

Select Board Members  
 X Peter Hood, Chair  
 X Mary Just Skinner,  
Vice Chair  
 X Phil Hyjek  
 X Steve Martin  
 Liz Scharf

MINUTES  
**MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD**  
**Tuesday, November 19, 2019**  
**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 Phil Hyjek, and Steve Martin. Treasurer Dorinda Crowell. Road Foreman Paul Cerninara. Elias Gardner, Bill Dorigan and George Longenecker of the Budget Committee. Russ Bennett, Mike Pelchar and Paul Stafford of Planetary Matters. Doug Hayes. Jeff Koonz, MVFD President; Marge Bower, MVFD Treasurer and Eric Metivier of the MVFD. Gregory Gallant filming for ORCA and Select Board Assistant Sarah Merriman.

**Call to Order/Amendments**

Peter called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM and welcomed guests. There were no amendments.

**Planetary Matters Presentation**

Mike and Russ presented a slide show of their plans for the future of Camp Meade on US Route 2 and property they own across the street at the old gas station along with property abutting Camp Meade they are under contract to acquire from the estate of Armand Lacount. Below are the following highlights:

- **Hitching Posts.** Russ said PM along with the owners of Red Hen Bakery have chipped in to pay for a "hitching post" outside Red Hen on US Route 2. The brainchild of Adam "Phoenix" Mitchell of Worcester, Hitching Posts are carved wooden posts placed along popular thoroughfares where erstwhile hitchhikers may legally line up for rides from passing motorists. Russ noted that VTrans is offering \$500 to communities to offset the costs of installing these posts, which run about \$750. Russ proposed that Middlesex might want to apply; the Board agreed.
- **Expansion at Camp Meade.** Russ said PM would like to get another "anchor tenant" similar to Red Hen and are considering adding another building beyond the Mud Studio while retaining the green "campus" in the center of the complex. An addition at Red Hen has expanded the bakery and kitchen by removing the offices and a break room. The white house next door had been turned into a "pop-up" art studio where local art is available for sale.
- **Street scape for US Route 2.** Russ has been in touch with a consultant who thinks money might be available from VTAOT to add tree-lined bikeways/walkways along Route 2 in 2026. The project might require a 10% town match and PM might be interested in contributing to the project.
- **Creating a TIF District.** Russ suggested Middlesex consider designating a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District in the village so that the town could collect a portion of the education taxes raised by taxes on properties within the TIF District. He suggested expanding the Village District westward and including Welch Park in the TIF.
- **Aesthetics of the Exit 9 interchange.** Russ and Mike encouraged the Town to consider aesthetics when rewriting the zoning for this area and expressed concerns that without careful planning, introduction to the town off the interstate could be a "glorified gas or convenience station." Peter noted the zoning regulations are about to be rewritten; Mike and Russ said they were presenting the same ideas to the Planning Commission at its November 20, 2019, meeting and would be actively involved in the zoning rewrites process.
- **Purchasing Lacount property.** PM is in the process of acquiring the Lacount property adjacent to the Red Hen parking lot in a preemptive move. They were concerned that with the wrong buyers it could be transformed into something akin to a Dollar Store, even with the current zoning. They are investigating whether Green Mountain Power, which owns a small adjacent, land-locked parcel on the river that has an easement to Church Street, would consider allowing pedestrians and bicyclists to use that easement to cross into Camp Meade so they can avoid the dangerous, narrow curve at Route 2.

The Board thanked them for the presentation. Mike and Russ left the meeting.

**FY 21 Budget Workshop**  
**Highway Department**

Paul and Steve, who is also the Road Commissioner, presented a budget for the Highway Department that is a 12.68% increase over the current budget. A big chunk of that increase is associated with a proposal to hire one seasonal employee and rent an excavator for one month to do nothing but ditching during the summer to catch up on work that had to be postponed because of storm repairs. Other costs include stone that must be applied to ditches along roads with a grade of 7% or higher per the Clean Water Act. Peter expressed dismay that well-intentioned legislation imposed by the State places the burden of higher costs on the towns. With a contracted mower retiring, Paul suggested buying a boom mower with a 7-year payment plan and using the Town crew to mow twice a year instead of hiring that out. Mary asked if the Road Crew would be sticking with the 4-day/week summer schedule. Paul said yes, it's still 40-hours per week and it's a small price to pay for a Road Crew that's on call 24/day seven days a week during the winter. Paul suggested holding the 2014 Western Star for one more year than anticipated since much of it has already been rebuilt. Dorinda asked about entering into an extended warranty in this fiscal year, not FY21. Other costs include a 12.33% increase in health insurance and more propane use. On the upside, debt service has gone down because one truck has been retired.

On that note, the Board discussed acquiring a new grader after July 1, 2020, so payments on the debt would not be part of the FY21 budget. Paul estimated that with a roller, the costs for a new grader would approach \$250,000 and suggested financing it over 10 years. Bill Dorigan asked about ditching as a form of mud mitigation. Paul said yes and that this was the advantage of hiring someone to do nothing but ditching for 8-10 hours per day per month; it's a far more efficient system than using other road crew members who might be pulled off for other projects. Peter wondered if towns in the area could get together and hire a mower like under the most recent system. Paul said that was a conversation worth having. Peter said there might be enough money in the paving budget to tackle Center Road in the summer of 2022. Bill said he personally liked the Highway Department's plans because you can't keep kicking the can down the road.

