

Select Board Members
 Peter Hood, Chair
 Mary Just Skinner,
Vice Chair
 Phil Hyjek
 Steve Martin
 Liz Scharf

MINUTES
MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD
Tuesday, September 24, 2019
5:00 PM
Middlesex Town Clerk's Office
5 Church Street
Middlesex, Vermont 05602
(802) 223-5915

MINUTES

PRESENT: Chair Peter Hood, Members Phil Hyjek, Steve Martin, Liz Scharf and Vice Chair Mary Just Skinner by speakerphone. Treasurer Dorinda Crowell. ORCA and Select Board Assistant Sarah Merriman.

Call to Order/Amendments

Peter called the meeting to order at 5:03 PM. The agenda was amended to pass over parking issues at Camp Meade events since Mike Plechar of Planetary Matters is unable to attend the meeting.

Approving the FY20 Municipal Resolution for a Municipal Planning Grant.

MOTION: Steve moved and Phil seconded passing a resolution to apply for a Municipal Planning Grant from the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development, acknowledging that, if granted, the Town will be responsible for a 10% match of funds which may be in-kind contributions. The motion passed and the members present signed the resolution. Afterward, the Board discussed whether to check the box on the resolution permitting the regional planning commission to act as agent for administering the grant. The box was checked pending further clarification from the potential grantor regarding the Town's control if the regional planning commission assumed this responsibility.

Approving a Bid from DeWolfe Engineering to Study the Town Garage

At the Board's request, Road Foreman Paul Cerminara solicited bids for structural engineering studies to be performed on the Highway Department Garage at 481 Shady Rill Road and Town Hall/Town Clerk's Office at 5 Church Street. Basic compensation for an engineering review and analysis by DeWolfe would run about \$2,200 - \$2,800 plus expenses. The Town Offices study would be about \$1,000 less. Peter said he was in favor of a study for the Highway Department, but not Town Hall. Liz inquired whether this needed to be done should the voters be asked to consider improvements to the existing Town Hall or to build a new one. Peter recommended an architectural study for that. The Board was not in favor of a less-expensive visual assessment. Peter said the Town should try to find the original specs of the Highway Department building which should reduce the cost of the structural assessment.

MOTION: Phil moved and Steve seconded accepting DeWolfe Engineering's bid to conduct a structural analysis of the Town Garage for up to \$2,800 plus expenses. The motion passed.

Treasurer's Report

The Board briefly discussed the MVFD's 2018 IRS filing for its 501(c)(3) and a complaint that employees age 65 and over receive 35% in disability compensation and, therefore, are compensated less than younger coworkers. Peter said this was a standard insurance schedule.

Requiring Petitions for Town Meeting Funding Requests over \$250

The Board revisited its policy that funding requests \$250 and under do not need petitions, just a letter to the Select Board. Requests over \$250 must follow the Vermont statutes for any petitioned articles not brought by the Select Board, i.e., signatures of 5% of the Town voters or 73 registered Middlesex voters. Last year, the Board allowed Kellogg-Hubbard Library to warn its request for \$29,000 with just a letter to the Select Board after members of the library board asked not to have to submit petitions on the argument that few towns requested petitions, the request was unchanged from the previous year and soliciting petitions was a burden on library staff. The Board agreed that was a "one-time" pass. Peter, who solicits petitions on behalf of several organizations, said the process also allows organizations to connect with voters and inform them of their organizations' purpose.

Dorinda suggested the Board consider asking voters if all funding articles \$2,500 and over – there were four on the 2019 Town Meeting Warning – be placed on an annual Town Meeting Australian ballot. Liz and Peter spoke against this reasoning that to do so would effectively end a floor Town Meeting, especially if the budget ends up on a paper ballot. Dorinda noted that fewer than 150 of the Town's 1,420 registered voters attend Town Meeting. They end up approving over \$60,000 of special funding requests from organizations outside of Middlesex. This is not fair. Liz noted that though these organizations may be in Waterbury or Montpelier, they serve Middlesex residents. Dorinda said taxes are going up to the point where people are feeling stressed. This is only going to get worse as the Town addresses backlogged problems such as an aging Town Hall and Highway Department along with keeping up with road maintenance. At least an Australian ballot would allow more residents to vote not only in the negative, but in the positive. Peter agreed the Board should keep this on the agenda for future discussions; there is still time between now and when the Warning is approved in January. Perhaps the Moderator Susan Clark and the Town Meeting Solutions Committee should be involved.

MOTION: Steve moved and Mary seconded requiring Town Meeting funding requests over \$250 to solicit petitions with signatures of 5% of the Town's voters to appear on Town Meeting Warnings, while requests of \$250 or less will need a letter to the Select Board only. In both situations, the applying organizations must submit a 250-word statement on why they want the money and how they will use it to serve the people of Middlesex. The motion passed.

Considering Tech Group for Town Emails

In exploring an affordable option for the Town to establish Town emails with a middlesexvt.org extension for all Town officers, Phil spoke with Tech Group out of South Burlington which proposed using Network Solutions for \$1.24/mailbox/month. This can be used with any client and, since the Town operates its own server, this data would not have to be stored in a far more expensive cloud program. An archiving backup would satisfy state and federal requirements. Peter suggested inviting Tech Group to make a formal proposal.

Researching Consultants to Review the MVFD

The Board reiterated that it would like Sarah to research consultants who might be able to help the MVFD with its operations and recruitment.

OTHER BUSINESS

MOTION: Phil moved and Mary seconded approving the September 3, 2019, Select Board Minutes. The motion passed and those present signed the minutes.

All orders were signed.

The Board reviewed correspondence from John Rahill objecting to the placement of flashing RSFS signs on VT Route 12.

The Board also reviewed an email from Bryan Redmond and Sky Barsch, who live at the end of Notch Road by the trail to the Town Forest, requesting that @730 feet of Class 4 road from the VT Fish & Wildlife sign to the end of Notch Road be upgraded to Class 3. Nearby residents have been improving and widening this road on their own – a violation of the Town’s Class 4 Roads and Trails policy and the 2003 Highway Ordinance, Peter noted – and now there is a lot of traffic from outdoor enthusiasts. In their email, Bryan and Sky said there are safety issues as well, especially in the winter. Steve said he’d like to discuss this idea with the Road Foreman and present a report to the Board.

The Board discussed the possible transfer of accused murderer to the Therapeutic Care Center in Middlesex and recommended that a brief letter be sent to the State of Vermont reminding them that, per prior written agreements, residents of the Care Center present no danger to the public.

The Board was apprised that the another WCUUSD vote will be held November 5, 2019, to address technical glitches in the previous approved Articles of Amendment.

The Board reviewed its schedule for the remainder of the calendar year and agreed to stick with the established schedule of meeting the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of every month.

Regarding recent alarming radon readings in the Town vault, Peter and the Board agreed Sarah should contact a radon mitigation specialist to see if the vault can be vented.

Peter adjourned the meeting at 6:49 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Merriman, Town Clerk/Select Board Assistant

THE ABOVE MINUTES WERE APPROVED AS A WARNED AGENDA ITEM AT A REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD ON OCTOBER 1, 2019.

PETER O. HOOD, CHAIR

MARY JUST SKINNER, VICE CHAIR

PHILIP HYJEK

STEVEN MARTIN

ELIZABETH SCHARF