

Select Board Members

X_ Peter Hood, Chair
X Mary Just Skinner,
Vice Chair
X Phil Hyjek
X Steve Martin
X Liz Scharf

MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD
Tuesday, October 24, 2017
5:00 PM
Middlesex Town Clerk's Office
5 Church Street
Middlesex, Vermont 05602
(802) 223-5915

MINUTES

Present: Chair Peter Hood, Vice Chair Mary Just Skinner, Members Steve Martin, Liz Scharf and Phil Hyjek. Treasurer Dorinda Crowell. Road Foreman Paul Cerminara. Auditor Bonnie Batchelder, Budget Committee members Bill Dorigan and Elias Gardner, and Select Board Assistant Sarah Merriman.

Call to Order/Welcoming of Guests/Amendments

Peter called the meeting to order at 5 p.m. The agenda was amended to include an Executive Session to discuss pending litigation.

FY 2016-17 Audit Report

Auditor Bonnie Batchelder reported that her audit of the 2016-17 fiscal year turned up no discrepancies. The fund balance was positive and there were no issues.

MOTION: Steve move and Phil seconded acceptance of the 2016-17 audit report.
The motion passed.

FY 2018-18 Budget Workshop
Town Employee Compensation & Benefits

Dorinda noted there would be a 10.8% increase in premiums for the CDHP BC/BS plan offered to employees in 2018 and most likely more increases in 2019. Peter suggested sticking with the plan since the future of health insurance is in flux. At least the rates for the first half of the fiscal year are knowable.

The Board reviewed three spreadsheets Dorinda prepared showing the costs and benefits of three pay increases, 1%, 1.5% and 2%. Phil said the cost-of-living increase for Vermont was 1.9%, so a 2% would be a break even. He also noted that the roughly \$13 to \$15 per hour earned by such part-time employees as the ACO and Listers might be worth revisiting. Peter suggested the time to look at that is now. Liz said even if those wages are brought up to \$20 per hour, they should not have a huge effect on the budget because the number of hours worked is minimal.

Paul advocated for a bigger pay increase than 2% to keep the road crew satisfied. Many municipalities are having difficulties attracting quality applicants who have gravitated to the private sector where the pay is better and the hours are more predictable. In addition, Phil said, it is expensive to recruit and train new hires.

Dorinda said the current budget of 75 hours per year for her to perform her duties as Treasurer and Collector of Delinquent Taxes was unrealistic. She has probably worked more than that already. Liz suggested that she break out the two positions and estimate the number of hours for each. Dorinda said she will research this and report to the Board. The Board asked Dorinda to plug in a 2% pay increase for all employees. Phil asked her to run another budget with a 2.5% increase.

Highway Department Budget Proposal

Paul presented the Highway Department's budget that, without factoring in salaries, represented an increase of barely 1%. Paul said money would have to be spent on repairing the grader. Peter noted that this was a decision the Board made several years ago, to spend \$70-80,000 overall on repairing the grader instead of buying a new one at a cost of \$200,000. That said, the grader is coming to the end of its 10-year lifespan and the Town will need to purchase a new one after July 2019.

Steve explained the 64% decrease in construction costs by noting that after two summers of rebuilding Shady Rill and other roads, the road crew would turn its attention to maintenance, including replacing old culverts. Also, the crew would be using more salt which would be stored at Dubois.

Peter asked about upgrading the Town Shed. Steve said the building fund should be used to maintain Town Hall, but that he would like \$5,000 to be set aside in a capital plan to be put toward repairing/replacing the building which is not much more than a temporary structure.

Peter suggested that Paul start researching trucks to replace the one-ton which is overworked and should be replaced after July 2018. (Bill and Elias left the meeting.)

Zdon Road Turnaround

The Board revisited whether the snow plow turnaround on Zdon Road should be extended 200 feet from the end of the Class 3 portion to the driveway being built by Paul Otenti on the Class 4 part for safety's sake. Paul Cerminara has said the current turnaround is at a steep angle and trucks have been often stuck there. Peter said the issue was treating a Class 4 road like a Class 3 road during the winter since the plows would have to plow that portion of the road in order to get to Paul Otenti's driveway. He noted that another landowner off Zdon had gone through the legal petition process to have his road upgraded. This was too much of a gray area. Paul Cerminara said he would present the dilemma to Paul Otenti and report back to the Board.

Leland Farm Road Maintenance

In response to Scott Skinner's complaints at the October 10, 2017, Select Board meeting that the new owner of the Owen Ward subdivision was upgrading the Class 4 portion of Leland Farm Road into a Class 3, the Board reviewed documentation from 2009 Board meetings regarding the future of the road. At the time, John Grenier said the road would be 16' wide. Liz pointed out that the Board hadn't limited him to this.

Steve, who is also the Road Commissioner, said the base had been put in eight years ago and turned into wheel tracks. The grass that had grown up had to be removed and some gravel had been put down. That was it. The Town had no intention of maintaining the road.

Liz added that the new owner hadn't sought a legal upgrade but, with permission from the Road Commissioner had simply taken it upon himself to make the road "good or better" per the Town's Class 4 Roads & Trails Policy. However, "better" was a relative term.

The Board also reviewed Scott's memo suggesting two changes to the Class 4 Roads & Trails policy – that the Road Commissioner be required to report all permissions to the Select Board so the public could access those decisions, and that notice be given to

abutting landowners when permission has been granted for Class 4 road work. Peter said care needs to be taken that private landowners don't keep upgrading Class 4 roads. The Board agreed a revised policy was worth considering at the November 14, 2017, meeting. For now, however, the Board was not going to take action on Leland Farm Road and would send a letter to Scott outlining the reasons why. (Paul left the meeting.)

OTHER BUSINESS

The Board agreed to send a letter to the State of Vermont reminding the Agency of Human Services that former administrations had promised in writing to remove the "temporary secure facility" on US Route 2 – otherwise known as the Middlesex Therapeutic Community Residence – by January 1, 2018. Though the State had asked last year for a second extension, the Board had denied this request.

MOTION: Mary moved and Liz seconded approving the October 10, 2017, Select Board meeting minutes. The motion passed.

All Orders were signed. (All guests left the meeting.)

EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION: Mary moved and Phil seconded entering into executive session to discuss pending litigation against the Town and to permit Dorinda to attend. The motion passed and at 6:52 p.m. the Board entered executive session.

MOTION: Phil moved and Mary seconded exiting executive session. The motion passed and the Board left executive session at 7:10 p.m.

Peter adjourned the meeting at 7:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Merriman, Select Board Assistant

ABOVE MINUTES APPROVED NOVEMBER 14, 2017

PETER O. HOOD, CHAIR

MARY JUST SKINNER, VICE CHAIR

STEVEN MARTIN

ELIZABETH SCHARF

PHILIP HYJEK

12:45 PM

October 26, 2017