

**DRAFT MINUTES**  
**TOWN OF MIDDLESEX**  
**ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**  
**MARCH 7, 2017**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:** At 4:30 PM Moderator Susan Clark introduces the Select Board. Elliot Burg reminds people of the summer bandstand concert series. Sarah Seidman notes the Middlesex Historical Society still doesn't have a home and that the fate of the train station off Route 2 remains undecided. John Puleio announces the pie breakfast. Jeff Koonz recommends that homeowners label the end of their driveways so they can be found in an emergency. Vermont State Rep. for Middlesex and Berlin Kim Jessup updates the meeting on what's going on at the Statehouse. U-32 High School Senior Savannah Yates sings a stirring acapella rendition of These Green Mountains, the Vermont state song, and relatively new US citizen Sven Coenye delivers the convocation.

The meeting is called to order at 5 PM.

**ARTICLE 1: *To elect a Moderator for the ensuing year.*** Jeff Koonz nominates Susan Clark. Anita Krauth seconds. The article is approved.

**ARTICLE 2: *To elect a Grand Juror and Town Agent for the ensuing year.*** Elijah Hawkes nominates Todd Daloz. Mary Just Skinner seconds. The article is approved.

**ARTICLE 3: *To elect all necessary officers for the ensuing year.*** (411 voters cast ballots)

Town Clerk	3-year term	Sarah Merriman
Treasurer	1-year term	Dorinda Crowell
Trustee of Public Funds	1-year term	Dorinda Crowell
Collector of Delinquent Taxes	1-year term	Dorinda Crowell
Select Board	3-year term	Philip Hyjek
Select Board	2-year term	Steven Martin
Cemetery Commissioner	3-year term	Gary Lamell
Lister	3-year term	Vacant
Planning Commissioner	2 years of a 3-year term	Barry A. Bolio
Planning Commissioner	2 years of a 3-year term	Troy Sumner
Planning Commissioner	3-year term	Steven Martin

**ARTICLE 4: *To receive and act upon the reports of the Town Officers.*** Dorinda Crowell moves and Ron Krauth seconds. Susan reminds the meeting that this is a good time to ask questions. Planning Commission Chair John Krezinski announces that the Commission will be revising the Town Plan in preparation for a vote at the 2018 Town Meeting and welcomes input and involvement. Wendy Freundlich thanks Road Commissioner Steve Martin, Road Foreman Paul Cerminara and the Road Crew for all their work. Applause. The article is approved.

**ARTICLE 5: *To see if the Town will vote a discount of 1% on the net property taxes, exclusive of tax rebate, if the total annual tax is paid in full within 30 days of issuance of the tax bill. (32 VSA Sec. 4773)*** Jeff Koonz moves; Anita Krauth seconds. Charlie Merriman speaks in opposition of the discount because it benefits banks while others who can't pay an early lump sum don't get the benefit of the discount. Select Board Chair Peter Hood says the practice was instituted so the Town would have money at the beginning of its fiscal year even though it costs the Town roughly \$16,000 per year. Otherwise, the Select Board would have to borrow money to operate. Dave Shepard asks how many taxpayers take advantage of the discount. Treasurer Dorinda Crowell says she hasn't explored that issue, having just come on board in February to take over from Cindy Carlson who retired at the beginning of the year. However, she notes that there are 78 tax payers who are currently delinquent, most of whom are financially strapped. This \$16,000 goes back into the budget so they have to bear the burden. The article is approved.

**ARTICLE 6: *Shall the voters authorize payment of real and personal property taxes to the Town Treasurer in two equal installments and the due dates being September 20th and February 20th, except if post marked by the US Postal Service on or before September 20th and February 20th? (32 VSA Sec. 4773)*** Jennifer Murray moves, Jeff Koonz seconds. Lauri Scharf asks if this is a change. Sarah Merriman notes that it is and that it was recommended by Cindy Carlson because the State uploads late state payments on the current due date of September 15th which creates an accounting snafu. Alison Cornwall asks if maybe the Town should consider four payments instead of two. Dorinda says that might help. The article is approved as is.

**ARTICLE 8: *To 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.*** (This article is taken up at 5:15 PM and, therefore, out of order.) Anita Krauth moves to approve a Town budget of \$1,099,071 for the 2017-2018 fiscal year. Jeff Koonz seconds. Peter notes the budget represents a 2.27% increase over the prior year. Budget Committee Member George Longenecker confirms that the Select Board worked hard to reduce costs and keep the budget increase low without cutting salaries and benefits. The article is approved as is.

