

Town of Mount Holly
Special Select Board Meeting
January 4, 2022
Minutes

In-Person with Zoom Meeting: 898 6126 5487

Present: Select Board: Jeff Chase, Jennifer Matthews, Mark Turco (Chair)

Town Officials: Carol Garrow-Woolley, Diana Garrow, David Johnson, Stephen Michel, James Seward, Brigid Sullivan, Clinton Woolley

Members of the Public: Donna Seward

1. **Call to Order** by Mark Turco at 4:35 p.m.
2. All recited the **Pledge of Allegiance**.
3. **Changes and/or additions to the Agenda** – None were necessary.
4. **Town Meeting Articles** – Jennifer Matthews referenced the VT League of Cities & Towns Model Town Meeting Articles. She noted that we Select Board members had already decided to put an article on the Annual Town Meeting Warning regarding retail cannabis so voters could decide the issue. Ms. Matthews read the wording for the article per VLCT: “Shall the town authorize cannabis retailers in town pursuant to 7 V.S.A. § 863?” Discussion ensued. Mr. Turco made a motion to add the article to the Warning, seconded by Ms. Matthews, unanimously approved. Ms. Matthews also noted an article to eliminate the elected Auditor. She explained that the Town is not in compliance with State Statutes as the Town Auditors are not fulfilling the functions set out by Statute. Our Town Auditors are more of a town report committee; we hire a professional auditing firm to review our financial records. She stated the need to address this in order to bring the Town into compliance with Statute. Ms. Matthews also noted the article to eliminate the elected Lister. Once the new State regulations come into being, we might want to consider the option of subcontracting the Grand List work. Ms. Matthews also noted an article allowing the Select Board to appoint the constable. She spoke of all the work done by the Select Board to enforce the Junk Ordinance, only to hit a stumbling block when it came to issuing the necessary tickets. She explained the article, if passed, would allow the Select Board to appoint a constable, even sharing a constable with a neighboring town. After mentioning several other articles already included on the Warning, Ms. Matthews noted the article to pay the town clerk a salary only. She explained that at present the town clerk is paid \$38,740 a year for a part-time job plus almost \$30,000 in fees. She stated she did not think a pay rate of over \$44 an hour was being fiscally responsible as far as the taxpayers in Mount Holly are concerned. Ms. Matthews further explained that the majority of towns in Vermont now pay their town clerk a salary only; the fees go into the General Fund to offset expenses. When a town clerk does receive the fees, the salary is usually \$13-14,000 a year. Discussion ensued about other towns’ pay rate (average of \$25 per hour); hire dates of other town clerks. Ms. Matthews stated she thought the voters of Mount Holly should have the right to determine if they want to pay a part-time town clerk close to \$70,000 a year plus full benefits. She noted we are asking voters to determine whether or not to allow retail cannabis in town; why shouldn’t voters decide whether or not to pay a well-compensated town clerk an additional \$30,000, money which could instead go to offset expenses, thereby keeping taxes lower? Mr. Turco asked for a motion. Ms. Matthews made a motion to ask voters to decide to compensate the town clerk with a salary only, no

fees. Discussion ensued about appointed vs. elected town clerks; fluctuating fee amounts from year to year; other towns' pay rates; changeover date (1980s-90s) to salary only by other towns; full benefits (health, dental, retirement); the wording of the article. Ms. Matthews pointed out this was just a decision to put an article on the Warning to let voters decide whether this compensation package is okay with them, and the decision rightfully belongs with the taxpayers. Neither Jeff Chase nor Mr. Turco would second the motion. Ms. Matthews stated she interpreted that to mean they thought it okay to pay a 30-hour-a-week town clerk close to \$70,000 a year plus full benefits. She stated she greatly disagreed with that.

5. **FY'23 Budget Work Session** – Select Board members working with Town Treasurer David Johnson along with Road Foreman Clinton Woolley went line-by-line through the proposed budget for fiscal year 2023. Some budget items were increased slightly; a few were actually decreased; and a large number of items were left unchanged, budgeted at last year's amount. The Select Board members' goal was to keep the budget numbers similar to last year's with a minimal municipal tax increase for residents.

6. **Adjourn** – Meeting adjourned at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted: Jennifer Matthews

Minutes Approved: 1.11.2022