

**TOWN OF SPRINGFIELD
SELECTBOARD HALL – 96 MAIN STREET – THIRD FLOOR
REGULAR SELECTBOARD MEETING
MONDAY, January 23, 2023**

APPROVED MINUTES

A. CALL MEETING TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND ROLL CALL

Chair, Kristi Morris, called the meeting to order at 6:33 pm. Pledge of Allegiance was recited. The meeting was paused due to technical difficulties with audio via Zoom at 6:34 pm, while the issue was corrected. The meeting resumed at 6:36 pm and Roll Call was taken.

Selectboard Members: Chair Kristi Morris, Vice Chair Michael Martin, Everett Hammond, Walter Martone, and Crissy Webster were present in-person.

Administration: Town Manager Jeff Mobus and Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne were present in-person. Fire Chief Paul Stagner, Parks and Rec Director Chris Merrill, and Library Director Sue Dowdell joined via Zoom.

School Board Liaison: Steve Karaffa was not in attendance

B. MINUTES

1. Regular Selectboard Meeting – January 9, 2023
2. Budget Workshop – January 16, 2023

MOTION: Crissy Webster moved to approve the two sets of minutes as printed and distributed with revisions.

Seconded by: Michael Martin

Walter Martone raised concerns about if he would be able to vote on both sets of minutes as he was not at the Regular Selectboard Meeting on January 9, 2023, he was unsure if they needed to be two separate motions. Further discussion ensued that Walter Martone did watch the entire thing via SAPA Tv, and the Board was comfortable with him voting on it.

Walter Martone pointed out a correction on the first set of minutes on page 10 of 10 on the seventh line down “**Jess Mobus**” should be “**Jeff Mobus**”.

The meeting was paused due to technical difficulties with audio and video via Zoom at 6:40 pm while the issue was addressed. The meeting resumed at 6:45 pm.

Chair Kristi Morris recapped that they are approving the minutes of the Regular Selectboard meeting of January 9th and the Budget Workshop of January 16th and there was one minor correction on page 10 line seven.

Vote: 5-0, unanimous

C. ANY REQUESTED ADDITIONS TO THIS AGENDA

No requested additions to this agenda at the time of the meeting.

D. NEW BUSINESS

ITEM #1 Act on Library Trustee Appointment

Town Manager Jeff Mobus presented the Act on Library Trustee Appointment included in the meeting packet.

MOTION: Walter Martone moved to appoint Sharon Ayer to the Library Board (of Trustees) until Town Meeting in March.

Seconded by: Everett Hammond

Vote: 5-0, unanimous

Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne noted that Sharon Ayer needs to come take the oath and drop off the petition for the Town Meeting. Chair Kristi Morris confirmed with Sharon Ayer that she heard before she can take the position, she needs to visit with the Town Clerk to take the oath of office. Sharon Ayer via Zoom confirmed.

ITEM #2 Act on Town Budget

Town Manager Jeff Mobus presented the Act on Town Budget included in the meeting packet.

Discussion ensued to clarify that the Town Budget amount has to be set first before they get to the articles.

MOTION: Michael Martin moved to set the Town Budget to \$14,284,999.

Seconded by: Crissy Webster

Chair Kristi Morris restated the motion to approve the fiscal year 2023-2024 Town Budget at \$14,284,999. Everett Hammond commented it would have been nice to round it up to \$285,000, but we would leave it is as.

Vote: 5-0, unanimous

ITEM #3 Move Articles to the Town Meeting Day Warrant

Town Manager Jeff Mobus presented the Move Articles to the Town Meeting Day Warrant included in the meeting packet, noting that the Selectboard can do this as one motion as he read them all.

Chair Kristi Morris asked the Board if any of them had any conflicts of interest. Walter Martone commented he was on the Board of the Art and Historical Society. Chair Kristi Morris noted in the past members that have been part of those organizations have recused themselves from that portion, so the motion should be that they would vote on the articles aforementioned by the Town Manager and the special appropriations with the exception of the Springfield Art and Historical Society.

MOTION: Crissy Webster moved to approve the articles aforementioned by the Town Manager and the special appropriations with the exception of the Springfield Art and Historical Society.

Seconded by: Michael Martin

Chair Kristi Morris noted that the articles are the same as they have been so the moderator is \$50 and the Selectperson the sum of \$500 for the annual contribution. Chair Kristi Morris inquired what the total was \$208,000 for the special appropriations and that it included the Springfield Art and Historical Society. Town Manager Jeff Mobus confirmed.

Vote: 5-0, unanimous

MOTION: Crissy Webster moved to approve the special appropriation for the Springfield Art and Historical Society.

Seconded by: Everett Hammond

Chair Kristi Morris noted that they are doing this item separately as one of the members (Walter Martone) has stated that he had a conflict of interest. Trails Committee Chair Jim Fog wanted to say how helpful the Art and Historical Society had been to the Trails Committee and their efforts to promote the trails system in this Town by providing the historical information for the kiosks and placards that are going up.

