State of Vermont — Chartered in 1781

MORRISTOWN

SELECTBOARD MINUTES JANUARY 20, 2003

Members Present: Brian Greenia, James Paige, Mark Struhsacker, Shaun Bryer and Lee Sturtevant

Department Heads: Paul D. McGinley, TA; Chief Richard Keith; Fire Chief Wally Reeve;

Guests: Carroll Lawrence, Steve Rae, Mike Stafford, Senator Susan Bartlett, Representative Shap Smith, Michele Swift, Kathleen O'Neill, Jennifer Edwards, Heidi Krantz, Joanne Harrison, John Sullivan, Riki French, Rita Angione and Amy Noyes

Chair Brian Greenia called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM at the Morrisville Water & Light Facility.

GUESTS

MORRISTOWN COMMUNITY PLAYGROUND IMPROVEMENT PROJECT (MCPIP):

Riki French, Principal at Morristown's graded schools, Kathleen O'Neill, Rita Angione and Michele Swift members of the MCPIP Steering Committee presented a summary handbook of their Playground Project plans to the Selectboard. This project has been in the "works" since the fall of 2001 and meetings are held on the first Thursday off the month. The Committee sent a representative to the KABOOM Playground Institute in Chicago in the spring of 2002. They did extensive research and contacted numerous vendors, after which they have focused on one vendor, the Miracle Recreation Equipment Company to help them design the playground. When plans are finalized, they will put the project out to bid.

Kathleen began by outlining the five most important criteria, which they have based their designs on. They are safety, handicap accessibility, fun, practicality and attractiveness. Rita explained that notices were posted to receive input from teachers and students as well. A school wide survey was conducted with responses from 95 families. 73% of these families felt they would visit the playground more often after the renovations were made.

Specifics of the playground include: Monkey bars, swings, slides and climbers. There will be an open play area and track as well. A separate structure is planned for younger children, who are in Essential Early Education preschool and other playgroups.

MCPIP has done numerous fundraisers and are planning more, but their intent is to apply for a $40,000 Land and Water Conservation grant, which will be their main source of funding for this project. Other grants they hope to receive are from concept 2, A. H. Copley Trust, Ronald McDonald, Hasbro, Green Mountain Fund, VT community Fund, IDX, child care Services Division, Agnes M. Lindsay Trust, Copley Foundation, National Life of Vermont and Ben & Jerry's for an additional $31,000. They are also looking for in-kind contributions or discounts for site preparation, landscaping, signs and other amenities. The Steering Committee felt this project would be a vital part of the "Downtown" revitalization plan

The Selectboard informed the group that about the same time this project was initiated, safety concerns at this same location near the school, had been brought to their attention. SRO Ryan Bjerke had submitted a letter to the Selectboard expressing concerns from neighbors and other citizens pertaining to traffic safety at the Copley Avenue Park Street intersection. A group was formed to look at the traffic safety issues at the intersection, which included Officer Bjerke; David Pelletier, Senior Transportation Planner at LCPC; Paul D. McGinley, Town Administrator; Bill Moulton, Highway Superintendent; Alice Agney, LSSU Superintendent; and several VAOT representatives as well. The intersection is a very busy one, not only with the school and playground, but also with the traffic from 15 A and Rte 12 as well as the Library and Fire Station. Additional use of the playground would only add to the traffic safety situation and current parking problems.

The Selectboard asked the MCPIP representatives if they had considered other locations, as by using Grant funding it would restrict possible street improvements. The group felt this was the only possible location that would enable the graded school students to have access during recess time. They stated they would try to keep the portion of the playground pertaining to grant funding small, so as not to interfere with future improvements. Mike Stafford left at this time.

MCPIP members stated the School would be the lead for the grant application, but was looking for support as their first choice for the grant from the Town, as well as in-kind services and support as members of Copley Trust. They did not expect the Town to support the project financially.

It was questioned if other organizations from town would be applying for the same grant funding, as it is sometimes harder to receive grant monies if more than one application from the same municipality is received. Community Development Coordinator Heidi Krantz stated that the Trails group is considering applying for funding for a project. She advised the Committee talk with Dave Pelletier regarding the safety issues.

August of 2003 is the projected date for construction. MCPIP representatives left at this time.

