SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES
OF JANUARY 3, 2023

Members: Bob Beeman, Judy Bickford, Brian Kellogg, Don McDowell, Jessica Graham

Absent:

ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Eric Dodge, Town Administrator; Judi Alberi, Administrator's Assistant; Kevin Barrows, Highway Superintendent; Scott Longe, Foreman; Jason Luneau, Police Chief; Tina Sweet, Finance Director; Stacey Ferriman, Assistant Finance Director; Bill Mapes*, EMS Chief; Todd Thomas*, Zoning/Planning Director.

PARTICIPANTS/GUESTS:Tom Cloutier, Kristin Marriott, Barry Russo, Sheila Tarbox, Tony Cote, Laura Streets, Cathy Chaffee*, Mary Ann Wilson*, Chris Audi*

**participating via Zoom*

CALL SELECTBOARD MEETING TO ORDER
Bob Beeman called the Selectboard Meeting to order at 6:01PM at the Tegu Building.

AGENDA CHANGES/ADDITIONS
Under Liquor control add: Review of Tobacco License
Under Old Business add; Phase II Construction revised motion

APPROVE MINUTES

1. **Approve Minutes 12-19-22**
   Motion made by Brian Kellogg to approve the minutes of December 19, 2022. Motion seconded by Don McDowell. Motion carried (5/0) with amendments.

   Jess Graham asked to change the "?" to a "." on page 2, second paragraph "It was discussed about who will pay for the balance if the grant does not cover the complete cost."
   Jess Graham asked to add to Selectboard comments: amended budget schedule every other Monday and would like to see the regularly scheduled meetings longer.

2. **Approve Minutes 12-27-22**
   Motion made by Brian Kellogg to approve the minutes of December 27, 2022. Motion seconded by Judy Bickford. Motion carried. (4/0). Judy Bickford abstained.

LIQUOR CONTROL

1. **Big Intelligence Group DBA Wild Legacy Cannabis**

On a motion by Judy Bickford, motion seconded by Brian Kellogg, the Selectboard recessed their regular meeting to meet as the Board of Liquor Control at 6:05PM. Motion carried. (5/0)

Motion made by Brian Kellogg to approve tobacco license for Big Intelligence Group DBA Wild Legacy Cannabis. Motion seconded by Judy Bickford. Motion carried. (4/1) Jess Graham against

Jess Graham expressed concerns due to the proximity to schools in the area.

On a motion by Brian Kellogg, motion seconded by Judy Bickford, the Selectboard came out of Liquor Control at 6:10PM. Motion Carried. (5/0)

NEW BUSINESS

1. **Budget Overview**

Tina Sweet applied the suggested changes by Eric Dodge and the Selectboard from the meeting of December 27, 2022 and presented the Selectboard with the revised budget. After approximately 1/2 million dollar cuts to the overall budget, the Selectboard is looking at an increase in the overall budget of approximately over 32%. The previous Selectboard had given the former Town Administrator specific guidance on keeping the rate of increase for the budget very low, which has shown to have stalled the growth of local government structure.

The salaries and benefits for staff are more than approximately 54% of the budget. The cost of living adjustment is 8.7% for 2022, which is the largest the town has seen in a long time. The cost of utilities and services such as fuel, propane, electricity, road salt etc... are also very high and are areas that the town has no control over, yet we must have these services to operate daily. A budget increase of 32% does not equate to a 32% increase in property taxes.

Chief Luneau presented data in support of his request for a new police officer. From 2020 - 2021, the Morristown Police Department saw an increase of 13% in the number of service calls and from 2021 - 2022 an increase of 25% in service calls. In an informal roll call, the Selectboard is in agreement with Chief Luneau to hire a new police officer.

One of the proposed cuts discussed was the Assistant Zoning Administrator. Todd Thomas is the only staff member that currently works in the Zoning/Planning Department for the Town. Eric Dodge has expressed concerns that Todd is a "one person show" in the zoning office. If Todd was unable to come to work, there would be no qualified personnel to step into his shoes. After discussion, the Selectboard has various opinions on whether an assistant should be hired, maybe bring in an assistant January 2024.

There were concerns expressed by the citizens in attendance along with Selectboard members addressing the issue of educating the town citizens that have not been attending the budget meetings over the past 3 months. Chair Bob Beeman and Eric Dodge will be meeting with Tommy Gardiner from News and Citizen to clarify to the town citizens the budgetary process, and how the budget increase affects taxpayers through a newspaper article.

The Selectboard members will digest this information and bring the Budget discussion back on January

17th agenda for further consideration.

OLD BUSINESS

1. **Phase II Construction Revised Motion**
   The order of the agenda changed during the meeting to accommodate this needed motion prior to moving on to the budget overview.

   Motion made by Don McDowell to approve the construction proposal in the amount of $116,019.96 from Donny Blake Jr., Inc for the second phase of the second floor of the Tegu Building and authorize Bob Beeman to sign the acceptance of agreement. Funds will be utilized from the Municipal Building Fund. Motion seconded by Judy Bickford. Motion carried. (5/0)

APPROVE WARRANTS

Motion made by Brian Kellogg to approve the warrants. Motion seconded by Judy Bickford. Motion carried. (5/0)

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Eric attended the Legislature's breakfast at the GMTCC this morning. Great meeting with lots of good information.

SELECTBOARD CONCERNS

Don McDowell - Breakfast with legislature's as well. Thanked Eric for speaking up in regards to the budget increase for 2023. Theft in downtown Morrisville is a concern. Thanks to MW&L and Vermont Electric Co-Op for acting quickly and getting services turned back on after many lost power. Thanks for having more citizens here this evening.
Judy Bickford - Thanks to MW&L
Jess Graham - Thanks for getting the streets cleaned up and the hours put in after the recent holiday storm
Brian Kellogg - Thanks for working on this hard budget and getting the streets cleaned up after the recent holiday storm.
Bob Beeman - Echo all - thanks the highway crew for getting everything cleaned up so quickly and removing a fallen tree in the road near his driveway.

Eric Dodge - Spent time with Scott Johnstone today and Scott expressed gratitude to our highway crew for helping out the MW&L during the recent storm.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS

Community concerns were expressed regarding the budget increase and helping to inform the citizens that will be voting. Concerns were expressed that the budgetary process is hard to understand, especially if you have not attended meetings. There are a few citizens that would like all the articles on the Australian ballot. There was discussion surrounding the mailing of all ballots. There is data supporting the fact that more citizens return mailed out ballots than attend in-person voting.

OTHER BUSINESS

None

ADJOURN

Motion made by Don McDowell to adjourn. Motion seconded by Judy Bickford. Motion carried. (5/0)

Meeting adjourned at 7:52PM
Submitted and filed this January 4, 2023
Amended January 18, 2023
Judi Alberi, Scribe

Please note all minutes are in Draft form and are subject to approval at the next Selectboard meeting.