Vote: 4-0, 1 recused, adopted, Walter Martone recused himself

Town Manager Jeff Mobus mentioned that Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne wanted to make sure the Board was aware that we were planning to do the Town Meeting at 7:00 pm under the new charter not at 7:30 and she wanted to make sure the Board was okay with the meeting being a hybrid meeting assuming the technology works as we need to make that clear when we post it and advertise it. Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne commented it would be back at the High School again and was already reserved. Everett Hammond brought up concerns about doing a hybrid meeting in case we experienced technical difficulties, noting it is a lot of planning and scheduling. Everett Hammond commented that he would not be concerned with doing a hybrid meeting as long as it was advertised as “pending any difficulties the meeting on the floor will stand”. Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne responded that hybrid means it is in-person and Zoom capabilities so we can still function, noting that there is no meeting on the floor and has moved to the Australian Ballot, so you are hearing reports and seeing your boards and hearing from them.

Further discussion ensued that SAPA Tv used to live broadcast those meetings. Additional discussion ensued to confirm that if we had difficulties with Zoom the meeting could continue and that it was not a requirement. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that the big difference is it is an informational meeting that night with no actions being taken.

ITEM #4 Act on Flag Policy

Town Manager Jeff Mobus presented the Act on Flag Policy included in the meeting packet.

Michael Martin commented on page 2 the first sentence “in the Designated Downtown only the flag of the United States of America may be displayed along the Main Street, Clinton Street, and River Street corridor” and questioned that it was Town property. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded he included that as it was similar to what they had in the other policy, adding that the VFW does put flags for Memorial Day along Main Street, so he wanted to make sure those are allowed. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that it is municipal property. Michael Martin inquired that this is only on municipal property. Town Manager Jeff Mobus confirmed. Everett Hammond noted it may or may not be as simple as we own it, noting that if it’s a right-of-way we do not own it and in most cases, it is a right-of-way. Michael Martin commented that he has a problem with that first sentence there, noting that he doesn’t know how to fix that, and he inquired what was the intent. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded it was to allow the displaying of the displaying of the United States flag by the VFW on the Main Street corridor as they have done for many decades at this point.

Walter Martone commented in response to what Mr. Martin said, how about if in the purpose it says on our municipal property and town rights-of-ways. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded that the easiest solution is to take that sentence out.

MOTION: Michael Martin moved to that they adopt the Town of Springfield flag and banner policy for municipal property dated January 23, 2023, and exclude the first sentence on the second page.

Seconded by: Walter Martone

Crissy Webster commented under the ceremonial flags part it says that the ceremonial flags may be flown from the municipal flag poles, noting that she doesn't believe that they can be and believed it would have to be a separate one. Crissy Webster added that she thought the only three that are allowed on the flagpole are the United States, Vermont, and Town of Springfield flag. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded that he believes they can be, noting the flags would just have to be displayed in accordance with the United States Code title 36, chapter 10, adding that they would have to be further down on the flagpole and smaller in size. Chair Kristi Morris inquired if that is what that code is stating. Town Manager Jeff Mobus confirmed.

Walter Martone pointed out the Declaration of Inclusion Committee did review it and there is a memo in the packet from the committee. Walter Martone added they were focused to ensure that it supports equity, inclusion, and specifically promotes the goals in the Declaration of Inclusion policy that this board already adopted so they felt the policy did exactly those things.

Further discussion ensued regarding the U.S. flag code and that it was believed that the United States flag and Vermont state flag could be flown on the same pole, but the State flag had to be below and smaller than the U.S. flag.

Scott Richardson in-person inquired regarding the public right-of-way or public property at Riverside the Rotary Banner, Beyond the Unicorn, and Apple Festival where they all fall, noting that the fence at the softball field is Town property. Scott Richardson inquired how they define ceremonial flags. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded that those are defined in the policy, noting that those are not ceremonial flags at Riverside those are informational banners, but they probably should be added on. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added the Town does not control school property so they could have different rules. Discussion ensued that the fence is on Town property and the school property starts where the bank from Riverside and the parking lot meet. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added under the banners he would add a line at Riverside informational banners that comply with the Town Zoning regulations may be displayed. Chair Kristi Morris commented regarding informational banners if businesses that supported the teams and put banners up was considered informational. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded that he would like to check the Zoning for which banners can go up there, noting you can do it for nonprofits and for municipal communications, but he didn't think businesses are allowed to advertise on there.

Doug Johnston in-person brought up the fencing that displays the different clubs on both entrances down on Clinton Street and Chester Road, noting that they might want to address those too. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that there are three, one is in North Springfield. Doug Johnston inquired if we maintain those. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded we do not they are privately maintained. Chair Kristi Morris inquired if it is the responsibility of the organizations. Town Manager Jeff Mobus confirmed it is their responsibility to make sure the information is accurate and provide their own signs. Michael Martin commented it doesn't fall under this policy as those are permanent installations and he believes they were permitted through the Zoning department.

Jim Fog in-person commented in terms of advertising his understanding is they can only hang business advertising on the fences at the tennis courts down there just adjacent to the football field and those are sponsors of SHS athletics or supporting businesses similar to those that hang banners in the Dressel gym, noting that he was sure our athletic director could provide more information on that. Jim Fog noted concerns regarding the Farmer's Market signage which sits on Town property or right-of-way, noting it was put up with Town blessing about 10 years ago. Jim Fog added the one up at the plaza was still going strong and he recently saw that the one down at the bottom of South Street Hill got taken out by someone that slide in the recent storm, noting that they will do their best to get that put back up in the Spring. Jim Fog further added that in addition to that permitted sign they've provided a service to whoever had events coming up that they wish to promote, and it was a nonprofit and nonpolitical things, noting there is a list of rules that the Town has on record and there is room for 2-3 of these temporary signs and there ought to be some kind of provision for that included in this new ordinance. Chair Kristi Morris commented he believed that would fall under informational.

