



SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES OF JULY 13, 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; Stacey Ferriman, Assistant Finance Director; Mitzi Fleming*, Assistant Town Clerk/Treasurer; Tricia Follert*, Community Development Coordinator;

PARTICIPANTS/GUESTS: Joh L Buttolph, III, Jamie Jaret, Yon Perras, Uwanna Perras, Tom Cloutier, Martin Green, Kristen Connelly, Evelyn Throne, Jerry Throne, Julie Pickett, Steph Hoffman, Allison Tewhill, Nathaniel Berger, Donnie Blake, Julie Blake, Cara Hancy, Christy Snkipp, Ruth Brown, Pat Michelson, Julia Compagna, Laura Green, Jim Binginot, Chantal Binginot

**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

Add: Announcements section with item Treasure Announcements

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Treasurer Announcements

Sara Haskins, Town Clerk/Treasurer, announced that the State has set the 2023-2024 education tax rates. They have been posted to the Town website and on social media and you can contact her if you have questions. Once the Selectboard finalizes the budget she will create an updated tax rate calculator and post it to the town website.

Sara Haskins announced on behalf of the Listers Office that the change of appraisal notices were sent out to any property owners that were involved in the grievance process. If you did not receive your notice in mail, you should contact Abbie Griggs, the Listing Coordinator. The deadline to submit a written notice to the Town Clerk if you wish to appeal your change of appraisal notice is Thursday, July 20.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Budget Discussions

Judy Bickford, Don McDowell, Christopher Palermo indicated their support for the budget that was presented to the citizens. Laura Streets does not support the budget as presented.

Many citizens at the meeting supported the budget and would like to see the town move forward.

As liaisons to the departments, each Selectboard member worked closely with their department heads and spoke about the impact the budget would have on the departments. The highway budget has been reduced by over \$700,000 from the first budget vote that was voted down. The recent storm has impacted some of our roads and Oxbow Park. Laura Streets spoke regarding the EMS budget and how the EMS providers did not receive the CPI-W increase or the step increase and she is very concerned that we will lose our EMS providers due to wages. Dennis Digregorio, Fire Chief, spoke about the need to support the fire department crew and, without the passed budget, they also did not receive an increase in wages like the EMS providers. Chris Palermo spoke to the citizens regarding the estimated 23-24 municipal property tax rates and if the budget level funds the library, cuts a new police officer position, and keeps the recreation coordinator at part time, the savings will have a minimal effect on taxes. For example: Housesite value of \$300,000 will save approximately \$50.70 a year in taxes; a housesite value of \$500,000 will save approximately \$84.50 a year in taxes. The benefit of supporting these items is worth the small increases.

Chief Jason Luneau spoke about the immediate need to approve a new police officer position. From hiring a police officer to getting them out on their own can be as long as 2 years. Chief Luneau is concerned that 1/3 of the day only one patrol officer is on duty, arrests have significantly increased and are up 96% since 2021. Morrisville has become the hub for drug distribution. Drug dealers are coming to Morrisville from Detroit, Springfield, Holyoke, Philadelphia, Hartford and other areas, setting up shop here and selling their poison to our residents. In order to combat the drug issue in this area, the detectives need to be able to do their primary job and not do patrol. The state has cut funding on the detox center in Lamoille county, so now officers have to take someone under the influence to St. Johnsbury. The sheriff's office used to escort anyone arrested to St. Johnsbury during off hours, but now they can't due to staff shortages, so the transport of folks arrested falls on the shoulders of the Morristown Police department. All in all this is taxing the officers and Chief Luneau is concerned about burnout.

Steph Hoffman, Treasurer of the Morristown Centennial Library (MCL), was present to inform the public that the library was built in 1913 but has been in existence since 1891. The MCL is #1 library in Vermont. The library helps learners with tutoring, homework, internet access, applying to colleges, summer reading programs and so much more. Don McDowell stated clearly that he does not believe the library has mismanaged any of their funds. The library is relying on the principal of the endowment fund to gain interest in supporting the library.

The citizens participating in the budget discussions support the full time recreation program overwhelmingly, the new Police Officer request, and the library funding.

ADJOURN

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

Meeting adjourned at 8:07PM

Submitted and filed this July 14, 2023

Judi Alberi, Scribe

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