

**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, December 19, 2017**  
**5:00 PM**  
**Middlesex Town Clerk's Office**  
**5 Church Street**  
**Middlesex, Vermont 05602**  
**(802) 223-5915**

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**MINUTES**

**Present:** Chair Peter Hood, Vice Chair Mary Just Skinner, Members Steve Martin, Liz Scharf and Phil Hyjek. Treasurer Dorinda Crowell. Budget Committee members Barry Bolio, Ruth Dockter, Bill Dorigan, George Longenecker, Elias Gardner, and Select Board Assistant Sarah Merriman.

**Call to Order/Welcoming of Guests/Amendments**

Peter called the meeting to order at 5:07 p.m.

**Executive Session**

**MOTION: Steve moved and Phil seconded entering into Executive Session to discuss personnel matters and to include Dorinda and Sarah.** The motion passed and at 5:08 the Board entered Executive Session.

**MOTION: Steve moved and Phil seconded exiting Executive Session.** The motion passed and the Board resumed its public meeting at 5:22 p.m.

**FY 2018-19 Budget Workshop**  
**Proposed Budget Overview & Cemetery Fund**

At \$1,162,293, the proposed FY2018-19 draft budget is a 5% increase over the previous year's budget. Historically, the Board has kept annual budget increases to approximately 2%. Dorinda explained that the bulk of the increase is due to both a proposed increase in hourly pay for part-time employees to \$20 and an increase in the number of hours worked by the Treasurer, Zoning Administrator and Recreation Director. Dorinda said she was budgeted for only 100 hours before and has been working many hours for free. She increased the Treasurer's time to 250 hours, which Liz said is still insufficient. In addition, the Town now has three paid Listers after several years of paying for only two. Mary clarified that Sarah's pay is split into 40% clerk and 60% Select Board Assistant.

Dorinda asked for direction on the Middlesex Cemetery Commission's request to create a fund in which unspent monies could roll over and accumulate from year to year. The Board discussed this and decided that if the Cemetery Commission has a project it wants to fund, then it should be placed in the budget. Otherwise, it is not in favor of creating such a fund.

The Board discussed the reasons behind the proposed 5% increase. Liz noted that paying someone \$20/hour for this level of government service is the industry standard. Peter said it would be far more expensive to hire a zoning professional or an appraiser to do the jobs now performed by the Zoning Administrator and Listers.

Peter polled the Budget Committee members for their initial reactions to this increase. Barry said at first he was concerned about the 5% increase until he looked at what drove

those numbers “in a positive way.” The rest of the Budget Committee agreed. Ruth questioned the increase in zoning costs. Bill said the Board was further hampered by insurance and dispatch costs which are set in stone.

The Board agreed to defer voting on the budget until the next meeting on January 9, 2018.

Meanwhile, Dorinda said the \$4,000 the U-32 Supervisory Union pays annually to the Town for her to serve as School Treasurer did not cover the cost of her time, postage and the school’s portion of the Town Report. Peter suggested apprising the district of that in September 2018.

#### **Mud Mitigation on East Hill Road\***

In response to Bill’s request that the Road Commissioner investigate the possibility of placing a special article on the 2018 Town Meeting Warning to fund mud mitigation on East Hill Road so it wouldn’t have to be deferred to 2019, Steve reported on his discussions with the Road Foreman about hiring an outside contractor to do general maintenance the Highway Department has planned for the summer of 2018. This way, the Road Crew could fix East Hill Road which would be far less expensive than using an outside contractor who would inevitably run into unexpected expenses. Still, Steve estimated that hiring the contractor to do ditching and replace culverts with an excavator and a couple of trucks for a month would cost \$50,000. Bill said if voters approved a special article for that amount, the Town budget would increase by 10% and he didn’t feel comfortable with that. Peter, who also lives on East Hill Road, agreed that with a proposed increase of 5% in the general budget already, this was not the time to put forward a \$50,000 special article. At any rate, the project would be completed in 2019. The Board decided not to add East Hill Road mud mitigation in 2018 as a special article. Members of the Budget Committee left for its meeting.

#### **Paying 2018 Property Taxes in 2017**

The Board discussed a request by some tax payers to “front-load” paying their 2018 taxes before December 31, 2017, so they could take advantage of potential write-offs before the \$10,000 cap on deducting local/state and property taxes was eliminated in the 2018 tax code. The Board was not inclined to allow this for bookkeeping reasons, though Dorinda would check with auditor Bonnie Batchelder for her recommendation. The Board wanted to be clear that in no way was the Town suggesting taxpayers could deduct 2018 property taxes from their 2017 federal income taxes.

**Memorandum of Understanding for Ambulance Service with Montpelier**  
**MOTION: Mary moved and Liz seconded approving the FY19 and FY20**  
**Memorandum of Understanding for Emergency Medical Service between the Town of Middlesex and City of Montpelier in which the Town will pay \$65,894 for FY19 and \$67,870 in FY20.** The motion passed and Peter signed the agreement.

#### **Appointing Mitch Osiecki to the Planning Commission**

The Board reviewed a letter from Mitch asking to be appointed to the seat on the Planning Commission that has been vacant since John Krezinski stepped off April 5,

2017. In his letter, Mitch noted that he had attended almost every PC meeting as ZA and planned to run for the seat in March 2018.

**MOTION: Mary moved and Phil seconded appointing Mitch Osiecki to the Planning Commission until the March 6, 2018, Town Meeting.** The motion passed.

#### **Draft 2018 Town Meeting Warning and Eliminating the 1% Discount**

The Board reviewed a draft of the 2018 Town Meeting Warning and discussed eliminating the 1% discount for early taxpayers. Dorinda explained that the practice of offering a 1% discount to taxpayers who pay their property taxes in full within 30 days' of the bill's issuance is a bookkeeping nightmare, especially when dealing with late state payments. The discount increases the burden on the people who already struggle to pay their taxes. In 2017, it added another \$15,000 that needed to be raised. Peter said the value of the discount was that it brought money into the coffers at the beginning of the fiscal year. Dorinda said that was necessary back when it was expensive to borrow money and when the due date for taxes was November 20<sup>th</sup>. Now the first due date is September 15<sup>th</sup>. She said only three towns in Vermont still offer early payer discounts. The Board will take this under advisement when it approves the 2018 Warning in January.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS**

**MOTION: Mary moved and Phil seconded approving the November 28, Select Board meeting minutes.** The motion passed and the minutes were signed.

All Orders were signed.

The Board discussed RB Technologies' bills and whether to use NEMRC's cloud service. Phil said GoToMyPc would serve in the interim and RB Tech would have plenty of off-site backup. Therefore, NEMRC's cloud service was not necessary.

The Board reviewed the Vermont Department of Taxes' 2017 Equalization Study results which set Middlesex's Common Level of Appraisal at 101.24% and the Coefficient of Dispersion at 3.91, a substantial improvement over previous years thanks to the 2017 town-wide reappraisal.

Peter adjourned the meeting at 7:10 p.m.

(The Board skipped over other agenda items to address this before Bill had to leave for the Budget Committee meeting.)

Respectfully submitted,  
Sarah Merriman, Select Board Assistant

ABOVE MINUTES APPROVED JANUARY 9, 2018

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PETER O. HOOD, CHAIR

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MARY JUST SKINNER, VICE CHAIR

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STEVEN MARTIN

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ELIZABETH SCHARF

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PHILIP HYJEK

DRAFT