

Select Board Members

Peter Hood, Chair
 Steve Martin, Vice
Chair
 Randy Drury
 Phil Hyjek
 Liz Scharf

MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD
Tuesday, March 8, 2022
REMOTE VIA ZOOM
Middlesex Town Clerk's Office
5 Church Street
Middlesex, Vermont 05602
(802) 223-5915

MINUTES.

PRESENT: Peter O. Hood, Chair. Members Randy Drury, Phil Hyjek, and Liz Scharf. Treasurer Dorinda Crowell. Road Commissioner Vic Dwire. Energy Committee members Theo Kennedy and Lauri Scharf. Planning Commission member Sandy Levine. Road Foreman Shane Brickey. Sky Barsch. Select Board Assistant Sarah Merriman took the minutes.

Call to Order/Amendments

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

Capital Improvement Program

Liz asked the Board to officially adopt the Capital Improvement Program which outlines the procedure for implementing a Town capital spending plan. Peter reminded the Board that this was the result of the 2020 Town Meeting when voters requested a list of Town assets and a timeline for their maintenance, improvement and/or replacement. This document will be available for public inspection on middlesexvermont.org and in the Town Clerk's Office. It puts a significant burden on the Budget Committee which will be managing this process going forward. Liz said the document clearly details the history of Town assets, including land, and provides a process, with an application, for acquisitions of \$5,000 or more. By accepting this document, the Town will have a foundation for applying for future capital spending grants, such as those studying what to do with Town Hall, she said.

MOTION: Phil moved and Randy seconded accepting the Middlesex Capital Improvement Program document. Peter said the document will evolve. The motion passed. Randy, who is also a member of the Budget Committee, said that now that this document has been approved, the applications for acquisitions should be completed by April 1st.

Discussing a USDA Rural Energy Pilot Program Grant

Lauri said he was looking for the Board's input on a USDA grant that would help fund renewable energy in rural towns like Middlesex. One example would be communities coming together to combat climate change while advancing environmental justice. The grant requires a 20% local match. The Town could apply for up to \$2 million. There has to be a renewable energy component. The due date for the letter of intent is April 19. Now that the Enhanced Energy Plan has passed, Lauri said the Energy Committee is exploring serious endeavors. Liz said the likelihood of Middlesex getting the grant itself is not likely. She asked if there is an opportunity for communities to come together to apply. Lauri said the grant does look for partnerships. Theo asked if there's a downside to submitting a letter of intent and if it requires Select Board approval. Lauri said he saw no downside. He didn't know about the rest. Liz asked if it would conflict with ARPA grants. Randy said, at first glance, the ARPA money could be used toward the 20% match. Peter suggested Lauri return after meeting with Energy Committee with more information.

Revised Access Policy to Rumney School

Peter said he reviewed the revised document and the two points of concern were addressed. The Board passed over it until its author, WCUUSD Board Member Chris McVeigh, could join.

Animals on Brook Road

In regards to numerous complaints of cows meandering into Brook Road from Carole Picard's house, the Board discussed 20 V.S.A. § 3341: *A person who knowingly permits cattle, horses, sheep, goats, or swine to run at large in a public highway or yard belonging to a public building without the consent of the selectboard shall be fined not more than \$10.00 nor less than \$3.00.* Peter said enacting provisions in the statute is not a simple process. The Town might have to adopt an ordinance, Peter said, noting more research needs to be done on what will be required. Liz suggested asking the Animal Control Officer to visit the owner who is letting her cows, ducks and chickens wander into Brook Road. Vic said he would contact VT Fish and Wildlife. Peter said he's worried about drivers having to dodge animals. Sandy said this is a rural community and that's life in a rural community; drivers can slow down. Peter said this is different from a farmer's cow or horse running around. Randy suggested more outreach to the animal owner. The Board asked Sarah to research the statute's requirements.