Kurt Merriman via zoom commented that he believed there may have been some flags that may not have been considered, noting the military flags, the 5 branches of the military, and the MIA POW flag and inquired if they were excluding them in the policy. Chair Kristi Morris responded he recognized we are not flying those now and he knows the MIA POW flag is flown on the State Capital in Montpelier with the U.S. flag. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded we can allow for those and put them into the policy, noting they are not in the policy currently. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that the most common flag other than these three in the policy is the MIA flag on government property. Chair Kristi Morris noted that a policy can be exclusionary for some things and when you are trying to be inclusive for what can be sometimes it is interpretation, and it would be up to a future board or someone to amend or add that if we don't include it.

Kurt Merriman noted concerns about the blue line flag being brought up and someone not wanting it flown on Town property. Kurt Merriman added it is a meaningful flag and some have interpreted it the wrong way, but we all know what it was for, adding that he would like it flown on the Police Department's pole or the Fire Department's pole or anywhere in Town.

Everett Hammond noted that with all the discussion he was not ready to make a vote tonight and added that they should pull it back and redevelop another to bring back in a few weeks after they put some thought into it. Everett Hammond added that he did not see a big rush to get this adopted tonight as far as blue line flag. Everett Hammond further added that the blue line flag, red line flag, or whatever shouldn't be there, noting that he understands there is a lot of controversy on that but doesn't need to come from the Board and it doesn't need to be a policy, it could be the Manager making that decision. Everett Hammond stated that he was not going to vote on this tonight either way. Chair Kristi Morris inquired if they had a section in there where it can be approved by the Town Manager, and he noted that he did not see where the Town Manager would have discretion on those under this policy.

Charis Boke via Zoom commented that she was a member of the Inclusion Committee here in Town and while she was grateful for Mr. Merriman's comments she wanted to reflect back a different opinion that is also strongly held by a lot of people in Town that the thin blue line and thin red line flags should specifically not be flown. Charis Boke added that with all the compassion in the world and gratitude for good work the public servants do, the impact of those flags on community members of color and on people of color who might want to come, to visit, to shop in, to move to Springfield it is huge the impact of what they have come to represent across the nation and that is really separate and apart from the intent of those flags. Charis Boke further added knowing there is good intent behind them does not make it okay to fly them on Municipal property.

Crissy Webster commented that she believed it should be mentioned that being the Inclusion Committee it seems that there is some exclusion going on because there is strong support for first responders and those flags. Crissy Webster added that it seems that they are excluding the first responders, noting that she knows it is really hard to include every single group and everyone's feelings, but these are flags that have been around for a long time and the representation that they have for these first responders and their families is really important and it needs to be noted that it is really important.

Scott Richardson agreed with Ms. Webster that there is a lot of sentiment behind those, and we are talking about the Inclusion Committee of being Springfield, noting that there is a lot of Springfield Public Safety people who live here and work here in Springfield and are proud to be here in Springfield. Scott Richardson added what happens in Washington and what happens in San Diego happens there and we are talking about Springfield, VT. Scott Richardson further added he agrees that those flags are a symbol that really should be there. Scott Richardson continued a little history about the thin blue line came about after the assassination of two New York City police officers in December of 2014. Scott Richardson noted that the other meeting there was some discussion that pointed towards a previous president, adding it was President Obama that this came under, there is some miscuing there. Scott Richardson reiterated it is support of the public safety folks here in Town and he understands there needs to be a policy. Scott Richardson further discussed on Memorial Day we honor the fallen fire fighters every memorial day by placing a fire flag and it's not the thin red line

fire flag it is the red fire flag at the gravesites every memorial day in all the Town cemeteries and in other towns around here and that is town property. Scott Richardson additionally added that is a fire flag and it doesn't fall under the policy so there is a lot to this, and everyone needs to come into consideration, and he agreed with Crissy Webster that the Inclusion Committee wants to include everyone in Springfield, but they are excluding our public safety folks.

Walter Martone commented that he did not follow how it is excluding anybody by not having a flag for every single group. Walter Martone added that they are talking about not flying a flag that is clearly very controversial, the thin blue line flag Police departments are weighing in on both sides on the issue and it clearly has some connotation there that is very offensive to certain groups. Walter Martone further added that if you want to include everybody he believes we need to have the rainbow flag, the black lives matter flag, and we need to have a whole bunch of others. Walter Martone discussed that's not the way you have to have inclusion by doing it all, he believes you need to make sure you are not offending, excluding, or making anybody in Town feel uncomfortable so he didn't see how not flying those flags are making people uncomfortable being in Springfield.

