



SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 27, 2023

Members: Judy Bickford, Brian Kellogg, Don McDowell

Absent: Bob Beeman, Jessica Graham

ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Eric Dodge, Town Administrator; Judi Alberi, Administrator's Assistant; Kevin Barrows, Highway Superintendent; Jason Luneau, Police Chief; Tina Sweet, Finance Director; Bill Mapes, EMS Chief; Paula Beattie, Human Resources Director; Sara Haskins, Town Clerk/Treasurer; Mitzi Fleming*, Assistant Town Clerk/Treasurer: Stacey Ferriman*, Assistant Finance Director; Tricia Follert, Community Development Coordinator; Anna McCormick, Recreation Coordinator;

PARTICIPANTS/GUESTS: Stuart May, Tom Cloutier, Richard Craig, Travis Sabatoso, Theresa Snow, Elaine Fortin, Bill Robinson, Martin Green, Laura Green, Kristin Marriett, Paul E Hertz, Charles Burnham, David E. Campbell, Tony Cote, David Ring, Laura Streets, Sheila Tarbox, Donnie Blake, James Rauchman, Greg Vossler, Jerry Throne, Mary Lou Nichols, Jamie Brewster*, Kathy Chaffee*, Mary Ann Wilson*, Evelyn Throne, Richard Lowe.

**participating via Zoom*

CALL SELECTBOARD INFORMATIONAL HEARING TO ORDER

Judy Bickford announced that Bob Beeman was still out due to an illness in the family.

Moderator Shap Smith called the Informational Meeting to order at 6:00PM at the Tegu Building. Various announcements were made as to how the meeting would be conducted and the expectations of the audience.

AGENDA CHANGES/ADDITIONS

None

REVIEW AND DISCUSS ARTICLES

1. **ARTICLE 3:** Shall the voters authorize payment of real and personal property taxes in two equal installments, with the due dates being November 15, 2023 and May 15, 2024 by physical delivery to the Town Treasurer before 4:00 pm on that date or delivery to the Municipal Office postmarked on or before that date?

No questions from the audience. Judy Bickford mentioned to the audience that if this article does not pass, then taxes will be due 30 days after mailing them out.

ARTICLE 4: Shall the voters authorize total fund expenditures for operating expenses of \$10,106,209, of which \$8,656,282 shall be raised by taxes and \$1,449,927 by non-tax revenues?

Some citizens in attendance were seeking answers regarding the general government budget. The budget can be found on pages 36-48 of the Town of Morristown Annual Town Report for 2022. Town Administrator, Eric Dodge, answered several questions from the audience, mostly surrounding salaries/wages/benefits of town employees. Eric explained, in depth, to the citizens that with so many employees rethinking and leaving their jobs, having a solid employee retention strategy is more important than ever. The town is fortunate to have many skilled employees that are experts in their fields. The financial costs of recruiting and training new employees can be a big blow to the budget but also morale and productivity. Compensation is certainly a driver of employee turnover. In order to keep your employees engaged with their jobs, competitive compensation needs to be a priority. Other factors increasing the budget figures are services and materials. Price increases and supply shortages are playing out across the economy. Costs for materials like salt, gravel, fuel, propane and many other materials are still very costly and driving up the budget as well.

ARTICLE 5: Shall the voters authorize the construction of sidewalks on Jersey Way, any remaining balance should be used for sidewalk operating expenses in an amount not to exceed Two-Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$200,000) to be financed over a period not to exceed five years?

It has been brought to our attention that the wording in Article 5 of the Town Meeting Warning is incorrect. The article speaks to funding a sidewalk project in Jersey "Way". In actuality, the project is in Jersey "Heights". Following legal advice, the Selectboard has opted to take the following action to resolve this matter according to the last: All votes cast for, or against Article 5 on the Australian Ballot will be disregarded. Article 5 with the corrected street name, will be brought to the voters for consideration at the special floor meeting scheduled for April 18, 2023.

ARTICLE 6: Shall the voters authorize the purchase of an ambulance and power stretcher in an amount not to exceed Three-Hundred Thirty-Five Thousand Dollars (\$335,000) to be financed over a period not to exceed five years?