Treasurer's Report

Dorinda said she was contacted by Carl Bailin, president of the Welch Park Association which was timely since one of the Select Board's goals for 2022 was to extricate the Town from Welch Park. Peter said he spoke with Carl and also called the Town Attorney re: removing the Town from Welch Park. Carl agreed that he would like to dissolve the association. Carl told Peter he was going to call Benderson, a major property owner in Welch Park, to discuss dissolving the association. Peter said an insurance bill must be paid and the individual members billed.

Highway Report – Kenworth Truck Surcharge

The Town signed a contract on October 21, 2021 based a price level of April 1, 2021 to purchase a plow truck for \$135,200, Dorinda said. According to minutes of that meeting, the Board was assured the price was locked in when the order was placed. That said, Kenworth has asked for a price increase of \$5,000 due to costs beyond the seller's control. Peter noted the letter was sent not just to Middlesex, but to all purchasers. Dorinda said there's nothing in the contract's fine print that would allow for this change. Shane said there is a shortage of trucks. Peter said if this order is cancelled, then the Town will have a hard time finding a truck. Shane said the current Western Star truck needs to be replaced. Peter asked Shane to contact New England Kenworth to ask where in the contract this price increase is allowed. Vic said the Town needs the new truck. If this is based on market conditions, Randy asked if they would change the price if market conditions improve. The truck is slated to go into production in April. Dorinda asked if the trade-in value will remain the same. Shane said there is a potential buyer and, in that case, the Town might get more if it sells the truck vs. a trade in. To sum: the Town will proceed with the truck order, request documentation that permits the surcharge, ask Kenworth whether they will remove the surcharge if the market improves and pursue a private sale of the current Western Star instead of trading it in for \$60,000.

MOTION: Randy moved to accept the \$5,000 provided Shane asks the question outlined above; Liz seconded. The motion passed.

Openings for Listers and Collector of Delinquent Taxes

Because there were not enough write-in votes for all three open Lister positions on the March 1, 2022 ballot, Sarah apprised the Board that if no one is appointed soon, then the Board may have to hire an assessor to do the clerical work of compiling the 2022 Grand List. The Board discussed its options, including hiring NEMRC to do the clerical work in addition to property assessing, which it is already contracted to do. One possibility is recruiting one or two voters to fulfill the stator requirements of creating a Board of Listers while hiring a Lister Clerk to do the actual work. The Board asked Sarah to actively recruit listers and, hopefully, find candidates by the next Board meeting.

The Board also discussed the ongoing vacant Collector of Delinquent Taxes position. Dorinda said the Treasurer’s Office has been notifying taxpayers if they’ve missed tax payments, but she does not want to take on this role, which defaults to the Treasurer if none can be found. She said this will hit a crisis point on the delinquent date of May 20th.

OTHER BUSINESS

Sky Barsch told the Board she wants to hold fitness classes at the Bandstand this summer from May – August, depending on the turnout. The classes are 40-45 minutes. She would be using just the field, not the bandstand. Planks, squats, lunges. The classes will be offered through Alpine Glow, because that’s how she’s insured. Peter asked for a certificate of insurance for the Town. Sky expects 4 to 8 people. Peter suggested she charge \$2 per person per class and remit the money to the Town at the end of the summer, out of principle. Dorinda asked about liability if she charges; Peter said it doesn’t matter if there’s a charge. Randy asked if there’s a consistent time. Sky said she’s thinking of Thursday or Friday morning at 7. Peter asked that she leave the field in the same condition as found it. Sarah will draw up an agreement espousing the above points for her to sign.

MOTION: Phil moved and Randy seconded approving the minutes of the March 8, 2022 Select Board meeting. The motion passed.

MOTION: Phil moved and Liz seconded approving renewals of Class 1 and Class 3 liquor licenses for The Filling Station. The motion passed and the applications were signed.

The Orders were signed.

The Board discussed future meetings, especially whether to hold a special meeting just to discuss ARPA funds.

The meeting adjourned at 7:12 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 APRIL 5, 2022.

PETER O. HOOD, CHAIR

N/A
STEVEN MARTIN, VICE CHAIR

RANDY DRURY

PHIL HYJEK

ELIZABETH SCHARF