

Select Board Members

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

MINUTES

MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD
Tuesday, December 3, 2019
5:00 PM
Middlesex Town Clerk's Office
5 Church Street
Middlesex, Vermont 05602
(802) 223-5915

MINUTES

PRESENT: Vice Chair Mary Just Skinner, Members Phil Hyjek, Liz Scharf and Steve Martin. Treasurer Dorinda Crowell. Bill Dorigan of the Budget Committee and George Longenecker of the Budget Committee/Middlesex Conservation Committee. Dave Shepard and Ross Lieblappen of the MCC. Jeff Koonz, MVFD President; Marge Bower, MVFD Treasurer and Eric Metivier of the MVFD. Jerome Lipani filming for ORCA and Select Board Assistant Sarah Merriman.

Call to Order/Amendments

Mary called the meeting to order at 5:04 PM and welcomed guests. There were no amendments.

Approval for MCC Application for Trails Grant from VDFP&R

Dave asked the Board for approval to apply for a recreation trail grant from the VT Dept. of Forest, Parks & Recreation to add steps and "benching" to the Town Forest Trail. He estimated the work would require a trail crew to put in 4 weeks at \$7,400/week for approximately \$29,000. The Town is obligated to put up a 20% match and, realistically, that would have to be in cash, though volunteers could make up a portion. Ross estimated the 20% would equal \$5,600. Mary asked if that could be taken out of the Conservation Fund. Dave said he believed that would be an allowable use of fund money. This is also a reimbursement program meaning the Town would have to pay up front and then would be reimbursed by the State about a month later. Dorinda said there is \$9,033 in the Conservation Fund now, enough for the 20% match. At this point, the Town could handle fronting the money. Steve asked if any Town equipment would be required. Dave said no. If the Town receives the grant, it would select the contractor. An obvious candidate would be the Youth Conservation Corps, though perhaps the Northwoods Stewardship Center might work. Dave said federal money might be involved. If so, the Town would have to send out RFPs and follow protocols for federal grants, Sarah said.

MOTION: Phil moved and Steve seconded approving a temporary expenditure of \$29,000 if the Town receives a recreation trail grant from the Vermont Dept. of Forest, Parks & Recreation to improve the Town Forest Trail with expected reimbursement of 80%. The motion passed.

Amending the MCC Fund Guidance Document

The MCC has proposed two changes to the Middlesex Conservation Fund Guidance Document and Application Fund Authority passed on March 2, 2004 and revised on May 3, 2018. Specifically, the Commission was interested in expanding Section E. of III. Fund activities to include publicly owned properties within the Town instead of simply Town-conserved property. Dave said this became an issue earlier this year when the Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District proposed a project to shore up the banks of Patterson Creek in the Shady Rill picnic area because that property was not Town-conserved. Dave said the MCC was generally supportive of the project; Mary reminded him that the Select Board had twice denied Winooski NRCD's requests for an in-kind contribution from the Town to use Highway Department equipment and labor to move a road in what is State-owned land. Dave said since then, other projects have come to light, such as need for a parking area near the Town Forest.

MOTION: Steve moved and Liz seconded approving the two changes to the Middlesex Conservation Fund Guidance Document. The motion passed. Ross and Dave left the meeting.

Review of FY21 Town Budget/Treasurer's Report

The Select Board moved to this item while the MVFD waited for Jeff to arrive. Dorinda said with 3% pay raises for Town employees and only four relatively minor line items still not in, the budget so far represented a 11.55% increase over this year. Since the November 19th meeting, NEMRC submitted a budget request of \$5,000, a drastic step up from the \$1,400 it has been charging for years. NEMRC supplies various municipal software products. Mary said NEMRC should have been increasing gradually per year instead of surprising towns with a leap like this. Dorinda said she felt it was still a good value. In addition, Dorinda urged the Board to increase its computer expenditures to \$14,000 since the current line item barely covers maintenance. Phil asked to add a separate line item for government email - \$400 - and archiving software, approximately \$300-\$400. With those new costs, though a drop in Emergency Management spending, the budget stood at an 11.79% increase. There was no action. George left the meeting.

MVFD Denied Funding for Rescue Vehicle: Second Request

After the Board at its last meeting denied the MVFD approximately \$18,000 in funding to purchase a used rescue vehicle from the Colchester Fire District coming up for auction at the end of this year, the MVFD returned with a more detailed and scaled-down proposal. Jeff explained that the rescue vehicle stands loaded at the ready with important emergency supplies that cannot be carried on fire trucks. The current one, a 1986 model, costs approximately \$1,100/year to repair and now there might be rust. The Town could purchase the available truck for \$13,000 and the MVFD could buy the \$1,600 lighting package because it has approximately \$12,000 in its accounts, though much of that came from donations earmarked for special equipment. The MVFD could also postpone adding the \$3,500 cap.

Liz asked about the upcoming cost of replacing breathing apparatuses in a few years, a \$58,000 cost. Jeff

said the manufacturer, Scott, is planning to end support of those models. The MVFD might be able to get along with the existing ones for a few years, but should then replace them all at once so everyone has the same equipment. Liz suggested getting a line item on the Warning now to begin gathering funds for that expense.

The Board discussed taking out a loan of fewer than 5 years to fund the truck. However, upon further examination of 24 VSA §1786, it appeared that the Town did not have the authority to go into indebtedness on non-highway equipment without voter approval. Liz said she supported buying a new truck, but assumed another one would be available in the near future from another source. Liz suggested the MVFD chip in money from its accounts because she didn't feel comfortable using Town money for the entire purchase and there's no line item for this in the budget.

MOTION: Liz moved and Phil seconded allocating \$9,000 from the Town's General Fund to purchase a used rescue vehicle for the MVFD. The Board discussed this. Steve noted that the Town was already facing an unexpected expenditure of \$52,000 to repair a Highway truck. The motion failed by a vote of 3-1, with Liz being the only one to approve the motion. After the vote, Phil explained that the MVFD's timing couldn't have been worse considering the \$52K truck bill. If the Town had had a surplus, that might be a different story. The MVFD left the meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

MOTION: Phil moved and Steve seconded approving the November 19, 2019, Select Board Minutes. The motion passed and those present signed the minutes. Liz abstained because she was not at that meeting.

All orders were signed.

Phil updated the Board to say he'd set up 25 Town email accounts so Town officials can stop using their personal emails to conduct Town business.

CORRESPONDENCE: Sarah said she received an email that on December 4, FEMA would be inspecting 28 Rich Road for a possible Tropical Storm Irene buyout. The application was filed in April 2018, but VEMA was unable to secure a separate 25% match. Sarah said she was concerned the Town might be asked to chip in money to deconstruct the house, along with other costs. Phil said FEMA should be asked if local fire departments could conduct a controlled burn as a way of cutting deconstruction costs.

The Board discussed the origin of the Recreation Fund and decided a new fund did not have to be created to save for resurfacing the Rumney tennis courts.

Phil moved and Liz seconded adjourning the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 6:52 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 17, 2019.

N/A
PETER O. HOOD, CHAIR

MARY JUST SKINNER, VICE CHAIR

PHILIP HYJEK

STEVEN MARTIN

ELIZABETH SCHARF