**ARTICLE 7: *To see if the Town will charge interest at the rate of .5% per month or fraction thereof on overdue tax installments from the due date of the tax. (32 VSA Sec. 5136)*** Elliot Burg moves and John Puleio seconds. The article is approved as is.

**ARTICLE 9: *Shall the Town change the term of Town Treasurer from one year to three years, effective March 6, 2018? (17 VSA § 2646(3))*** Julie Moore moves; Scott Carbee seconds. Sarah Seidman speaks in opposition. While she's delighted to have Dorinda on board, the only way to hold Town Treasurers accountable is to elect them in or out annually. Micheal Levine speaks in opposition and wonders why this question is on the Warning when voters shot it down in 2016 after a long discussion. Peter explains that he brought this to the Select Board when it was drafting the Warning and four out of five members approved. The argument for a three-year term rests on the fact that being a Treasurer takes quite a bit of knowledge and experience. A year is not long enough. Moreover, the Town has excellent checks and balances with an excellent professional bookkeeper, Patti Lewis. The Treasurer oversees the bookkeeper and the Town is professionally audited annually. No faults have ever been found in the Town's finances. Jeff Koonz asks if the Town would pay for Treasurer training. Peter says that depends on the experience of the incoming Treasurer. Dorinda is an accountant and former Select Board member so she has lots of experience and knowledge. Charlie says Vermont state statutes contain monumental controls over the Treasurer, that a Town could demand a weekly audit if it wanted. Sandy Levine opposes the change and adds that running for elected office in Middlesex is not an onerous task. Plus, the annual term provides an added level of accountability. Lynne Walther says this is different from when the voters approved changing the Clerk term from one to three years in 2016 because the Clerk is not responsible for the Town's finances. John Krezinski asks if Middlesex has

ever had an embezzlement problem. Peter says no, largely because the Town has had professional audits and the Select Board signs the orders which was not happening in towns that ended up with problems. Select Board Vice Chair Mary Just Skinner says she is opposed to the change and voted against it on the Select Board. She sees no problem with the system as it now stands and three years is a long time to go unchecked. Chris McVeigh asks about statutory constraints. Charlie says towns can increase a Treasurer's bond but there is no provision to oust a Treasurer unless he or she has committed a crime. Peter says it's a challenge to find good people and no matter how good their intentions are, if they are inexperienced, they are going to need a lot of training. Charles Green speaks in opposition. The article is defeated.

**ARTICLE 10: *Shall the Town change the term of Collector of Delinquent Taxes from one year to three years, effective March 6, 2018? (17 VSA §2646 (9))*** Mary moves to pass over this issue; Anita Krauth seconds. Susan notes this needs a two-thirds voice vote. The article is passed over.

**ARTICLE 11: *Shall the Town voters appropriate the sum of \$5,000 to the Middlesex Conservation Fund? (By Select Board)*** Bennett Shapiro moves; John Austin seconds. Mary Just Skinner notes that much of the money in the fund was spent last year on purchasing land to expand the Town Forest. Sarah Seidman asks how much money is in the fund now. Sarah Merriman says it is depleted, though Dave Shepard, a member of the Conservation Committee, says there is roughly \$4,000. The articles is approved.

**ARTICLE 12: *Shall the Town voters authorize the purchase of a refurbished tanker for the Middlesex Volunteer Fire Department in the fiscal year 2017-2018 for an amount not to exceed \$120,000 and authorize the Select Board to borrow up to this sum for a period of 10 years?*** (By Select Board) Anita Krauth moves; Laura Lyle seconds. Jeff Koonz, who is president of the Middlesex Volunteer Fire Department, says the current tanker chassis was purchased as a two-year stopgap and is now going on five years. The one the department would like to buy is refurbished and costs about \$117,000 though the price might change once the MVFD goes to purchase. John Krezinski asks how long the new refurbished tanker will last. Jeff says the current chassis was built in 1983. Hopefully, it will 25 years. Paul Cerminara asks if there's a trade-in value. Jeff says the chassis is not worth anything, that the maximum speed it can go leaving the driveway from Welch Park is 18 m.p.h. Mary Just Skinner says the Select Board put this out for voter consideration instead of approving it as another line item in the budget because voters need to know how a purchase of this size will impact the Town's debt service. The article is approved.

