



**MORRISTOWN SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES
OF JANUARY 18, 2022
AMENDED BY SARAH HYDE ON FEBRUARY 11, 2022**

MEMBERS: Bob Beeman, Judy Bickford, Jessica Graham, Brian Kellogg (via Zoom) and Gary Nolan

ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Kevin Barrows, *Highway Superintendent*; Paula Beattie, *Asst. Finance Director*; Sarah Hyde, *Administrator's Assistant*; Jason Luneau, *Interim Police Chief*; William Mapes, *EMS Chief*; Tina Sweet, *Finance Director*; Todd Thomas, *Zoning Administrator & Planning Director*

PARTICIPANTS: Tom Cloutier, Laura Streets, Kelly Connelly, James Brewster, Don MacDowell, Chris Wiltshire, Alan Van Anda, Ron Stancliff

Chair Bob Beeman called the Selectboard Meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

AGENDA CHANGES/ADDITIONS

1. Rotate New Business items #5 & 6 to the top of the list

APPROVE MINUTES

1. Minutes of January 3, 2022 Regular Selectboard Meeting

Motion made by Judy Bickford to approve minutes of January 3, 2022. Motion seconded by Gary Nolan. Roll Call: Bob Beeman Y, Judy Bickford Y, Jessica Graham Y, Brian Kellogg Y, Gary Nolan Y. Motion carried (5/0).

2. Minutes of January 3, 2022 Town Plan Public Hearing

Motion made by Judy Bickford to approve minutes of January 3, 2022. Motion seconded by Gary Nolan. Roll Call: Bob Beeman Y, Judy Bickford Y, Jessica Graham Y, Brian Kellogg Y, Gary Nolan Y. Motion carried (5/0).

3. Minutes of January 10, 2022 Budget Review

Motion made by Judy Bickford to approve minutes of January 10, 2022 provided they are amended to reflect board members who opposed the library budget cuts, as well as additional details about the library's audit. Motion seconded by Gary

Nolan. Roll Call: Bob Beeman Y, Judy Bickford Y, Jessica Graham Y, Brian Kellogg Y, Gary Nolan Y. Motion carried (5/0).

COMMUNITY CONCERNS

Kelly Connelly brought up that the draft of the January 10th Selectboard minutes were not currently posted on the website. Her concern was noted and the minutes will be posted online as soon as they are amended following tonight's meeting. Ms. Connelly felt it was hard to find the board documents online, so the town administrative assistant Sarah Hyde showed her how to navigate the website to find packets and agendas.

BOARD OF LIQUOR CONTROL

Motion by Judy Bickford to go into the Board of Liquor Control. Motion seconded by Gary Nolan. Roll Call: Bob Beeman Y, Judy Bickford Y, Jessica Graham Y, Brian Kellogg Y, Gary Nolan Y. Motion carried (5/0).

Motion made by Judy Bickford to approve the liquor licenses for R.L. Vallee Inc (DBA Maplefields #27) 621 Laporte Rd, R.L. Vallee Inc (DBA Maplefields) 33 VT Rte 15W, Lost Nation Brewing LLC 87B Creamery Rd, Veterans of Foreign Wars Lamoille County Post 9653 28 VFW Street. Motion seconded by Gary Nolan. Roll Call: Bob Beeman Y, Judy Bickford Y, Jessica Graham Y, Brian Kellogg Y, Gary Nolan Y. Motion carried (5/0).

Motion made by Brian Kellogg to exit Board of Liquor Control. Motion seconded by Judy Bickford. Roll Call: Bob Beeman Y, Judy Bickford Y, Jessica Graham Y, Brian Kellogg Y, Gary Nolan Y. Motion carried (5/0).

NEW BUSINESS

1. ACCEPT HEIDI BENNETT'S RESIGNATION FROM EMS POSITION

Motion made by Judy Bickford to accept Heidi Bennett's resignation (with regrets). Motion seconded by Jessica Graham. Roll Call: Bob Beeman Y, Judy Bickford Y, Jessica Graham Y, Brian Kellogg Y, Gary Nolan Y. Motion carried (5/0).

