

TOWN OF MARLBORO, VERMONT
~ Minutes of the Non-binding Informational Meeting ~
MARLBORO PRE-TOWN MEETING ELECTION : Meeting # 4 of 4

**January 11, 2025 @ 2 pm in the
Marlboro Community Center & by video conference**

Legal voters and interested persons are further warned and notified that an Informational Meeting (discussion and information, no voting) to prepare for the 2025 Town Meeting Election will meet in-person & via ZOOM on **Saturday, January 11, 2025**, from 2:00-4:00 pm at the Marlboro Community Center (in-person) or for those who prefer joining remotely via ZOOM, below is 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 Select Board members Molly Welch, Jeff Skramstad, and Kate Kirkwood, Town Administrator Nick Morgan, Town Clerk Forrest Holzapfel, Treasurer Rebecca Sevigny & Assistant Treasurer Lynn Scheuermann, Lister & DTC Evan Wyse, Malcolm Moore, Marcia Hamilton, Michelle Holzapfel, Carol Ann Johnson, Staley McDermet, Nancy & Lou Tognan, Gail MacArthur, School Board Chair Dan MacArthur, Peter Mauss, Phyllis Odessey, Jude Robinson, Jim Herrick, Phil & Andrea Howe, Catherine & Curtis Rhodes, Rachel Boyden, Susan Knipe

online: Barbara Cole, Nancy Anderson, Lucy Gratwick, Gussie Bartlett, Jean Boardman, Beth McDermet, Celia Segar, David Holzapfel, Peggy Tiffany, Amy Tudor, Don & Linda Fuhrman, Jonathan Morse, Francie Marbury

Called to order by Select Board Chair Molly Welch at 2:10 pm

Molly and Town Administrator Nick Morgan explained the procedure for the meeting and that this is the fourth of four meetings and that furthermore the statutory pre-election informational meeting will be held on **February 22, 2025 from 2 - 4 pm** in the Marlboro Community Center.

Opening Remarks:

- Molly spoke about a new format today which will include smaller breakout sessions where voters can discuss and bring questions forward to the group.

Review of draft of Town Warning

Molly Welch introduced Treasurer Rebecca Sevigny to walk us through the budget:

- Rebecca explained broadly the comparisons of income and expenses
- She noted that the Town's federal ARPA funding has been entirely expended

- Rebecca spoke about the amount of borrowing the town requires annually in order to keep solvent throughout the year and detailed some planned strategies to secure better interest rates on our funds
- Andrea Howe asked about the legal expenses and what that amount was for
- Staley McDermet asked about expenses and where interest is shown on the handout
- Nancy Tognan asked about cemetery expenses as the King Cemetery Fund has been spent way down in working on the expansion area but new funds are expected to be coming in during 2025 as new burial lots are sold
- Carol Ann Johnson asked about the mutual aid assessment line which is for Keene Mutual Aid which provides the communication links during fire and emergency situations
- Catharine Rhodes asked about the large difference in retirement costs over the prior year
- Rebecca Sevigny and Molly Welch explained the Vermont Municipal Employees Retirement System and how the Town had not been offering retirement to employees in the past but only to the Road Crew. This is a long-standing violation of State law by the Town.
- Molly Welch spoke to the difficulty of small boards with rotating volunteers and the difficulty of continuity with these types of problems. The cost to bring long-serving employees into the system and add currently eligible employees is steep but required by law.
- Jim Herrick asked about the recycling center cost and how this works for its considerable expense.
- Town Administrator Nick Morgan explained the process that Casella, our recycling contractor, undergoes with all materials
- Curt Rhodes, who works for Casella, spoke about how the sorting works and that there is a market for the plastics, but that it is shrinking
- Forrest Holzapfel stated that the recycling center amounts to about \$8 per month per household for the service provided

Breakout discussions

The voters present now turn to their neighbors in breakout groupings to discuss and formulate questions. After 10 minutes, Molly asked for the questions that each group generated

- Staley McDermet wondered about the financial report on the total income versus expense and the apparent excess funds that were raised
- Carol Ann Johnson asked about cell phone tower revenue and Molly detailed that National Grid income is the only tower owner that makes a direct payment to the Town (but it is not a cell tower), Forrest Holzapfel detailed all the other cell and radio towers in Marlboro

