

**Select Board Members**

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

**MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD**  
**5:00 PM**  
**Tuesday, July 20, 2021**  
**Middlesex Town Hall**  
**5 Church Street**  
**Middlesex, Vermont 05602**  
**(802) 223-5915**

**MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Chair Peter O. Hood, Vice Chair Mary Just Skinner, Members Phil Hyjek and Liz Scharf. Treasurer Dorinda Crowell. Road Commissioner Vic Dwire, Road Foreman Shane Brickey, Town Energy Committee member and E911 Coordinator Mitch Osiecki, Roland Hilbert, Randy Drury and Select Board Assistant Sarah Merriman. ORCA recorded the meeting via Zoom

**Call to Order**

Peter called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM. The agenda was amended to discuss brush cutting on Class 4 roads. No action. Also, to discuss overtime for the Road Foreman during the Capital Committee's upcoming grader presentation and Town Highway Garage tour.

**Highway Department Update/Switching Uniform Providers**

Shane said the excavator is almost done with repairs. The road crew has completed 4 miles of ditching and installed 400 feet of culverts this summer. The weather has been unpredictable and affected grading.

Shane said UniFirst, which weekly provides clean uniforms and rags to the road crew, is charging \$5,600/year for uniforms even though one member is too tall for the uniforms and another does not use UniFirst's pants. With rags and delivery, the total charge is \$8,500 per year. Shane suggested switching to Foley Services which would provide the same for \$2,800/year. However, due to the contract with UniFirst, for early termination, the Town may be forced to pay half of what it paid to UniFirst for the previous 26 weeks which averages about \$2,400, according to Dorinda. Peter said it might be worth the switch even with the penalty for ending the contract before it terminates this fall.

The Board discussed other options including buying uniforms and reimbursing highway department employees for cleaning the clothes themselves. Liz asked if it's worth negotiating with UniFirst; Shane said he discussed modifying the contract and they could only come down \$100. Peter suggested the Town move to make the change with Dorinda's approval. Shane said Foley uniforms could be ready in about three weeks after approval.

**MOTION:** Mary moved to terminate the Town's contract with UniFirst and switch to Foley Services to provide road crew uniforms with an effective date to be determined after the Town Treasurer's review; Phil seconded. The motion passed.

Peter asked about training on the new grader since it operates with a stick, unlike the old grader; Shane said he's taken online courses. Vic said the free-grader courses must be completed before August 30<sup>th</sup>. One member of the Road Crew does not want to be trained on the grader; Peter said that's not an option.

Dorinda asked about the new screener arrival; Shane said it will be here by the end of the week. The Board agreed that Lafayette Engineering – a contractor hired to install two Radar Speed Feedback Signs approved by the voters at the March 2020 Town meeting - should not be paid until they waive the cost for repositioning the speed signs they initially incorrectly installed on VT Route 12 in Putnamville.

**Leland Farm Road Tree Branch Cutting**

The Board discussed Mary's complaint that trees had been cut on Leland Farm Road, where she lives, without her knowledge to accommodate a new resident at the end of the road. Part of Leland Farm is Class IV and part is Class III; the cutting was done mostly on the Class III section. Vic said the new resident, Mark Hannon, asked for permission to trim the canopy so he could move in a house that's 14-feet high. Vic gave approval, but told Mark the road crew did not have the means or equipment to do the cutting so he would have to hire an outside tree trimmer. Mark was also referred to the Tree Warden Gary Lamell who granted approval. Only branches were cut, Vic said, no trees. Mary said homeowners along the road should have been notified because it wasn't the road crew who did the work, it was a third party. Shane said he tries to give homeowners notice when trees are removed, especially apple trees. Peter said there is no requirement to provide notice on Class-III road cutting and he was reluctant to get in the practice of notifying landowners along those roads of such. Vic said the cutting is not drastic; only branches were removed. Liz noted the homeowner needed it done so they paid for it. She said that's not happening every day. Liz noted Mark Hannon talked to the Road Commissioner and the tree warden, thereby following procedure.

**Grader "Field Trip" for the Community to be Held August 4th**

Liz, who is also a member of the Capital Committee which is studying the Town's municipal needs, asked Shane if he could modify his work hours on August 4<sup>th</sup> so he wouldn't have to put in for overtime when he shows off the new grader for the community on August 4<sup>th</sup> near the Town Garage on Shady Rill Road between 5 pm and 6:30 pm to coincide with the weekly Wednesday Bandstand concert. The rain date will be August 11. Shane said he could modify his hours; the Board agreed it was fine for kids to sit in the grader. There will also be a garage tour.

**Energy Fair September 18 with Possible Corn Roast**

Mitch said the Town Energy Committee is considering holding an Energy Fair on September 18th on the Town Rec Fields by Rumney School and might be resurrecting corn roast. Mitch asked if the Board had any concerns about this. There would be no interference with the playing fields. Peter said he should check with the Bandstand Committee before using the Bandstand and that safety precautions should be taken since electric chain saws and lawn mowers might be on display.

**Two New Private Roads Need to be Created**

As E911 Coordinator, Mitch said there are a couple of private roads that will be need to turn from private drives to private road because they have three houses. One is at the bottom of Molly Supple and another is off French Road. The Board discussed this process which involves the approving recommendations made by the abutters for private road names.

