

**DRAFT**  
**MINUTES OF THE MIDDLESEX ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**  
**MARCH 6, 2018**  
**RUMNEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:** Moderator Susan Clark calls the meeting to order at 4:35 p.m. and introduces the Select Board. John Puleio reminds attendees of the upcoming pie breakfast to benefit the bandstand. Sarah Seidman of the Middlesex Historical Society announces that Nick Hecht is purchasing the train station on Route 2. Middlesex Emergency Management Coordinator Paul Otenti introduces himself and urges community involvement in hazard mitigation and emergency planning. Susan notes the spaghetti dinner to follow Town Meeting will benefit the Middlesex Food Shelf. Sam Skolnik is brought on stage to review parliamentary procedure with Susan. The Civil Invocation is performed by new voters Ethan Scharf, Arthur Anderson and Alex Reilly.

**ARTICLE 1: To elect a Moderator for the ensuing year.** Jeff Koonz nominates Susan Clark, Bennett Shapiro seconds. The motion passes.

**ARTICLE 2: To elect a Grand Juror and Town Agent for the ensuing year.**

Charlie Merriman nominates Todd Daloz; Susan Sussman seconds. The motion passes.

**ARTICLE 3: To elect all necessary officers for the ensuing year. (466 voters cast ballots.)**

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	Peter O. Hood
Select Board	2-year term	Elizabeth Scharf
Budget Committee	3-year term	William Dorigan
Budget Committee	3-year term	George Longenecker
Cemetery Commissioner	3-year term	Janet H. McKinstry
Lister	3-year term	Richard Alderman
Lister	2 years of a	Amy Whitehorne
	3-year term	
Planning Commissioner	3-year term	Mitch Osiecki
Planning Commissioner	3-year term	Vacant

**ARTICLE 4: To receive and act upon the reports of the Town Officers.**

Anita moves and Chris Reilly seconds. Planning Commission member Barry Bolio says the Planning Commission is working hard to draft a questionnaire for input on a revised Town Plan. The survey will be available electronically and a postcard will be sent to voters and out-of-state landholders with instructions about how to access the survey online or request a paper version. Michael Levine asks if there will be a broader process in addition to the survey. Barry says the PC plans to go door-to-door but the survey will be the primary means of collecting data. He notes that the PC meets every third Wednesday of the month and encourages those interested to attend. Michael suggests the PC posts notifications that minutes are available on the Town's website on Front Porch Forum. He also questions whether the Emergency Management Committee will be conducting a survey, too. Mary Just Skinner moves to let Emergency Management Coordinator Paul Otenti speak since he is not yet a Middlesex voter. There is no objection. Paul clarifies that his committee is seeking more community involvement but does not plan on circulating a survey. Michael calls the question. Anne Greensfelder asks Road Foreman Paul Cerminara which part of East Hill Road the Highway Department will next improve. Paul says no mud mitigation is planned for that road this summer because the Highway Department needs to conduct routine maintenance that has been deferred while the Road Crew replaced the culvert and repaved Shady Rill Road. Sarah Seidman notes there is a 5-year plan for the roads. Dave Shepard asks about the Town Clerk's Office. Sarah says the vault is at capacity, the basement office leaks and the offices should be moved upstairs in Town Hall. Peter says the Select Board is aware of her concerns. The article passes.

**ARTICLE 5: Shall the Town voters authorize all property taxes paid to the Town Treasurer, as provided by law and without discount, in two equal installments as follows: The first installment will be due on or before 4:30 p.m., Thursday, September 20, 2018, and the second installment will be due on or before 4:30 p.m. Wednesday, February 20, 2019, except if post marked by the US Postal Service on or before September 20, 2018, and February 20, 2019, accordingly? (32 VSA Sec. 4773)**

Laura Lyle moves and Barbara Buckley seconds. Jeff Koonz asks about the \$16,000 that needed to be made up because of the 1% discount previously offered to taxpayers who paid their property taxes in full within 30 days of the bills' issuance. This discount has been omitted from the the 2018 Warning. Peter Hood says this is the cost of the discount. Jeff asks how it compares to the interest incurred because the Town has to borrow money at the beginning of the fiscal year. Peter says the Town no longer borrows money. When the fiscal year began January 1, then the Town had a problem because the budget wasn't voted on until Town Meeting in March. Now that the fiscal year has been moved to July 1, there is no justification for the 1%. He says it was the sense of the Board that with Middlesex being one of only three Vermont towns offering the early-payer discount, there was no justification for the \$16,000 that is spread among the other taxpayers. Mary notes that 1% is not up for vote.