Michael Martin commented that there are a lot of issues that people have with emotions and symbolism associated with these different banners, noting that he appreciated Mr. Merriman's comments in particular because he points out the branches of the military and we all support the military. Michael Martin added as Mr. Martone pointed out there are several other flags that he is sure that other people might find objectionable, and the purpose of this policy is to avoid all of this. Michael Martin further added he doesn't want to go down the road of trying to pick which flags are going to be allowed and which flags are not going to be allowed, noting that this is a government entity, the Town of Springfield is a government entity chartered by the State of Vermont and the United States of America and we have three flags that we fly the U.S. flag, the State flag, and the town flag and for purposes of ceremony and support of our youth in our school system we have additional banners for seasonal display or support of the community. Michael Martin continued as a municipality that is where we should draw the line and as far as revisiting this policy to include a whole litany of lists, he did not want to go down that road. Michael Martin discussed this is the policy that protects the most number of people by limiting on municipal property period and that's why he likes the policy the way it is written. Michael Martin further discussed relative to additional things there were some comments made about other signs in other places and if you want to add something to this maybe we should add that this does not exclude, preclude, or override any of the existing permitted signage that we have in the Town of Springfield, noting the welcome signs at the entrances of Town and that those went through the zoning process and that is a little different story than sticking a piece of fabric on a pole which is a temporary installation.

Chair Kristi Morris noted his only concern about a policy is you create a document that has one intent and that is to fly the flag of the United States of American, the Vermont State flag, and the Town of Springfield flag and as soon as you create a policy you close the door on other opportunities. Chair Kristi Morris added that he recognized that this conversation has gone that they are trying to determine what would be included and there will be questions, there will be requests to fly these different banners, and he knows we haven't done the military branches' flags, but this would prohibit them. Chair Kristi Morris added that the cemetery flag is a good point and he thought of another one today as he was watching trucks from the Town highway drive around town, and they have the Town seal on the side of the truck. Chair Kristi Morris continued that's our Town seal, he inquired if that was included or is it not included. Chair Kristi Morris discussed those are the questions that when you create a policy that you are either going to exclude when your intent was to not exclude or include something that there wasn't intent to include it, so a policy gives us that document for that purpose. Chair Kristi Morris additionally noted that is why he is really not in favor of a policy; he recognizes what we are all trying to do here as a government body, and he respects that but anytime we create a policy it is going to have unintended consequences.

Chair Kristi Morris stated that he believed that Mr. Martin's motion was to include "to adopt the flag policy with the exclusion of "in the designated downtown only the flag of the United States of America to be displayed along the Main Street, Clinton Street, River Street corridor" so that sentence has been struck.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus commented that stuff like signs he believes that is covered under Zoning and that is not an issue, noting he believed the only thing we haven't mentioned tonight is basically you can have a very limited group of flags, or you have to allow all flags. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that the supreme court has ruled on this and it's not where we can say "Well, we are not going to do anything" because then you run into consistency issues and then we would be very open to any First Amendment Challenge to their freedom of expression of the first amendment. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added he believes we do have to have a policy because if we don't, we couldn't hang any flags or we have to hang all flags which would be a monumental undertaking. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that one town in Vermont tried to have a two-week rotation on about 50 different flags and they finally gave up on that as it's a challenge. Town manager Jeff Mobus further commented it's not something we can say that DC doesn't affect us it does, the supreme court has ruled on this and if we get sued for not hanging a flag we will lose because the supreme court has already ruled it. Town Manager Jeff Mobus stated that we do have to be prepared and have a policy that protects the Town.

Wes Marshall of SAPA TV in-person, commented that everybody has mentioned all these different flags, noting that if you put 50 flags out there to represent all these groups and you put all these groups together, they represent America. Wes Marshall added we only need one flag to represent everybody, we don't need 50 flags out there he believes it should just be the American flag and that would be it.

Kurt Merriman inquired if the blue line flag is the issue here tonight and if that was what brought this all up, noting if it is then we should be addressing that one flag and not a whole variety of other flags, banners, etc. Kurt Merriman commented if you read the description of the blue line flag it clearly defines its meaning which is very meaningful to Law Enforcement, First Responders, and the general public that support the police departments and there is nothing in that definition that anyone should interpret as being wrong or racist. Kurt Merriman added there is so much of this stuff going around now and he thinks people could spend time in their lives doing something much better than complaining about the blue line flag. Kurt Merriman further commented the young lady said people are apparently offended by it and it is taken down then himself and hundreds of others are going to be offended because it was taken down. Kurt Merriman further added he believes this has just gone to the extreme and he thinks the Board has a lot of homework to do before they write a policy covering all these flags and it's gone beyond the blue line flag. Kurt Merriman further continued they talk about the flags downtown and inquired what about Memorial Park they didn't include if they have the five branches of the military MIA flags up there and the policy only talked about the flags downtown so there is another issue that needs to be addressed.

Walter Martone commented something that the gentleman (Kurt Merriman) just said that he believes was really key was that you should not have a different interpretation of that flag, the word should be used, but the reality is that lots of people do have a different interpretation of what that flag is and that was evidenced in the fact that it was carried by people that were storming the capital as part of the insurrection group. Walter Martone added it was carried right next to the Confederate flag in downtown Springfield when they had the Black Lives Matter rally in front of where the Coop is now, and it has got this association, but he agrees it should not be misinterpreted but it has. Walter Martone further added like he said before if you google it, all the hits you are going to get are this other interpretation of it, you can't get away from that it has been co-opted by other groups and this co-opting is a very damaging and dangerous thing and for us to put anything out on public property that is that controversial is very unwise.