**ARTICLE 13: *Shall the Town voters authorize expenditures of \$1,000 to support Central Vermont Adult Basic Education?*** (By Petition) Elliot Burg moves and Lauri Scharf seconds. The article is approved.

**ARTICLE 14: *Shall the Town voters authorize expenditures of \$500 for the Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation?*** (By Petition) Jeff Koonz moves; Julie Moore seconds. Peter speaks in favor as someone who is on the CVEDC Board, as is Middlesex resident Lindsay Kurrle. He says they do a lot of good for business, Red Hen Bakery being one such beneficiary. The article is approved.

**ARTICLE 15: *Shall the voters authorize expenditures of \$3,750 to support Central Vermont Home Health and Hospice?*** (By Petition) Amy Harris moves; John Krezinski seconds. John Puleio speaks in support after CVHHH helped with his elderly mother-in-law. Wendy Freundlich says it's a little known fact that they will help with a new baby. Mary Neville Hood speaks in favor. The article passes.

**ARTICLE 16: *Shall the Town voters authorize expenditures of \$3,000 to support Community Connections?*** (By Petition) Joe Loga moves; Scott Carbee seconds. The article is approved.

**ARTICLE 17: *Shall the Town voters authorize expenditures of \$1,500 to support Girls/Boyz First Mentoring?*** (By Petition) Maribeth Domanski moves; Julie Moore seconds. Maribeth speaks in favor, noting she has been participating as a mentor during her retirement. She considers the program very valuable and that mentees stay on board for a long time. The article is approved.

**ARTICLE 18: *Shall the Town voters authorize expenditures of \$27,760 to help support the Kellogg-Hubbard Library?*** (By Petition) Ron Sweet moves; Mary Neville Hood seconds. John Puleio who is a trustee on the Kellogg-Hubbard Library Board speaks in favor and notes that 33% of people in town hold library cards. He also asks for a round of applause for Michael Katzenberg who is stepping down from the Board after a long tenure. Applause. He says it is the second-busiest library in the state. The article is approved.

**ARTICLE 19: *Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$4,500 to the Montpelier Senior Activity Center to be used for operating expenses within the fiscal year July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018?*** (By Petition) Anita Krauth moves; Jeff Koonz seconds. Mary Hood asks what do Middlesex residents have to pay to join. Mary Just Skinner says \$30. Wendy Freundlich reads from the annual report. The article is approved

**ARTICLE 20: *Shall the Town voters authorize an expenditure in the amount of \$1,500 to help support services provided by the North Branch Nature Center in Montpelier?*** (By Petition) Susan Sussman moves; John Puleio seconds. The article is approved.

**ARTICLE 21: *Shall the Town voters authorize expenditures of \$10,000 to support the Waterbury Senior Center's Meals on Wheels program?*** (By Petition) Lauri Scharf moves and Eric Benedict seconds. Mary Hood speaks in favor and asks if it's okay for the Waterbury Senior Center Director, Karol Smith, to speak since she's from Waterbury. Lisa Parrish asks Karol why the Center asks roughly \$5,000 from Moretown and Duxbury but twice that from Middlesex. Karol says residents from those towns tend to come to the Center to eat instead of having the Center deliver meals to them in their homes, like in Middlesex. There is some confusion over how many meals, per se, are served in Middlesex versus clients, of which there are 15, according to Karol. The Center pays \$6,209 just in mileage alone for Meals on Wheels drivers going Middlesex. She says this is a savings to the townspeople since these people are not in nursing homes costing the system \$9.00 per day and they're in their homes contributing to the Town's taxes. Celest DiPietropaolo expresses frustration that every year the voters at Middlesex Town Meeting ask for an accounting of how many meals are delivered in Town and every year the Center doesn't have an answer. Bekah Mandell speaks in favor, noting that these programs are essential. Celest says he doesn't know anyone in Middlesex who is against the Meals on Wheels program, but he would like to know why Middlesex pays more while other towns pay less. There are so many unknowns. Bennett says there are no unknowns; just do the math. Out of \$10,000, \$6,200 goes to milage, that leaves the remainder for meals. Hope Crifo speaks in favor, says Meals on Wheels is much more than about delivering food, it's about checking in on sick and/or elderly people. Debbie Goodwin also speaks in favor, relating stories of when her mother drove for Meals on Wheels. Karol says other towns have spending caps. Moretown, for example, caps all request at \$4,999. There is no cap in Middlesex. John Krezinski says he's tired of people making him out as a bad guy simply because he wants to know where the money goes. What he wants is a responsible accounting. Applause. Karol complains that she has to fill out a six-page questionnaire when she makes a request. Michael Levine asks what happens to those questionnaires. Sarah Merriman says the questionnaire was developed by the Town Meeting Solutions Committee in 2010 and that she condenses the responses to 250-500 words per organization for the Town Report. Wendy Freundlich says maybe the procedure for asking for money should change. In other towns, organizations submit their requests to a board that then makes a recommendation to the Select Board about whether to place an article on the ballot. Eric Benedict suggest that instead of the questionnaire, the Town ask each organization to write 250 words on what services they provide, etc. and put that in the Town Report as is. Lisa Carlson defends Karol and says she's given a lot of information. Just

