

**Select Board Members**

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

**MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD**  
**Tuesday, December 19, 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\* 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. Bob Butler of Butler Technology. MVFD President Jeff Koonz. Firefighter Scott Isham\* Budget Committee members Mark Harris\*, George Longenecker, Elias Gardner\* and Zara Vincent.\* 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 5:04 PM.

**MOTION:** Randy moved, and Peter seconded, approving the December 5, 2023, Select Board meeting minutes. The motion passed and those present signed the minutes. Vic abstained since he had not been present.

**MOTION:** Vic moved, and Randy seconded, approving the amended agenda for the December 19, 2023, Select Board meeting which was amended to remove the Treasurer's request to step down as de facto Collector of Delinquent Taxes

**Butler Technology Presentation**

Dorinda said she met with Bob Butler last Friday, showed him the Town's computer equipment and discussed various IT issues and needs. She said the Town needs guidance as well as support and they discussed if the Town should consider going to the cloud for the server. Bob was invited to the Board meeting. Bob said he's had an IT business in Waterbury for 30 years and provides services for the Town of Waterbury. He's also a former Select Board member and has served in various municipal roles. Liz asked about the fee structure. Dorinda said that was not discussed. Bob said he works on a times/materials basis vs. a subscription fee, though he would consider that.

Randy asked about a rate for municipalities. Bob said he charges \$125/hour plus one-way travel to discourage coming on site. Still, most work can be done remotely, and Bob said he likes to work odd hours, including weekends and very early in the day.

Liz asked about team backup; Bob said he has one technician and has managed arrangements with other providers in emergencies. In 25 years, he said this arrangement has worked well. He said he's busy but can handle Middlesex. He said he works with Duxbury, Waterbury – with whom he's been associated for 10 years – and Eden.

Liz asked about moving from Rackspace. Bob recommended going from Rackspace to Office 365. Dorinda asked about a new server. Bob said he would price it out. Peter said the Town has not been happy with the current IT provider. Peter suggested Bob provide a proposal to update the server, with or without the cloud, and how he would solve the puzzle of the email. Peter also asked about an estimate of time for ongoing support, though email is priority, however. Peter asked if Bob was familiar with NEMRC; Bob said he has a good working relationship with NEMRC. He said he's good at working with other vendors. Peter said he was looking for this information mostly for budgeting purposes.

Bob said the Town has a good idea of how much uses IT services, though all towns are different. Dorinda asked about monthly/quarterly health checks. Bob said it depends. In Waterbury, he's at the site often enough to not require updates. For clients with whom he touches base every six months, that can be a challenge. He said, frankly, the monthly checks are not always in the Town's best interests. He said it's a matter of risk management; he analyzes which services require the most attention. He regularly checks the servers and backups. He asked if he could work with one person who understands the business risk. The Board agreed to ask Bob to submit a proposal for the email conversion. Bob said his hours are flexible, depending on what the Town needs and agreed to provide a proposal by mid-January. Peter asked if the server has exceeded its life; Bob said that's unlikely. However, it all depends on the risk, redundancy, and backup system. The Board asked Bob to submit his proposal by January 12, 2024. Bob agreed and left the meeting.

**Highway Report**

Vic said he met with Steve (Martin – FEMA construction coordinator) and reviewed the FEMA projects. He said the requests for proposals probably won't go out until mid to late January. Sarah said FEMA has obligated the debris removal expenses, which are now being reviewed for payment by Vermont Emergency Management. Dorinda said over \$2 million in emergency projects are being reviewed by FEMA and a few more may be added to the emergency category.

Eric said all the roads have been brought up to normal after yesterday's record rain. Randy asked about truck repairs. Eric said he has the parts.

**Monthly Meeting with the MVFD**

Jeff reviewed the monthly details (please see report below). He noted there are tough moments for the crew such as retrieving a dead body in Moretown at Moretown's request. The MVFD has also had to deal with trees on power lines and flooding issues from Monday night. Eric and Jeff left the meeting.

