

Warning/Meeting

ANNUAL TOWN AND SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING MARCH 3rd, 2025

The legal voters of the Town of Morgan and School District are hereby notified and warned to meet at the Morgan Elementary School in said Town on Monday, evening March 3rd, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. to transact the following business:

The Meeting was called to order at 6:00 and was followed up with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. Moderator Kathy Austin opened the meeting and asked everyone to take a moment to reflect and remember those community members we have lost since the last Annual Town Meeting and in gratitude for this opportunity to self-govern for our freedom, our safety, and our democracy. Kathy Austin stated she would do her best to follow Roberts Rules of Order and if anyone feels she is wrong to please speak up.

Only registered voters of the Town of Morgan may participate in any vote, non-voters are welcome to attend but may not vote and can speak on articles only if there is no objection by the registered voters. All motions and remarks should be addressed to the Moderator, and articles must be moved and seconded from the floor before a debate may begin.

Kathy asked to please stand when called on and to speak loudly so everyone can be heard from your seat. All who wish to speak will be given a chance before a voter is recognized a second time and debate will be cut off by a motion and 2/3's vote and be recognized by the moderator.

A couple announcements were made with a welcome to Christina Paré the new Assistant Clerk for the Town of Morgan and a Congratulations to Eric and Rachel Pope for the birth of their new baby on February 27th 2025.

Kathy suspended the meeting to have Representative Larry Labor speak.

Representative Larry Labor brought everyone up to date on what was going on in the house. Larry thanked everyone for attending and fighting the cold.

Representative Labor noted that there was information in the back of the room on the kitchen counter on Broadband for the Town of Morgan.

Representative Labor spoke of a few bills that may affect Morgan that are in the works out of 452 in the house only not including the Senate.

He mentioned those that have land in Land Use or Current use to pay attention to H7-Land Use conservation bill, that representative Higley from Glover has introduced and has been moved from his committee to the environmental committee which Representative Labor sits on. It has not been brought to a vote but is sitting there for now. The goal to this bill is to get Land Use, Land that has been conserved already in a 10-year plan, moved into the states goal to consider it conserved, right now it is not in perpetuity its every 10 years you renew.

Act 74 To exempt Social Security benefits from the Vermont State Tax and has been moved to the House Ways and Means Committee.

Act H 85 Taxation of forestry vehicles.

Act H 86 The Chloride Contamination reduction Bill and is produced by the environmentalists, it is to reduce the amount of salt additions on all roads, not just state highways. You must be certified to spread salt or sand. This includes the independents in addition to municipal employees. You will have figure out

how to measure the weight to know how much salt or sand you are using per mile. This will be very expensive to enforce and very expensive to do. A private contractor with a truck estimated bill for the measurement and paper work is \$50,000.00.

Act H103 For Veterans. This is a good bill. Its to protect the veterans from scams. Another Bill for veterans is to remove the disability benefits as a criteria basis for income benefits application to the state. Benefit packages will not be counted as state income. This one is stalled right now.

H113 Lake in Chrysis Bill. This will allow the state to apply for Federal funds to clean up if there is a fee to clean up.

Act 18 The Clean Heat Standard Bill. This has already been processed by Senate this bill, 17 out of 30 voted to keep it and is enough this time to sustain if the governor vetoes.

H132 Is an act to the taking of Furbearers. Non bait bill.

In closing Representative Larry Labor said he has copies and addresses of all 452 bills in his iPad and if there is something anyone was keeping track of that he did not mention, he can look it up for you.

Kathy Austin than introduced Sheriff Jennifer Harlow. Sheriff Harlow stated that the Sheriff's Department will continue with law enforcement and patrolling in the Town of Morgan and if anyone has any questions or concerns to contact her.

Moderator Kathy Austin mentioned a couple corrections. 1 being the inside cover saying "Report cover - photo courtesy of Douglas Gimler, should read Christina Paré and 2 on page 5 Planning Commission Denis Fortin in place of Robert Guyer and page 6 Article 11 the amount of \$769,799,000.00 Should read \$769,799.00.

Moderator Kathy Austin mentioned the Circle of Friends were selling raffle tickets for a quilt in the back of the room to visit them to support and mentioned that the Circle of Friends support so many local charities and are a great organization.

Article 1. To elect a moderator for the ensuing year for the Town.

A motion was made and seconded to nominate Kathy Austin as Moderator for the Town of Morgan Moderator for the ensuing year.

Hearing no other nominations. The Clerk cast 1 ballot.

Article 2. To elect a moderator for the ensuing year for the Town School District.

A motion was made and seconded to nominate Kathy Austin as Morgan Town School District Moderator for the ensuing year.

Hearing no other nominations. The Clerk cast 1 ballot.

Article 3. To hear and dispose of the reports of the Town and School District Officials as required by law.

A motion was made and seconded to move the question.