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SENATOR SUSAN BARTLETT AND REPRESENTATIVE SHAP SMITH:

Local State officials had been invited to the Selectboard meeting this evening to discuss issues that are important to Morristown. Town Administrator McGinley had sent everyone a list of the issues he was aware of that could or do affect the Morristown community. This list was used as a guide for discussion. Topics included the Alternate Truck Route or "Bypass" as was previously called; the Railroad Engine House and the short-term lease the Town has for the property; new proposed bills for consideration; rail banking the railroad lines and use as a Trail system; Act 60; controlling the growth of local school budgets; reappraisals and property taxes; Enhancement versus Block grants; *"Downtown Designation"*; tax credits; funding through grants for the "Arts"; and "Survivor Benefits" and Fire Department training programs.

Another area of concern was the amount of traffic traveling the Stagecoach and Randolph Roads. The Selectboard inquired if there were State monies that could help with paving until the "Bypass" went through? $100,000/yearly was suggested when Senator Bartlett asked if there was a specific dollar figure the Board had in mind. She suggested the Board draft a letter outlining their request.

John Sullivan (LEDC) gave Representative Smith a brief update on the Railroad Engine House building and how the Town came to lease the property and reiterated that the State would need to abandon the rest of the rail lines before the lease could be extended according to Charlie Smith of AOT. The Town does have individuals interested in the property when an agreement can be made. Specifics pertaining to rail banking, which preserves and keeps the corridor open were discussed.

With the recent Administration changes in Montpelier, it was determined that it would be best for the local representatives to come back around mid March with updates. Senator Bartlett also suggested she give a ten-minute presentation on Act 60 at the start of a meeting some evening, to give the Board a better understanding how Act 60 works. Shap Smith gave his phone number and email address and encouraged everyone to contact him with questions or concerns. He also requested to stay on the Agenda and Selectboard Minutes email list to stay informed of Town issues. Senator Bartlett and Representative Smith left at this time.

OLD BUSINESS

MINUTES

On a motion by Lee Sturtevant, seconded by Shaun Bryer, the Selectboard unanimously approved the minutes of January 6, 2003 as presented.

PREVIEW DRAFT WARNING:

The Selectboard, after reviewing the draft Warning, elected not to include Maple Street as a warned article. After much discussion, the Board decided it would be in the town's best interest to delay the Maple Street project until the FY 2004 – 2005 budget. This would allow for further study of cost savings if the Highway Department or other did the removal of the cement in-kind services provided rather than contract out. They also suggested costs would be lower with less Engineering work. This issue will be discussed at the next Selectboard meeting on February 3rd.

Other warning issues included: no figures yet from the school; and whether the terms for the three Trustees of Public Funds could be staggered in one, two and three year terms. The Administrative Assistant will check with the Town Clerk on state statutes pertaining to this matter and write the warning accordingly. It was noted that the abbreviation for Meals on Wheels has changed and the Board asked if this was correct. The Administrative Assistant informed the Board that it was listed as it had been presented to the Town for the Town Report. The Selectboard approved the remainder of the draft warning as presented.

SELECTBOARD REPORT:

The Selectboard Annual Report, approved at the last meeting, was presented for the Board's signatures.

SNOWMOBILE USE ON TOWN HIGHWAYS:

The list of Town highways approved for snowmobile travel was presented for review. It was determined that changes would need to be made before the next season. The Board asked the Administrative Assistant to put a copy in the "tickler" file.

OTHER OLD BUSINESS

SNOW ISSUES:

Board Member Sturtevant asked the Town Administrator if the snow issue on Maple Street had been taken care of. The TA stated that it was a Town problem and it would be taken care of. Snow removal at the Cole Hill parking lot was discussed, as well as the issue with plowing snow onto the fence by Judith St. Aubin's property. The Board agreed that an alternate dumpsite, other than what is used now, needed to be found before next winter.

NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTION – EDUCATION BLOCK GRANT/STATEWIDE PROPERTY TAX RATE:

A draft Resolution calling on the State Administration and Legislature to increase Education Fund payments to school districts to reduce property taxes was included in the Weekly Legislative Report from VLCT.

On a motion by Lee Sturtevant, seconded by James Paige, the Selectboard unanimously voted to adopt the Resolution as printed.

A copy will be presented for the Board's signatures at the next Selectboard meeting.

MPD APPOINTMENT:

Chief Keith requested the Board appoint Michael Giaquinto as a full-time officer.