Treasurer Dorinda Crowell moves to amend the article to remove the clause about accepting postmarks, i.e. striking "*except if post marked by the US Postal Service on or before September 20, 2018, and February 20, 2019, accordingly?*". She says taxpayers who drop their payments in the mail on or before the due date have a false sense of security. This year two taxpayers deposited their payments in Post Office boxes before February 20<sup>th</sup> and because their envelopes were postmarked February 21, were hit with an 8% penalty plus interest for late payment. Dave Shepard seconds the amendment. Jeff Koonz says he moved at an earlier Town Meeting to include postmarks after a neighbor was penalized because it took a week for his payment to arrive at the Town Clerk's Office. He says it's prudent to stick with the postmarks. Charlie Merriman agrees with Jeff, but notes dropping your payment in the mail is not foolproof. Peter says if you're mailing your taxes at the last minute, go up to the counter and request a date stamp in person. Often, payments dropped in mailboxes are taken to Burlington where they won't be stamped for one or maybe two days. Bennett Shapiro proposes amending the article to stipulate that the postmark must be a week before taxes are due. Liz Scharf encourages people to use the Town's auto deduction by submitting a form with bank, routing and account number to the town so that the payment will be extracted from your checking account on the day it's due. Andy Emerson says after he was hit with a \$500 penalty for dropping his payment in the mail before the due date only to have it postmarked February 21, do whatever you can to make sure your payment has been received on time. Lisa Carlson asks about a September 13 postmark. If the Town is going to continue to accept postmarks, Dorinda says they should

be on the date due. Emily Smith calls the question. Ben Morton seconds. The amendment is defeated. Jane Erikson asks about Paypal. Liz Scharf replies that the auto-deduction service is pretty close to that. Gordon Grunder proposes a sliding penalty since being hit with an 8% penalty for being one day late seems a bit harsh. Peter says it's his understanding Towns cannot waive this; Charlie agrees but says he will research. The article passes.

**ARTICLE 7: 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 WILL BE CONSIDERED AS A SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS AT 5:15 PM)** This article is considered at 5:26 p.m. Jeff Koonz moves; Maribeth Domanski seconds. Susan clarifies that the budget proposed is \$1,160,515. Peter refers to the Select Board Report and the Budget Committee Report in the 2017 Middlesex Town Report, both of which explain the reasons for the increases. He says the Town was hit with the perfect storm of managing the budget, paying for insurance and paying down debt. It was a tough year and, therefore, the Select Board is requesting a larger increase than usual. Michael Levine asks why the insurance categories have been shuffled around; doing so make comparison with previous years difficult. Peter says that for many years, insurance was lumped under one area. The Select Board believed that a more accurate reflection of costs would be to categorize the insurance expenses by department. Jan Thouron asks if last year's townwide appraisal had any effect on the budget. Peter says it increased the grand list which will affect the tax rate and thereby mitigate the effect of the budget. Dave Shepard asks about the new line item for Welch Park. Peter says costs of maintaining that industrial part – which includes the Middlesex Volunteer Fire Department – used to be spread out in other departments. The Board thought it was a good idea to have its expenses under a separate line item. Mary Skinner asks the voters if they found the new budget format more understandable. Charlie asks about the fire department's debt ratio. Jeff Koonz responds that the cost of building the fire station in Welch Park was relatively less than what other communities spent on their buildings. Mary notes that it costs approximately \$135,000 to have a volunteer fire department and more than half of that is made up of paying off the principal and interest for the building and vehicles. John Puleio calls the question Mary Jo Lamell seconds. The article passes.

**ARTICLE 6: 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)** Jeff Koonz moves; Mary Hood seconds. The article passes.

**ARTICLE 8: Shall the Town voters appropriate the sum of \$5,000 to the Middlesex Conservation Fund? (By Select Board)** Charlie Merriman moves; Julie Moore seconds. Lee Rosberg, chair of the Conservation Commission, speaks in favor. He thanks the community for establishing a reserve fund to purchase property to be conserved. Most recently, the fund was used to acquire 40 acres for the Town Forest. The article passes.

