

Select Board Members
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Peter Hood, Chair
<input type="checkbox"/> Mary Just Skinner, Vice Chair
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Phil Hyjek
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steve Martin
<input type="checkbox"/> Liz Scharf

MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD
Tuesday, September 7, 2021
REMOTE VIA ZOOM + Town Hall
Middlesex Town Clerk's Office
5 Church Street
Middlesex, Vermont 05602
(802) 223-5915

MINUTES.

PRESENT AT TOWN HALL: Vice Chair Mary Just Skinner. **PRESENT VIA ZOOM:** Peter O. Hood, Chair, Members Phil Hyjek, Liz Scharf and Steve Martin. Treasurer Dorinda Crowell. PC Chair Sandy Levine and Trails Committee member Michael Levine. Trails Committee Member John Udis and Russ Bennett of Planetary Matters. Road Commissioner Vic Dwire. Wrightsville Representative Jane Dudley. Select Board Assistant Sarah Merriman took the minutes for half of the meeting; Liz took minutes the other half. Either Sarah or Mary was present at Town Hall which was open to the public. The meeting was recorded via Zoom by ORCA.

Call to Order

Peter called the meeting to order at 5:03 PM. There were no amendments to the agenda.

Planning Commission Update

Better Places Grant: Sandy said the Town needs to develop an easement with Planetary Matters for public access to two river overlooks behind Camp Meade. She requested an extension on the grant for one month and Sandy is awaiting a contract amendment from the VT Dept of Health. The Select Board will need to review the easement or license agreement to provide public access to trails on Camp Meade property. Working with Russ Bennett and the Town attorney on this matter. Sandy stressed this is just the beginning stages. Russ said the agreement definitely be done by the end of September.

Discussion about Downgrading a Class 4 Section of Dolan Road

The Board preliminarily discussed downgrading to a trail a Class 4 portion of Dolan Road and downgrading Colby Road from Class 3 to 4. Liz asked if it would be difficult to turn it back from a trail to road if the Town wanted in the future. Peter said no because the Town is maintaining its right of way. Peter said his thought on Colby Road was let's start the process and see what happens. Sandy said the Town Plan has strong language to keep class 4 roads as public access and that the Town shouldn't be giving up those rights of way; people use them as hiking/biking trails. Liz asked why the Town would be downgrading Colby Road if land around it recently sold and development is planned. Russ said he was part owner of the recently acquired acreage around Colby Road and that preliminary plans included possibly creating housing, as well as affordable housing, along with putting in trails. Plans might even include a quality day care. Other broad strokes include installing enough solar. Peter noted the Town maintains a legal trail that goes after Colby Road to Notch Road. Sandy said according to the Town Plan, that area has been designated for more development and questioned why the Town would then downgrade it from a Class 3 to a Class 4 road. Liz and Mary agreed. Peter said Colby should be taken off the list of possible downgrades. Michael Levine said Middlesex has a trails committee that is interested in exploring rights of way. The trails committee would frown on any downgrading since the trails are hard to navigate. The Board was reminded that the CVRPC told the Road Foreman that either poor conditions on the Class 4 portion of Dolan Road had to be brought up to state standards – at a potential cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars – or the Town must downgrade it to a legal trail. Michael said maybe standards should be written for a Town trail. Liz said maybe the Trails Committee could turn its attention to maintaining town trails so they're walkable. The problem is they're not bikeable, Peter said. Michael said they've been taking an inventory of Town trails. Phil said the Board should start the process of downgrading that portion of Dolan Road with plenty of time for further discussion, though he encouraged Michael and the trails committee to continue with their inventory.

MOTION: Phil moved to start the process of downgrading a portion of Dolan Road to trail. Steve seconded. The motion passed. Sarah left the meeting and Liz took the minutes.

Highway Department Updates

COVID: The Board was updated on the status of two Road Crew members who were infected with COVID. One Highway Department member wants the garage professionally cleaned; Peter bought them rubber gloves and wipes and the Road Foreman cleaned the vehicles. Crew members want to know how to stay safe while in the highway building. Vic said there should be a policy, though neither he nor Peter could find policy templates for COVID and road crews. The Board suggested the crew members wear masks and socially distance. Equipment should be wiped down after each use. Peter said he would ask Sarah to create a document on how to avoid getting COVID and Vic said he'll ask the foreman to order more cleaning supplies.

