

TOWN OF MONTGOMERY
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING MINUTES – 2023

Timothy Murphy called the meeting to order at 9:00am on Tuesday March 7th, 2023. Tim began with article 1, to elect a moderator for the ensuing year. Pat Farmer nominated Morgan Daybell, hearing no other nominations on the floor, Morgan Daybell was elected Moderator by voice vote. Let the record show that Timothy Murphy officially retired and was acknowledged with a standing ovation for his 25 years of service as the Town Moderator.

2. Elect the remaining Town Officers as required by law:

- a. **Selectperson- two (2) year term by ballot.** Sue Wilson nominated Emily Kimball, hearing no other nominations and without objection, Morgan directed the Selectboard chair to cast one ballot to re-elect Emily Kimball to a two-year term.
- b. **Selectperson- three (3) year term by ballot.** Titus Presler nominated Suzanne Dollois. Paul Nichols nominated Arnold Mercy. Hearing no other nominations Morgan directed the candidates to address the body if they were so moved. Arnold Mercy spoke. It was noted that Suzanne Dollois was not present. Morgan directed the voters to assemble in two lines to conduct the vote by ballot. Morgan called the voting to close. Ballots were counted, Suzanne Dollois had 41 votes, Arnold Mercy had 36, and there was 1 blank. Suzanne Dollois was re-elected to a three-year term.

At 9:20am Morgan asked the electorate if there was any objection to allow for visitors not on the voter checklist to address the body, hearing none, a motion was made by Scott Perry and seconded to suspend the rules to allow for the State Representative to speak. Allen “Penny” Demar stood up to speak before those present. Penny addressed recent bills they are working on in Montpelier and discussion ensued.

- c. **Lister- three (3) year term by ballot.** Marijke Dollois nominated Genevieve Lodal-Guild, hearing no other nominations and without objection, Morgan directed the Selectboard chair to cast one ballot to re-elect Genevieve Lodal-Guild to a three-year term.
- d. **Lister- remainder three (3) year term expiring in 2024 by ballot.** Tosca Smith nominated James Walsh, hearing no other nominations and without objection, Morgan directed the Selectboard chair to cast one ballot to elect James Walsh to the remainder of a three-year term expiring 2024.
- e. **Lister- remainder three (3) year term expiring in 2025 by ballot.** Sue Wilson nominated Sharon Youland, hearing no other nominations and without objection, Morgan directed the Selectboard chair to cast one ballot to elect Sharon Youland to the remainder of a three-year term expiring 2025.
- f. **Delinquent Tax Collector- three (3) year term.** Tosca Smith nominated Anita Woodward. Anita respectfully declined the nomination. Suzanne Pelletier asked for a description of the job. Discussion took place. Tosca Smith nominated Deanna-Dee Robitaille. Hearing no other nominations Deanna-Dee Robitaille was elected by voice vote. Charlie addressed the body to acknowledge the 25 years that Anita served as the Delinquent Collector and thank her for her dedicated service undertaking one of the toughest positions in local government, standing ovation was held for Anita.
- g. **First Constable- two (2) year term.** Christina Suarez-Pratt nominated Brent Godin. Hearing no other nominations Brent Godin was elected by voice vote.

