



SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES OF JULY 6, 2023

Members: Judy Bickford, Don McDowell, Christopher Palermo, Laura Streets

Absent:

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

PARTICIPANTS/GUESTS: Yon Perras, Uwanna Perras, Paul Griswold, Tom Cloutier, Ron Stancliff, Jamie Jaret, Martin Green, Susan Sinnott, Gary Sinnott, Laura Green, Bob Bortree, Alexander Cyr, James and Chantel Binginot, Christy Snipp, Will Spalding, Sheila Tarbox, Tony Cote, Steph Hoffman, Evelyn and Jerry Throne, Tom Stames, Richard Cote, Julia Compagna, Kathy Chaffee*, Mary Lou Nichols*, Alison Link, Tyler Machia*

**participating via Zoom*

CALL SELECTBOARD MEETING TO ORDER

Judy Bickford called the Selectboard Meeting to order at 5:30PM at the Tegu Building.

AGENDA CHANGES/ADDITIONS

None

NEW BUSINESS

1. Set the date for the budget revote

Sara Haskins, Town Clerk/Treasurer, presented the Selectboard with various timelines on which the budget revote could happen and how they would affect the due date for property taxes. After much discussion, the board chose to have the budget revote (election) on Tuesday August 29th. The warning will need to be signed on July 24th, tax rate will hopefully be set around October 2nd with tax bills going in the mail within the first 2 weeks of October. Property taxes will then be due on Wednesday November 15th. This is the last date to hold the election that will allow for the vote on November 15th due date. Sara also reminded the Board that education and village taxes are also collected on the same tax bill.

2. Discuss Vacant Selectboard Seat

The Selectboard appointed Christopher Palermo after Bob Beeman's resignation. That seat is held by Chris until the next election, which will be August 29th. The Selectboard also has an empty seat at this time with Travis Sabataso's resignation. The Selectboard discussed having the two Selectboard seats

voted on with the budget revote on August 29th. The vacant seat formerly held by Travis is a two-year term that expires March 2025 and the appointed seat held by Christopher Palermo is a three-year term that expires March 2024.

Petitions for Selectboard seats can be downloaded online on the town website or they can be picked up at the town clerk's office.

Motion made by Don McDowell that the vacant Selectboard seat and the appointed Selectboard seat currently held by Christopher Palermo be voted upon at the special election on August 29, 2023. Motion seconded by Christopher Palermo. Motion carried. (4/0)

3. Budget Discussions - Untable

Motion made by Christopher Palermo to un-table the budget discussion from the August 3, 2023 meeting. Motion seconded by Laura Streets. Motion carried. (4/0)

The budget will be voted on again on August 29, 2023. Previously, the voters have already approved raising the following on the grand list:

1 cent for Highway Capitol

1 cent for Fire Capitol

1/2 cent for Bridge and Infrastructure Reserve

Laura Streets presented the following ideas given to her by community folks for cutting the budget:

1. Hiring Freeze - no new hires - internal restructure. Hiring a company to come in and do comparative study, which would be very comprehensive. Freeze steps - \$20,450.33

2. Morristown Centennial Library - 60.94% increase in budget. Should the library be level funded? \$113,350

3. Maintain Rec Coordinator part time \$41,634

4. Hold off on the Police Officer \$95,281.74

The total decrease if the four line items above were passed would be \$270,716.07

Christopher Palermo wanted to make folks aware that an estimate on a \$500,000 home value would save \$48 a year if the library is to be level funded.

Steph Hoffman presented to the folks how much the library is needed in the community. The library is non-profit with an endowment. Many folks need an after-school program for children. Library employees are not town employees, so that is a huge savings and the library is ranked 1st in the State of Vermont for number of programs offered. Water, propane, electricity and other necessary items have increased, just as the town and homeowners' bills have increased.

Lots of ideas were presented by the community. Tina Sweet, Finance Director, was able to answer a lot of the questions and create clarity. The history of the Recreation and Parks aspect of the town was a topic leading up to the importance of a recreation director and the need for the program to be full time. Anna McCormick spoke in regards to \$182,000 worth of grants she could apply for if she were full time. Anna's department could be self-sustaining given time to work full time and apply for grants. Chief Luneau spoke of the increase in incidents and arrests. Morristown Police Department (MPD) needs another patrol officer due to increased incidents and arrests. Retention is very important. It takes approximately a year to get a new police officer up to speed. MPD recently took over as the animal control office, transporting arrested folks to the correctional facility takes 2 officers on overtime to drive to St. Johnsbury, also transporting inebriated folks to St. Johnsbury to sober up.

Chief Luneau also spoke about the overtime budget which has doubled from over \$100,000 to over \$200,000. Chief Luneau can also shave off about \$25,000 from the new hire due to the timing of getting a new hire and start date.

Some creative ideas were proposed, such as restructuring debt, delaying some highway equipment purchases, and maybe foregoing tax sales and foreclosures through Title 32.

Items that are being deferred now, may become a priority later.

ADJOURN

Motion made by Don McDowell to adjourn. Motion seconded by Chris Palermo . Motion carried. (4/0)

Meeting adjourned at 8:50PM

Submitted and filed this July 11, 2023

Judi Alberi, Scribe

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