Crissy Webster commented if we are going to be bringing up that particular event that happened, the U.S. flag was actually worn more than any other flag, Confederate, blue line flag, or anything like that so it's very controversial in the sense that they were wearing multiple different flags and that was a representation of them personally and not of what the flags represent. Crissy Webster added that last time she brought up the fact that in the late 1800s early 1900s Vermont was a leader in eugenics and inquired if that means we can't fly the Vermont flag because Vermont wiped out the Abenaki population. Crissy Webster further added they get interpreted very differently and we need to stop with the interpretation because her interpretation is very different than someone else's interpretation of something, noting they

need to be very clear in that so if they are going to have exceptions its either they accept everything or they don't add and that it's either the U.S. flag or nothing else.

Scott Richardson commented that he doesn't disagree with Walter Martone, he was just trying to bring up some points here when we talk about January 6th it was the U.S. flag that was the most prevalent there and then there was a bunch of flags that were altered historical flags, noting one of the biggest ones was the yellow flag with the coiled snake in the middle that says "don't tread on me". Scott Richardson added that was real close to as many of those there as the U.S. flag, noting that the State of Virginia has that coiled snake "don't tread on me", as one of the license plates you can drive around with. Scott Richardson further added he understands there needs to be a policy, but he just doesn't like the idea that it is based on feelings and instead of facts.

Michael Martin commented the fact is this is a government agency, and we are in the State of Vermont and we are in the United States of America. Michael Martin added those are the two flags and the Town Manager wants to add the Town flag and Mr. Merriman made a good point about the flags at the Veteran's Memorial Park and he thinks that we should certainly make an inclusion for those flags, noting it's not the intent to exclude those flags especially in that ceremonial sense. Michael Martin further added back to this policy, the ceremonial flags of governments we could add branches of the military to that first section.

Doug Johnston commented it was a damned if you do, damned if you don't situation, noting just to point out there are people who do not like the American flag, they burn it, they stamp on it so if it is because some people don't like it, he would hate to be at that point where you have to discontinue an American flag. Michael Martin responded he didn't think that's the intent. Doug Johnston responded that the intent in his point is there are people that hate the American flag that live in the United States, and you can see it in the riots and things like that.

Chair Kristi Morris commented he was glad they brought that up and he would like to know what governmental flags we recognize because we have allies, and we have enemies, but they are recognized. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded he pulled that out of the other policy, he believed one of the issues is Taiwan as Japan doesn't recognize them, but he doesn't know if our country recognizes them or not. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that he was right he wasn't sure why we would be flying flags of other countries, he didn't believe that we would ever need to do that, and he believed the military flags and POW flags are much more important that's why I was glad that those were brought up.

Fire Chief Paul Stagner via Zoom commented that he might have something to do with a lot of this discussion tonight as the flag is on the building, he is responsible for. Fire Chief Paul Stagner added he agrees with Mr. Mobus' point that if we make a change to what flags we fly he feels pretty strongly that it should be based on previous legal decisions by the supreme court and not based on somebody's subjective ideologies, opinions, or of being offended. Fire Chief Paul Stagner further added he was offended by many things, but he doesn't have a right to not being offended that's just his human nature and people have the right to their own opinions and nobody can be protected from ever not being offended. Fire Chief Paul Stagner continued what kind of discussions and communications would be had if they were based solely on not being offended. Fire Chief Paul Stagner discussed that being said he would gladly take down the flag, red strip, blue strip, or any flag if that is what the Supreme Court has decided, noting that is what we should do. Fire Chief Paul Stagner additionally discussed we cannot as Jeff Mobus stated, logistically support the requirement to fly every flag that would want to be flown which he would be happy to do too if he could, but we cannot as he doesn't have the manpower. Fire Chief Paul Stagner further discussed that solely because of the previous decision made by the supreme court he thinks our policy should be focused on that as it is already established law and we should move on from there. Fire Chief Paul Stagner noted when we start discussing being offended and the subjective opinions that's where we get into the grey water, and we should remove as much of that as we can from this table in his opinion and he just thinks the Supreme Court has spoken and we need to focus our policy on that for our Towns liability issues. Chair Kristi Morris inquired if the Supreme Court made a ruling on flags that you can fly. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded governmental flags are one group and once you go into the non-governmental flags its either all or none it is basically that one ruling from May of last year.

Tre Ayer via Zoom commented to reiterate what a lot of people have been saying is that the Town has a legal responsibility to remain viewpoint neutral or else it can open itself up to lawsuits based on content discrimination and with that said the policy to only allow the United States, Vermont, and Town of Springfield flags would most likely satisfy that requirement of content neutrality. Tre Ayer added it gets dicey when the Town makes exceptions to that rule and how it makes the decision in deciding which of those requests to approve and which ones to deny so if the Town is going to engage in any sort of prohibition of flying any types of flags other than those three it could open the Town up to a lawsuit. Chair Kristi Morris inquired what Tre Ayer's thoughts were on the Memorial Park and the branches of the military flags. Tre Ayer commented that he is not a lawyer, but he thinks the military flags would be okay and the POW flag may run into issues just because some people do view that as a political statement that could get questioned but he doesn't think it would be challenged. Tre Ayer further added in the issue of the thin blue line flag vs the Black Lives Matter flag, for example that debate if you allowed one of those you would have to allow the other or else that would be content based discrimination. Tre Ayer corrected himself he meant to say viewpoint discrimination not content discrimination.