2. ADD NEW MEMBER TO EMS ROSTER: HILLARY GIACOMELLI

Motion made by Judy Bickford to accept Hillary Giacomelli for the volunteer EMS roster. Motion seconded by Jessica Graham. Roll Call: Bob Beeman Y, Judy Bickford Y, Jessica Graham Y, Brian Kellogg Y, Gary Nolan Y. Motion carried (5/0).

3. DISCUSS TOWN PLAN

Todd Thomas, Planning Director, presented the board with a post-public hearing (Selectboard and Village) draft of the Town Plan, and asked them to adopt the red-line changes in the document, accept a deletion of the sewer plant language, and review and discuss the Planning Council's responses to six topics concerning the current plan

language.

a) *Track changes from January 3, 2022 Public Hearing*

The board's goal is to approve what the Village Trustees approved in the plan so they are both working off the same document. Kelly Connelly had a clarification question about why Schutesville Hill was included in the Morristown Town Plan. Jessica Graham replied that it is in the plan because of keeping the commuter time from Morristown to Chittenden County as short as possible.

Motion made by Gary Nolan to approve the changes as presented. Motion seconded by Brian Kellogg. Roll Call: Bob Beeman Y, Judy Bickford Y, Jessica Graham Y, Brian Kellogg Y, Gary Nolan Y. Motion carried (5/0).

b) *Village Trustees' sewer plant change from the January 5, 2022 Village Public Hearing*

The board discussed whether or not to accept the sewer plant change. The Village Trustees deleted the "greater good sewer paragraph" from the Town Plan. Judy Bickford wants to leave the language in because she is concerned that the town would lose out on grant opportunities without it. Todd said that the plan could always be amended later. Laura Streets commented that changing the language from "town residents" to "town users" would be beneficial. There are currently 800 users. Jess Graham clarified that it is "user accounts" not individuals. Alan Van Anda, owner of Lost Nation Brewing in the Village, commented on Zoom that the town should have responsibility for the sewer plant. He brought up the time the plant almost reached capacity several years ago, and that we need to be careful in our planning to not ever let that happen again.

Motion made by Judy Bickford to accept the sewer plant change in the Town Plan. Motion seconded by Gary Nolan. Roll Call: Bob Beeman Y, Judy Bickford Y, Jessica Graham Y, Brian Kellogg Y, Gary Nolan Y. Motion carried (5/0).

c) *Discuss Planning Council's responses to Selectboard Town Plan questions*

Jessica submitted points and comments from the board and from town residents, including Brooke Scatchard, for the Planning Council to clarify. The board reviewed and discussed each of the six points, which were: 1) minimum lot size reduction, 2) adding bike lane language downtown, 3) protecting wildlife corridors, 4) village expansion, 5) class 4 roads, 6) Alexander Lane. Town resident Kelly Connelly asked about controlling development. Chris Wiltshire asked if this Town Plan was a decision or guidance. Todd said it is a decision and a vision. You can't enact zoning changes later that are not in the Town plan. Don MacDowell commented on the possibility of making changes in the town plan. Jessica proposed adding Brooke Scatchard's language to the section about reducing car traffic downtown.

Motion made by Jessica Graham to strike the language about minimum lot size from the Town Plan. Motion seconded by Judy Bickford. Roll Call: Bob Beeman N, Judy Bickford N, Jessica Graham Y, Brian Kellogg N, Gary Nolan N. Motion failed (4/1).

Motion made by Jessica Graham to add to page 16 of the Town Plan the language “all road improvement projects including those mentioned above should be planned with measures to increase safety and accessibility for bicycle riders and pedestrians”. Motion seconded by Judy Bickford. Roll Call: Bob Beeman Y, Judy Bickford Y, Jessica Graham Y, Brian Kellogg Y, Gary Nolan Y. Motion carried (5/0).

The board wrapped up the Town Plan discussion with Todd saying that the next Town Plan meeting would be February 22nd.

4. DISCUSS TOWN MEETING FORMAT

Sara Haskins, Town Clerk, informed the board that the Governor has passed act S.172, which provides alternative procedures for 2022 annual municipal meetings in response to COVID-19, such as enabling municipalities to move town meeting to a different date later in the year, and to switch from floor meetings to Australian ballot voting. She reported that most towns are moving to vote Australian ballot (this year only) and that the governor is seeking to find ways to make this standard practice for all elections in the future.

