State of Vermont Chartered in 1781

MORRISTOWN

SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES
OF FEBRUARY 18, 2025

Members: Don McDowell*, Christopher Palermo, Richard Craig, George Cormier

Absent: Laura Streets

ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Brent Raymond, Town Manager; Judi Alberi, Executive Assistant; Tina Sweet, Finance Director

PARTICIPANTS/GUESTS: Attorney Ed Adrian*, Jamie Jaret, Jodi Hess, Andrea Burton, Bob Heanue, Laura Green, Sarah Thomas, Charles Burnham, Jerry Throne, Evelyn Throne, Mary Lou Nichols, Sheila Tarbox, Tony Cote, Bob Bortree, Judy Bickford, Jasmine Farrell, Ryan Farrell, Dan McLaughlin, Ron Stancliff, Mary Goderwis

**participating via Zoom*

5:30PM - CALL SELECTBOARD MEETING TO ORDER

Chris Palermo called the Selectboard Meeting to order at 5:30 PM at the Tegu Building.

5:31PM - AGENDA CHANGES/ADDITIONS

1. Move Item number 6 of New Business, consideration to approve & sign Resolution Appointment of Acting Zoning Administrator to Item number 1 with all others to follow.
2. Add the item entitled Approve & sign Annual Disclosure to the State for Highway Mileage as number 8.

5:32PM - APPROVE MINUTES

1. **Approve minutes of 2-3-25**
   Motion made by Richard Craig to approve the minutes of 2/3/25. Motion seconded by George Cormier. Motion carried. (3/0)

2. **Approve minutes of 2-10-25**
   Motion made by Richard Craig to approve the minutes of 2/10/25. Motion seconded by George Cormier. Motion carried. (3/0)

   Note: Don McDowell joined the meeting via Zoom after the minutes were approved.

5:35PM - NEW BUSINESS

1. **Consideration to approve & sign Resolution Appointment of Acting Zoning Administrator**
   The meeting revolved around the resolution regarding the appointment of an acting zoning administrator. The position became vacant on January 14, 2025, and Brent Raymond believed he was assigned as the acting zoning administrator on September 19, 2024. However, a mistake was made in not having the Selectboard appoint Brent Raymond as the acting zoning administrator at the time. The Selectboard decided to correct this mistake and ratify any decisions made by Brent Raymond. They also discussed a zoning permit issued to the Cox family for a single-family residential home, which had

a construction finish date of October 24, 2024. The bank was hesitant to release funds due to concerns about the permit expiring, but the permit would have been in effect until March 2, 2026. Brent Raymond amended the permit to alleviate the contractor's issues.

The Town Manager takes responsibility for mistakenly signing a zoning permit without proper authority, explaining that he was unaware of the relevant statutes and incorrectly assumed he had been given authority by the former planning director. The Town Manager consulted legal counsel upon learning of the mistake and chose to address it transparently in a public meeting rather than in an executive session. He emphasizes his goal of improving communication and processes within the town team to prevent future errors. The selectboard expressed gratitude to Brent's willingness to step in on an interim basis as these responsibilities are in addition to his role of Town Manager, but emphasized the need to move forward and find a new zoning administrator. Legal counsel, Mr. Ed Adrian attended the meeting to provide further context. Charlie Burnham was also consulted to work with Brent on the resolution of the ramifications of this error and to assist all parties involved in the transaction.

Motion made by Richard Craig to adopt and sign the Resolution Appointment of Acting Zoning Administrator as presented. Motion seconded by George Cormier. Motion carried (4/0).

Note: Don McDowell had to leave the meeting after he voted on this discussion.

2. **Retention and Recruitment Specialist - DCF - Jodi Hess**

   Jodi Hess, Retention and Recruitment Specialist, and her coworker Andrea Burton, from the Department of Children and Families, addressed the coordination of Foster Parents for the state. There is a great need for more foster parents and the state has been posting banners to advertise the need for more foster families. Jodi Hess asked that she be allowed to put up their banner in the front window of the town offices, and asked for a waiver to post banners in the community. These requests were referred to the Zoning Administrator.

3. **Cancel SB Meeting for 3-3-25 due to Town Meeting**

   Motion made by Richard Criag to cancel the 3/3/25 Selectboard Meeting. Motion seconded by George Cormier. Motion carried (4/0).

4. **Consideration to approve and sign Certificate - No appeal or suit pending**

   Motion made by Richard Craig to approve and sign the Certificate - No appeal or suit pending as presented. Motion seconded by George Cormier. Motion carried (3/0).

5. **Consideration to donate the 2013 Ambulance**

   Motion made by Richard Craig to donate the 2013 Chevrolet 3500 Ambulance as is to the Wolcott Volunteer Fire Department. Motion seconded by George Cormier. Motion carried (3/0).

