

**Select Board Members**

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

**MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD**  
**5:00 PM**  
**Tuesday, August 17, 2021**  
**Middlesex Town Hall**  
**5 Church Street**  
**Middlesex, Vermont 05602**  
**(802) 223-5915**

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**MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Chair Peter O. Hood, Vice Chair Mary Just Skinner, Members Steve Martin and Liz Scharf. Treasurer Dorinda Crowell. Road Commissioner Vic Dwire, Road Foreman Shane Brickey, Highway Department employees Jay Files and Charles Pelchar. MVFD Chief Doug Hanson, President Jeff Koonz and Treasurer Eric Metivier. Budget Committee member Randy Drury and Select Board Assistant Sarah Merriman. ORCA recorded the meeting via Zoom and in person.

**Call to Order**

Peter called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM. The agenda was amended to discuss discontinuing or downgrading the Class 4 section of Dolan Road and discontinuing or downgrading Class 3 Colby Road, as well as discussing COVID precautions for future Select Board meetings. Vic asked for a clarification of the Personnel Policy.

**Highway Department Pay Increase Request**

Jay said the rate of pay for Highway Department employees in Middlesex is too low compared to other towns. He said there hasn't been a pay increase in three years. Peter disputed this, noting the recent 2% raise that went into effect July 1 and previous annual raises; Jay said those are cost-of-living increases and aren't the same. He said he's been with the town 10 years and is requesting a \$1/hour pay increase. Peter said the time to discuss a pay increase is during budget time in the fall. The FY22 budget has been approved and passed by the voters. Six weeks in the fiscal year, the Road Crew is asking for a pay increase. Peter said it would require a special Town Meeting and adjustment of the tax rates to institute that kind of raise now. Also, after reviewing the pay of other towns, Peter said Middlesex's compensation is within the range.

Liz said as an employer she looks at the benefits package, too. Pay doesn't tell the whole story. What else are we offering as benefits to make the job meaningful and a place where you would continue to want to work? She agreed with Peter that the issue can be revisited during budget planning in October, though there would be no changes until July 1, 2022. Liz said the Board is aware there are other jobs requiring CDLs, but she asked the crew to consider perks like short commutes and state benefits. In addition, the Board reviewed other towns of similar size a few years ago and applied an across-the-board raise to bring Middlesex up to par.

Charles asked about the starting rate for the new person; Peter said it would be based on their experience and qualifications. Shane said if you want Middlesex to be the town people want to work for, the pay will need to be increased and there's going to have to be a bump up in benefits. He said the crew does a good job and works hard. Charles said the crew didn't have a say in the budget last year because they didn't have a foreman. The crew thought they were going to get more in pay than they received on July 1.

Charles said the Town is going to have to start shelling out more money to get a replacement for Bruce Fitch, who is retiring this fall. If you're going to shell out more for that person coming in, then the Board should be paying the existing crew more. Charles said the crew would like to be part of the discussion; Peter said the crew is welcome to attend any Select Board meeting. Shane noted Berlin pays vision and dental. Dorinda says it's unclear what Berlin's healthcare plan is and whether they pay an HSA. Liz said she hears what the crew is saying and the Board has tried to be sensitive to that. That said, the Board also needs to be responsible to the voters and needs to justify a budget the Board puts before them at Town Meeting.

Jay said he guessed the crew needed to become way more involved in the budget process. Steve, former road commissioner, said the Board has been making sure to increase wages to catch up with raises, cost-of-living wages and bonuses. Budget time is coming up and Shane and Vic will be factoring wages into their budgets. Peter thanked the crew for coming and thanked them for their work. Charles and Jay left the meeting.

**Highway Update**

Shane and Vic said the crew was doing ditching and replacing culverts on Bolduc Road where the new grader also was used. Re Town trucks: the Western Star is due for replacement next July. If it's ordered now, the truck will be ready in a year. Vic said the chloride water truck is in bad shape. Could the Town use the Western Star for water/chloride? Shane said he doesn't believe it's inspectable.

**Proposing Class Changes to Colby and Dolan Roads**

Mary arrived at the meeting. Shane noted Dolan Road is a Class 4 road and that it has a high-risk connected segment. If it remains a Class 4, it will have to be brought up to state standards, which could be very expensive. If it's downgraded to a legal trail, the Town would not have to bring it up to state standards. Liz asked about water runoff; Peter said water can be managed even if it is a trail. Peter said his concern about downgrading Colby Road is that the property has just been purchased. Peter asked the Board to think about that. Peter noted the road hasn't been plowed in recent years because there are no residents. Steve said landowners abutting Colby Road would be notified in the downgrading process and they could express their opposition then. The Board agreed to discuss this issue at the next Board meeting on September 7, 2021.