**Doug Hayes's Culvert**

Doug told the Board that his metal culvert, which is over twenty years old and partly rusted, was damaged by Town highway equipment turning around on his East Hill Road driveway. In addition, he believes that riprap the Town dumped near his culvert and Town ditching further eroded soil underneath his culvert so that it caved in. Paul said his department has more than assisted Doug with this area of his driveway up to the point where the Town's pressure washer hose was cut while trying to de-ice Doug's culvert. Nevertheless, Doug said he would like compensation from the Town since he feels the Town is at least partially responsible for the culvert's collapse.

Peter and Steve said it's not the Town's responsibility to replace private culverts and that because Doug has not replaced his aging and damaged one, it has damaged East Hill Road. The Town's policy has been that if a homeowner purchases a culvert and the Road Crew happens to be repairing a Town road adjacent to the culvert then, depending on the circumstances, the Town may install the replacement culvert at no charge to the homeowner. Paul estimated the cost of Doug's replacement culvert to be approximately \$500. He could not say when the Road Crew would next be working on that area of East Hill Road. The Board took no action. Paul and Doug left the meeting.

**MVFD Request to Purchase Rescue Vehicle**

After informing the Board at an earlier budget meeting that the MVFD would have to purchase a replacement rescue vehicle in one or two years, Jeff said Colchester Technical Rescue was planning to auction a 2004 vehicle with 23,000 miles that has a Blue Book value of \$13,000. The fire department would add approximately \$5,100 of additional equipment for a total of \$18,100. In comparison, a new vehicle with the same specs would be approximately \$54,700. Peter asked if there could be any money for a trade. Jeff said maybe \$1,000-\$2,000 since the current vehicle has rust and might not pass inspection next year. Eric pointed out that the truck is a one-ton with 4WD, a six-person cab and new tires. Peter asked about the estimated life of this new truck; Jeff ballparked it at 15-20 years since it will be garaged. Mary asked how often it's used; Marge says it goes out on most interstate calls. The Board discussed sending a letter to Lawson's Brewery asking if they'd be willing to include the MVFD on its list of donation recipients. The MVFD agreed to send a letter.

**MOTION:** Steve moved and Peter seconded approving an expenditure of up to \$18,000 to purchase the Colchester Tech Rescue Truck at auction to replace the current MVFD rescue truck. Mary and Phil voted no. Peter and Steve voted yes. The motion failed and Marge, Eric and Jeff left the meeting.

**Treasurer's Report – Preliminary Review of the FY21 Budget**

The Board reviewed the FY21 budget so far – a 10.71% increase over the FY20 budget. A lot of numbers are not available. If the Board wants to create a Recreational Facility Fund, it will have to ask the voters. In the meantime, the current Recreation Fund should be researched to see if it allows for tennis court resurfacing.

Sarah pointed out that when the Town approved paying part-time employees \$20 effective July 1, 2018, Dorinda's pay as Collector of Delinquent Taxes decreased from the Board-approved \$27/hour to \$20 hour. The Board insisted that Dorinda calculate how many hours she worked as CDT since then so she could be fairly compensated. The Board also discussed potential pay raises for Town employees, agreeing that the standard 2% was barely maintaining the status quo. Dorinda said a 3% increase would raise the working budget to 11.02%; a 4% increase to 11.34%. Mary asked Dorinda to run the numbers for a 3.33% an 3.5% increase.

The Board agreed that Peter and Dorinda should sign the Batchelder Associates audit letter. They did.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

**MOTION:** Steve moved and Phil seconded approving the November 5, 2019, Select Board Minutes. The motion passed and those present signed the minutes.

All orders were signed.

CV Fiber update: Phil said the CV Fiber board is meeting twice a month now because progress is moving along so quickly. They have received \$5,000-\$7,000 in donations and are sending out RFPs for a consultant to do a feasibility study. The next step is to move onto a business plan. They will seek \$4.5million in municipal bonds. The Board has been sending out surveys. Middlesex has a high return rate on those which may make a difference when it comes to which areas should receive new broadband first.

Town computers: Phil said the Listers and the bookkeeper need new computers, about \$2,500 for the Listers; about \$2,000 for the bookkeeper. The bookkeeper's laptop is running on Windows7 – as is the public computer – and will be security risks after January 1, 2020. Phil will buy them using the Town's account; TechGroup will install them. Also, Network Solutions sells town-based emails in blocks of 10 for about \$1.42/mailbox/month or about \$340 a year. This will allow most Town board/committee to have government-based emails that are compliant with open-records statutes. A separate archiving product will cost about \$250. It can be installed on the server and backed up on the cloud.

CORRESPONDENCE: Sarah said she received an email from a Putnamville resident who objected to a "hitching post" being installed in the State's right of way on VT Route 12. She asked that the Select Board consider interceding on her behalf in her complaint to AOT. The Board agreed it had no jurisdiction in this matter.

Peter adjourned the meeting at 8:05 PM

Respectfully submitted by Sarah Merriman, Town Clerk/Select Board Assistant

THE ABOVE MINUTES WERE APPROVED AS A WARNED AGENDA ITEM AT A REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD ON DECEMBER 3, 2019.

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PETER O. HOOD, CHAIR

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MARY JUST SKINNER, VICE CHAIR

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PHILIP HYJEK

\_\_\_\_\_  
STEVEN MARTIN

\_\_\_\_\_  
N/A  
ELIZABETH SCHARF