

**Select Board Members**

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

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

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**MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Chair Peter Hood\* and Vice Chair Liz Scharf. Select Board members, Brigid Browning\* and Randy Drury (who is also a member of the Budget Committee). Treasurer Dorinda Crowell. Road Foreman and MVFD Chief Eric Metivier. Town Highway FEMA Project Manager Steve Martin. Budget Committee members Mark Harris, George Longenecker and Zara Vincent\*. Zoning Administrator Kevin Thompson. 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**

With the Chair's permission, Liz chaired the meeting and called it to order at 5 PM.

**MOTION:** Peter moved, and Brigid seconded, approving the November 21, 2023, Select Board meeting minutes. The motion passed and those present signed the minutes.

**MOTION:** Randy moved, and Peter seconded, approving the agenda for the December 5, 2023, Select Board meeting which was amended to include a discussion about Town Hall.

**Highway Department FY25 Budget Proposal**

Eric proposed a budget that represents about a 5% increase over the current FY24 budget and includes suggested wage increases of 4.5%. The Board noted this budget does not include FEMA roadwork and/or equipment costs. Randy asked about the excavator and line item #69, which is for small tools. Since there is no line item for replacing the excavator, Randy asked where else it could be captured in the FY25 budget. Liz said the Capital Fund. Mark said a rough capital-fund budget has been submitted that includes an excavator and truck. The first payment for those will be the following fiscal year (FY26) so they won't affect the FY25 budget. He said, theoretically, money could be drawn from the capital equipment fund to put a down payment on the excavator. Dorinda asked about the \$30,000 in gravel that's already budgeted for FY24 that hasn't been tapped. Eric said he plans to put down gravel between April and July, so that will be spent. Liz said the budget should reflect the FEMA-reimbursed road repairs since the Town has to pay for repairs before the Town is reimbursed by FEMA. Dorinda said this is a discussion to have and mentioned that the State is also offering low-interest loans to municipalities for flood repairs. Randy suggested an informational report on the FEMA repairs which wouldn't be tied to the operational budget. Mark said the flooded roads are a one-time capital expense. All the money being put into the roads has a useful life of more than a year. Liz asked if the FEMA match should be in the budget. Randy said the match could be spread over seven years.

**Highway Update**

Eric said the Highway Department has dealt with equipment issues over the past couple of weeks. The new truck has a coolant issue and there were a couple of nuisance hydraulic issues.

RE FEMA work: Steve said he's estimated that \$2.6 million worth of repairs still need to be done on the Town roads harmed by the flood. He'd like to post requests for proposals next week and perhaps have the Board review and approve the bids on January 16, 2024. That would bring the total estimate of costs to \$4.6 million, including the \$2 million of emergency repairs FEMA is reviewing now.

Sarah read a November 30<sup>th</sup> email from State Representative Ela Chapin as follows: *Vermont is almost definitely going to qualify for 90% FEMA coverage of expenses for all towns, within a few months. This seems inevitable given the estimates of statewide flood related expenses which are astronomical and will be more than several times the threshold that qualifies our disaster declaration for the higher cost share. So after a minimum of 30% of the local match covered by the state's ERAF program, you can expect to at most be covering 7% of the total costs sustained. But Ben (Rose of Vermont Emergency Management) thinks there are other ways that the ERAF portion will go up, and Middlesex might likely end up at the 70% level. One way that could happen is if the Legislature passes a bill early this session to cap local match or ensure ERAF covers 70% of match for all towns, which I am advocating for. Something similar happened post-Irene.*

The Board discussed this. In that case, the Town would be looking at a match of 138,000 which might be covered by the new low-interest loan program that would allow towns to borrow at 1.3% interest over seven years. Steve said there may be some money spent on culverts the Town won't be able to capture.

**Welch Park Drive Site Visit and Public Hearing**

**MOTION:** Per 19 VSA §709, the Peter moved, and Randy seconded, setting a site visit at Welch Park Drive – currently a private road – for 5 PM, Tuesday, February 6, 2024, to be immediately

followed by a Public Hearing in Town Hall to receive testimony about the Board's proposal to turn Welch Park Drive into a Class 3 Town road via deed and acceptance from the Welch Park Association. The motion passed.

The Board passed over compiling a list of grants needs to submit to the Municipal Technical Assistance Program.

**Treasurer's Report**

Dorinda informed the Board about a VLCT Zoom meeting on December 12<sup>th</sup> re: the municipal loan program offering 1.3% interest over seven years to pay for road repairs. She said another IT person will take a walk through the office and come to the December 19<sup>th</sup> Select Board meeting. Liz asked about the Community Bank loan for \$3 million to pay for road repairs in anticipation of FEMA reimbursement. Dorinda said the Town has a year to pay that down. She's submitted to FEMA the first \$2 million in invoicing for "B" – or emergency – projects, with a handful of invoices to add to it. She said she would not be surprised to see some reimbursement by the end of the FY24 fiscal year.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

All orders were signed.

**MOTION:** Randy moved, and Peter seconded, accepting the Planning Commission's recommendation and reappointing Kevin Thompson as Town Zoning Administrator for three more years. The motion passed unanimously.

**MOTION:** Randy moved, and Brigid seconded, approving another access permit for 422 Center Road and authorizing Liz to sign on the Select Board's behalf. The motion passed and Liz signed the permit.

The Board discussed Vermont Integrated Architecture's request for a schedule re: a more detailed design of Town Hall. The Board has tentatively agreed to ask the voters to approve \$46,000 in a special article on the 2024 Town Meeting Warning to pay for the design.

The Board adjourned at 6:00 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 DECEMBER 19, 2023.

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PETER O. HOOD, CHAIR

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ELIZABETH SCHARF, VICE CHAIR

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BRIGID BROWNING

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RANDY DRURY

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N/A  
VIC DWIRE