

**Moretown Select Board Meeting
December 4, 2023 at 6:00 PM
79 School Street
In the John Hoogenboom Meeting Room
Via ZOOM Meeting ID 620 104 2716 or call in: 929-205-6099**

Members Present: Tom Martin, John Hoogenboom, Don Wexler, Robin Campbell, (Callie Streeter was not present)

Guests: MRVTV, Tracy Branstromm (Valley Reporter), Cherilyn Brown, Carol Chamberlin, Martha Douglass, Tom Douglass, Carla Lewis, Charles Masland, Robin Masland, Colin Nohl, W Dan Noyes, Kristen Rogers, Amy Shaefer, Stephen Shaefer, Lawrence Westover, Louisa Wilson

Meeting called to order by Tom at 6:03 PM

Public Comment: Kristen Rodgers informed the Board that she does not intend to run for re-election to the HUUSD Board in March. Board members thanked her for her service on that Board for the past five years. Colin Nohl shared some information related to an upcoming deadline for the VT Federal Roads Grant and the applicability of that grant and another grant as options for funding work on the Brownsville Road and Moretown Common Road. He noted that the Federal grant deadline is December 20th, and he suggested this grant would be more appropriate to the Brownsville work needed. Tom explained that Cherilyn had provided the same information regarding these grants and the two areas of work to be completed.

Budget – Town Office: Cherilyn reviewed the proposed budget with the Board, noting the following items:

- Door cleaning and board replacement can be covered by the amount proposed
- Added security camera maintenance
- Phone up by \$500
- Postage keeps rising, three elections this year, but state may cover general ballot mailings as they have been doing recently
- A scanner for digitizing mylars would benefit all departments, and eliminate the need to transport the documents for copying; cost is \$6200
- Library budget will be impacted to some degree by Historical Society relocation
 - Related heating costs are budgeted at \$1500, up from \$1000, and it was agreed to track these separately
- The \$4K approved for a sidewalk scoping study should have a line item added under the Highway Grant section
- ARPA funds need further discussion
 - 2022 audit suggested moving lost revenue in the amount equal to 2023 payroll expenses to the General Fund, and from that fund to Capital Reserve

A **motion** to move the amount of \$335,894.47 from the ARPA line to the General Fund passed unanimously.

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Hazard Mitigation – Brian McWalters: Brian provided an overview of the program and the resources he is able to provide, as the State Hazard Mitigation Planner with Vermont Emergency Management. He explained that he has been working with towns which have properties affected by the July 2023 flooding, and assisting when those property owners are interested in applying for buyout grants and the town is willing to acquire the property as a perpetual green space. Brian outlined that the grants cover a range of work, including hiring an appraiser for a market evaluation, completing a pre-event evaluation, associated legal work such as title searches, buying the property for full market value (less any remuneration received due to flood damage), as well as costs of demolition work. Most of the funds are provided through a reimbursement process, although the purchase price is handled as an advance.

Several of those present asked questions of Brian, and he provided the following information:

- There is no mechanism to allow for a provision of an evaluation before a property owner begins the process, but the decision to withdraw from the program may be made at any time
 - There is also an appeal process to be used if the valuation appears to be incorrect, whereby a homeowner may hire their own assessor
- It is reasonable to expect that the entire process will take about a year (typically 9 months to over 12 months)
 - Once an award is made, it will require another couple of months to get all the paperwork in order
- The program is available for rental properties as well as primary residences
 - There is also tenant assistance which may be provided through the grant program
 - Brian will research possibilities for allowing tenants adequate time to find another living situation
- The first step is to inform the Town of being interested in the program, the Town will then reach out to Brian
- There is likely a deadline of early fall 2024 for the first round of grants, which would include a pre-event evaluation deadline
- Appraisals will be done in a standard manner, and properties outside of the Moretown Route 2 corridor will be included in the assessment if applicable
- Federal compensation received related to flood damage will be treated as a down payment and the buyout amount reduced accordingly
 - Documentation that the funds were needed to make the residence livable is necessary to show that these would not be included as a duplication of benefits
- The Town is not advocating for a decision either way from property owners, but the program is designed for buyouts, not assistance with repair work and retention of the structure

Friends of the Library: Carla Lewis and Louisa Wilson provided a summary of this group and the support they provide the Library, covering: Mission, Membership, Funding, Funding Sources, Uses of Funds, Other Support. Board members thanked them for their work and help in enhancing the Library programming, and suggested that a condensed version of the handout which Carla provided be included in the coming year's Town Report. Tom asked, and it was confirmed, that all the funds raised by the group are specifically to support programs in Moretown.

Administrative Items – reports, announcements, warrants, minutes, etc.:

Don will be meeting with the architect and construction manager this week for the Town Hall project, drawings are nearly complete; this is in preparation for the January/February grant cycle.

Robin has contacted the Historical Society regarding Vermont's 250th Anniversary; has not yet received a response.

Don reported that, regarding the scoping study, the group has received 50 responses to the sidewalk survey, mostly enthusiastic, with some mentions of a larger buffer being beneficial. Board members indicated that a 5' sidewalk can be accomplished.

It was clarified that Après Express is an entity planning to establish a parked food truck at the Bicycle Express location next year; a recent application for a liquor license was not approved due to Board members not knowing where the venue was.

Tom will call Ron regarding the apartment building in town.

Don proposed holding a 'public service' gathering in the early part of 2024, as an opportunity to allow residents to meet local Board and Commission members, as well as engage with people who may be interested in serving with one of the municipal groups.

Don and John will be at a Road Safety Committee meeting this week, gathering letters to be submitted to VTrans. The next topic covered by the group will be dirt road speed limits. Tom offered a reminder that any related sign costs should be considered during budget development.

Don will follow up with Sasha regarding the speed radar signs not working accurately.

John will be at a meeting with the principals involved, regarding the stormwater project at the town parking lot, to clarify which unexpected expenses will be covered by which party.

Don noted that he had received a note related to the reappraisal of his property, but that it was not clear where to get further information; he will get clarification and post related information on FPF so that other property owners are easily able to access the site that is mentioned.

A **motion** to approve the Minutes of November 20, 2023 passed unanimously.

Old Business: John will follow up with David Stapleton regarding trails and Class Four roads.

New Business: John signed the paperwork related to a VTrans grant for replacement of the salt shed.

Executive Session:

A **motion** to go into Executive Session for labor relations, per Title 1, section 313(a)(3), passed unanimously.

The meeting entered Executive Session at 7:41 pm and returned to open session at 8:30 pm.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm.