

Select Board Members

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

MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD
Tuesday, January 9, 2018
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 Liz Scharf and Phil Hyjek. Treasurer Dorinda Crowell. Budget Committee members Barry Bolio, Ruth Dockter, George Longenecker, and Elias Gardner. Road Foreman Paul Cerminara. MCC Chair Lee Rosberg. Celest DiPietropaolo and Marie Dicocco and Select Board Assistant Sarah Merriman.

Call to Order/Welcoming of Guests/Amendments

Peter called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

FY 2018-19 Budget Workshop

Proposed 2018-19 Budget Approval, Salaries for Elected Officials, Eliminating 1% Tax Discount

Faced with a budget increase of 5.59%, the Board reviewed ways to reduce expenses starting with adjusting proposed pay for part-time employees from \$20 per hour to \$17.50. Peter argued that, considering part-time employees are currently being paid \$14.91, this would split the difference. Mary agreed, noting that pay increases were cumulative and that next year part-time employees would expect more. Dorinda said the reduced pay would save only \$3,000.

Elias Gardner said the Rumney School Board was trying to finalize its budget but that currently it was looking at only a 2% increase. The Board and the Budget Committee noted that the major forces driving the increase – insurance, ambulance service, debt - were set and expenses and out of the Town's control.

The Board briefly discussed whether elected officials such as the Town Treasurer/Collector of Delinquent Taxes, the Town Clerk and the Listers should be paid by salary instead of hourly. Sarah disagreed with the Select Board's splitting of her pay into 60% Select Board Assistant and 40% Town Clerk when at least 80% of her job was being Town Clerk. Mary said she felt the Board should have some leverage over a bad Town Clerk by being able to eliminate his/her pay as Select Board Assistant. Peter said for now the Select Board should revert to a prior pay split – 51% Select Board Assistant and 49% Town Clerk and revisit the pay split and whether elected officials should be salaried next year.

As far as easing the tax burden of a 5.59% increase, the Board again discussed eliminating the 1% discount offered to taxpayers who pay their bills in full within 30 days. Middlesex is one of only three towns in Vermont that still offer this discount which originated when interest rates were too high for towns to borrow money at the beginning of the fiscal year. Middlesex no longer has this problem. Dorinda noted that often those who benefit from the 1% are corporations like Green Mountain Power. The Board agreed

that it might be time to eliminate the 1% discount; Peter said it wouldn't be reflected in the budget, but would impact the upcoming tax rate, which was all anyone cared about. Barry said the Board could stand tall on the budget increase and that reducing the hourly pay of part-time employees wouldn't make much of a difference. Mary agreed no changes should be made to the proposed budget.

MOTION: Phil moved and Liz seconded proposing a 2018-19 Town budget of \$1,160,515 to the Town Voters at the March 6, 2018 Town Meeting. The motion passed.

Phil said he would write an analysis of the budget and related expenses to be added to the Select Board report in the 2017 Town Report. Ruth said she was stepping down from the Budget Committee because she anticipated retiring soon.

Approving the 2018 Certificate of Highway Mileage

Peter read the 2018 Certificate of Highway Mileage which was unchanged from the previous year: a total of 77 miles of roads of which 15.920 are Class 2, 32.70 are Class 3 and 16.940 are State Highway. In addition, there are 9.03 miles of Class 4 roads and 3.32 miles of legal trails.

MOTION: Mary moved and Phil seconded approving the 2018 Certificate of Highway Mileage. The motion passed and the Board signed the certificate.

Red Hen Liquor License Renewal

MOTION: Phil moved and Liz seconded approving Red Hen Bakery's liquor license renewal. The motion passed and the Board signed Red Hen's application.

The 2017 Select Board Annual Report

This item was passed over so Phil could add his budget analysis. The Board will consider it at its next meeting on January 23, 2018.

Appointing Ross Lieblappen to the Middlesex Conservation Commission

The Board reviewed Ross's letter to the MCC asking to be appointed based on his environmental experience and interest. Lee said Ross attended prior meetings and was a fantastic addition who'd been heartily approved by the MCC.

MOTION: Liz moved and Phil seconded appointing Ross Lielappen to the MCC. The motion passed. Lee and the Budget Committee left the meeting'

Salt Usage on Shady Rill and other Town Roads

After reading in the Select Board minutes that the Highway Department wanted to increase its salt budget, Lee said the MCC had a spirited conversation at its January 4th meeting about the dangers of chloride run-off in the drinking water and its negative effect on wells. He said the chloride from the salt can wash off the roads and actually seep into the bedrock. Paul said the good news was that the salt was being stored off site at DuBois Construction instead of at the Town shed behind the school. He also said the Road Crew uses salt as sparingly as possible. Peter concurred and said a balance must be struck between environmental and highway safety. Liz thanked Lee for bringing the issue to the Board and added that it was good to be mindful of salt usage.

Winter Maintenance of Lower Barnet Road

Celest and Marie complained that, lately, the Town has stopped winter maintenance of the top of Lower Barnet Hill Road. They said the person who plows their driveway got stuck because the Town has not been plowing or sanding the last 100 feet and now has doubled his fees. Paul said the problem is that the one-ton truck, the only truck in the Highway Department that can plow at that elevation, has been in the shop for numerous repairs. He expected to have the truck working later in the week and it will be used to maintain the top of Lower Barnet. Paul, Celest and Marie left the meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

MOTION: Mary moved and Phil seconded approving the December 19, 2017, Select Board meeting minutes. The motion passed and the minutes were signed.

All Orders were signed.

The Board passed over the Executive Session because it wasn't necessary to discuss an insurance claim against the Town. Peter suggested that in the future, unless an insurance claim was for \$10,000 or more, VLCT did not need permission from the Select Board to settle it. The Treasurer's approval would be enough. The Board agreed the issue should be discussed at the January 23rd meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Merriman, Select Board Assistant

ABOVE MINUTES APPROVED JANUARY 23, 2018

PETER O. HOOD, CHAIR

MARY JUST SKINNER, VICE CHAIR

STEVEN MARTIN

ELIZABETH SCHARF

PHILIP HYJEK

4:30 PM

JANUARY 11, 2018