**Protecting Snapping Turtles on Daniels Farm Road**

Roland Hilbert says a snapping turtle has laid eggs on edge of Daniels Farm Road and asked that the road crew be mindful since the gestation period could be several months long. Shane said he knew the location and would not grade that portion of the road with the new grader. Roland and Mitch left the meeting.

**Public Information Meeting re: Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds**

Phil delivered a presentation on upcoming COVID-19 relief. He said \$521,000 of Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery is potentially coming to Middlesex. Such funds could be used for the following needs and that they cannot be used to supplement or supplant local funding for approved budgets:

- 1) Support for public health expenditures. This means funding COVID mitigation expenses, providing mental health services and paying for staff. It cannot be used to pay a health officer who's already on the Town payroll.
- 2) Address any negative impacts from COVID on the Town's public sector. Phil can't think of how the Town of Middlesex was negatively affected. Seems that anyone who needed financial support was able to apply for individual funds.
- 3) Replacing lost public sector revenue. Dorinda said the Town actually made out in increased highway funds and grants to deal with COVID costs. Liz asked about provisions to regain potential "lost revenue" five years down the road. Phil said he would review the webinar from VLCT which discussed that.
- 4) Premium pay for essential workers. This does not apply since Middlesex uses and has so few paid employees.
- 5) Infrastructure improvements in water, sewer systems and broadband. Phil said it's unlikely the Town is going to install a public water/sewer system which would cost millions of dollars. Peter said the Board in the past has investigated creating a water district in the village that would be paid for by the whole town and that did not go over well.

Liz noted there's going to be a lot of separate broadband money coming down the pike. She said there will be many, many years to spend this COVID money. Mary said broadband is extremely expensive, so any broadband money will be a drop in the pocket. Advice from VLCT is to invest the money and keep the interest because no one knows how much broadband money is coming in or whether there might be a qualifying project in the future. The Board discussed the schedule of payments. Dorinda said the first chunk of \$90,000 was to have arrived in June. In a year, the Town will receive another local payment of \$90,000. Then the Town will receive a portion of county-designated money. Phil said that's been an issue for places like

Vermont where county government is practically non-existent. Dorinda said the first report on the funds is due in October, though the Town has yet to receive any money.

Peter asked about CV Fiber; where Phil used to be a Board member. Phil said the CV Fiber has asked or intends to asks the Select Boards of Moretown, Middlesex, Worcester, and Calais to combine their funds and hand them over to CV Fiber so CV Fiber can extend broadband to unserved areas of their communities. A fair amount of Worcester is already covered by Comcast. And Calais has expressed interest in preliminary discussions with VELCO to run broadband through its town to service a local dam.

Liz asked about the potential risk of turning over all \$512,000 of potential funding to CV Fiber. What if, in the end, CV Fiber doesn't have enough funds to complete the project? Phil said there might be other federal sources to supplement the expenses but, ultimately, CV Fiber will have to sell bonds since the project will probably cost a total of \$7-10 million. Liz asked if all four towns need to be on board; Phil said ideally.

Phil said one of the big issues is what to spend the money on. Otherwise, you have to return the money. Mary said this is like rural electrification. The Middlesex cost alone would be 2.5 million, roughly. But then there's the issue of transmission lines, so Middlesex can't go it alone. Waitsfield Telecom, an independent company, has been approached about being the operator. Liz asked about maintenance. Phil said that will be the responsibility of the operator.

Peter asked when the Board has to make a decision; Phil said fairly soon. Liz expressed reluctance since it's unclear what future projects might qualify for this funding. Dorinda also said there's a risk about that other towns might not hop on board; each town might be waiting for other towns to act. The Board considered what other projects might be deserving. Peter said he's worried the Town will have to make a decision in a crunch. Liz noted that CV Fiber will be leveraging this COVID money to get bond money.

Vic asked about current providers; Liz said Comcast and Consolidated do not plan to run fiber to the "last mile" even though, as others noted, a line of fiber has already been installed on McCullough and Molly Supple hills. Shane and Randy left the meeting.

#### OTHER BUSINESS

**MOTION:** Mary moved and Phil seconded approval of the July 6 and July 13 Select Board meeting minutes. The motion passed.

All Orders were reviewed and signed by those present.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** The Board reviewed a letter from the WCUUSD regarding Middlesex openings on the WCUUSD Board now that representative Karoline May had left to become principal of Rumney. There was no action.

The Board considered emails from Penny Downen asking for action on VT Route 12 property the Board had cited for violating the Town's junk ordinance and asked Sarah to refer the matter to the Town Attorney.

The Board decided to cancel its August 3, 2021, meeting though Orders would be available that day for review and approval.

The Board adjourned at 6:47 PM.

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

THE ABOVE MINUTES WERE APPROVED AS A WARNED AGENDA ITEM AT A REGULAR MEETING OF THE MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD ON AUGUST 17, 2021

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PETER O. HOOD, CHAIR

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MARY JUST SKINNER, VICE CHAIR

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PHILIP HYJEK

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N/A  
STEVEN MARTIN

\_\_\_\_\_  
ELIZABETH SCHARF