because someone runs an organization that does good work, doesn't mean they are great at public speaking. Moreover, an organization serving the needy without a big budget can't afford to bring in a lawyer to make a pitch. Tim Kasten says the issue is equity with other towns. Maybe the Select Board here should ask the Select Boards in other towns to raise their caps. Alison Cornwall asks to call the question. The article is approved as is.

**ARTICLE 22: To see if the Town of Middlesex will appropriate a sum not to exceed \$4,561 to support the following organizations:**

American Red Cross	\$250.00
Capstone Community Action	\$249.00
Central VT Council on Aging	\$250.00
The Children's Room	\$250.00
Circle	\$199.00
Downstreet	\$250.00
Family Center of Washington Cty	\$250.00
Good Beginnings of Central VT	\$250.00
GMT	\$199.00
Green-Up Vermont	\$100.00
Home Share Now	\$250.00
Our House of Central VT	\$250.00
People's Health & Wellness	\$200.00
Sexual Assault Crisis Team	\$245.00
T.W. Wood Gallery	\$250.00
VT Assoc. for the Blind	\$249.00
VT Cares	\$250.00
VT Center for Independent Living	\$195.00
Washington County Diversion	\$250.00
Washington County Youth Services	\$175.00

Jeff Koonz moves; Amy Harris seconds. The motion passes.

**ARTICLE 23: To transact any other business that may legally come before the meeting.** Elliot Burg moves and Bennett Shapiro seconds consideration of the following non-binding RESOLUTION ON FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY IN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS: "The citizens of Middlesex, Vermont, support the efforts of our state and federal legislators to require the disclosure of federal tax returns before a presidential candidate's name can be placed on the Vermont primary and general election ballots, and we request that our town officials convey this message to the appropriate officials." Elliot says this means that, if approved, the voters will be asking the Select Board to write this letter, though the Select Board is under no obligation to do so. Mary Hood asks who will be the recipient. Elliot says the letter can be emailed to state officials and congressional delegates. He said 12 towns are considering the measure and to some degree it is symbolic, but it's also important and bi partisan. Barb Whitchurch says that while she may agree with the sentiment behind the measure, the Town risks alienating voters who already stay away from Town Meeting because of issues like this, that they will feel bulldozed and unwelcome. She also worries that it will be less effective than calling state and congressional representatives directly. And that, instead, people will feel as if they've taken action when they really haven't. Bennett Shapiro speaks in favor, as does Larry Becker who says this practice of non-binding resolutions has become a Town Meeting custom. Gordon Grunder asks if it's legal to force and individual to turn over his tax returns. As the law stands now, Charlie Merriman doesn't think it is. He says he was moved by Barb's speech and agrees that Town Meeting should be about Town issues. John Demeter agrees and wonders where this will end. Will state officials be forced to make their tax returns public? Will local candidates? Emma Hempstead disagrees and says that, also as a lawyer, she thinks it might be legal. Elliot says the difference between a presidential and other candidate is that the a US President determines how much federal money important institutions like schools and the EPA receive. August Burns says the anti-nuclear movement started in town meetings. There is discussion about whether to table which is rejected. Paul Trapani calls the question and John Puleio seconds. The non-binding resolution is approved.

Susan adjourns the meeting at 7 PM.

Approved and signed by the following:

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Peter O. Hood, Chair of the Middlesex Select Board  
March \_\_\_\_, 2017

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Susan Clark, Moderator of the 2017 Middlesex Town Meeting  
March \_\_\_\_, 2017

I attest that the above minutes of the March 7, 2017 Middlesex Town Meeting were recorded in the Town Records on March \_\_\_\_, 2017.

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Sarah Merriman, Town Clerk/Select Board Assistant