6. **Update on Downtown Designation application**

   The application for the designation of a downtown for Morristown is important because the town will be eligible to apply for many financial opportunities, including grant funds and planning. Members of the Village Trustees are working on the application for the Downtown Designation and an update will be given at next month's selectboard meeting. Members will review the downtown designation application materials prior to the next meeting.

7. **Consideration to approve and sign Resolution Morristown Planning Council to Morristown Planning Commission**

   Chris read the Resolution to Dissolve the Morristown Planning Council and Establish the Morristown Planning Commission. It was considered to be in the best interest of the town as a Planning Council without a Planning Director has no administrative power to make decisions. The Planning Commission allows the committee to accomplish tasks such as the proposed zoning bylaw changes. Etienne Hancock, Chair of the Planning Council, agreed with the decision to return to the Planning Commission as in years past until the Selectboard,Town Manager, Village Trustees, and public folks have a chance to discuss the needs of the town.

Motion made by Richard Craig to accept and sign the Resolution Morristown Planning Council to Morristown Planning Commission as presented. Motion seconded by George Cormier. Motion carried (3/0).

8. **Approve & sign Annual Disclosure to the State for Highway Mileage**
   Motion made by Richard Craig to approve and sign the AOT mileage certificate as presented. Motion seconded by George Cormier. Motion carried (3/0).

6:35PM - OLD BUSINESS

1. **Continued discussion - Habitat for Humanity**
   The Selectboard discussed the potential donation of a property adjacent to the library to Habitat for Humanity. The Board agreed that the decision should not be made by just five members, but should involve the entire town. They also recognized the need to determine the value of the property before making a decision. The Board decided to move forward with getting an appraisal of the property and possibly a professional survey to establish its boundaries. The discussion also touched on the potential value of the property for parking and the need to consider any state grants or restrictions related to the property. The Board agreed to keep the community informed about the process and to consider the urgency of the housing crisis in Vermont.

2. **Consideration to approve & sign Resolution Public Records fee schedule**
   The meeting focused on the issue of public records requests and the associated costs. Judi Alberi highlighted the significant increase in requests, which was affecting the town's operations and causing a hidden cost to taxpayers. She discussed the need for a fee schedule to cover the costs of staff time and other expenses associated with handling these requests. They also discussed the potential for hiring a contractor or employee specifically to handle public records requests. It was agreed to adopt a proposed schedule of public records charges and requirements, which includes charges for staff time, photocopies, computer-generated paper copies, and other materials. The team also discussed the need for a plan to enforce payment of these fees.

   Motion made by Richard Craig to adopt and sign the Resolution Public Records Fee Schedule as presented. Motion seconded by George Cormier. Motion carried (3/0).

6:50PM - APPROVE WARRANTS

Motion made by Richard Craig to approve the warrants. Motion seconded by George Cormier. Motion carried. (3/0)

6:52PM - COMMUNITY COMMENTS

Several people made comments. One community member said she supports the fee schedule for records requests. She considers the increase in requests without any effort by the requestor as abuse of the taxpayors' money. This takes employees time, energy, and money to comply with the requests. Another person suggested that the cost of requests be estimated, and the cost be collected at the time of the request, not after. This practice may eliminate some requests.

7:02PM - SCHEDULE

Thursday, February-2/20/25-SB Special Meeting

1. **Monday, March 10, 2025 - SB Organizational Meeting - 5:30PM**
   Monday, March 17, 2025 - SB Meeting - 5:30PM
   Monday, April 7, 2025 - SB Meeting - 5:30PM
   Thursday, February 20, 2025- Special SB/PC/DRB Meeting

7:05PM - OTHER BUSINESS

1. **Executive Session - Personnel**
   There was no Executive Session.

   Pleasant View Cemetery Association

   The Select Board identified a problem with the financial management of the Pleasant View Cemetery Association and the stewardship of the endowment and perpetual care funds. After several discussions with the cemetery personnel, the Selectboard was intent on addressing the financial problems identified in their records. The town will assume the management of the cemetery and the fiduciary responsibility of the funds, citing unsustainable practices and a depletion of the Endowment Perpetual Care Fund.

   Motion made by Richard Craig to terminate Pleasant View Cemetery Association's fiscal and operational management of Pleasant View Cemetery effective immediately. Motion seconded by George Cormier. Motion carried (3/0).

   Motion made by Richard Craig to direct all Pleasant View Cemetery funds and other assets be turned over to the Town of Morristown by Friday 2/21/2025. Motion seconded by George Cormier. Motion carried (3/0).

7:08PM - ADJOURN
Motion made by Richard Craig to adjourn. Motion seconded by George Cormier. Motion carried. (3/0)

Meeting adjourned at 8:02 pm
Submitted and filed this 2/17/25.
Bonnie McDermott, Scribe

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