

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

MINUTES
MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD
Tuesday, January 7, 2020
5:00 PM
Middlesex Town Clerk's Office
5 Church Street
Middlesex, Vermont 05602
(802) 223-5915

MINUTES

PRESENT: Chair Peter O. Hood, Vice Chair Mary Just Skinner, Members Phil Hyjek, Liz Scharf and, by speakerphone, Steve Martin. Treasurer Dorinda Crowell. Bill Dorigan of the Budget Committee and George Longenecker of the Budget Committee/Middlesex Conservation Committee. What's Next Middlesex? Trails Committee members Mary Nealon and John Udis. Sue Bettmann filming for ORCA and Select Board Assistant Sarah Merriman.

Call to Order/Amendments

Peter called the meeting to order at 5:05 PM and welcomed guests. The agenda was amended to include an access permit consideration for Hal and Shelley Cohen on Macey Road.

MCC Trails Subcommittee and Possible Improvement of Class 4 N. Bear Swamp Road

George said the Middlesex Conservation Commission has been approached by members of the What's Next Middlesex? Trails Committee who want to be added as a subcommittee of the Conservation Commission. The MCC considered this request at its January 2nd meeting and determined that George and Dave Shepard would be official members of the subcommittee. Mary Skinner asked to see the statutes governing Conservation Commissions and questioned whether subcommittees must consist of Commission members, determining that they did not. John said he and Mary Nealon wanted to take over duties the MCC didn't have time to do, such as inventorying the condition of recreation trails. Since the MCC might subsequently enter into legal agreements concerning said trails, he and Mary wanted to be part of an official subcommittee. The Board thanked them for taking on this extra work.

Along those lines, Mary Nealon brought up the condition of North Bear Swamp Road by the Mount Hunger trailhead. It is in very poor condition and beaver activity has clogged a culvert that is causing flooding on the road. Mary said she connected with a "beaver expert" in the VT Department of Environmental Conservation who suggested a "beaver fence." She asked the Board for direction. Peter said that portion of N. Bear Swamp has long been a concern of his and the Highway Department especially because it is used for recreation. Liz questioned whether an improved Class 4 road would encourage unwanted traffic. Would that invite more people to use the back road to get to Mt. Hunger vs. going past Rumney? Peter shared Liz's concern but said the beaver situation needs to be solved or the Town will lose the road altogether. John said that road might become necessary if there's a huge natural disaster. The Board gave Mary Nealon the green light to explore solutions to the beaver problem. John and Mary Nealon left the meeting.

FY21 Budget Approval

The Board reviewed a proposed Town budget to begin July 1, 2020 and end June 30, 2021 that was \$1,323,867, an 11.45% over the current FY20 budget. The Board discussed ways to cut costs including reducing the salary increases from 3% to 2%. That would reduce the overall increase to 11.11%, each 1% uptick in salaries equaling \$4,000. Peter pointed out that \$770,000 of the budget is devoted to highway and highway-related expenses. Still, Middlesex residents have made it clear that they want decent roads. This is a priority, he said. Liz pointed out that a one-time expenditure of \$40,000 to hire a temporary worker to ditch next summer in itself represented over a 3% increase in the total budget. Without it, the budget would be an 8% increase. Phil said there was nothing in the budget the Board couldn't justify to the voters at Town meeting. Speaking on behalf of the Budget Committee which has been monitoring this budget process, Bill said the committee would not recommend a lower budget. This is the first step in righting things around Town, meaning roads, Bill said. George said you can't run a Town whose major roads are partially impassable.

MOTION: Phil moved and Mary seconded presenting a FY21 budget of \$1,323,867 to the voters at the March 3, 2020 Town Meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

Phil said he would write a budget report to be included in the 2019 Town Report's Select Board Report. Bill and George left the meeting.

Approving the 2019 Select Board Report

MOTION: Mary moved and Liz seconded approving the 2019 Select Board Report with changes. The motion passed. Steve left the meeting.

Treasurer Report - Clarifying Personal Leave in the Town Personnel Policy

Dorinda said the current Personal Leave accrual provisions in the Personnel Policy need to be clarified because, as it stands now, any personal time an employee acquires in December would be wiped out in January. The policy needs to be reworded to say that full-time Town employees would receive three personal days on January 1. The Board discussed possible proration formulas for those hired after January 1 and decided to keep it simple: if you are a full-time employee of Town on January 1, you are credited with 3 days. Those hired after January 1 have to wait until the next January 1 of the following year to acquire personal time, though they will be granted sick and vacation time.

MOTION: Phil moved and Liz seconded to clarify the current Town Personnel Policy to read as follows: *Those employed full time by the Town on January 1st will on that day receive 3 days of paid personal leave per year. Anyone hired for a full-time position after January 1st will receive 3 days of paid personal leave the following January 1st, provided said employee is still employed full time by the Town.* The motion passed and the policy will be amended and delivered to the five full-time employees for signatures of receipt.

OTHER BUSINESS

MOTION: Mary moved and Phil seconded approving the December 17, 2019, Select Board Minutes. Liz abstained because she was not at that meeting. Those present signed the minutes.

All orders were signed.

The Board reviewed an access permit application submitted by Hal & Shelley Cohen for a driveway cut on Macey Road, @.4 miles from West Hill that had been approved by the Road Foreman. Peter signed the application.

Dorinda asked the Board for direction regarding putting up for tax sale a property that is three years behind on its taxes. The property is in a flood plain and may end up as Town property if no one bids on it at the tax sale. The Board indicated it should still be put up for tax sale. Dorinda will make a formal announcement to the Board at its next meeting.

Phil updated the Board on progress of the Town computers and changeover to Town emails. Peter requested that the website and 2019 Town Report incorporate the new emails.

Sarah informed the Board that Assistant Clerk Maryke Gills would be retiring April 1.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:49 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 JANUARY 14, 2020.

PETER O. HOOD, CHAIR

MARY JUST SKINNER, VICE CHAIR

PHILIP HYJEK

STEVEN MARTIN

ELIZABETH SCHARF

DRAFT