

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

MINUTES
MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD
Tuesday, September 15, 2020
5:00 PM
HELD REMOTELY VIA ZOOM

MINUTES

PRESENT: Chair Peter Hood, Vice Chair Mary Just Skinner, Members Steve Martin, Liz Scharf and Phil Hyjek. Treasurer Dorinda Crowell, Road Foreman Paul Cerminara. Conservation Commission Chair Lee Rosberg and Select Board Assistant Sarah Merriman. ORCA recorded the meeting which was also recorded on Zoom.

Call to Order/Amendments

Peter called the meeting to order at 5:03 PM and welcomed guests. The agenda was amended to discuss the Conservation Commission's recommendation that \$5,000 from the Conservation Fund be allocated toward the Vermont Land Trust's purchase of the development rights on 88 acres currently owned by Sarah Seidman and Scott Harrower on Culver Hill Road.

Road Foreman Resignation

After 11 years working for the Town Highway Department, Road Foreman Paul Cerminara told the Board he will be leaving October 16th to take a position with another establishment. He said he hopes to make the transition as smooth as possible during the remaining weeks and, if possible, after he leaves. Speaking on behalf of the Board, Peter thanked Paul for his years of service and the orderly way he is working on this transition. It will be a challenge to fill his shoes. The Town has advertised for a replacement on the VLCT website and in the Times Argus with applications due September 18th. The Board suggested posting the advertisement on Front Porch Forum and the municipal listserves. The Town might have to consider an interim Road Foreman if no qualified candidate comes forward.

Highway Report

Road Commissioner Steve Martin said the Road Crew has been working on McCullough and Upper Barnett Hill roads. They repaired the Wood Road bridge, hydroseeded on Upper Barnett and will be roughing in the parking area at the Town pit on Notch Road to create parking for the Town Forest. They will finish cleaning up the pit – which is being used to procure winter sand – and will address water runoff to avoid pollution. They will also start clearing at the Wildlife Management parking area to allow for more parking. The State is paying for gravel and trucking and the Town will do some tree clearing. Paul has several road and speed signs ready to be installed. After that, the Road Crew will return to McCullough Hill Road for more ditching, though it's doubtful the Town will finish McCullough Hill road this year.

Paul said he called Ed Pierce, permit coordinator for VTrans, regarding the Route 12 solar speeding signs the voters approved purchasing at the March 2020 Town Meeting. Paul hopes to do an onsite meeting on Route 12 with the State since this the first time the Town has installed flashing speeding signs in the State's rights of way. Paul said he hopes to have at least the paperwork in by the time he leaves. Peter asked if he had decided on a model of sign; Paul said he needs to nail down the size required, first. Paul left the meeting

Approving the Capital Planning Grant Resolution

Liz said she's been working with Town Moderator Susan Clark on applying for a grant from the VT Department of Housing and Community Development that would pay for assistance in creating a capital spending plan. She has also contacted Planning Commission Chair Sandy Levine. The deadline is October 1st, however, so they need to act fast. In order for the Town to apply, the application must include a resolution that the Select Board is supportive of the Town applying for the grant. It's unclear whether the PC needs to sign. The grant requires the Town to provide a 10% cash match and the maximum award is \$22,000. The money would be spent on meeting facilitation to guide the conversation so the Town is more transparent in spending and allow for townspeople to be more involved in the process. However, considering What's Next Middlesex? cost

about \$5,000 and that involved hiring a facilitator, Liz does not expect to apply for the maximum. If the Town can hire someone from the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission, the cost of a facilitator and public notification might run anywhere from \$5,000 to \$10,000. Liz expects this to be a 12-18 month process and result in a capital spending schedule akin to what the Road Crew does with a 5-year plan of roads. She said the Town doesn't really have a 5-year plan vision for this town, including the Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall and other visions, though nothing would be set in stone. This is different from how the Town traditionally purchases big-ticket items, by borrowing money. In many of these capital spending plans, other towns put money aside each year to put toward a larger expense. Peter said in the old days, that's what Middlesex did, financed an equipment fund. The Board's philosophy for many years was that pre-funding sounds like a good idea, except you're charging the current taxpayers for something they may never see. Under the current system, when interest rates are low, the payers who are paying for the equipment are the ones seeing the equipment on the road. Peter recommended approving this resolution. Liz said the Town must consider the impact of COVID in the application. She said she'd like to create a short survey to publish on FPF to generate data about how COVID has affected Middlesex households. Peter asked for a draft to be circulated. Liz would contact each member individually for input.

MOTION: Mary moved and Steve seconded approving the Resolution to apply for a Planning Grant from the VT Department of Housing and Community Development and, if necessary, authorizing Mary to sign on behalf of the Chair and the Board. The motion passed.

Treasurer's Report

Dorinda recommended the Board start the 2021-2022 budget process at its first meeting in November. The Board decided to move that meeting from its regularly scheduled time of November 3rd to the following Tuesday, November 10th due to the General Election. The November 10th meeting will start at 4 PM so Phil can attend the Central Vermont Internet meeting. The next Board meeting will be as scheduled on November 17th. In addition, Dorinda said she's received no word from either Mitch Osiecki or Sandy Levine on drawing down grant money to pay for consulting by Dubois & King on the Village Plan. Peter said he would contact Sandy but the check should not be sent to the consultants until the Town has received the funds.

OTHER BUSINESS

MOTION: Mary moved and Phil seconded approving the September 1, 2020, Select Board minutes. Steve abstained. The motion passed.

All orders were approved via email.

Lee Rosberg, Chair of the Conservation Commission, said the Commission voted to spend \$5,000 out of the Conservation Fund to assist in the Vermont Land Trust purchase of the development rights on 88 acres of Pease Farm on Culver Hill Road for \$372,070. The VLT is encouraging continued agricultural use of the land. To that end, Calais farmer Nicole Dutch wants to expand her farming operation by acquiring and farming this parcel which would be unaffordable at market rates. The Town funds helps the VLT access a larger pool of money because it shows Town support. Lee said the MCC worked with the VLT to revise its request, specifically addressing the prospective owner's willingness to discuss public access during the summer months as well as events at the farm involving the community or trails. Lee said the application meets the guidelines of the Conservation Fund. Therefore, the MCC at its last meeting recommended unanimously to the Board that \$5,000 out of the fund's \$9,000 be withdrawn to contribute to this purchase. Peter said there was some concern about this being a private landowner situation and it wasn't appropriate for the Town to be involved. However, he thinks it's in the Town's interest to preserve agriculture and he would hate to see houses built in those fields. The contribution is relatively minor and does show support and is in accord with Town Plan. The Board agreed to take up the matter as a warned agenda item at its October 6 meeting. Lee left the meeting.

The Board agreed it did not want to go forward with purchasing a lockbox for depositing ballots. The Board approved spending up to \$160 for Assistant Town Clerk and filmmaker Dave Smith to create a video on how to vote absentee in the November General Election.

MOTION: Phil moved and Liz seconded entering into Executive Session to discuss a personnel matter under 1 VSA § 313(1) (3) and to permit Select Board Assistant Sarah Merriman to attend. The motion was approved, guests left and the Board entered Executive Session at 6:23 PM. The Board exited Executive Session at 7:09 PM. No action followed.

The Board adjourned the meeting at 7:10 PM

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

THE ABOVE MINUTES WERE REMOTELY APPROVED AS A WARNED AGENDA ITEM AT A REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD ON OCTOBER 6, 2020.

PETER O. HOOD, CHAIR

MARY JUST SKINNER, VICE CHAIR

PHILIP HYJEK

STEVEN MARTIN

ELIZABETH SCHARF