She then asked the board for a decision on what format they’d like to use for elections. Jessica asked for clarification on who pays for the ballots to be mailed if the board decides to take that route tonight. Sara said the town would have to pay for it, not the state. Resident Tom Cloutier made the comment that no one is going to be wanting to come to a town meeting during a pandemic. Jessica reported that last year’s Town Meeting had 32% absentee ballots and 35% voter participation overall. Sara reported about 4% of townspeople would attend town meeting before COVID-19. The BCA will determine the polling location at tomorrow night’s BCA meeting.

Gary Nolan made a motion to adopt the Australian ballot system for voting on all articles on the 2022 Annual Town Warning as authorized by Act S.172 with the Board of Civil Authority (BCA) to decide on polling location. Motion seconded by Brian Kellogg. Roll Call: Bob Beeman Y, Judy Bickford Y, Jessica Graham Y, Brian Kellogg Y, Gary Nolan Y. Motion carried (5/0).

Next the board discussed how to treat the ballots: have voters request absentee ballots, have all registered voters’ ballots mailed with return postage paid, or have all registered voters’ ballots mailed with no return postage paid. Resident Laura Streets commented that the senior citizen population depends on these ballots being mailed out and if we didn’t mail them as a standard practice, there would be less voter “turnout”. Jessica asked how much it costs to mail ballots. Sara reported it costs the town around \$3,000 to mail them out and around \$2,000 to do return postage. Ms. Streets asked if there was a way that there could be a C.O.D. arrangement for those who can’t get out to buy their own postage. Chris Wiltshire said that he hears chatter that people want the cost of return postage to be put in the town budget. Judy said there are all sorts of options for people to get their vote turned in if they really want to vote such as mailing, drop box, and “drive thru” voting to cast their ballot. Ms. Streets said we should as a town want to get more people to vote and we need to make it easier to access civic information. Gary asked Sara if there was a way to get permitted envelopes and she said she’d investigate. Brian thinks that we should mail the ballots but not pay postage.

Gary Nolan made a motion to mail all active registered Morristown voters their ballot for the 2022 Annual Town Meeting. Motion seconded by Brian Kellogg.

Jess Graham made an amendment to Gary's motion to say: I make a motion to mail all registered Morristown voters their ballot for the 2022 annual town meeting and decide at our next meeting whether or not to include free return postage paid once Sara Haskins researches an option of only paying for return ballots. Seconded by Judy Bickford. Roll Call: Bob Beeman Y, Judy Bickford N, Jessica Graham Y, Brian Kellogg N, Gary Nolan Y. Motion failed (3/2).

Roll Call for Gary's original motion: Roll Call: Bob Beeman Y, Judy Bickford Y, Jessica Graham Y, Brian Kellogg Y, Gary Nolan Y. Motion carried (5/0).

Sara wanted to share that there is a bill possibly passing soon stating that candidates will not need 30 signatures anymore; but as of right now, a consent of candidate form and petition with 30 signatures are still required. Ms. Streets commented that it was hard for the Farmer's Market group to get enough signatures for their appropriations request because of the cold weather and COVID-19 restrictions. Sara said they also missed the deadline. Jessica asked if the board could place them on the appropriations list anyway and Sara replied that the board should check the policy on that before making any decisions.

5. SIGN VERMONT AGENCY OF NATURAL RESOURCES BRYAN POND PARKING PROJECT LICENSE

The Morristown Conservation Commission is spearheading this parking lot project to bring a better parking situation to the Bryan Pond area of the Town Forest. There is currently no structured parking, so cars have to park on the side of the road. Selina Rooney of Rooney Farm commented via Zoom that she is opposed to the project and she thinks that a second parking lot (in addition to the existing lot at the Beaver Meadow Rd entrance to the Town Forest) will add more traffic to her farm and is redundant. She also read her neighbor Randy Bidwell's letter of opposition on his behalf. Ron Stancliff said that it is for secondary access to the town forest and the MCC has gone through all the necessary hoops at the state level to get approval to begin the project. Mr. Cloutier suggested that the parking lot will cost the town more money which would be better off put toward the ballots.