Kurt Merriman commented the Fire Chief pretty much summed it up and he thinks also as he has said before, they have one issue on the table and that is the thin blue line flag because there are some people that are offended by it. Kurt Merriman added again go back to the description that is written on the thin blue line flag and you will see exactly what it represents and if somebody has taken that flag and done something else with it then that's not what that was all about, adding that he thinks they need to be clear and concise. Kurt Merriman further added he doesn't see them taking any steps to take that flag down and it would really be a slap in the face to the Police Department, the Police Officers, the Fire Department and so on, adding that he thinks that needs to come off the table and let's move on.

Chair Kristi Morris restated the motion on the floor was to adopt the Town of Springfield flag and banner policy for municipal property dated January 23rd, 2023, with the exception of the removal of the downtown only in the Main Street, Clinton Street, River Street corridor.

Michael Martin noted "and add flags of U.S. military branches". Further discussion ensued to confirm that the motion would need to be amended.

MOTION: Michael Martin amended his motion to include item 1 under ceremonial flags after United States insert the words and flags of U.S. military branches.

Michael Martin commented we have a Memorial Park where we display those flags every year on Memorial Day and he doesn't want to exclude the branches of the military from the Memorial Day celebration. Chair Kristi Morris commented they didn't appear to have a second. Everett Hammond commented he told him his opinion and they are all over the place.

Walter Martone commented his only concern there is that the blue line flag and the red line flag have opened up a can of worms, you know there is also the green line, the white line, the yellow line flags and these things are all these different groups the only one that I am aware of that has been controversial is the blue line one and he would be concerned that with his (Michael Martin) amendment all of a sudden we are going to start putting up the green line flag for the army and inquired that we are not talking about those kinds of flags. Michael Martin confirmed the official Banners.

MOTION: Michael Martin amended his motion to include item 1 under ceremonial flags after United States insert the words and official U.S. military branch flags.

Seconded by: Walter Martone

Michael Martin commented in that particular passage there was a question about flags of other governments and he knows this policy was drafted from San Jose, adding that it was not likely that we would have a lot of call here in Springfield Vermont, but some of these larger cities do have visiting dignitaries from foreign countries and they fly their flags when

they are having dignitaries come by and he doesn't know why we wouldn't do the same if we had entourage from Great Britain visiting Springfield for some reason, we would want to fly their flag. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that the most recent common example is the Ukraine flag. Michael Martin inquired if the policy is upon request and approval by the Selectboard. Crissy Webster asked to clarify what they were making a motion on. Michael Martin responded that is the motion just the amendment.

Vote: 5-0, unanimous

Chair Kristi Morris restated the whole motion "to adopt the Town of Springfield flag and banner policy for municipal property dated January 23, 2023 with under ceremonial flags number one flags of governments recognized by the United States and official U.S. military branch flags and the striking of the first sentence under street flags and banners which is the in the designated downtown only the flags of the United States of American on the Main Street, Clinton Street, River Street corridor.

Michael Martin commented that it has been very informative, and he appreciated the decorum of all of the participants who expressed their viewpoints and one of the most important things he wanted to point out is that there have been a variety of viewpoints and at one point there was some discussion of how the Selectboard would approve these additional flags. Michael Martin stated one of the comments that was made was if we had to fly the blue lives matter flag then we had to fly the BLM flag and that is exactly the reason he wants this policy because he doesn't want to have to make that decision. Michael Martin added there was a question of why do you want to be offended, but why do you want to be offensive is the next question and he doesn't want to be offensive but he can't control peoples' response to the things that he says and whether they are offended or not but he's going to try not to be offensive by trying to be as neutral as possible.

Everett Hammond inquired if this addresses the Riverside banners, as well. Chair Kristi Morris responded it doesn't. Everett Hammond commented that's what he would like to see addressed.

Crissy Webster commented in response to Mr. Martin she feels that we need to tighten up the policy a little more and she thinks it is still open up to interpretation and opinions when we have ceremonial flags that are flown, noting she feels if we are trying to go the less offensive route then it should be specifically the U.S. flag, State flag, Town flag, and the branches of the U.S. military.

Walter Martone commented he can only speak for himself and not for others, but we have talked about misinterpretations and feelings and all this other stuff and the one thing he wanted to make clear is that anything that he said was not in any way intended to be disrespectful or offensive to people who are first responders, the police, the fire, and the ambulance. Walter Martone added that he is a huge supporter of them, and he would be very open to finding some alternative way of expressing that, something that is clear and would not be misinterpreted, that would not be subject to that kind of controversy I just want to make that clear cause there was a comment about taking the flags down and that would be disrespectful. Walter Martone further added none of that was his intention at all and if there are other ways of showing our support that is clear and not misinterpreted, he would be in favor.

Vote: 2-3, Michael Martin and Walter Martone voted yay, Crissy Webster, Chair Kristi Morris, and Everett Hammond voted nay, the policy stands not adopted.

ITEM #5 Act on Children in the Workplace Policy

Town Manager Jeff Mobus presented the Act on Children in the Workplace Policy included in the meeting packet.

Crissy Webster inquired from a liability standpoint if "workplace" included unofficial work vehicles. Town Manager Jeff Mobus confirmed it does because they are working, and it is a worksite. Walter Martone pointed out that one of the things the Declaration of Inclusion Committee is working on a tool for evaluating the different policies of the Town to

see if there are any inherent discriminatory items and one of which would be the employee handbook. Walter Martone added he did not see any discriminatory issues with this because of the liability issue. Walter Martone further added as they develop this tool which they hope to approve at their next meeting, they want to make that available to the Town to refer to as we are going through the process of looking through the handbook. Walter Martone noted as there are drafts or even not complete drafts of the handbook, the Committee would be very interested in starting the review and applying this tool to provide appropriate recommendations.