Discussion. Hearing none, a motion was made and seconded to accept reports as written.

ARTICLE 4, 5, 6 & 7 TO BE VOTED ON FROM 8:00 AM TO 7:00 PM ON MARCH 4TH 2025 AT THE MORGAN TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE.

Article 4. (Australian Ballot) To cast ballots on the North Country Senior High School Budget.

YES – 33 NO - 17

Article 5. (Australian Ballot) To cast ballots on the North Country Junior High School Budget.

YES – 34 NO - 16

Article 6. (Australian Ballot) To cast ballots on the North Country Junior High School Building Maintenance Reserve Fund.

YES – 37 NO - 13

Article 7. (Australian Ballot) To cast ballots on the North Country Junior High School Equity Fund.

YES – 33 NO - 17

Article 8. To Elect all Town officers as required by law. (Newly elected officers will be sworn in at the close of Town Meeting).

Town School District Treasurer: (1 year term) (Vacant)

David Augustoni was nominated, no other nominations, nominations closed. CLERK CAST 1 BALLOT.

Selectman: (3-year term) (Bruce Remick)

Bruce Remick was nominated, no other nominations, nominations closed. CLERK CAST 1 BALLOT.

School Board Director: (3-year term) (Janet Selby)

Janet Selby was nominated, no other nominations, nominations closed. CLERK CAST 1 BALLOT.

Union School Board Director: Evelyn Saurez (Appointed) (3-year term)

No nominations, nominations closed. The position will be appointed for a 1-year term until the next Annual Town Meeting vote.

1st Constable: (1 year term) (Robert Cain)

Robert (Bob) Cain was nominated, no other nominations, nominations closed. CLERK CAST 1 BALLOT.

2nd Constable: (1 year term) (Eric Paré)

Eric (Ric) Paré was nominated, no other nominations, nominations closed. CLERK CAST 1 BALLOT.

Delinquent Tax Collector: (1 year term) (James Judd)

James Judd was nominated, no other nominations, nominations closed. CLERK CAST 1 BALLOT.

Cemetery Commissioner: (5-year term) (Kenneth Whitehill)

Kenneth (Ken) Whitehill was nominated, no other nominations, nominations closed. CLERK CAST 1 BALLOT.

Community House Committee: (1 year term) Jane Malgeri, Chair, Deanna Keenan, Treasurer, Eric (Ric) Paré, Tamara Paré, Robert Cain, Julia Norton, Libby Jacobs, & Lynda Chaffee. (Can vote as a slate).

Michael Rossi was nominated, no other nominations, nominations closed. The Community House can be voted as a slate if no objections, hearing none the Community House Committee, as shown with addition of Michael Rossi, will be voted as a slate.

CLERK CAST 1 BALLOT.

Article 9. Shall the voters of the Town of Morgan vote a budget to meet the expenses and liabilities of the Town and authorize the Select Board to set a tax rate sufficient to provide the same?

A motion was made and seconded to move to the floor. Discussion.

Brandon LaChance asked about taxes and the extra tax rate for flood recovery, if that would be in the tax rate again? Chairman Eric Pope explained hopefully it was a one-time thing, to help cover the expenses that federal funding would not.

Donna Young questioned what is the ARPA expense of \$53,000 on page 12 under Town Expenses? Chairman Eric Pope explained the ARPA was money that all towns received post Covid and that the town of Morgan took in a total of \$210,000. He explained that there were certain parameters in which this money could be spent and we had until December of 2024 to spend it all. We spent it on the school PFAS, drilled a new well, and used some for paving last summer. All money we received from the government, but then had to expend, a cash in/cash out basically. To utilize the funding we had to get the balance down to zero.

Also, Donna Young asked, on page 14, under School Expenses, line-item Contracted Services, she was curious as to what that was and why it was so far over budget? Chairman Eric Pope explained that the school has expenses come up here and there. We had to put in a new septic system in, some of which was covered by the ARPA funds, the grease trap had to be replaced in the sink. We tried to remove it, but were unable to because of a mandate, so replacing it was over \$5000.00, as well as various items that had come up through the year.

Eric also explained that the town has been awarded \$222,000.00 grant that we applied for last spring, which will cover significant energy upgrades to the school. It will be a big benefit to both the school and the town, and will include heating & zone cooling systems, comprehensive insulation, all new lighting, and will help keep the building more current and sustainable. With that money we are also able to hire a consultant to help manage all the different problems which was also funded through the grant.

Robert Guyer questioned the new water system and Eric explained that this is a forgivable loan, that is funding the new well and is all covered and already accessible to us to drill in the spring and see what happens from there. The town is slated to get going on this project, hopefully sometime in May of 2025.

Moderator Kathy Austin read Article 9 again and it was moved and seconded. Ayes have it.