Motion made by Judy Bickford to accept and sign the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources Bryan Pond parking project license. Motion seconded by Gary Nolan. Roll Call: Bob Beeman Y, Judy Bickford Y, Jessica Graham N, Brian Kellogg Y, Gary Nolan Y. Motion carried (4/1).

6. SIGN TOWN OF FLETCHER SANDER OFFER

The Town of Fletcher is offering to purchase a 9 foot stainless steel truck sander from the Town of Morristown for \$8,500. It was a pilot version that just didn't end up sanding the way the town needs and the electrical was backward. It was purchased for \$10,200 two and a half years ago.

Motion made by Judy Bickford to sell the stainless steel sander to the Town of Fletcher for \$8,500. Motion seconded by Gary Nolan. Roll Call: Bob Beeman Y,

Judy Bickford Y, Jessica Graham Y, Brian Kellogg Y, Gary Nolan Y. Motion carried (5/0).

7. AWARD CLEANING CONTRACT

The current cleaning person, Penny Keith, is retiring next week and the town has gathered bids for a new cleaner. There are four bids on the table. The cleaning would be for two times per week at the Municipal and Public Safety buildings. Michelle Fellows, who currently has a contract at such buildings as the Lamoille Sheriff's Department and Concept II, was the top recommended cleaner. She has been vetted and has proven she is trustworthy to be around confidential documents. Her bid is for \$1,850 per month. The other bids were discussed.

Motion made by Judy Bickford to hire Michelle Fellows to clean the municipal and public safety buildings for the amount of \$1,850 per month. Motion seconded by Gary Nolan. Roll Call: Bob Beeman Y, Judy Bickford Y, Jessica Graham Y, Brian Kellogg Y, Gary Nolan Y. Motion carried (5/0).

8. DISCUSS IMPROVEMENTS IN COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLIC

Bob feels the information from the town to the public should be improved. He would like agendas to be posted on Front Porch Forum. He would also like it put in the newspaper as well. He reported that there is a general feeling the public doesn't think the town is being as transparent as they could be or accessible as they could be. Just using the website is a narrow way to get things done. He also wants DRB and Planning Council meetings announced more broadly so people can get more involved. Gary mentioned that Johnson's Front Porch Forum announces their Selectboard meetings and he likes the idea of more people showing up for meetings. Judy also feels that we need to broaden our reach and put a link on Front Porch Forum that links directly to our agenda. Tom Cloutier says it's hard to navigate the town website and likes the idea of Facebook posts and radio announcements. Bob noted the recent additions and improvements made to the town website by Sara Haskins and Sarah Hyde. Jessica commented that it takes 4-5 steps to get to things on the website, and that the common person is not going to know how to find what they need as is. She'd like it to be more accessible, in newspapers and on the radio. She thinks it will communicate to the public that we are trying to be transparent. Gary said it'll give the board a lot more input and people will be able to make more informed decisions. Sara reported that the website platform is very outdated and we are very limited in what we can do in-house with the design and content. Bob replied we need to look at updating the website sometime.

APPROVE WARRANTS

Motion made by Gary Nolan to approve the warrants. Motion seconded by Judy Bickford. Roll Call: Bob Beeman Y, Judy Bickford Y, Jessica Graham Y, Brian Kellogg Y, Gary Nolan Y. Motion carried (5/0).

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

None.

SELECTBOARD CONCERNS

Judy – Same as Gary.

Brian – None.

Jessica – Asked for clarification about signing the town meeting warning.

Gary – We’ve done enough for tonight! But we’ve come a long way with our discussion.

Bob – Brought up concerns about library budget meeting and apologized to the town finance office if the conversation in any way indicated a mistrust of the information provided by the finance office to the Selectboard. Wants to follow up with the library about numbers.

ADJOURN

Motion made by Judy Bickford to adjourn. Motion seconded by Gary Nolan. Roll Call: Bob Beeman Y, Judy Bickford Y, Jessica Graham Y, Brian Kellogg Y, Gary Nolan Y. Motion carried (5/0).

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted and filed this January 21, 2022

Sarah Hyde, Scribe