

**Select Board Members**

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

**MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD**  
**SPECIAL MEETING**  
**Tuesday, April 26, 2022**  
**REMOTE VIA ZOOM**  
**Middlesex Town Clerk's Office**  
**5 Church Street**  
**Middlesex, Vermont 05602**  
**(802) 223-5915**

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**MINUTES.**

**PRESENT:** Peter O. Hood, Chair. Steve Martin, Vice Chair. Members Randy Drury and Liz Scharf. Treasurer Dorinda Crowell. Aaron Weed. 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. There were no amendments to the agenda

**American Rescue Plan Act Workshop**

Peter read an email from Phil, who was unable to attend, outlining his priorities for ARPA fun expenditures. 1) would be broadband, to make a significant contribution to CV Fiber of at least \$100,000 in order to take advantage of the match. That would cover the connection costs of approximately 50% of underserved Middlesex residents. In addition, Phil wrote he would like to spend the money on new gear for the Middlesex Volunteer Fire Department.

Peter said the only rush was the match for CV Fiber. Dorinda said in regards to CV Fiber, it's better to act sooner than later since the match is limited. Randy said the million-dollar match is on a first-come, first-serve basis and several municipalities have already taken them up on that offer. Dorinda said the total ARPA grant is \$500,000.

Peter suggested giving CV Fiber \$100,000. Dorinda said the Town currently has \$250,000 in ARPA funds. The MVFD department's request for turn-out gear was between \$13,000 and \$15,000. Peter suggested setting aside \$20,000 all told. Also, Peter said, money should be set aside for Town Hall planning. Perhaps \$30,000.

Randy asked about the original ask from CV Fiber; Peter said they wanted it all, about \$350,000 at the time. Peter said if the Town contributes \$100,000 now and if CV Fiber needs more and the Town has ARPA funds left over, then the Town can contribute more. The monies the towns give will directly impact the towns themselves, Randy said.

Liz said she'd like money to be put toward improving town roads. Dorinda said the money can be used for infrastructure and winterizing spaces. Dorinda said there needs to be something done to Town Hall. Perhaps a new heating system, she said. Even if the Town sells the building, these improvements need to be made. Peter agreed that heating and water need to be improved. He would like to hold off on the lift. Liz said there are grants for lifts and that the Town should not replace the same heating system, but consider energy efficiency. Liz asked if ARPA money could be used for grant matches. Dorinda said, yes.

Regarding Town Hall, Dorinda said in the bookkeeping side of the office there were three new listers, the NEMRC accessor, the bookkeeper and Treasurer in a small room. In addition, the windows upstairs are useless. It's as if the windows are open. Liz added retention bonuses to the road crew and other employees. Dorinda said \$50,000 in unbudgeted pay and benefits had been spent on the road crew, bookkeeper and clerk to retain them during COVID. That could be made up with ARPA funds. Randy said if the Town loses the building and, ipso facto, the food shelf, then this money could be used for a new building. The Town might not know for another year if the current Town Hall is viable. Peter said, and then there is the question of how much income will be generated from selling Town Hall; Randy said that will be part of the capital-planning study. Liz asked about a donation to the Middlesex Community Fund which was established during COVID to assist residents.

Dorinda said the MVFD has other concerns including air packs and a new rescue vehicle which isn't to be replaced until three to four years. Might be better, she said, to spend the ARPA funds on those items and then build up the funds to replace them down the road. Peter said he likes the idea of buying those since there are no grants for air packs. Also, buying this equipment will show the MVFD the advantages of being a Town department. Dorinda suggested looking at the capital plan for items that could be purchased now.

Liz asked how much was in the fund balance; Dorinda said there is \$462,000 in all the funds.

Dorinda said a few thousand should be spent on remote meeting equipment. Peter agreed.

Steve asked if public hearings must be held before money can be spent; Randy said they're not required, but they're a good idea. Steve agreed with Randy that \$125,000 be spent on CV Fiber and would like to know how that would affect Middlesex. That allocation should be made immediately to take advantage of the grant match. Randy said the less money CV Fiber has to borrow, the lower the service fees. Peter said the Town should clarify the cause and effect of CV Fiber funding and make a formal decision during the May 3 meeting.

Randy said tonight's meeting is just to create a wish list. Broadband is an immediate priority, but after that the Board can take its time prioritizing. Steve suggested putting \$25,000 for a heating system and another \$15,000 for covering the fuel tank at the Town Shed.

Aaron said he would vote for fixing the roads 100% since it's his understanding broadband is happening regardless. All the Town keeps doing is throwing sharp rocks in holes. Fix the arteries first and then the other roads. Peter said towns are waiting to hear about money coming down from the infrastructure grant to repair roads. Until then, the Town can't make a decision on spending ARPA funds on the roads. Aaron asked about the dirt piled around the trees; Peter said that's so the Town doesn't push back that degraded slate onto the roads again. Steve said the Board has agreed the Town roads need money and thanked him for his input.

Randy brought up the excavator, which is going to need a new underside. Dorinda noted that currently, the interest rates are good, though they're going up. If you're going to buy a piece of equipment in two years, might be better to buy it next year. Peter said the Town normally doesn't buy equipment in cash. But it's worth looking at whether this might be a wise use of spending ARPA money. Steve said a new excavator would cost about \$150,000. Randy said it would cost over \$200,000; that lower price is with a trade-in. Peter said equipment can be bought through normal means; ARPA money is a one-time opportunity.

Randy said he sees the Board's job as throwing up all the ideas and then scoring them according to how they impact residents.

Liz ran through the list:

- \$100,000 to CV Fiber
- \$20,000 for turnout gear
- \$30,000 for Town Hall planning
- \$50,000 for grant matching including Town Hall rehabilitation
- \$50,000 Town Hall remodeling
- \$50,000 for retention bonuses and salary increases already implemented
- \$300,000 for roads/mud mitigation (Build Back Better funds may cover 100% of costs)

- \$55,000 for MVFD air packs
- \$25,000 toward a rescue vehicle
- \$25,000 for the Middlesex Community Fund
- \$4,000 for remote meeting equipment
- \$35,000 for town garage heating system and roof for the fuel tank

Total on wish list = \$754,000

Peter said if the Town gets the town hall grant and the Build Back Better funds covers the roads, then the wish list isn't so out of whack.

The meeting adjourned at 6:15 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.

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PETER O. HOOD, CHAIR

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STEVEN MARTIN, VICE CHAIR

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RANDY DRURY

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N/A  
PHIL HYJEK

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ELIZABETH SCHARF

DRAFT