

Select Board Members

Liz, Scharf, Chair
 Randy Drury, Vice Chair
 Vic Dwire
 Peter O. Hood
 X_Zara Vincent

MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD
Tuesday, May 7, 2024
Middlesex Town Hall and via Zoom*
Middlesex Town Clerk's Office
5 Church Street
Middlesex, Vermont 05602
(802) 223-5915

MINUTES

PRESENT: Chair Liz Scharf, Vice Chair Randy Drury. Select Board members, Peter Hood*, Vic Dwire (who is also the Road Commissioner) and Zara Vincent* (who is also on the Town Roads Subcommittee). Treasurer Cheryl Grandfield. Road Foreman Eric Metivier. Planning Commission Chair Sandy Levine*, former Road Foreman Paul Cerminara*, Galaxy of Yes owner Russ Bennett, Wood Road residents John Rahill, Ben Jessup, and Joan and Benjamyn Carlson. Town Clerk and Select Board Assistant Sarah Merriman. Select Board Chair Liz Scharf took the minutes, and the meeting was recorded by ORCA. (*indicates attended via Zoom)

Call to Order

Liz called the meeting to order at 5:25 PM, a delay due to technical difficulties involving Zoom. Guests were welcomed and there were no amendments added to the amended agenda.

RE: April 16, 2024, Select Board Minutes. Randy requested the minutes regarding correspondence from Jeremy Goff be corrected to note other Board members did *not* interpret the Chair's response as siding with Jeremy. **MOTION:** Randy moved, and Vic seconded approving the corrected minutes from the April 16, 2024, Regular Select Board meeting. The motion passed.

MOTION: Vic moved, and Randy seconded approving the minutes from the March 26, 2024, Special Select Board meeting. The motion passed.

Amending the May 7, 2024, Agenda. Randy requested the agenda be amended to include an Executive Session to discuss personnel issues and Zara asked for additional Town voters to be added to the Town Roads Subcommittee. **MOTION:** Vic moved, and Randy seconded approving the amended agenda for the May 7, 2024, meeting. The motion passed.

Surveying Village Residents About a Potential Municipal Water System

Sandy explained that Galaxy of Yes (G of Y) spoke to the Board last year about its interest in a municipal water system using water found in an aquifer on the former Colby property on Center Road. The Planning Commission has been interested in this possibility as part of the PC work, and the Select Board was interested in learning more about connecting to the G of Y water supply.

Sandy and Russ worked on creating a survey. Then the flood happened, and the survey was never distributed. Sandy said she thought it would be worthwhile to revisit the survey.

Russ said since G of Y has been going through due diligence with the State, including digging two wells. The State has approved the source for about 25K gallons per day between the two wells (700 feet, 670 ft deep). Springs and wells within a 2000-foot radius and other wells weren't impacted.

The G of Y plan is for 50 housing units, a daycare for 150 children, a maker space, and possibly more. The leach field is good for 30K gallons of water per day without treatment, Russ said, though 25K gallons per day is what's needed for the G of Y development plan on former Colby property.

Liz asked how there would then be enough water to add to the town if the development needed all 25K per day. Russ responded that to add water for the Village, they would have to drill more wells. Russ added that the water was tested to see how old it is and it's 60-70 years old. He said it's a huge aquifer that's a long way away—and no PFAFs – and therefore a good source. He is investigating storage potential. G of Y needs to build a water system anyway and are offering to work with the Town if that makes sense.

Russ said rough estimates of costs are \$2.5 million dollars for the G of Y system, \$8-10 million for the Town portion, so around \$12 million dollars for a municipal water system that includes the G of Y development. Russ said that the state and federal monies pay for roughly 80% of the cost of a municipal water system.

G of Y can get by on a 6 or 8-inch pipe, Russ said, adding that the municipal water supply would require a municipal 12-inch pipe and that costs a lot more. Russ says that if there's desire, and the Town signed on, the Town would have more say in how the water is used. The Village would have access to sprinkler systems and hydrants.

Liz brought up some concerns about the municipal water system survey: 1. The cost of water per month, how realistic is that for our situation? 2. Is the survey only for the Village? That should be made clear in the survey to exclude those who aren't working or living in the Village. Cheryl expressed concerns about how the Town would administer a municipal water system. Liz assured Cheryl that the Town wasn't at that stage yet; this is still exploratory. Russ Bennett left the meeting around 6:05.

Appointing Betsy Davis to Planning Commission

Due to the resignation of PC member Nicole D'Agostino, whose term expires March 2025, the Board posted notices of vacancy and urged interested Town voters to submit letters of interest to serve on the PC until the March 2025 Town Meeting. Rob Retter, who is new to town as of January 2023, and longtime resident Betsy Davis sent emails of interest to the Board which Sarah read at the meeting. Liz acknowledged how great it was to have two candidates and asked if one could be an alternate. Sandy said there were no alternates on the PC. Randy said he liked that Betsy has been in Middlesex a long time and knows the town well. Liz added that it might be a welcoming gesture to invite a new person to be involved in Town government.

MOTION: Vic moved that the Board appoint Rob Retter, Liz seconded.

MOTION: Randy moved to appoint Betsy Davis and Zara seconded. Liz asked for a vote on Rob and only Vic voted in favor. Liz asked for a vote on Betsy and Zara, Randy, and Peter voted in favor. Liz abstained from voting. Betsy Davis was welcomed to the Planning Commission; Rob was thanked for throwing his hat in the ring and invited to get involved in other Town happenings.

Appointing Scott Gurley, Sue Warren, Hilton Dier and Steve Martin to the Town Roads Subcommittee.

