

Select Board Members

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

MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD
Tuesday, April 19, 2022
REMOTE VIA ZOOM
Middlesex Town Clerk's Office
5 Church Street
Middlesex, Vermont 05602
(802) 223-5915

MINUTES.

PRESENT: Peter O. Hood, Chair. Steve Martin, Vice Chair. Members Randy Drury, Phil Hyjek, and Liz Scharf. Treasurer Dorinda Crowell, Road Commissioner Vic Dwire. Todd Sirack. MVFD President Jeff Koonz and MVFD member Scott Isham. Select Board Assistant Sarah Merriman took the minutes. The meeting was recorded by ORCA.

Call to Order/Amendments

Peter called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. and greeted guests. There were no amendments to agenda.

Annette Halasz Appointed to Replace Eric Young as Lister

Sarah said Eric submitted his resignation as Lister effective April 8, 2022. In the meantime, Annette has been performing "Lister clerk" duties by inputting VT Property Transfer Tax Returns and attending online training sessions. Shelly Desjardin and Gary Waring were appointed as Listers at the April 9, 2022 Select Board meeting. All will serve until the March 2023 Town Meeting.

MOTION: Phil moved and Steve seconded accepting Eric's resignation "with regret." The motion passed and the Board thanked Eric for his many years of service.

MOTION: Steve moved and Phil seconded appointing Annette Halasz as Lister until the March 2023 Town Meeting. The motion passed.

Appointing Larry Rooney to the Zoning Board of Adjustment

The Board reviewed an email from Larry Rooney of Story Road asking to be appointed to fill a vacancy on the ZBA. Having just gone through a zoning application process, he said in the email he's interested in serving the Town in this capacity. The appointment would not be effective until after April 20, 2022 when the Board will hold a hearing on his application for a home industry at his home on Story Road.

MOTION: Liz moved to appoint Larry Rooney to the Zoning Board of Adjustment effective after April 20, 2022; Phil seconded. The motion passed.

Todd Sirak's Request to Use the Old Fire Station Behind Town Hall as a Woodworking Shop/Retail Establishment

Todd said he's a woodworker from Northfield who builds cabinetry for kitchens and bathrooms and in need of a larger bigger space. He would like to move his business into the old firehouse and, perhaps, create a retail space on the second floor. He wanted to meet with the Board to see if the Town was interested. Todd said he toured the building two years ago and again last month. Peter said two things could be problematic: 1) no heating system in the building and 2) the fire escape from 2nd floor is severely impaired. Also, a woodworking shop in a wood-framed building might be a problem. Todd said his vision for the dust collection is building a closet to house the dust. This would allow for easier transfer to dumpster. It could also be soundproofed.

Steve said the Town should figure out what to do with Town Hall before move forward with former MVFD building. Renovate, move or build? Those are the options, Peter said, noting the Board was in the early phases of deciding. Todd said he'd eventually like to own the building. Peter said there's a shared septic and shared water system. Another concern is parking, which might be a problem during the week. Todd said it doesn't have to be retail. He has two employees, a utility trailer and a small Dumpster. If there are retail hours, there would have to be an agreement about where they could park. Liz said the Town is waiting to hear if it will receive a planning grant to pay for a full assessment of Town Hall. Therefore, this is kind of a funny time to be considering this proposal since the study won't be concluded for about a year. At the same time, she said, the proposal is exciting.

Peter asked Todd to stay in touch. Todd asked for a time frame re: the Town Hall study. Liz said it would be a couple of years before anything happened to Town Hall, though Peter said within a year, the Board will probably have a clearer idea of which options for Town Hall are preferable. Todd left the meeting.

Approving the 2022 Local Emergency Management Plan

MOTION: Phil moved and Steve seconded approving the 2022 Emergency Management Plan. The motion passed. Emergency Management Coordinator Margaret Schwartz and Peter will sign the approval documents.