Article 10. Shall the voters of the Town of Morgan vote to have the Town Treasurer accept and collect regular taxes each year, and this year being October 30th 2025 no later than 4:00 p.m.

A motion was made and seconded to approve and move to the floor. Discussion. Hearing none, the Ayes have it.

Article 11. Shall the voters of the Morgan Town School District approve the School Board to expend \$769,799.00 which is the amount the school Board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year? The Morgan Town School District estimates that this proposed budget, if approved, will result in per pupil education spending of \$9,130.00, which is 9.64% more than per pupil spending the current year.

A motion was made and seconded to approve and move to the floor. Discussion. Hearing none, the Ayes have it

Article 12. Shall the voters of the Town of Morgan vote the sum of \$27,040.00 to the Orleans County Sheriff's Department for law enforcement services, to direct the Select Persons to assess a tax over and above the budget sufficient to meet the same? **(This will be used for routine patrols, answering complaints, and investigating incidents. It will also cover administrative expenses, including salaries, vehicle, benefits, liability insurance, maintenance, gasoline, supplies, telephone costs, and crime prevention programs).**

A motion was made and seconded to move to the floor. Discussion.

Robert Guyer asked about the radar speed signs and if there was any feedback from the Sheriff's Department on the signs? Chairman Eric Pope replied that we had not heard any formal response from the department, but most of the public response has been positive and he feels everyone is happy with the speed signs.

Another question from David Augustoni was what role does the State Police have in this? Tammy LaCourse, Chair of the School Board, who also works for the dispatch of the Sheriff's and State Police Department, explained that it depends on how the call comes in. The Sheriff's Department has 24/7 dispatch now for the first time ever. The Sheriff's Department and State Police share the responsibilities. If someone calls VSP, then they respond. If someone calls the Sheriff's Departments, then the Sheriff's respond.

Moderator Kathy Austin read the article again, it was moved and seconded, and the Ayes have it.

Article 13. Shall the voters of the Town of Morgan vote to appropriate the sum of \$10,348.00 to be raised by taxes to the following organizations as shown?

Orleans Essex VNA and Hospice, Inc.	\$ 3,000.00
Northeast Kingdom Human Services	\$ 1,498.00
Daily Memorial Library	\$ 1,400.00
Morgan Historical Society	\$ 1,000.00
Old Stone House Museum	\$ 650.00
North Woods Stewardship Center	\$ 500.00
Orleans County Citizen Advocacy	\$ 500.00
The Pope Memorial Frontier Animal Society	\$ 500.00
Umbrella	\$ 500.00
Northeast Kingdom Learning Services	\$ 400.00
Northeast Kingdom Council on Aging	\$ 300.00
Rural Community Transportation, Inc. (RCT)	\$ 100.00

A motion was made and seconded to approve as a slate. Discussion. Hearing none, the Ayes have it.

Article 14. Shall the voters of the Town of Morgan vote to start its Annual Meeting on the Monday evening preceding the 1st Tuesday of March at 6:00 p.m. 2026?

A motion was made and seconded to move to the floor. Discussion. Hearing none, the Ayes have it.

Article 15. To transact any other business that may legally come before said meeting.

A motion was made and seconded to move to the floor. Discussion.

Kathy Austin explained that there can be conversation, but no actions can be taken on the subject.

Brandon LaChance questioned why the Town of Morgan did not have a choice?

Tammy LaCourse, of the School Board, explained that there was a vote for the school to choose to go with Derby Elementary School back in 2012. To close E. Taylor Hatton Elementary School and to provide for the elementary education of the pupil residing in the district by paying the tuition in accordance to Title 16 section 821 (a)(1) to the Derby Elementary School, which shall be known as the designated school.

Danielle Blake advised Brandon to provide the Select Board with his number and they would reach out to him.

Eric Pope replied that he is supportive, but the town also needs to understand what it looks like now and how we would bring it forward. Eric said that it will be discussed at a select board meeting, more formally, to get some background on what the process looks like and do a little research.

Eric invited Brandon, or anyone who wanted to have specific conversation, to any board meeting and go from there.

Glenn Lambertz offered his assistance in setting up a speaker system for next year's meeting, so everyone can hear the meeting.

Kathy Austin asked if there was any other business. Hearing none, continue to Article 16.

Heather Webster wanted to extend her gratitude and thanks to the road crew and the selectmen who worked so hard to get the roads, culverts, and ditches up and running as quickly as they did through the 2024 flooding.

Article 16. To swear in newly elected officers.

Kathy asked that any newly elected officers visit TammyLee Morin at the Town Clerk Office to be sworn in.

Article 17. To adjourn the meeting, except the Australian Balloting, which happens on Tuesday March 4th, 2025 from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting at 6:50 p.m.

Morgan Select Board

Morgan School Directors

Eric Pope, Chair

Danielle Blake, Chair

Larry Labor

Tammy LaCourse

Bruce Remick

Janet Selby