**Paying for Incorrectly Placed Signs on VT12**

Dorinda asked about payment to Lafayette Highway Specialties which originally incorrectly installed radar-feedback speed signs on VT 12. Lafayette had to move them and then billed the Town for the move. Lafayette claimed the State gave them the wrong information about sign placement. Dorinda said the new bill is \$2,462 to move the signs. The original bill to install the signs (which hasn't been paid) is \$4,866.10. Peter said the Town should pay the first invoice. Peter says there's no paperwork supporting the claim that the State of Vermont gave them incorrect information about the signs' placement. Peter asked for a motion to support Dorinda.

**MOTION:** Mary moved to pay Lafayette Highway Specialties the approximate amount of \$4,800 for the original installation of the signs. Liz seconded. The motion passed.

Peter proposed asking the State to verify that they provided the wrong instruction about sign installations to Lafayette and proceed accordingly. The Board will revisit this at the September 7, 2021, Board meeting. Shane and Vic left the meeting.

**Meeting with the MVFD**

Since the meeting was running over schedule, the Board momentarily passed over other issues on the agenda to meet with the MVFD. Jeff listed accidents and incidents the department has recently responded to. He said the MVFD amended its bylaws to bump up pay according to the following schedule: \$10/hour or part thereof per call (previously, the department had paid \$5 per two hours) for firefighters, \$20/training, \$15/worknight and \$10/FAST call. Two new members have been added. One works in town and can respond during the day; another applicant lives in Moretown, but can respond quickly. On Sunday, the MVFD trained with multiple local fire departments, focusing on analyzing how many tankers would be necessary to extinguish an average structure fire. Jeff said everyone worked well together and also got a better handle on the water capabilities of each town and how best to coordinate efforts for most effectiveness. About \$500 was raised on behalf of the MVFD via the bandstand concerts; Jeff said he'd like to apply the money toward repairing a gas meter. Jeff reported no problems with the current equipment. Peter thanked the MVFD for the updates. Peter suggested the MVFD come to a Select Board meeting once every other month and submit a written report of incidents. Jeff said the next month is CPR training; he said the department is up to 13 members. Doug said there is one additional applicant. There are three women on the department. Randy left the meeting. Peter suggested the MVFD consider sending out a fundraising letter. Jeff invited Board members to join them at the third Tuesday of the month at 7 PM. Doug, Jeff and Eric left the meeting.

**Discussion of Allocating Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds**

Dorinda said the Town has received the first half payment of Coronavirus Recovery money, approximately \$90,000. She didn't want to open up a separate account if it's going to be a passthrough. The money is in a separately designated account now, but normally the money would be put in a money market account. Peter said he's comfortable having it sit in a separately designated account, but probably wouldn't be making that much money in a money market, either. Dorinda said the next payment is supposed to be substantially more.

**Treasurer Updates**

Dorinda said Edward Jones wants to conduct an annual review of cemetery funds, of which there is about \$120,000. Dorinda asked if the Board would like to meet with an Edward Jones representative. Peter said he doesn't think he needs to meet with them. The Board would just like a report. Dorinda registered a complaint about the new email system which some Board members are finding hard to access. Peter suggested that for the time being, all town emails should be copied to the original email addresses.

**Appointing Stacey Skadberg to the Zoning Board of Adjustment**

The Board reviewed an email from Stacey Skadberg expressing interest in replacing outgoing Jess Clark on the ZBA.  
**MOTION:** Mary moved and Steve seconded Stacey Skadberg to the ZBA. The motion passed.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

**MOTION:** Liz moved and Mary seconded approval of the July 20, 2021 Select Board Meeting minutes. Steve abstained. The motion passed.

**MOTION:** Liz moved to approve WEC's request to install a 7200-volt electric distribution line on South Bear Swamp Road near Luther Putnam. Steve seconded. The motion passed and the Board members present signed the permit.

Peter suggested returning to remote meetings to avoid spreading the COVID Delta variant among the unvaccinated.

**MOTION** Mary moved the September and October Board Meetings be held by Zoom with Sarah in attendance and Town Hall open if the public wishes to attend in person. Dorinda reminded the orders must be signed in person.

**MOTION:** Mary moved to approve curb cuts for Elizabeth Colgate and Raymond Medina on South Bear Swamp Road, and Lori and Joseph McCarthy for two curb cuts – one at West Hill Road and another at Macey Road. Steve seconded. The motion passed. Peter signed them access permits.

All Orders were reviewed and signed by those present.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** The Board reviewed a letter from CVFiber inquiring about Town buildings that could house internet hardware.

The Board adjourned at 7:19 PM.

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

THE ABOVE MINUTES WERE APPROVED AS A WARNED AGENDA ITEM AT A REGULAR MEETING OF THE MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD ON SEPTEMBER 7, 2021

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PETER O. HOOD, CHAIR

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MARY JUST SKINNER, VICE CHAIR

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N/A  
PHILIP HYJEK

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STEVEN MARTIN

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ELIZABETH SCHARF

DRAFT