Further discussion ensued regarding workplace means wherever the employee is working at. Additional discussion ensued regarding concerns for safety and that is why you would want to have this policy, so we are not liable.

Michael Martin commented the first line says, "employees are welcome to bring their children". Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted this was for visits. Chair Kristi Morris inquired if there were examples of where children are being brought into work. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded the biller at the Fire Station has brought her child in for many hours at a time. Chair Kristi Morris inquired if that is the only example. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded that is the only one off the top of his head. Chair Kristi Morris commented regarding the Fire Station, they work a 24-hour shift, and he knows that sometimes the families come in for super or that members who get called backed may bring an older child in. Chair Kristi Morris requested more information, noting he understands what the concept is it seems that it limits disruptions, the kids must be directly supervised, and if the frequency, length, and nature of visits becomes problematic the employee is advised of the situation and will be expected to take corrective action which he assumed would have to be by permission of the supervisor.

Michael Martin commented after reading the policy and the situation that was described he believes the policy covers that, noting it is planned, it is in a fashion that limits the disruption of the workplace. Michael Martin added the family comes in to have dinner with the father in the breakroom and that's not disruptive, it is a planned, infrequent, and brief visit. Michael Martin further added as Mr. Hammond pointed out, going to a jobsite for the DPW would be out of the question, he doesn't think employees are welcome to bring their children to jobsites where heavy equipment is being operated. Michael Martin noted that if someone brings someone into an office environment and sits down at their desk to have lunch with them would not be a disruptive issue or safety concern, noting he wasn't sure if they could rework it so that safety is an issue. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded he would send it back to them (Cathy Sohngen and Charley Shepherd).

Chair Kristi Morris pointed out that this is for employees and sighted concerns that several of the Town's departments have students or interns come in that could be considered minors. Chair Kristi Morris inquired how that works and if they are considered an employee. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded they are not an employee they are considered interns and we know from the VLCT that we have intern programs, and they would be covered in that situation.

Doug Johnston present in-person, noted that at one time the Police Department had a ride along program, but he was not sure if they were still doing that and that this should be considered also.

Scott Richardson present in-person, commented regarding students and interns at the Fire Station an intern or paramedic student coming on a ride along is actually in contract with whoever the student is going to school with. Chair Kristi Morris noted those are adults though. Scott Richardson added the students in the health career field at the High School have the same thing with River Valley Tech where there is a contract, and they are covered under school insurance.

Library Director Sue Dowdell via zoom, commented at the library anyone age 8 and above can be in the library on their own, so that precludes that. Library Director Sue Dowdell added they did attend the VLCT First Amendment Audit training, and it said that any area that is employees only should be just employees only. Library Director Sue Dowdell further added when her staff have their children or grandchildren in, they are only in the library proper, and they are not in the staff area. Library Director Sue Dowdell noted if we let children in there, we need to let a First Amendment auditor in there as well.

There was no action taken on this item and it will go back for revision based on the discussions.

ITEM #6 Act on Technology Request

Town Manager Jeff Mobus presented the Act in Technology Request included in the meeting packet noting that he is coming to the Board is that we do not have three companies as they are not getting back to us, and we are concerned that without firewalls our data is at risk to be hacked which can lead to severe disruption to the Town.

Further discussion ensued to clarify that this is just to start working with the company as according to the purchase policy we should have three different proposals and expenditures will be presented to the Board for their authorization.

MOTION: Walter Martone moved to authorize the Town Manager to go forward with Tech Group discussions to improve our IT situation.

Seconded by: Everett Hammond

Further discussion ensued that Tech Group has already done the evaluation and the next step is getting a proposal for the fire wall. Chair Kristi Morris recognized that the Town Manager was not in violation of the purchasing policy because he tried to do that, it was just not happening.

Chair Kristi Morris inquired what the timeframe was. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded they have been very responsive, and he expects to get a quote on the firewall situation later this week. Michael Martin inquired where they were located. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded in Burlington.

Vote: 5-0, unanimous

Chair Kristi Morris noted that the Town Manager would come back to the Board if the dollar amount is more than \$10,000. Town Manager Jeff Mobus confirmed.

ITEM #7 Act on Police Union Contract

Town Manager Jeff Mobus presented the Act on Police Union Contract included in the meeting packet.

MOTION: Michael Martin moved to authorize the town manager to sign the contract with the Police Union.

Seconded by: Walter Martone

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed we have number 11 in the Patrol Division, noted he is on FTO, and he is currently a certified patrol officer. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that we have two going to the academy in February and that brings us up to the fully allotted 11. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added he authorized the Chief if he had another Vermont certified officer to make an offer, noting it won't hurt us budgetarily because in the first half of the year we only had seven. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that we are getting applications for police officers and the guys are reaching out to other departments, adding they are very pleased with the new situation.

Chair Kristi Morris asked for an update on dispatch. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded we did hire the fifth full time dispatcher, Tyler Putnam. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added he was informed during his (Tyler Putnam's) training that he is picking things up very quickly and really seems to buy into the job and once he finishes the required training, he would be on the second shift from 3-11. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added we would then be functioning independently, and we also have two part time dispatchers to help fill in when people are on vacation or are sick.