Other news: Vic said there are no applicants for an upcoming opening on the Road Crew. Vic suggested advertising on WDEV. Also, the excavator had a \$3,000 part repair due to leaking fuel.

Culverts on Center Road: Vic asked if there should be traffic control on Center Road while culverts are installed. The cost for that would run as follows: \$1,600/week, \$40/hour/flagger and \$100/day for signs. Vic said the road should be brought down to one lane during construction; the Board concurred. The Road Foreman hope to start replacing culverts on October 1 with repaving in the spring of 2022.

Vic said the Road Crew is still not happy about the pay and that the Assistant Foreman isn't doing the work he was doing when he was an interim Foreman, before Shane Brickey was hired. Steve supported a pay raise, but said it hasn't been budgeted. Peter spoke to the crew about the pay and said the Town needs to follow a process instead of being held "hostage" to the road crew by threats of them leaving. The Board can discuss a bonus during budget discussion.

Wrightsville Update

As Middlesex's representative to the Wrightsville Beach District, Jane said an increasing number of people are coming from all over to use the area's trails and Frisbee golf, not just from the five towns making up the district. She said maintenance is costly, especially since it's extended to mowing along part of Shady Rill Road. Jane said the District is considering some exciting expansions such as possibly constructing a dog beach by the boat launch, a picnic area on the east side of the dam and a new picnic shelter. Visitors have asked for more maps of the trails and there's an increase in demand for rental gear. But all of this comes at a cost. In addition, Wrightsville would like to manage the boat launch area, though that's currently under the control of the Dam Division of the VT Department of Environmental Conservation and also Fish & Wildlife. To cover some of these costs, Jane said the District is considering expanding membership to Barre since Barre residents are heavy users of the area. There is also a lot of grant money available for outdoor recreation. The Wrightsville Beach is a municipal entity in its own right and can play an interesting role in a grant application. Peter acknowledged that the Board is motivated to support the Wrightsville Beach District and appreciates the beach as an asset.

**** The Board temporarily adjourned to hold a BCA meeting. It reconvened at 6:33 PM.****

OTHER BUSINESS

All orders were reviewed, approved and signed in person.

MOTION: Mary moved and Steve seconded approving the August 17, 2021 Select Board minutes. The motion passed.

Dorinda noted the Washington County Sheriff came to the office last week and outlined problems enforcing speed in town due to an outdated Town speeding ordinance and also misplaced signs along Town roads. The last ordinance was revised in 1999. Peter said updating the Town highway ordinance should be on the September 21, 2021 Board agenda.

Treasurer's Report

Regarding Lafayette's invoice for reinstalling signs they'd incorrectly installed in the first place on VT Route 12, Dorinda said there's still no answer as to whether Lafayette was following verbal direction from the State of Vermont. Peter said he will follow up with the Road Commissioner and apprise Dorinda later.

ARPA (Coronavirus Relief Fund) money: Dorinda said \$225,000 (half) of Middlesex's allotment landed in the Town's bank account over the weekend; the remaining half will arrive in a year. Sarah canvassed other towns on how they plan to spend the money. Worcester is likely going to turn over its money to CVFiber for a broadband network. Calais is not making a decision immediately. Peter said he was interested to learn Berlin will use the money to repair the culvert that's closed a road to the hospital and that ties into their water system. Dorinda encouraged the Board to think creatively about how best to spend the funds including, possibly, a Town Hall renovation since there's a rumor that some future money might be earmarked just for broadband.

Meanwhile, the proposed Memorandum of Understanding with CVFiber has been redrafted by the Town attorney and sent to CVFiber's attorneys. Peter said the Board should explore other ways to use the money so it's expended in the Town's best interests. Phil said CVFiber is not rushing the Town.

Steve noted that the funds must be obligated by 2024 and expended by 2026. Regardless, Peter said the Town should bring the MOU with CVFiber to a conclusion. After that, the Board should list options and hold a dedicated public meeting. The Board further discussed the MOU and whether townspeople would get a discount on connection fees if the ARPA money is used for broadband. Liz said she would ask the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission point person on this issue to come to a Board meeting to illuminate the Board on how the money could be spent.

The Board adjourned its meeting at 7:11 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 SEPTEMBER 21, 2021

PETER O. HOOD, CHAIR

MARY JUST SKINNER, VICE CHAIR

PHILIP HYJEK

STEVEN MARTIN

N/A
ELIZABETH SCHARF

DRAFT