Monthly Meeting with the MVFD

Jeff reviewed the MVFD and Fast Squad calls in the last month. Money from the local VFW and a raffle held Friday would probably go toward purchasing meters that measure propane and other gas leaks. The fire department recently trained with Moretown. Jeff asked about replacing turn-out gear which was removed from the FY23 budget and costs \$1,300/set for a total of \$13,000. This is just coats and pants. Peter asked about grant; Jeff said the only grant available was from VLCT for \$1,000. Randy, who's also on the Budget Committee, said there was discussion about borrowing money instead of purchasing all at once. Jeff said the gear lasts only 10 years per the National Fire Protection Association's recommendations. Since the MVFD is a volunteer fire department, this is merely guidance. Dorinda said turn-out gear would fall under ARPA's government services. Randy said the Budget Committee should add the turn-out gear to its long-range capital planning since it has a ten-year lifespan. Jeff said the MVFD recommended that air packs and a water filtration system be added, too. Liz asked about previous quotes for the equipment, which were higher. Jeff said he would check on pricing to see if inflation has affected the prices. Peter asked about the old set of gear once it's replaced; Jeff said it would be kept as backup.

Peter said he wants to draft a proposal for "merging" the MVFD with the Town. He asked for the MVFD to come up with a list of issues and concerns. Jeff said he would talk this over with his department. The MVFD left the meeting at 5:42 PM.

Highway Department Updates

Vic said the Highway Department applied for a VTRANS grant that would pay for repaving Shady Rill Road from the fire station to Molly Supple (i.e., the portion not paved several years ago.) Liz asked how much money was spent on extra material for this mud season; Vic said \$75,000. For perspective, Peter said normally \$25,000 to \$35,000 is spent on mud season material. Steve said there's been no season like this in recent history. Vic said there's still hope that the State will reimburse the Town for some of these costs due to the severe mud situation.

Vic said he and Road Foreman Shane Brickey met with Jim Ryan from the municipal road grant program at the VT Agency of Natural Resources in response to a complaint the Town was not taking the necessary anti-erosion precautions on Bolduc Road as required by State permits and the Town Bridge & Road Standards. Bolduc Road needs to be hydroseeded with stone and matting installed to prevent erosion. Vic said the Town didn't have time to hydroseed this spring due to a crazy mud season and equipment repairs. He said the road crew will hydroseed as soon as the snow melts.

Executive Session per 1 V.S.A. §313 (a)(1) (D)

MOTION: Randy moved and Liz seconded entering Executive Session to discuss grievances and to include Vic. The motion passed and the Board entered Executive Session at 5:58 PM. The Board left at 6:30 PM. There was no action.

Executive Session per 1 V.S.A. §313(a)(3)

MOTION: Liz moved and Phil seconded entering Executive Session to discuss the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee and to include Vic. The motion passed and the Board entered Executive Session at 6:33 PM and exited at 6:45 PM. There was no action, though Peter said the Board would like to ramp up advertising to fill a vacancy on the Road Crew. Peter said sign-on bonuses may be a possibility. Or perhaps a \$1,000 bonus to a Town employee who refers a qualified candidate. Randy agreed that paid referrals work. The Board was supportive of the idea.

MOTION: Randy moved to offer a referral fee of \$1,000 to any Town employee who refers a successful Road Crew candidate with a payment of \$500 when the candidate is hired and \$500 at the six-month mark if the employee is still working for the Town. Phil seconded. The motion passed.