**FY 25 Budget Workshop**

The Board reviewed the proposed budget, including categories subject to change. Flood recovery debt includes principal and interest. Dorinda said she plugged in \$30,000 in interest on the \$3 million line of credit, though that is subject to change. At this point, the Town may not have to pay back principle for two years, depending on if the Town takes advantage in the Vermont Bond Bank's low-interest loan program for heavily flooded communities. Dorinda also highlighted tax abatements; the three this year were unbudgeted. Since she's not sure if there will be abatements next year, Dorinda wondered if that should be accounted for. Peter suggested coming up with some sort of number since it's likely there will be activity in that area. The Board agreed to plug in \$7,000 as a placeholder.

Town administration: Dorinda asked about a placeholder for a new server. The Listers/NEMRC Assessors contract will need to be paid in July 2024 a total of \$105,000 over two years. However, there is already \$52,000 in the appraisal fund. It will cost \$26,500 per year.

Computer maintenance: \$22,000 plugged in as a placeholder. Mark said that needs to be added to the capital inventory since it's more than \$5,000 and lasts more than five years. In FY23, the Town spent \$17,900, which included the contract with NEMRC for its municipal services. The Listers asked for 100 hours of support from NEMRC at \$150 per hour.

Dorinda also highlighted building repairs in the budget; it is level funded. She said there is no new number for the ambulance services. Property and casualty services/workers comp is not a huge difference from the previous year. The Board discussed trucking expenses which average around \$1,900. Randy asked if the recently purchased trailer would affect that trucking expense.

Wrightsville beach dues are not available. As for the Planning Commission, no future grant match was included. Not sure if that's an oversight, though there have been no matches in the past two years. Elias said Sandy Levine (PC Chair) was not planning on pursuing grants.

CIP (Capital Improvement Plan): Mark said it's the same as last year's, aside from a request of \$30,000 for elevator repairs. Randy said he added \$20,000 for the server upgrade. So now, there's a \$50,000 increase. Peter asked if the elevator is wrapped up in what happens with Town Hall. Randy said if the Town Hall plan doesn't move forward, the Town still needs to do something about the elevator. Essentially, money set aside in the Town Hall Building Fund could be applied to the renovation; if the Town doesn't move forward with the renovation, then the Town still needs to improve the elevator.

The Board is looking at a 12.72% increase in the budget; Mark said that's better than the 20% increase the Board faced last year before it began cutting. Last year, the Board ended up with a 10.25% budget increase before special articles and 12.5% after special articles. As for wages, the Board is looking at a 4% increase.

Mark asked about the flood's effect on the budget. Dorinda said the Town has spent over \$2 million on flood invoices, but she's only drawn down \$1.5 million from the line of credit. The Town will be paying interest on the \$1.5 million. Mark asked about a revised budget; Dorinda said wages will have the biggest impact on the budget. Peter said to leave the pay raise at 4% for the time being. George left the meeting.

**Treasurer's Report**

The Board discussed applying for a Vermont Bond Bank loan for heavily flooded communities at 1.3% interest. The application requires three years of Town audits, three years of financial statements, the FEMA project worksheets, and a legal opinion from the Bond Bank's approved list of counsel. Everything must be submitted by January 9<sup>th</sup>. Only \$15 million is available, so it might be extremely competitive.

Every payment from FEMA has to pay down the Vermont Bond Bank loan – which is only for current expenses, not future work. Any residual money would go to paying down the Community Bank line of credit. The Community Bank loan is only a one-year loan due in October. There are seven years to pay off the entire Bond Bank loan and five to pay off the principle.

**MOTION:** Peter moved, and Randy seconded authorizing Dorinda to apply for a loan at 1.3% from the Vermont Bond Bank. The motion passed.