Chair Kristi Morris noted he does have a brother that works for the PD as a dispatcher but this in no way affects any of his compensation. Chair Kristi Morris additionally noted the contract was negotiated with the Management Team of that

Union, Town Manager, and Administration for the Town. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted Town Attorney was involved with the negotiations as well.

Vote: 5-0, unanimous

Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted there are two other unions, one for the library and one for the Fire/Ambulance. Chair Kristi Morris noted that the highway contract negotiation was done previously.

ITEM #8 COVID Update

Town Manager Jeff Mobus presented the COVID Update included in the meeting packet.

E. FINANCIAL REPORTS

FY2023 Warrants to January 19, 2023 – copies on website.

Town Manager, Jeff Mobus stated that any questions regarding these warrants should be directed to the Finance Director, Cathy Sohngen.

F. MANAGER'S REPORT

Town Manager Jeff Mobus presented the Manager's Report included in the meeting packet. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that we are finding that people plowing are plowing out into the streets and causing hazards to public passing by on the streets.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus wanted to let the Board and Public know that the Town of Springfield was up for its 8-year renewal for the Downtown Designation. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that the presentation was presented to the Board back in September and Jessica Martin the Executive Director of Springfield on the Move and himself made the presentation in Montpelier. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added they acted immediately on our renewal and voted unanimously to renew our Downtown Designation for another 8 years. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that they highlighted we are making the passage of Main Street with 10,000 cars a day going down it, safer with the traffic calming and the wigwag signs so pedestrians are safer crossing the streets. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further noted the increased activity from our investments not just Town's but our partners as well, in the Woolson Block building, the new Comtu Cascade Park, and the attraction of the new Coop downtown.

Crissy Webster inquired about the 24/7 coverage for the Police Department and what the anticipated timeline was. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded starting this coming weekend on January 28, they will be extending coverage to 2:00 am and we will then be doing our own on call from 2-7 am, so the State Troopers will no longer be our primary on call. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added getting to true 24/7 coverage will be further down the road as we have to wait for the FTOs and academy candidates to get there, but once we have them all there, he feels very comfortable that we will be at 24/7 finally.

Jessica Martin Executive Director of Springfield on the Move via zoom, agreed with Jeff Mobus that the Board for the Downtown Designation was impressed with not only our achievements but also in our ability to access available funds including the downtown tax credits to get some of these projects completed. Chair Kristi Morris noted that the Downtown Designation is important because as we apply for grants it makes us eligible and decreases our match. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added it gives us favorable treatment in grants and allows us to take advantage of Downtown Transportation fund grants and tax credits, noting the biggest part of the funding for Woolson Block was actually the tax credits. Town Manager

Jeff Mobus further added it was just a whisker under \$5 million in tax credits for that project. Town manager Jeff Mobus continued that it opens us up to a lot more financial options when it comes to funding these projects and he also emphasized that the Town didn't do this on our own, we have fantastic partners like SOM, SRDC, Springfield Housing Authority, MARC, and our volunteer groups and it takes everybody to help move the Town forward. Town Manager Jeff Mobus additionally added that he stressed all the support we received and even included the support from the State, Gary Holloway is our manager for this program, and he has been very helpful on all of our projects and guiding us through the renewal of the application as well.

G. FUTURE AGENDA ITEM PROPOSALS

Crissy Webster requested a timeline for when the employee handbook would be completed. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded that according to preliminary discussions it will be completed sometime this Spring, noting that he would get a more precise timeline.

Walter Martone requested a new and improved flag policy taking into consideration the discussion they have had here to be brought back to them. Everett Hammond inquired if we just concentrated this as a flag policy and scratch banners for now, noting he believed it would be a lot quicker.

H. COMMITTEE REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Crissy Webster commented in reading through the Inclusion Committee meeting minutes, she noticed a second time where it refers to "blue lives matter flag" and requested this be corrected to the thin blue line flag and it should have the appropriate title.

Chair Kristi Morris commented they are still working with the State on our Town charter update, noting that Mr. Martone and the Town Clerk were involved in this. Chair Kristi Morris added that they have acknowledged there were some issues with that and this is a busy point for Legislative Council as they are in the middle of drafting bills, and they will be updating our charter bill as well.

Walter Martone mentioned the Declaration of Inclusion Committee was interested in the handbook and if the Town Manager does have a schedule that would be fantastic and it doesn't have to be in its complete form for them to review it, it can be in sections.

Further discussion ensued regarding the technological difficulties experienced during the meeting and the Recording Secretary was thanked for resolving the issues.

I. OTHER MINUTES & CORRESPONDENCE

Chair Morris read aloud the list of Other Minutes and Correspondence and noted these are all available online.

1. Springfield Inclusion Committee – Minutes of January 18, 2023
2. Springfield On The Move – Minutes of November 10, 2022
3. Springfield Town Library – Events Calendar for February 2023
4. Springfield Town Library – Strategic Planning Subcommittee – Minutes of January 17, 2023
5. Springfield Town Library – Library Trustees – Minutes of January 10, 2023
6. Springfield Regional Development Corporation – Minutes of December 20, 2022

J. CITIZENS' COMMENTS

No Citizens' comments at the time of the meeting.

K. ADJOURN

MOTION: Michael Martin moved to adjourn the meeting.

Seconded by: Crissy Webster

Vote: 5-0, unanimous

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carrie M. Kellow, Recording Secretary