**ARTICLE 9: Shall the Town of Middlesex enter into a communications union district to be known as Central Vermont Internet, under the provisions of 30 V.S.A. Ch 82?** Jeff Koonz moves; Ron Krauth seconds. Phil Hyjek, the Select Board's representative on this project, notes that by statute no tax money can be used to create this district. This is simply an authorizing vote because two towns need to approve the district at their annual meetings; after that, other towns can join by vote of their select boards. Wendy Freundlich says she heard on the radio that two other neighboring towns have already approved the district at their annual meetings. She asked how long will it take to get internet after this district is create. Phil says it is a "fiber-to-home" project offering speeds of up to 700 MB/second. This will be enough to run a server. It will also be net neutral. They will have to be a lot of surveying about where the needs will be mos prevalent. As a government agency, the district can issue tax-free bonds. Initially, there are no plans to go head-to-head with Comcast, Fairpoint, etc which, Phil says, have to satisfy shareholders first. Therefore, running lines out to rural, hilly areas is not cost effective, not good for profits. In contrast, the district will have no staff, no employees. It will subcontract with other, related, companies which will be glad to have access to another customer base. Phil says he and members of the district feel this is the way to grow communities, to help small businesses that otherwise would never have access to high-speed internet. David Lawrence says it would have cost \$53,000 to fiber optic cable from Route 2 to his house on South Bear Swamp Rd. He feels this distric offers a lot of value to the community. Charlie Merriman says, by statute, there is no danger of this district encountering the same taxpayer scandal as Burlington Telecom. The article passes.

**ARTICLE 10: Shall the Town voters authorize expenditures of \$600 for the Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation? (By Petition)** Amy Harris moves, Alisa Darmstadt seconds. Peter Hood speaks in favor. Mary says more business may be coming to the community because Russ Bennett, Alan Newman and someone else (Mike Pelchar) have purchased the Red Hen complex and abutting property. The article passes.

**ARTICLE 11: Shall the voters authorize expenditures of \$3,750 to support Central Vermont Home Health and Hospice? (By Petition)** Jill Olson moves; Susan Sussman seconds. Mary Hood speaks in favor. The article passes.

**ARTICLE 12: Shall the Town voters authorize expenditures of \$3,000 to support Community Connections? (By Petition)** Joe Loga moves; Eric Benedict seconds. The article passes.

**ARTICLE 13: Shall the Town voters authorize expenditures of \$1,731 (equivalent to \$1 per Middlesex resident) to support the Cross Trail Vermont Association's efforts to construct 2.75 miles of universally accessible trails and a 200-foot-long pedestrian and bicycle bridge across the Winooski River that will be located on and adjacent to U-32 School property and will connect the school trails with the regional trail network? (By Petition)** Jeff Koonz moves; John Puleio seconds. Greg Western asks for permission to speak. No one objects. He speaks in favor of the project noting that the voters of Montpelier approved contributing \$1 per person if the U-32 towns did the same. The Association was founded in 1990 and does not normally make annual requests; this is a request for one-time funding to connect local trails. Liz Scharf asks where the bridge in question is located. He says its off Route 2 in East Montpelier by the Koboda dealership and will utilize the old bridge abutments left over from when the railroad used to cross the river. Lauri Scharf speaks in favor. The article passes.

**ARTICLE 14: Shall the Town voters authorize expenditures of \$1,500 to support Girls/Boyz First Mentoring? (By Petition)** Laura Lyle moves; Lynne Walther seconds. Sarah Katz speaks in favor as a mentor who has worked with her mentee, now 13, for eight years. She says money is needed to arrange the matchups. Wendy Freundlich speaks in favor as someone who's been running the program for 18 years. She says five or six mentors are in the room. She urges empty nesters to become mentors. The article passes.

**ARTICLE 15: Shall the Town voters authorize expenditures of \$500 for Home Share Now? (By Petition)** Julie Moore moves; Chris McVeigh seconds. Julie speaks in favor of the program and says the money will go toward administrative costs associated with matching up roommates. The article passes.

**ARTICLE 16: Shall the Town voters authorize expenditures of \$29,801 to help support the Kellogg-Hubbard Library? (By Petition)** John Austin moves; Eric Benedict seconds. Vic Dwire asks why this article should be approved when the Town has already spent a quarter of a million dollars for an institution that isn't public. John Puleio, who is on the library board, responds. He says the library is an independent non-profit organization and serves five towns including Middlesex. About 16,000 books circulate each year from the library. If you're receiving Meals on Wheels, KHK will deliver books to your home. In addition, the library runs about 560 programs annually. One third of Middlesex residents have library cards. The request this year is \$2,000 more than last year, about \$1 per Middlesex resident. Middlesex's contribution covers 3.3% of the library's operating costs. Maribeth Domanski speaks in favor and calls KHL the jewel of Central Vermont. If you are part of a book group, the library will try to gather enough books for each member of the group. Jeff Koonz speaks in favor and notes that kids from U-32 spend time at the library to research. Bennett Shapiro speaks in favor and talks about spending rainy days with his child in the children's room. Greg Whitchuch says if you have a \$250,000 house, this article will cost you just under \$35. Chris McVeigh says what excuse will teenagers have to head downtown if there's no library? He would hate to deny them that cover. Kathryn Lichtig uses the library as a self-employed adult. Kyle Landis-Marinello says the most important birthday in his family is the 6<sup>th</sup> birthday because that's when you can get a library card. Diane Hahn calls the question. The article passes.