**WCUUSD Request to Mail 2024 School Ballots**

**MOTION:** Randy moved that the town of Middlesex allow the Washington Central Unified Union School District to distribute ballots for the WCUUSD Annual Meeting via U.S.P.S. mail to all active-not challenged registered voters on the Middlesex checklist. Vic seconded. The motion passed.

**Approving Documents Allowing VEM to Administer HMGP Buyouts**

**MOTION:** Peter moved that the Board approve the Maintenance Agreement, the FEMA Model Statement of Assurances, and Memorandum of Agreement allowing Vermont Emergency Management to administer the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program buyouts of 15 properties along Three Mile Bridge, Cross and Lower Sunny Brook Roads and permitting Liz as Vice Chair to sign the above; Randy seconded. The motion passed and Liz signed the documents.

**Signing a Warning for the February 6, 2024, Welch Park Drive Site Visit & Public Hearing**

**MOTION:** Peter moved, and Vic seconded signing a Warning noticing abutting landholders and all interested parties that the Select Board will visit Welch Park Drive at 4 PM, February 6, 2024, before returning to Town Hall immediately for a Public Hearing to take testimony re: turning Welch Park Drive from a private road to a Class-3 Town Road via deed and acceptance. Vic asked about the road conditions and whether current owners should be asked to chip in before the road becomes a town road. The Board did not take up that question. The motion passed and all Board members present in person signed the Warning.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

All orders were signed.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** The Board reviewed an email from Brigid Browning notifying the Board that due to a medical situation, her doctors have asked her to scale back her responsibilities

**MOTION:** Peter moved accepting resignation with regret; Randy seconded. The motion passed. The Board asked that a notice of vacancy be posted as soon as possible with potential candidates submitting their letters of interest by January 8, 2024.

Due to the fact that the next regularly scheduled meeting would fall on the day after the end of a holiday season, the Board agreed to move the next meeting to January 9, 2024. It will also meet on January 16<sup>th</sup> as scheduled.

The Board adjourned at 7:04 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Sarah Merriman, Select Board Assistant

THE ABOVE MINUTES WERE APPROVED AS A WARNED AGENDA ITEM AT A SPECIALLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD ON JANUARY 9, 2024.

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PETER O. HOOD, CHAIR

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ELIZABETH SCHARF, VICE CHAIR

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N/A  
BRIGID BROWNING

\_\_\_\_\_  
RANDY DRURY

\_\_\_\_\_  
VIC DWIRE

19 Dec MVFD Meeting Notes

Total calls to date: 96	E-1 out 3 times
Calls during the last month: 10	E-6 out 0 times
Mutual Aid out: 2	T-1 out 1 times
Mutual Aid in: 0	R-1 out 5 times
Max members respond: 7	Tk-14 out 0 times
Min members respond: 1	POV out 6 times
Avg members respond: 4.0	

- 21 Nov, I-89 NB, Pick-up vs deer, E-1, T-1, R-1, 7 responders
- 27 Nov, Jones Brook Road, Body recovery, R-1, 3 responders  
MA out, Moretown
- 27 Nov, East Hill Road, Fiber line fire, POV, 1 responder
- 27 Nov, Portal Road, Power line down along driveway, no road hazard, R-1, POV, 2 responders
- 30 Nov, I-89 SB, Car smoking, Cnx'd by VSP, no equipment response before cnx, 4 responders
- 03 Dec, River Road, Power line arcing, POVs, 4 responders  
MA out, Moretown
- 04 Dec, Rt 12, Tree on power line and road, POVs, 3 responders
- 09 Dec, US-2, Vehicle rollover, R-1, POV, 5 responders
- 18 Dec, Bolduc Road, Culvert clear out, E-1, 4 responders
- 18 Dec, US-2 and Rt 100B, Road closure for flooding, E-1, R-1, POV, 6 responders

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Training: CPR

Work Night: Station and vehicle cleanup

Repairs: Possible new tire on E-1, T-1 has electrical issues  
Purchases:

New Rescue Update: Equipment moved over

FAST Sq:  
9 total for the reporting period  
7 medical only calls