

TOWN OF MARLBORO, VERMONT
MARLBORO SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING ELECTION
~ MINUTES of the Non-binding Informational Meeting ~
February 22, 2025 @ 3:30 pm at
Marlboro Elementary School & by video conference by BCTV

Legal voters of the Town of Marlboro, County of Windham, State of Vermont, are hereby warned and notified that **all articles (1 - 8)** will be voted by Australian ballot. A ballot and voting instructions were mailed to all active voters of this municipality on February 12, 2025. Additionally, the polls will be open for in-person voting on Tuesday, March 4, 2025, 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 - 8 will meet in-person & via ZOOM on **Saturday, February 22, 2025**, from **3:30-5:00pm** at Marlboro Elementary School (in-person) OR for those who prefer joining remotely via ZOOM, can use the following link and/or phone number:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89235574264> To Join by Phone: 1-646-558-8656

Present: Marlboro School Board members Dan MacArthur & Rachel Boyden, Town Clerk Forrest Holzapfel, Town Treasurer Rebecca Sevigny, Patty Webster, Jerry Lundsted, Tamara Stenn, Jesse Lepkoff, Carol Ann Johnson, Kalya Yannatos, Jeff Skramstad, Beth McDermet (zoom), David Holzapfel, Lucy Gratwick, Louis Tognan, Nancy Tognan, Michael Boylen, Michelle Holzapfel, Nancy Anderson, Staley McDermet, Marcia Hamilton (zoom), Gussie Bartlett (zoom), Peggy Tiffany (zoom), Jean Boardman (zoom), Lindy Corman (zoom). Approximately 25 participants total.

School Board Chair Dan MacArthur opened the meeting at 3:56 PM and spoke about the School Board budget generally and how we are part of a big State system that is increasingly under the strain of change.

- Page 78 of the Town Report – Education Spending Grant.
- \$4,088,034.00 budget has increases in health insurance, step increase in salaries, and if the budget passes, they are authorized to spend that amount.
- The \$429,000.00 line shows that all of that fund balance surplus will be used this year to reduce the tax rate instead of keeping it for an unknown future use. The tax rates have been very high and the Board is doing their best to to reduce the taxes and have removed this money which was held as a buffer.
- Pre-Kindergarten cost shown separately
- Page 79 - 80 is all K - 6 grade and the various details showing costs of the building
- Page 84 shows the total costs as the current forms don't have column totals, sorry

- The school tax rate should be going down this year based on their cuts
- Page 8 of the Town Report, the School is asking to raise between \$3.7 and \$4 million
- Dan MacArthur detailed how Homestead owners paid \$1.27 million after income sensitivity, while Non- Residents property owners paid \$1.37 million, with the balance paid by the State of Vermont
- Dan MacArthur replied to Carol Ann Johnson’s question about the \$136,000 that went to student meals and that the School Board no longer includes free meals for staff, and if they want lunch payment is needed
- Lucy Gratwick asked about the secondary school costs shown as 7 - 12 grades and Dan MacArthur clarified the locations in the Town Report showing the information
- Tamara Stenn asked about page 78, and the “Local Tuition” students line 41301 and further wondered if these new students would be tuitioning in?
 - Dan MacArthur responded that Special Education costs have been taken over by the Supervisory Union. Tuition to MES is around \$16,000 per year.
- Peggy Tiffany asked if Marlboro School employees get reduced tuition for their children who are attending?
 - Yes the School Board has granted 4 students whose parents work at MES ½ price tuition. Previously, the employees were allowed to send their children to MES for free, but the terms have now changed.
- JW asked “What has happened with the School building which is in need of extreme repairs?”
 - Dan MacArthur explained that PCBs *{Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) are toxic chemicals that harm human and environmental health. They were once used in many industrial applications, but were banned in the United States in 1979}* have been identified in the original building in the nurse’s office and that children can only be in the room for 15 minutes at a time to reduce the risk of exposure. Further he stated that the Board has hired architects to look into the feasibility of keeping the building among the host of repairs needed.
- Dan MacArthur further described how the State has thrown the education funding system into complete revision, so the School Board is on hold with the building and maintenance issues since there is so much uncertainty of funding in the short term. Further the excess spending penalty was suspended during COVID but has now been reinstated, meaning that the Board has a very narrow discretion for spending.
- Forrest Holzapfel requested moving to the Articles as follows:

Article 1: To elect One (1) School Director for a three-year term ending 2028.