- Carol Ann also asked about the funding for town buildings: Molly spoke about the Town Garage mold remediation project as well as the First Aid Building on Hogback which is both hazardous and a liability. Funds to remove the building and its hazardous materials will be addressed by voters in **Article 14**
- Jude Robinson asked about spending for both Town and School. Rebecca responded that if we have unexpected, large expenses, creation of a recovery fund will allow us a buffer against a sudden cost
- Peter Mauss asked about the \$721,000 that the town borrowed from the bank and why. It is mostly from the shortfall caused by income only coming once a year with the current tax collection schedule
 - **Article 5** asks voters if they want to make two tax payments instead of one, perhaps in October and March to remedy this need to borrow annually
- Jonathan Morse is frustrated that the Zoom participants are having trouble hearing and participating. Some discussion of how to make the experience better.
- Andrea Howe returns to the expenses from 2024 and sees indebtedness of \$58,000
 - Rebecca responds that more work is needed on this report before it is finalized
- Forrest Holzapfel spoke about **Article 5** and the possibility of two tax collection dates
- Questions from Peter Mauss, Carol Ann Johnson, Catherine Rhodes, and Linda Fuhrman, who is in favor of 2 payments and zoom as a way to participate
- Discussion of **Article 6** and the pros and cons of a 1% sales tax levied on all sales in Marlboro including rooms, meals, alcoholic beverages. The State of Vermont administers the collection of the 1% tax as an addition to their sales tax. They retain 30% of the total and quarterly disburse 70% of the total collected to the Town
 - Forrest Holzapfel explained the tax and related how the tax has provided revenue in other similar sized towns in Vermont (potential for \$40,000 annual income)
 - This is a source of revenue that could help reduce the tax rate annually
 - If adopted, the tax can be repealed at any time by a town vote
 - Both good and bad ramifications discussed by voters, for instance short-term rentals like AirBnB will pay this tax as will those who make purchases in Marlboro
- 3:35 pm the MES School Board is deferring their meeting until later

Road Foreman Andrew Richardson addressed the Highway Budget

- Andrew Richardson spoke generally to the 2024 spend detailed
- They overspent on culverts but many need upgrading throughout town
- Many costs will be the same as last year and spend was very close to budget
- Catherine Rhodes asked about the CDL training costs
- Andrew Richardson replied that multiple employees have not had a CDL upon being hired and the Town paid for their training

- Jim Herrick asked about the expense and wanted to know what happens if people get the training and then quit.
- Andrew Richardson responded that legally it may not be possible to make the investment and make the employee stay
- Discussion of the culverts at the end of people's driveways and who is responsible for what
- Andrew Richardson is requesting a \$50,000 Capital Equipment Fund which will function as a buffer against rising costs and the future need for downpayments on new equipment and by 2027 all our loans for equipment will be paid off
- Currently the Town has a four person Road Crew and that a fifth employee will hopefully be hired in the spring
- Molly Welch spoke to the expense for speed tables coming to the center of Marlboro in the spring of 2025 and long-awaited traffic calming that will come with that
- Brief discussion about the Windham County Sheriff presence
- Jim Herrick spoke about keeping the roads gravel to keep traffic speeds down
- Andrew Richardson spoke about the retirement fund category that the road employees currently have and the increase they are requesting
- Andrew Richardson and Molly Welch detailed the Equipment Fund and how the rate we pay into the fund for equipment will never make enough to replace the machine, we could not charge enough to make this possible
- Michelle Holzapfel wondered if the Equipment Fund is an artifact of an older time? Andrew says the idea may have worked in the past, but has not worked more recently
- Andrew Richardson discussed the radios the Road Crew uses.
- Discussion of the cost of tires, cutting edges (bottom of plows and grader), and the details of the categories in the road budget.
- Catherine Rhodes appreciates the details shared by this data display and budget.
- Andrew Richardson appreciates all the support that townspeople have been giving the Road Crew.
- On Zoom, Beth McDermet thanked everyone for the ability to participate from home.

Molly thanked those present here and on Zoom and then moved to adjourn the Town portion of the meeting at 4:25 pm

Reconvene the School portion of the meeting

Marlboro School Board meeting, started at 4:27 pm

- School Board Chair Dan MacArthur spoke about the big picture of the upcoming budget
- The State Legislature is radically changing education funding and the future is unclear. The board is trying to keep the programming the same.

- Currently looking at a 5% budget increase for the coming year somewhat based on the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Vermont's state-wide 15% health care increase
- Dan MacArthur spoke about the \$429,000 surplus from the prior year which will be used to reduce the tax impact for the coming year
- This coming Thursday January 16, 2025 the School Board will be finalizing their budget and posting it on the MES website
- Rachel Boyden has agreed to run again for a three-year term
- Dan MacArthur spoke about the help that the Supervisory Union provides to us on the extensive number crunching needed to produce these highly detailed budgets
- Rebecca Sevigny spoke about the ways capital funds can help buffer expenses in the future
- The statutory **Informational Meeting for both Town and School** in advance of the election will be **February 22, 2025 at 2 pm** and will meet at the Marlboro Community Center to discuss each article on both the Town and School ballots
- Carol Ann Johnson stated that Vermont is the second-lowest recipient of federal education funding in the nation and she hopes the Vermont delegation can change this
- Dan MacArthur stated that currently only 4% of Special Education costs are covered by the federal government, which is difficult to comprehend and Dan hopes the small towns in Vermont can retain their schools
- Peggy Tiffany asked about the school building and its needs. Dan stated that one idea, of moving to the school to Potash Hill, will cost us money
- The current school building repair needs won't go away and the Board is trying to keep patching the holes until there is more comprehensive funding from the state
- Molly Welch asked about Special Education and the escalation of costs
- Dan MacArthur replied that these costs are paid by the Supervisory Union which we pay into which is a stable way to fund this essential service
- Rebecca Sevigny asked about how the School moving to Potash Hill would work and if the town would be paying rent, which it would
 - Would the current school building be sold?
 - Dan MacArthur stated that one firm thought it could be sold for \$150,000 and ideas abound as to what possible other uses the building could be utilized for

School meeting adjourned at 4:58 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Forrest Holzapfel, Marlboro Town Clerk