

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

MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD
Tuesday, January 5, 2021
REMOTE VIA ZOOM
Middlesex Town Clerk's Office
5 Church Street
Middlesex, Vermont 05602
(802) 223-5915

MINUTES.

PRESENT: Peter O. Hood, Chair, Mary Just Skinner, Vice Chair, Members Steve Martin, Phil Hyjek and Liz Scharf. Treasurer Dorinda Crowell. Budget Committee Bill Dorigan, George Longenecker, Elias Gardner and Bill McManis. Moderator Susan Clark. Vic Dwire and Randy Drury. Select Board Assistant Sarah Merriman took the minutes and the meeting was recorded by ORCA.

Call to Order/Amendments

Peter called the meeting to order at 5:05 PM and welcomed guests. There were no amendments to the agenda.

FY2021/2022 BUDGET WORKSHOP

The preliminary budget drafted by the Treasurer was \$1,323,867. This included a 2% payroll increase. Vic questioned the expense of winter sand and whether there would be a savings because the Town is now taking material from the Town-owned pit on Notch Road. Vic also questioned the line item in the highway department budget for \$40,000 approved at the March 3, 2020, Town Meeting. His understanding was that this expense was a one-time deal. Steve said highway department did not get around to spending that money so he wanted the highway department to address that this summer, which meant the project will overlap into the new fiscal year.

Peter said he didn't see the point of going through the budget line by line, so it might be worthwhile to concentrate on personnel costs. He questioned the Town Clerk's pay of \$26.49/hour at 32 hours per week which he said is on the low side compared to nearby towns. Peter proposed a pay increase of 2% and then add a dollar per hour. That would bring the pay to \$27.5. The Board agreed.

The Board addressed a last-minute request from the Listers that \$15,000 be added to their budget for new CAMA software. Elias and Peter said their notes from previous meetings showed that the Listers did not expect to incur costs for this new software in the upcoming fiscal year.

Those changes raised the budget to a 5.39% increase. George asked if the new software could be postponed for a year. There was no clear answer. Phil said NEMRC, the current program, will have to run during the transition. He said he doesn't see an alternative.

That brought the proposed FY2021-2022 budget to \$1,395,238.

The Board discussed cuts to reduce the proposed budget to under a 5.39% increase. Elias said the Budget Committee also reviewed the budget and couldn't come out with significant cost-cutting ideas.

MOTION: Mary moved and Phil seconded approving a \$1,395,238 budget. Steve proposed removing \$12,500 from the highway budget to hire a subcontractor for mud mitigation. Dorinda said that would bring the overall budget to less than a 5% increase. Randy asked why the road gravel purchase was up over 95% and if that could be used for mud mitigation in the upcoming fiscal year and, therefore a savings. Peter suggested using part of the \$40,00 that hasn't been yet spent on stockpiling gravel.

Mary and Phil accepted an amendment to approve a FY21-22 proposed budget of \$1,382,738, which represents a 4.45% increase over the current fiscal year. The motion passed and the budget will be put before the voters for approval at the March 2, 2021 Town Meeting. Members of the Budget Committee left the meeting

REGULAR MEETING

Notifying the Public of March 2, 2021 Town Meeting Changes

Since there will be no "in-person" Town Meeting this year, Liz asked about mailing ballots to everyone; Sarah said Towns currently don't have that legal authority and it's unclear when – or if – that will be granted by the Legislature anytime soon. Peter said people are asking questions about Town Meeting so the Town needs to get out information now. The Board discussed sending postcards to all voters notifying them that Town Meeting will be held by Australian ballot, that voters can request absentee ballots now, that candidates need only to submit Consent of Candidate forms by January 25, 2021, to appear on the Town Meeting ballot, that the 2020 Town Report will be available mid-February and that there will be informational meetings. Susan stressed that the postcards should note this is an emergency measure and call them voting ballots, not Australian ballots. She also said a technical person should be brought in to help organize the informational meetings because attendees will be on Zoom and may have difficulty participating. People should be alerted ahead of time that they may submit questions in writing.

MOTION: Steve moved and Phil seconded sending out postcards apprising voters of emergency COVID modifications to the 2021 Annual Town Meeting and that informational meetings should be held via Zoom on at 6 PM on February 16 and February 23, 2021. The motion passed.

Accepting the FY20 Audit

MOTION: Mary moved and Phil seconded accepting the annual audit of the Town's 2020 fiscal year by Batchelder Associates. The motion passed.

Treasurer Report

Dorinda apprised the Board of her search for a municipal bookkeeper.

Highway Report:

Steve Martin Resigns as Road Commissioner; Peter Hood as Interim

Steve submitted his resignation as Road Commissioner in order to comply with the Town's anti-nepotism policy because he is the father of the new Road Foreman, Shane Brickey who reported to duty on January 4, 2021. Steve said before advertising the position, the job description needs to be updated. He suggested installing Peter as interim.

MOTION: Steve moved and Mary seconded appointing Peter as interim Road Commissioner while the Board searches for a permanent replacement. Motion passes.

Winter Maintenance for the Class 4 Section of Notch Road

Steve said there is a plan to upgrade the class 4 section on the upper end of Notch Road near the Town Forest by extending the Class 3 section about 1,000 feet to include the Vermont Wildlife Management Area parking lot. Peter said one neighbor is in favor and one is opposed to upgrading that stretch of road. The Board agreed upgrading is a statutory process involving public notification and input so no decisions are about to be made.

Maintaining Charging Station at Rumney School

The Board considered the WCUUSD’s request that the Town assume maintenance of an electric charging station at Rumney for the next five years at a cost of \$5,000. Liz noted electric charging stations for cars comply with the Town plan and that employees at Rumney should be encouraged to use alternative energy. She suggested the Town split the cost of maintaining the charging station with the WCUUSD. Peter said school employees would be the most likely to use the charging station and yet none of the employees currently has an electric car. Steve said the WCUUSD letter stipulated that the charging station could be used during school hours only by school employees and that other electric-car owners would have to use it after hours. Randy said that didn’t seem very fair to the Town taxpayers.

MOTION: Steve moved and Phil seconded rejecting the WCUUSD’s request that the Town take over the charging station at Rumney. All but Liz approved. The motion passed.

OTHER BUSINESS

MOTION: Mary moved and Liz seconded approving the minutes of the December 15, 2020 Select Board. The motion passed.

All orders were approved via email

CORRESPONDENCE: The Board reviewed the 2020 Equalization Study Results that assessed the Town’s Common Level of Appraisal at 95.89% and the Coefficient of Dispersion at 12.01%.

Randy thanked Steve for his service and asked if the Board intended to salary a future Road Commissioner. Randy said the Board should think seriously about volunteer vs. paid road commissioners. The Board briefly discussed this.

Vic thanked Steve for his service and said the Highway Department has managed well during this transition.

The meeting adjourned at 7:05 PM

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

THE ABOVE MINUTES WERE REMOTELY APPROVED AS A WARNED AGENDA ITEM AT A REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD ON JANUARY 19, 2021.

PETER O. HOOD, CHAIR

MARY JUST SKINNER, VICE CHAIR

PHILIP HYJEK

N/A
STEVEN MARTIN

ELIZABETH SCHARF