

Select Board Members
 Peter Hood, Chair
 Liz, Scharf, Vice Chair
 Brigid Browning
 Randy Drury
 Vic Dwire

**MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD
EMERGENCY MEETING
MIDDLESEX TOWN HALL AND VIA ZOOM*
5 CHURCH STREET
MIDDLESEX, VT 05602
THURSDAY, AUGUST 17, 2023
MINUTES**

PRESENT: Peter O. Hood*, Chair, Liz Scharf*, Vice Chair. Members Brigid Browning* and Vic Dwire. Treasurer Dorinda Crowell and Steve Martin. Select Board Assistant Sarah Merriman took the minutes, and the meeting was recorded on Zoom.

Call to Order/Amendments

Peter called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM

Hiring Steve Martin as Project Manager for Flood-Related Road Recovery

Peter said Steve was not happy with the Board's offer Wednesday to pay him \$52/hour plus mileage to serve as project manager on FEMA reimbursement projects involving Town roads and didn't want to accept it. Peter encouraged him to reconsider, and Steve said he wanted to appear at this meeting.

Steve noted his fifty years of experience in construction and earthwork projects, work he does for private companies at \$70/hour, his original bid. He said Vic and Road Foreman Eric Metivier hired him five weeks ago. No pay was discussed. Steve said Vic asked about how much he wanted for compensation and Steve said he wasn't ready to discuss that. Therefore, he's taking some of the blame for this misunderstanding. That conversation should have taken place right away, he said.

Steve said the offer was like a "slap in the face" considering his experience and knowledge. He said he was willing to stay on with the following terms and conditions: 1) \$70/hour as a part-time employee, which he said is fair since he won't be paid benefits and he won't charge for mileage. He said he already has put in 64.5 hours and, if the Board does not accept his offer, he will deduct time he spent writing up notes and drafting bids. 2) he wants to deal with one person, either Vic as Road Commissioner or Peter as Select Board Chair. 3) he wants a unanimous vote accepting his terms and conditions.

Peter noted Randy was in a meeting at work and could not attend. He said the Board shared responsibility for the situation by not firming up the terms of the arrangement at the beginning. He said it is a short-term situation for a relatively few hours and he looks at this more as hiring an outside consultant rather than a temporary employee. Therefore, he said he was willing to go forward with Steve.

Liz said she's sorry Steve felt insulted by the offer. The \$52/hour was not about him as much as it was that the Board considered him in the light of being a temporary Town employee and not an independent contractor. The counteroffer considered the fact the Town would be covering FICA, insurance and mileage.

Steve said he expects his hours to drop off as the repairs are underway, until the time comes to file paperwork with FEMA, which is very particular and detailed. All in, he expects to put in approximately 200 hours of work.

Brigid said she supported what Liz said. Board members were doing due diligence on behalf of taxpayers who now might see the situation the Board finds itself in is a bit untenable. She said the Board has learned from this process. Next time, a system will be in place and members will have more experience.

Vic said the Town will be trying to recover a lot of money with FEMA and it's important to have someone like Steve do the job. He said he was not shocked by the \$70/hour because when he was tasked after the July 13, 2023, Special Select Board meeting with finding a project/manager consultant, he knew from his own prior experience that consultants in this field charged \$125-\$150/hour. He said \$70/hour wasn't out of whack. In this field, that compensation was normal, if not on the low side, he said.

MOTION: Liz moved, and Vic seconded, hiring Steve Martin as project manager/consultant for flood-related road repairs, making him a temporary employee at a pay rate of \$70 – no mileage – and to pay him that rate retroactively. All present voted in favor. Peter asked Steve if that was okay since Randy was unable to attend the meeting; Steve agreed.

Steve asked whom he would be working with, Vic or Peter. Peter said Vic and if anything goes awry, that he should feel free to bring the issue to Select Board meetings.

Dorinda asked how Steve should bill his time. Peter suggested that Steve bill for hours already put in, but that, going forward, he should submit hours per normal payroll cycles. Steve agreed.

The meeting adjourned at 9:27 AM.
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 SEPTEMBER 5, 2023.

PETER O. HOOD, CHAIR

ELIZABETH SCHARF, VICE CHAIR

BRIGID BROWNING

N/A
RANDY DRURY

VIC DWIRE