- h. **Village Cemetery Commissioner- remainder four (4) year term expiring in 2024.** Merle Van Gieson nominated Sheila Marshia. Hearing no other nominations Sheila Marshia was elected by voice vote to the remainder of a four-year term expiring in 2024.
 - i. **Center Cemetery Commissioner- five (5) year term.** Sue Wilson nominated Lynda Cluba, hearing no other nominations Lynda Cluba was elected by voice vote.
 - j. **Library Trustee- remainder three (3) year term expiring in 2025.** Patty Hathaway nominated Christina Suarez-Pratt. Marijke Dollois nominated Jen Wirth. Morgan asked the candidates if they wished to address the body. Christina Suarez-Pratt spoke. Jen Wirth was not present. Christina Suarez-Pratt was elected by voice vote to the remainder of a three-year term expiring in 2025.
 - k. **Fire Commissioner- two (2) year term.** Christina Suarez-Pratt nominated Joe Zartarian, hearing no other nominations, Joe Zartarian was elected by voice vote.
 - l. **Planning Commission- three (3) year term.** Merle Van Gieson nominated Joe Sherman, hearing no other nominations, Joe Sherman was elected by voice vote.
3. **Shall the voters approve the addition of one (1) Trustee seat, to increase the Board membership of Library Trustees from eight (8) to nine (9) members.** Merle Van Gieson made a motion to approve article three, seconded by Esther Litchi. Brent Godin asked why the trustees were looking to add another trustee seat, Marijke spoke on behalf of the Library Trustees. She explained that the bylaws allow up to nine members which is more favorable for voting purposes and with the need for fundraising they are looking for more help on the board. Article was approved by voice vote.
- a. To elect a Library Trustee for a term of three (3) years (expires 2026). Brent Godin nominated Jen Wirth. Titus Presler nominated Nicole Landreman. Esther Litchi nominated Daniel Khan. Morgan asked the candidates to address the body. Daniel Khan and Nicole Landreman both spoke. The body agreed to conduct by show of hands. Daniel Khan was elected by a show of hands to a term of three years.
4. **Shall the voters authorize the Treasurer, pursuant to 32 VSA 4791, to collect Current Taxes.** Scott Perry so moved, seconded by Barry Kade, and the Treasurer was authorized to collect current taxes by voice vote.
5. **Shall the town vote to approve a half cent increase in the tax rate to be allotted to the Conservation Reserve Fund (established by the voters in 2018) in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §2804.** Pat Farmer, so moved and seconded by Titus Presler. Charlie clarified how much this raises with the current Grandlist, roughly eight-hundred dollars. There is currently sixteen-hundred dollars in the fund. Discussion took place regarding the reserve fund allocation, Charlie stated what this reserve fund is for. Article five was approved by voice vote.
6. **Shall the voters accept a fiscal year 2024 Budget of expenditures not to exceed \$1,399,220.00 of which an estimated \$964,448 shall be raised by taxes and authorize the Selectboard to set a tax rate sufficient to provide the same.** Scott Perry so moved, seconded by Sharon Perry. Discussion took place. Suzanne Pelletier asked for this article to be done by ballot. Voters asked clarifying questions to specific line items in the budget. The article was called by the moderator to ask if there were seven hands to support a ballot vote, the body did not support the call for ballot vote. Article six was passed by voice vote.

7. **To do any other business proper to be done at said meeting.** Paul Nichols asked for an update about the access for Gibou Rd, Charlie stated the public right of way is still open, there were no changes to that request. Barry Kade stood and addressed the body, offering a non-binding resolution and seconded.

Resolved by the voters of Montgomery at Town Meeting:

1. The “right” and the “Left” are both responsible for the tribalism that is dividing us in to enemy camps and stopping nuanced discussion cold.
2. Democracy is dependent on vigorous and free debate on all matters of public concern
3. No one, especially not corporations and government agencies have a monopoly on “truth”
4. The necessity for censorship is always argued in time of “exigent circumstances.”
5. The road to totalitarianism is paved with exigent circumstances.
6. Truth is out there. It takes a little work to find reliable sources of information.

Resolution passed by voice vote. Joe Sherman asked that the Selectboard pursue looking into getting additional microphones setup to address hearing concerns during subsequent meetings. Sarita Khan asked whether the Town had any say regarding the cell tower installation on Begnoche Farm Rd, Charlie clarified that the town is notified of these decisions, but does not have a direct say as this falls within the Public Utility Commissions purview. There is existing infrastructure already on this tower, Verizon is adding on to what is currently there to increase coverage areas. Arnold Mercy asked for a status update on the Streetscape, Charlie indicated there are numerous public meetings that have been held for Wastewater and Streetscape; the board has asked the Engineering firm to revise a design for streetscape which will be review by the board and then there will be public meetings scheduled at a later date for commentary, review, revisions, town approval. Charlie reiterated the point of the streetscaping is to slow traffic and consider the safety issues of pedestrian traffic. Merle encouraged the public to attend Selectboard meetings, join by zoom or in person, and get involved to stay abreast of what is on upcoming agendas. Doug Kopacz, Fire Chief, presented Billy Baker Sr with an Honorary Fire Chief plaque for his extensive dedication and work for the Town of Montgomery on the Fire Department for well over fifty years. There was a standing ovation held for Billy as he accepted the honors and thanked everyone for their support.

Motion to adjourn was entertained, so moved by Scott Perry, seconded by Remi, closing discussion ensued many thanks to the Highway Department and volunteers in the community, and the meeting adjourned at 10:40AM.

Dated at Montgomery, Vermont this 13th day of March 2023 AD

Selectboard Chair, _____

Town Moderator, _____

Attest: Elizabeth Reighley, Municipal Clerk, Town of Montgomery

Elizabeth Reighley March 13th, 2023