this time and that the amount “earmarked” per year would remain at the previously accepted \$1,000 per year and not include the 4% yearly “boost”.

Highway Department:

Purchasing Policy Adjustments – Andrew came to the Board to see whether it was possible to establish a “preferred vendor” policy within the Town’s Purchasing Policy. Currently the Policy dictates that for purchases of \$25,000 or more, there must be a bid process (2 or more bids). Andrew advised that he would like to be able to establish a policy so that he could continue to order the current “sand” he is getting that is an excellent material and is highly beneficial for the roads. Nick advised that he would reach out to the VLCT for opinion and advice on this, and if need be bring town lawyer, Bob Fisher in to help write the policy. The importance here for the Highway Department is to be able to get a superior product without being handcuffed with always having to get multiple bids. The Board was supportive of investigating this process, and just wanted to make sure that whatever is done, comports with all legal strictures and standards. Nick assured the Board that he would make sure to run any final ideas by Bob Fisher to ensure the Town is on firm legal grounds.

Old Business

Town Administrator Report:

Rescue Inc. 25-28 Contract - Nick reported that his appeal to the Rescue Inc board to reduce the Town's rate due to some idiosyncrasies in the 2020 Census which Rescue Inc basis its rates on was turned down by the board as they have to have a standard on which to base their rates and right now that is the 2020 Census. Nick advised he can always go back when the 2025 Census adjustments are published and see if the town can get a reduction at that point. Nick also pointed out that Rescue does a great job keeping rates down and also does a fabulous job. The Board agreed and signed the contract.

Motion to move into Executive Session @ 7:06p (Welch/Skramstad – Passed unanimously)

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion to return to Regular Session @ 8:11p (Welch/Skramstad – Passed unanimously)

Items arising out of Exec. Session:

Note: the following motions were read by Nick, with Molly Welch moving them forward & Jeff Skramstad seconding:

Motion: Approve \$1.00 merit increase on top of already approved COLA for Robert Germon effective 1/1/25. (Passed unanimously)

Motion: Approve Robert to have the option to take paid leave at 50% of his 40-hour work week for the current week ending 12/19/24, and for this next week ending 12/26/24, pending further consideration by the Board on 1/2/25. (Passed unanimously)

Motion: For Treasurers (Rebecca & Lynn) provide a \$1.00 merit increase on top of already approved COLA increase. (Passed unanimously)

Motion: For Evan, provide a \$2.00 merit increase on top of the already approved COLA increase. (Passed unanimously)

Motion: For Evan, approve his Assistant Town Clerk work schedule from eight (8) to ten (10) hours per week. (Passed unanimously)

Motion: For Forrest, Town Clerk, approve \$5.00 merit increase on top of already approved COLA increase. (Passed unanimously)

Motion to Adjourn @ 8:14p (Welch/Skramstad – Passed unanimously)