**ARTICLE 17: Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$5,500 to the Montpelier Senior Activity Center to be used for operating expenses within the fiscal year July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019? (By Petition)** Anita Krauth moves; Cynthia Martin seconds. The article passes.

**ARTICLE 18: Shall the Town voters authorize expenditures of \$10,000 to support the Waterbury Senior Center's Meals on Wheels program? (By Petition)** Dave Shepard moves; Paul Cerminara seconds. Michael Levine says he read in the Town Report that the primary purpose of this article is to fund Meals on Wheels. But he notes that the Center for Independent Living and the Council on Aging also provide Meals on Wheels so how does that work? Mary Hood asks that the center's director, Karol Smith, be allowed to speak. There is no objection. Karol says the Central VT Council on Aging oversees the NOW program and anybody who wants to apply for MOW has to go to the Council on Aging. VCIL serves the disabled and those under age 60. It pays the Waterbury Senior Center to deliver meals. Paul Cerminara speaks in favor and thanks Karol for a more in-depth report. He says everyone appreciates the extra effort and thanks Karol for all she does. Wendy Freundlich asks if there's an income cut off to MOW. Mary Hood says anyone over 60 is eligible to receive MOW, though, if possible, the organization requests a \$4.50 contribution per meal. The article passes.

**ARTICLE 19: To see if the Town of Middlesex will appropriate a sum not to exceed \$4,915 to support the following organizations:**

American Red Cross	\$250.00
Capstone Community Action	\$249.00
Central VT Adult Basic Ed	\$250.00
Central VT Council on Aging	\$250.00
The Children's Room	\$250.00
Circle	\$199.00
Family Center of Washington Cty	\$250.00
Good Beginnings of Central VT	\$250.00
Good Samaritan Haven	\$250.00
GMTA	\$199.00
Green-Up Vermont	\$100.00
Montpelier Veterans Council	\$200.00
Our House of Central VT	\$250.00
People's Health & Wellness	\$250.00
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	\$199.00
VT Rural Protection Task Force	\$100.00
Washington County Diversion	\$250.00
Washington County Youth Services	\$175.00

Jeff Koonz moves; Bennett Shapiro seconds. The motion passes.

**ARTICLE 20: To transact any other business that may legally come before the meeting.**

Mitch Osiecki introduces himself as Recreation Director and encourages people to use the Walt Kelly Park down by the Fire Department in Wlech Park. Anita Krauth asks for a moment to recognize Tim Kasten as a compassionate member of the community who died last year. Gordon Grunder says there will be a memorial for Tim in June. Liz wants everyone to know about the Middlesex Food Shelf. Mary Just Skinner says the land surrounding Hunger Mountain has been sold to the state so it is now protected from future development. Vermont Rep. (Middlesex/East Montpelier) Kim Jessup says the Legislature is addressing gun violence, especially in the schools and also considering bills that would permit guns to be removed by those considered to be a threat to themselves or others. In addition, the Legislature is revamping how taxes pay for schools with more focus on income. Lee Rosberg clarifies that the Trust for Public Land purchased the 1,700 acres surrounding Mt. Hunger in Middlesex and Worcester, an unusual step for that organization. Geraldine Vatan says she is part of a group that holds monthly meetings for families to discuss climate change and that next year they would like to submit a petition to appear on the Town Warning to address renewables.

Susan adjourns the meeting at 6:55 p.m.

Approved and signed by the following:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Peter O. Hood, Chair of the Middlesex Select Board  
March \_\_\_\_, 2018

\_\_\_\_\_  
Susan Clark, Moderator of the 2018 Middlesex Town Meeting  
March \_\_\_\_, 2018

I attest that the above minutes for the March 6, 2018, Town Meeting were recorded in the Middlesex Town records on March \_\_\_\_, 2018.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sarah Merriman, Middlesex Town Clerk/Select Board Assistant

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