Discussion: *Rachel Boyden stated that she is the candidate for the position.*

Article 2: To compensate the Directors of the Marlboro School District **\$500** each.

Discussion:

- Forrest Holzapfel pointed out that last year's minutes (which do not appear in the Town Report) included a statement from former School Board member Jeremy Kirk who felt the compensation is so low that it is unattractive as a position for anyone to volunteer for and will be unattainable by anyone without means to participate.

Article 3: To see if the voters of the Town School District will authorize the School Directors to borrow in anticipation of revenue.

Discussion: *None.*

Article 4: "Shall the voters of the Marlboro School District approve the School Board to expend **\$4,088,434.00** which is the amount the School Board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year? The Marlboro School District estimates that this proposed budget, if approved, will result in per pupil education spending of \$16,350, which is 1.94% lower than per pupil spending for the current year."

Discussion:

- *Dan MacArthur stated that they are authorized to spend the entire amount but the total may end up being less*
- *Susan Kundhardt and Woody Bernhard asked "how do we compare education spending here in relation to other towns?" The Board was unsure on specifics. They knew when our District was one of the highest spending in the State in the past, but that has changed in recent years and currently spending is somewhere in the middle.*

Article 5: 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:

- *Dan MacArthur spoke briefly about this authorization.*

Article 6: To see if the voters of the Marlboro School District authorize School Directors to move the operational surplus from FY 2024, if any, to the Operational Reserve Fund.

Discussion:

- *Nancy Anderson asked if FY 2024 would be allowed since it should read 2025, Dan MacArthur wonders if this is legal and was the board's error. Unclear if this is correct or not.*
- *Forrest Holzapfel stated that the Warning as submitted to him for publication was incorrect and further stated that he corrected items for the ballot but that the Warning was submitted without signatures and full of numerical and typographical errors.*

Article 7: 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.

Article 8: 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 on 7 & 8:

- *Forrest Holzapfel read a prepared statement attached to these minutes*
- *Rachel Boyden and Dan MacArthur spoke about their reasoning for including these articles even though they have been unanimously voted down on the last two consecutive years*
- *David Holzapfel asked if the Town government's process could be replicated by the School Board as the series of meetings held allowed far more opportunity for discussion*
- *Gail MacArthur said that only Australian ballot can be used to go back to a voice vote Town Meeting so keeping this article makes sense*
- *Jeff Skramstad discussed the Select Board's position and response to the prior votes*
- *Tim Whitney on zoom questioned when does the cost of operating the school become untenable? If the demographics indicate that it is too much cost and it seems the school could face closing*
- *Rebecca spoke about her experience as Treasurer, and that she feels as though asking the questions on 7&8 repetitively would make sense if the votes for and against were close but they were not*
- *David Holzapfel spoke about the tradition of voting and that only propertied white males could vote in the past, and sometimes traditions no longer the serve the population*
- *Nancy Anderson spoke about the pre-Town Meeting informational meetings in the past and that it would be generous to say that there would be more than 5 people there who were not town officers. Furthermore she considered that the voice vote meeting showed that many voters would ask questions which showed where they had clearly not read any of the town reports contents but that the Town's new format offered many opportunities to learn about the operation of the town and the opportunity to ask questions*
- *Dan MacArthur thanked those present*
- *Mo Hart thanked the School Board and Town Clerk and suggested that we need to reach across the aisle to one another to get these communications fixed to keep civility and support for each other*
- *Many thanks to School Board, Town Clerk, Select Board from Woody Bernhard and Susan Kundhardt*
- *Thanks to BCTV for recording the meeting which will be available on the town website*

Adjournment at 5:21 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Forrest Holzapfel, Marlboro Town Clerk