Bill Mapes, EMS Chief, spoke about the need for a new ambulance purchase. The Town of Morristown EMS(MEMS) crew are the primary responders for Morristown and Elmore. Elmore will pay a subscription fee of \$30,500 for FY 23-24 and \$35,000 for FY 24-25. MEMS also provides Paramedic Intercept services, which are ALS services provided by MEMS. This type of service is most often provided for emergency ambulance transport, in which a local volunteer ambulance that can provide only basic life support (BLS) level of service is dispatched to transport a patient. MEMS has 6 paramedics and is often dispatched to other towns due to the quality of MEMS personnel for paramedic intercept. The requesting agency can bill for a higher level of service when MEMS provides paramedics. In January 2023 the Selectboard approved billing agencies that are requesting paramedic intercept for \$250 per incident.

ARTICLE 7: Shall the voters establish a reserve fund to be called the Unallocated Reserve Fund to replace both the General Fund Unallocated Reserve Fund and the Highway Fund Unallocated Reserve Fund in an amount not to exceed 10% of the prior year's operating budget be used for covering unanticipated revenue shortfalls and to pay unanticipated expenditures, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §2804?

This article does not ask for any additional taxpayer funds. The law changed last year and now allows for all unallocated reserve funds to be commingled into one account. This article asks for permission to combine the two existing accounts into one.

ARTICLE 8: Shall the voters establish a reserve fund to be called the Municipal Building Capital Reserve Fund to be used for the purposes of the construction or improvement of municipal buildings and deposit approximately \$988,887.37 from the general fund surplus created from former ARPA funds to fund this reserve fund, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §2804?

This article does not ask for any additional taxpayer funds. This article asks for permission to create a new reserve account.

ARTICLE 9: Shall the voters establish a reserve fund to be called the Bridge and Highway Infrastructure Reserve Fund to be used for the purposes of the construction or improvement of bridges and highway infrastructure and deposit approximately \$306,450.42 from the current bridge account to fund this reserve fund, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §2804?

This article does not ask for any additional taxpayer funds. This article asks for permission to convert an existing account into a new reserve account.

ARTICLE 10: Shall the voters authorize raising taxes equal to one (1) cent on the Grand List approximately \$67,757 to be dedicated to a Morristown Fire Department Capital Equipment Fund?

ARTICLE 11: Shall the voters authorize raising taxes equal to one (1) cent on the Grand List approximately \$67,757 to be dedicated to a Morristown Highway Department Capital Equipment Fund?

ARTICLE 12: Shall the voters authorize raising taxes equal to one-half (1/2) cent on the Grand List approximately \$33,879 to be dedicated to the Noyes House Museum Repair and Maintenance Fund?

ARTICLE 13: Shall the voters authorize raising taxes equal to one-half (1/2) cent on the Grand List approximately \$33,879 to be dedicated to the Morristown Conservation Commission Fund?

ARTICLE 14: Shall the voters authorize raising taxes equal to one-half (1/2) cent on the Grand List approximately \$33,879 to be dedicated to the Bridge and Highway Infrastructure Reserve Fund?

ARTICLE 15: Shall the Town of Morristown vote to raise, appropriate and expend the sum of \$900 for the support of Capstone Community Action to provide services to residents of the Town?

ARTICLE 16: Shall the Town of Morristown vote to raise, appropriate and expend the sum of \$2,900 for the support of Central Vermont Adult Basic Education (CVABE) to provide services to residents of the Town?

ARTICLE 17: Shall the Town of Morristown vote to raise, appropriate and expend the sum of \$2,500 for the support of Central Vermont Council on Aging (CVCOA) to provide services to residents of the Town?

ARTICLE 18: Shall the Town of Morristown vote to raise, appropriate and expend the sum of \$1,750

for the support of Clarina Howard Nichols Center to provide services to residents of the Town?

ARTICLE 19: Shall the Town of Morristown vote to raise, appropriate and expend the sum of \$1,000 for the support of Justice for Dogs to provide services to residents of the Town?

ARTICLE 20: Shall the Town of Morristown vote to raise, appropriate and expend the sum of \$2,500 for the support of Lamoille County Civic Association to provide services to residents of the Town?

ARTICLE 21: Shall the Town of Morristown vote to raise, appropriate and expend the sum of \$5,000 for the support of Lamoille County Food Share to provide services to residents of the Town?

ARTICLE 22: Shall the Town of Morristown vote to raise, appropriate and expend the sum of \$1,000 for the support of Lamoille County Habitat for Humanity to provide services to residents of the Town?

ARTICLE 23: Shall the Town of Morristown vote to raise, appropriate and expend the sum of \$3,900 for the support of Lamoille County Mental Health/Community Connections to provide services to residents of the Town?

