

Select Board Members

X_Peter Hood, Chair
X_Liz, Scharf, Vice Chair
X_Randy Drury
X_Vic Dwire
X_Phil Hyjek

**MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD
SPECIAL MEETING
TUESDAY, JUNE 27, 2023
Middlesex Town Hall and via Zoom*
Middlesex Town Clerk's Office
5 Church Street
Middlesex, Vermont 05602
(802) 223-5915**

MINUTES.

PRESENT: Peter O. Hood, Chair, Liz Scharf, Vice Chair. Members Brigid Browning*, Randy Drury, and Vic Dwire. Former Treasurer Dorinda Crowell. Michelle Johnston* The meeting at Town Hall was recorded on Zoom. Select Board Assistant Sarah Merriman took the minutes and was present at Town Hall. (*signifies attendees via Zoom)

Call to Order/Amendments

Peter called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM. He amended the agenda to include prepared remarks by Sarah and himself.

MOTION: Randy moved, and Liz seconded approving the agenda June 27, 2023, Special Meeting Agenda.

Board Procedure Following the June 20th Meeting/Apoloizing to the Treasurer

Sarah delivered a statement itemizing the Board's accomplishments during the pandemic, labor shortages and beyond, including making the MVFD a Town department, approving a capital improvement plan, and hiring a qualified road foreman and bookkeeper by increasing employee pay. The result is a fully functional Town government and community happiness about the roads. For that, the Board deserves to be commended and should be respected. In turn, the Treasurer should be equally respected, especially considering how she kept the financial department afloat when there was no bookkeeper.

Peter apologized to the other Board members and Dorinda for the chaos of the June 20th meeting. He said he should have imposed controls sooner. From now on, he suggested, Board members and others should raise their hands to speak. Don't just start talking. Also, the Board should have a chance to review orders ahead of time so they're not reviewing orders during the meeting.

He said time sheets should be submitted to the financial department no later than 9 AM on Mondays. That's the cutoff. This will allow the financial office time to review the time sheets for errors. If the time sheet is not on the bookkeeper's desk by 9 AM, the employee will not be paid that period. "That will eliminate confusion and back and forth issues."

Lastly, he said, over the years the Board has dealt with the Town's business by being calm and reasonable. "We don't attack personally, we don't have three-way conversations and we don't introduce hearsay."

Liz suggested that it's more natural for Board members to converse instead of raising their hands for permission to speak, though the public should and maybe the Treasurer and Select Board Assistant should, too. But when Peter says the conversation needs to stop or be reined in, the Board must listen. She said Peter's job as chair is to make sure that point is not crossed. Peter said he agreed. People need to be polite and respectful without talking over one another or interrupting – no personal remarks from outside sources.

Randy said he agreed that fluid conversation conducted in the right manner and tone has its place. People are going to continue to have differing opinions; that's where there needs to be direction, he said. Brigid and Vic concurred.

Peter said the question is what about the Treasurer who has informally resigned. Dorinda said she was called out for doing the job she was elected to do, and this was not the first time. She and the Board have had these conversations before. (The Board behaves) and then something falls apart. Dorinda said these comments on June 20th were made in front of neighbors, friends, and community. Based on the actions of the Board at this meeting, she'll decide whether to return.

Liz noted the Board and Treasurer are elected officials who should act in the best interests of the town. The community has entrusted them with money and maintenance of the roads. Mostly, the Board listens, oversees, asks questions and makes sure things in the Town are running smoothly. The Treasurer, by default, Liz said, is not doing her job if she's not asking questions and drilling down. Does that mean the Treasurer is a little nitpicky? If they're not, then they're not doing their job. The same applies to Randy and herself when they scrutinize orders. The (Board and Treasurer) are stewards of the Town's money.

Liz said Dorinda does a "fabulous job." She also knows the ins and outs of the Town and asks the hard questions. It can't be promised that (outbursts like on June 20th) won't happen again, Liz said, but the Board will work toward being kinder and more respectful.

The Board then discussed the mechanics of possibly emailing bills and invoices along with the orders. Dorinda said that would be too time consuming. The Board discussed changing the time-card format so it's clearer. Randy said a standardized spreadsheet for all employees would be ideal.

Michelle asked why there were so many levels of scrutiny over times cards when they're reviewed by the department heads and financial office. Peter said they are scrutinized as part of the orders submitted to the Select Board which has found errors and problems in the past. The Board wants to pay people correctly.

Peter asked Dorinda where she stood; Dorinda said she has to think about it. "I've got to be comfortable coming to the table and sitting among everyone." She said she would make her decision by the end of the week.

Meeting adjourned at 5:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted by 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 JULY 11, 2023.

PETER O. HOOD, CHAIR

ELIZABETH SCHARF, VICE CHAIR

BRIGID BROWNING

RANDY DRURY

VIC DWIRE