On a motion by Lee Sturtevant, seconded by Shaun Bryer, the Selectboard unanimously appointed Michael Giaquinto the Morristown Police Department as a full-time Police Officer at the rate of $9.00 per hour.

Chief Keith informed the Board that if Officer Giaquinto is accepted into the Academy in February, he would graduate fully certified in May with all necessary training and we would be able to begin utilizing the COPS funding then. If the class is full, we would need to pay for his part-time training and he would be certified as part-time by the end of March, but we could start the COPS program funding now.

Chief Keith stated that he was impressed with Officer Giaquinto and that having an additional officer would help to cut the OT hours that are currently being generated.

WARRANTS

On a motion by Lee Sturtevant, seconded by Mark Struhsacker, the Selectboard authorized the Warrants as listed on the Memorandum dated 01/20/03. (Attached)

GENERAL OPEN DISCUSSION

ACCIDENTS:

Resident Carroll Lawrence of Stagecoach Road addressed the matter of the number of accidents by his driveway recently. He stated that there had been at least five accidents in the past three weeks that he was aware of. After discussion, it was determined that the Town Administrator and the Highway Superintendent would look at the location to determine what could be done. Mr. Lawrence stated that he felt speed was a contributing factor.

ICE RINK:

Chief Wally Reeve inquired about a request to flood the ice rink. It was determined that it had already been done.

JOINT RESPONSE:

Chief Reeve presented a joint response agreement between the Morristown and Hyde Park Fire Departments. This agreement will cover automatic alarms at high life hazard buildings between the hours of 0600 through 1800 hours and all structure fires in both communities twenty four hours a day and will take effect on January 27, 2003 for a six month trial period. Chief Reeve also informed the Board that MFD would be receiving a Hazardous Material Decontamination trailer in the next few months, which will be stored at the hospital owned Demars garage.

REQUEST FOR BONDED EMPLOYEES INFORMATION:

The Administration Office received a request for a list of bonded employees. Chief Keith gave the Board a brief history behind the request. The Town Administrator will handle the issue with VLCT.

MCC – ZEISBERG PURCHASE:

MCC Co-chair Steve Rae reported that the Conservation Commission was successful in raising the Town's portion of the funding for the Zeisberg property purchase and inquired how to send the money to the State. The Selectboard advised that MCC ask the State to send their request for payment and submit it to the Fiscal Officer for processing to be included in the warrants for Selectboard approval.

MAPLE STREET REVISITED:

Carroll Lawrence asked if it has been considered to lift the street materials, extract the steel, crush and put back as a sub base. The Selectboard stated it had been discussed, but felt with the number of houses on the street, the noise level would be too high.

T.A. REPORT:

Chair Greenia thanked the Administrator for coming tonight and informed the other Board Members that the Administrator had been "under the weather" today. The Board reviewed the T.A. Report memo dated 01/17/03, which included a sample employee benefit sheet that was included with the employees' W-2 forms. The Board also received spreadsheets listing all employees' pay and hours worked for 2002 and benefits they received with cost to the Town.

The Selectboard was advised that this list depicted the actual figures for 2002, not what each employee was actually entitled to. The Board requested, at some time in the future, a printout of all unused benefits as well as a list showing what each employee is entitled to.

The Selectboard acknowledged receipt of William E. Johnson's January 13, 2003 letter pertaining to the petition for a redetermination of the values established by the Vermont Department of Taxes. It was suggested that Tom Vickery or Tim Morrissey, as well as a Board Member, accompany Lynn Miller to any meetings with State officials. According to the VLCT Legislative Report, Morristown's school tax rate will increase .14¢ without including changes in their budget and the Town's rate has increased only 2%. Changes could result in as much as a .04¢ cut according to the Town Administrator.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Chairman of the Board stated that he had a request for an Executive Session on a personnel issue.

On a motion by Shaun Bryer, seconded by James Paige, the Board, along with the Town Administrator and Administrative Assistant, moved into Executive Session at 9:17 PM on a personnel matter.

The Board moved out of Executive Session at 9:34 PM.

ADJOURN

On a motion by Lee Sturtevant, seconded by James Paige the Selectboard adjourned at 9:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted and filed this 21st day of January 2003

Barbara Cochran, Scribe
Administrative Assistant

Minutes to be presented for approval at the next Selectboard meeting.

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Minutes Approved Date