Boot Compensation – Personnel Policy Clarification

Steve commended Dorinda for catching unapproved expenses such as boot purchases that do not comply with the Town's Personnel Policy. He referred the Board to an email in which he proposed the Road Crew be given \$200 every year to purchase safety boots instead of the current voucher system where highway employees purchase the safety boots at Lenny's and the invoice is sent to the Town for payment. The Board discussed if the policy allowed one pair of boots or more than one pair. Vic said the policy should state "up to" \$200. Dorinda said the vouchers should have more detail than the latest Lenny's voucher which said only "boots." The voucher should be pre-filled out with the requirements for purchasing boots. That way, it'll be up to Lenny's to make sure the boots meet those specifications. She said the \$200 cash allowance won't work because it will be counted as income and will be taxed and affect the municipal retirement system. She said the Town needs the vouchers for audit purposes. Phil said the Personnel Policy will need to be revised to specify the number of boots, the standards and the detailed voucher system. Vic said in his discussions with OSHA, the safety specifications have changed significantly in recent years. If the Personnel Policy is going to be rewritten, Randy said he suggests doing away with the anniversary system and pro-rate payment for boots until the new fiscal year. Peter disagreed because he said it's too complicated. He also disagreed with giving the road crew cash because the Town needs to ensure the crew is wearing safety boots and not spending the allowance elsewhere. Phil asked what if someone ruins a pair of boots on the worksite. Can they get a pair of boots early? Randy said that should not be allowed.

MOTION: Randy moved to clarify Section 17 of the Personnel Policy to specifically state highway employees may purchase one (1) pair of boots for up to \$200 on an annual basis tied to that employee's anniversary. The boots must be at least 6" high and conform to the ASTM f2413-18 standards and that these specifications must be stated on the voucher submitted to Lenny's; Phil seconded. The motion passed. Vic will talk to Shane about his prior boot purchase and compensating the Town \$45.

Discussion of Board Practices

Dorinda added that she appreciated what Steve said, but said she feels like she gets criticized when she brings a serious problem to the Board's attention. The feedback she gets is that she deals with a million-dollar budget. Why is she worried about \$45? She doesn't feel that's right. Dorinda also asked why the procedure for dealing with the boot issue (the \$45 repayment) stopped after the Board made a decision on April 5 to have Vic talk to Shane? She said she was asking not as Treasurer, but as a citizen of Middlesex. She said this is not the first time this is happened. This needs to be addressed by the Board. She's still upset.

Peter said he did not disagree with what she said and apologized for upsetting her. He said he has since agreed not to talk to Shane until the April 19th Board meeting. He should not have spoken to Shane; he did as a courtesy to Steve. Dorinda questioned that timeline and said she feels there is not transparency. Phil said he thinks the Board needs some Select Board training, perhaps an annual retreat day with the Treasurer, Town Clerk and Road Commissioner, to get up to speed on statutory duties and responsibilities. Perhaps set aside a meeting. Liz said she wanted to acknowledge Dorinda's comment and noted Peter's job as chair, often, is to act as liaison. Sometimes the message can be lost in the communication. She said her conversations with other Board members have been conducted for clarification, though those conversations, albeit legal, may be misconstrued. Peter said he probably has more conversations with other Board members and Town officials than other Board members most likely because emergency action needs to be taken. Phil said he'll call VLCT and get back to the Board.

Setting Special Meeting to Discuss ARPA

The Board agreed to hold a Special Meeting at 5 PM, Tuesday, April 26, 2022 to discuss how to expend ARPA funds.

OTHER BUSINESS

MOTION: Phil moved and Liz seconded approving the minutes of the April 5, 2022 Select Board Meeting. Action likely. The motion passed.

All orders were signed.

Phil discussed changing access for the Treasurer's email. RBTech wants the Town to sign a waiver absolving them from liability by changing to a more normal sign-on to the Treasurer's email. **MOTION:** Phil moved to eliminate the double-authentication requirement on all Town emails and to inform RB Tech of this, and to grant Phil the authority to sign the waiver; Randy seconded. The motion passed.

Vic asked about the Road Crew going to four, ten-hour days starting May 1st. Is that a Select Board decision or Road Commissioner issue? He said the Board should address this at its special meeting on the 26th. Steve said the 26th should just be for ARPA funds. The Board agreed to discuss this at its regular meeting on May 3rd.

Dorinda said the Board does have time to address ARPA since the next report isn't due until March 2023.

The meeting adjourned at 7:50 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 MAY 3, 2022.

PETER O. HOOD, CHAIR

STEVEN MARTIN, VICE CHAIR

RANDY DRURY

PHIL HYJEK

ELIZABETH SCHARF

DRAFT