ARTICLE 24: Shall the Town of Morristown vote to raise, appropriate and expend the sum of \$3,375 for the support of Lamoille County Special Investigation Unit to provide services to residents of the Town?

ARTICLE 25: Shall the Town of Morristown vote to raise, appropriate and expend the sum of \$4,000 for the support of Lamoille Day Services to provide services to residents of the Town?

ARTICLE 26: Shall the Town of Morristown vote to raise, appropriate and expend the sum of \$4,000 for the support of Lamoille Economic Development Council (LEDC) to provide services to residents of the Town?

ARTICLE 27: Shall the Town of Morristown vote to raise, appropriate and expend the sum of \$3,000 for the support of Lamoille Family Center to provide services to residents of the Town?

ARTICLE 28: Shall the Town of Morristown vote to raise, appropriate and expend the sum of \$15,000 for the support of Lamoille Health Partners Community Center to provide services to residents of the Town?

Stuart May, President/Chief Executive Officer of Lamoille Health Partners, was present to give a brief presentation of the Lamoille Health Partners Community Center (LHPCC) located at 28 Union Street, Morrisville. Currently, the community center is being used for after-school program grades 5-12, a senior program for the aging population, and has partnered with the Lamoille South Unified Union Life Skills Program. There is a diverse group of students accessing the center and all it has to offer, such as table tennis, healthy snacks, creative projects, culinary delights and the opportunity to work as a team to solve challenging problems. A report was not requested as LHPCC is a brand new agency that took over the agency E=MC². The funds previously appropriated to E=MC² was paid to them and that money was then transferred to LHPCC and used as intended. Stuart is looking for support for this organization.

ARTICLE 29: Shall the Town of Morristown vote to raise, appropriate and expend the sum of \$15,681 for the support of Lamoille Home Health and Hospice to provide services to residents of the Town?

ARTICLE 30: Shall the Town of Morristown vote to raise, appropriate and expend the sum of \$1,000 for the support of Lamoille Housing Partnership to provide services to residents of the Town?

ARTICLE 31: Shall the Town of Morristown vote to raise, appropriate and expend the sum of \$1,500 for the support of Lamoille Restorative Center to provide services to residents of the Town?

ARTICLE 32: Shall the Town of Morristown vote to raise, appropriate and expend the sum of \$10,000 for the support of Meals on Wheels of Lamoille County to provide services to residents of the Town?

ARTICLE 33: Shall the Town of Morristown vote to raise, appropriate and expend the sum of \$1,000 for the support of North Country Animal League (NCAL) to provide services to residents of the Town?

ARTICLE 34: Shall the Town of Morristown vote to raise, appropriate and expend the sum of \$1,000 for the support of Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) to provide services to residents of the Town?

ARTICLE 35: Shall the Town of Morristown vote to raise, appropriate and expend the sum of \$10,000 for the support of River Arts to provide services to residents of the Town?

ARTICLE 36: Shall the Town of Morristown vote to raise, appropriate and expend the sum of \$10,963 for the support of Rural Community Transportation (RCT) to provide services to residents of the Town?

ARTICLE 37: Shall the Town of Morristown vote to raise, appropriate and expend the sum of \$2,500 for the support of Salvation Farms to provide services to residents of the Town?

Theresa Snow, founder of Salvation Farms, is mostly known for the act of "gleaning". Gleaning is the act of collecting leftover crops from farmers' fields after they have been harvested. This product is then distributed to local food sites. Theresa provided data for the year of 2022: Salvation farms collected over 82,000lbs of food with 183 volunteers working 750 hours. Theresa is looking for support for this organization.

ADJOURN

Prior to ending the meeting, there was a question about what happens if articles fail? Sara Haskins indicated that if Article 3 fails, then the tax due date will revert back to state statute and tax bills will be due in full by midnight, 30 days after bills are mailed out, which would be at the end of October. If Article 4 fails, then the budget will have to be revoted in the same manner that the budget was voted on originally. Therefore, the vote would be by Australian ballot and ballots would be mailed to all active voters. If the budget were to fail a second time, then this process would continue until a budget passes. If Article 15-37 fails, voters would need to submit a valid petition with signatures from 5% of the voter checklist in order to rescind the original vote and have a revote.

Meeting ended at 8:42pm

Submitted and filed this March 2, 2023 .

Judi Alberi, Scribe

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