MOTION: Vic moved to appoint Hilton Dier, Scott Gurly, Sue Warren, and Steve Martin to the Town Road Subcommittee; Zara seconded. The motion passed.

Zara provided an update on the committee that now has 18 members and has met two weeks in a row. At the next meeting on Thursday, May 9th, they will break into the following four groups:

1. Immediate needs
2. Future, climate change
3. Locating sources of funding
4. Outreach to community

Zara's informational post on Front Porch Forum generated helpful feedback. The Committee agreed the road crew has done a great job of grading the roads, and Zara gave a shoutout and thank you to Vic who has attended all the meetings to answer questions. Zara reiterated that the committee wants to support the road crew.

Highway Department Update, Discussion of Wood Road Conditions/Improvements

Eric provided a road update. He said there are only a few roads left for the "first round" of grading. Equipment-wise, both dump trucks are in the repair shop. An injector is broken on one and the transmission on the other needs repair, ETA unknown. Dirt Tech will start permanent road repairs on Monday, May 13th, and will be working on Macey Road. They will be repairing roads in sections, avoiding bus stops for now. Eric and Vic are waiting to hear back from some hydraulic studies (East Hill and Lower Sunny Brook) that will determine the appropriate sizes of culverts for those roads. Roads are no longer posted.

Guest John Rahill of Wood Road was given the floor to discuss Wood Road issues. John said he's had many ideas of how to fix the roads even before the flood happened. Then the flood happened in July 2023 and the roads got worse. John expressed concern that the FEMA work has already been contracted and the folks on Wood Road didn't get a chance to share their observations on what really needs to be done on the road. John added that Steve Martin met with concerned citizens on Wood Road to explain what Dirt Tech would be doing per the FEMA plans. And Steve was able to hear about the concerns that Rahill and his team identified. There are six areas of Wood Road that need repair and maintenance such as the following:

1. Potholes on the Wood Road bridge need to be fixed; Eric said he had ideas for improving those.
2. While gravel filled in many of the mud holes, the base still needs reconstruction. (John said he lost a bumper.)
3. An area in front of Iona Kemp's house is so poorly designed, water from the road seeps into her kitchen. John said Steve told the residents the road can be graded away from Iona's house since adding more material will only make it worse.
4. The top of hill where it gets flat (before Linda Buckley's house and after the Jessups' house) is hard to drive through in mud season. In the summer there are potholes because water doesn't drain properly.
6. At the end of Middlesex's part of Wood Road, there's a drop off on the east side. Water can't drain from the drop off, so it washes out the road. John provided a detailed page of the areas that need work and said he thinks these could be easy enough fixes. Eric and Vic were given copies of his letter.

Liz asked if there's hope that Dirt Tech would be able to address some of these issues when they do their FEMA work. Vic says Dirt Tech will address the issues above if they're related to flood repair/mitigation. Paul cautioned that redirecting water could take the problem from one area to another. Zara noted that it's great that Paul and John will be on the Immediate Fix team described above for the Roads Subcommittee.

Randy reminded Vic and Eric and the rest of the Board that any change orders re: Dirt Tech's contract need to follow FEMA procedure. Vic said any necessary change orders should come in front of the Select Board as well.

Ben Jessup agreed with John Rahill about the poor Wood Road conditions. Flood or no flood, the road is the worst it's ever been, he said. The road needs to be crowned to get water off the road. He said he hopes that the contract with Dirt Tech can help solve some of these problems.

Vic said he would focus on Eric's crew to address the issues Ben and John have outlined. John said he'd be happy to participate in conversations and planning a meeting. Ben said communication is key. Liz said Vic is the communication avenue because he's the Road Commissioner. Vic added that Steve Martin may be the contact for FEMA-specific related road issues. Benjamyn and Joan Carlson of Wood Road were also present and agreed with John's report about the six key places that need fixing.

OTHER BUSINESS

Welch Park update: Peter said documents for the dissolution are almost complete. However, he'd like to see somewhere in the agreement that the Town will maintain Welch Park Drive. Peter recommends the Town attorney review the dissolution documents. Liz approved the two insurance policies that were up for renewal regarding Welch Park. They have been paid and the Town will seek pro-rated reimbursement from the other Welch Park Association members.

Correspondence:

Mead Road update: Liz said she and Randy met with Samantha Beaudoin and Steve Dennis on April 23rd in Town Hall. They showed Liz and Randy some videos of Mead Road in which a flag is obstructing their view while driving and neighbor Zach French with a tool of some sort digging holes in the road this past winter and early spring. They asked what action they could realistically expect from the Select Board.

Liz reached out to Zach's wife Evelyn Prim via email asking her to ask Zach from working on the road without express consent from Vic or Eric and to take the flag down since it was obstructing the view of drivers. Evelyn replied to Liz via email that she wanted to see the video. Liz contacted Samantha who said she did not think it was necessary to share the video. Vic added that when he checked a culvert in the vicinity, he spoke to Samantha for an hour.

All orders were signed.

Executive Session

The Board discussed the necessity of entering Executive Session to discuss a personnel issue involving Town employees.

MOTION: Liz moved, and Randy seconded entering Executive Session to discuss labor relation agreements with Town employees as permitted under 1 V.S.A. § 313 (a)(1)(B) and to include Eric in the meeting. The motion passed and the Board entered Executive Session at 6:45 PM. Board members returned from Executive session at 7:44 PM. No action was taken.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 PM.

THE ABOVE MINUTES WERE APPROVED AS A WARNED AGENDA ITEM AT A REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD ON MAY 21, 2024.

LIZ SCHARF, CHAIR

RANDY DRURY, VICE CHAIR

VIC DWIRE

PETER HOOD

ZARA VINCENT