

Select Board Members

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

MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD
Tuesday, November 7, 2023
Middlesex Town Hall and via Zoom*
Middlesex Town Clerk's Office
5 Church Street
Middlesex, Vermont 05602
(802) 223-5915

MINUTES

PRESENT: Chair Peter Hood, Select Board members, Brigid Browning*, Randy Drury (who is also a member of the Budget Committee) and Vic Dwire (who is also Road Commissioner). Treasurer Dorinda Crowell. Rubin Bennett*, owner of rbTechnologies, LLC. Budget Committee Members Mark Harris, Zara Vincent, George Longenecker and Elias Gardner. Road Foreman and MVFD Chief Eric Metivier; Listers Shelly Desjardin and Annette Halaz. Town Highway FEMA Project Manager Steve Martin. Residents John Rahill*, Steven Dennis and Samantha Beaudoin. Select Board Assistant Sarah Merriman took the minutes, and the meeting was recorded by ORCA. (*indicates attended via Zoom)

Call to Order, Welcoming Guests, Approving Minutes and Agenda

Peter called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.

MOTION: Vic moved, and Randy seconded approving the amended agenda for the November 7, 2023, Regular Select Board meeting with the following amendments: a curb cut for North Bear Swamp Road, correspondence from Samantha Beaudoin re: Mead Road, and a speed study from the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission.

Rubin Bennett of rbTechnologies Discusses Proposals for Town IT Needs

EMAIL: In switching from Rackspace to Microsoft 365, rbTech will have to go through every mailbox and find all the data for all employee emails, Rubin said, explaining they cannot use automated tools on the Town's system. The total cost would be \$9,796. Monthly services would be \$148. Dorinda asked if current emails are being archived. Rubin said he doesn't know if Rackspace is archiving the emails; rbTech did not set up Rackspace. Microsoft 365 adds credential management and spam filtering. Dorinda said she and the bookkeeper have had problems with Rackspace. Rubin said his company's standard remedy is Office365 which is more secure. Peter asked if any extra software will be needed; Rubin said no, emails can be accessed through the web.

Rubin rbTech is giving the Town – as with other nonprofits – a discount. The figures are high because it's better to estimate high. Peter asked for a start date to switch from Rackspace. Rubin said they are backed up and he doesn't know when that process could start, probably not until March.

BATTERY BACKUP: Replace the UPS for \$1,968. The new server proposal includes the UPS. The device is 7-8 years old which means it should be replaced. They should be run for only 3-4 years.

NEW SERVER: The revised proposal was sent this afternoon. Peter said he hasn't had chance to review, but if the Board said today to approve the server, when could it be installed. Rubin said not until March at the earliest. Peter said email is the Town's priority. Rubin said the server is running a supported operating system. The hardware is old, but does not exhibit signs of failure. Dorinda asked about a cloud-based system. Rubin said you have to define what you mean by cloud based. NEMRC sits on a physical server. You could move to NEMRC online. All of the bookkeeping is in NEMRC. If you just need file access, then you could work with Office 365 and no server. That would be far less expensive than capital expenses and maintenance. The challenge is that the switch is a substantial project and there is a longtail on getting that set up and is in conflict with the existing machine. You may not have the capital expense of purchasing, but amortizing over years is more expensive. Peter summed up the situation: to transition to a cloud-based service, the Town needs a good server and the current server is not up to the task. Rubin said that's a simple explanation but accurate. Peter asked if there were a short-term solution like renting a server; Rubin did not recommend. Rubin left the meeting.

Highway Report

Eric is replacing the transfer case in the Freightliner. The highway department has removed all gravel from the pit for this year. Peter asked if the roads are going to be as they are until spring. Vic said the Town will put in some concrete blocks on East Hill Road and fix Center Road. John Rahill discussed Wood Road. Vic said he's discussed the problems about Wood Road with him. Eric said the Town is going to grade the road and make it the best as possible for winter. They will clean the edges so the water can get off. John said glad to hear the road is on the list before winter because there are dangerous curves and glad there's a plan to move the water into the ditches. He says he hopes the first blind corner can be addressed. When there is money, he said he hopes the Town will address underlying issues before the flood.

Eric said the department is working on a plan to rebuild the road next year. It's a material issue; there is not enough available. John wanted to know what the Town's plans before winter. Vic said it is winter. Vic said the department has received emails from all over Town regarding roads that were damaged in the flood.

MOTION: Vic moved to approve a curb cut for WL Martin LLC on North Bear Swamp, 1.1 miles from Story road. Randy seconded. The motion passed. Peter signed the curb cut application. Steve left the meeting.

MEAD ROAD: The Board discussed Sam Beaudoin's email re: a rock that Zachary French was placing in the Town's easement on Mead Road. Vic asked if that stone was in the 22' area the Board previously discussed. Sam said it was in the right of way. The Board reviewed the email from October 26th and accompanying photos. Samantha said the video shows Zach putting the rocks in the right of way. Randy said this violates what the Board discussed with all the parties on Mead Road at the September 19, 2023, Select Board Meeting. Sam said her car hasn't hit the rocks, but they shouldn't be in the roadway. The Board agreed to send a letter to Zach French warning him not to put objects in the Town's right of way and that he will be fined if he continues to do so. Sam asked if the letter could mention vehicles not parking them in the roadway; Peter said the problem is many residents all over town park their cars in the Town's rights of way. The Board agreed to give Zach 14 days to comply from the date of the letter.

* At 6:03 PM, the Board recessed until the conclusion of a warned Board of Abatement meeting. The Select Board meeting resumed at 7:39 PM.*

FY25 Budget Workshop

Dorinda said the Cemetery Commission requested an increase in its budget to \$7,500 from \$6,900. The Planning Commission submitted a placeholder for \$4,440, which is less than the current year, but does not account for certain fees. The Recreation Director has proposed a budget of \$17,395.

Randy reached out to another IT company and spoke with them about taking over the Town IT services. Dorinda said this company has provided IT services for 25 years and is contracted with Waterbury, Duxbury and Eden. The owner is a former Select Board member in Waterbury who would be happy to meet with the Board. Randy noted rbTechnologies' proposal to upgrade the server for \$18,000 and migrate emails for \$11,000 is high.

Dorinda gave the Board a heads up that BlueCross/BlueShield health insurance rates for Town employees would increase by 12.41% next year.

OTHER BUSINESS

All orders were signed.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Sarah Merriman, Select Board Assistant

THE ABOVE MINUTES WERE APPROVED AS A WARNED AGENDA ITEM AT A REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD ON NOVEMBER 21, 2023.

PETER O. HOOD, CHAIR

N/A
ELIZABETH SCHARF, VICE CHAIR

BRIGID BROWNING

RANDY DRURY

VIC DWIRE