

**Select Board Members**

Peter Hood, Chair  
 Liz, Scharf, Vice Chair  
 Randy Drury  
 Vic Dwire  
 Phil Hyjek

**MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD**  
**TUESDAY, JULY 12, 2022**  
**REMOTE VIA ZOOM**  
**Middlesex Town Clerk's Office**  
**5 Church Street**  
**Middlesex, Vermont 05602**  
**(802) 223-5915**

**MINUTES.**

**PRESENT:** Peter O. Hood, Chair. Liz Scharf, Vice Chair. Members Randy Drury, Vic Dwire and Phil Hyjek, Treasurer Dorinda Crowell. Road Commissioner Vic Dwire. Select Board candidates Sky Barsch, Sarah Birgé, and Jason Merrill. Listers Shelly Desjardin and Annette Halasz. Consultant Dayton Crites, Planning Commission Chair Sandy Levine and member Mitch Osiecki who is also the E911 Coordinator. Road Foreman Eric Metivier. Former Road Foreman Paul Cerminara. Trails Committee member Michael Levine. Select Board Assistant Sarah Merriman took the minutes. The meeting was recorded by ORCA.

**Call to Order**

Peter called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM. There were no amendments.

**Appointing Vic Dwire Select Board Member**

Peter opened the meeting by expressing gratitude that four candidates have stepped forward to fill the vacancy created by Steve Martin's resignation last month. He suggested giving each candidate a couple of minutes to say why they want to be on the Select Board.

Sarah Birgé said she's been living in Middlesex for five summers, though she's originally from the Northeast Kingdom. She's been involved in the Town's emergency management committee, the ZBA and is now an assistant Zoning Administrator. She was briefly a Lister. She said she was eager to serve in Town government and brings skill sets from her experience in non-profit organizations.

Sky used to live on Knapp Road now lives on Notch Road. She said she loves the community and has experience in communication and community building. She is a former reporter who covered many select boards and city council meetings and knows how state legislation impacts local communities. Middlesex is at an interesting time with some of the changes in the village ahead, she said. She said she's interested in seeing that area more walkable and is also interested in improved internet access in town since she is a remote worker.

Vic said he's been in Town since 1969 and was born and bred in Vermont. He said he's been attending meetings since before the pandemic and has been the Road Commissioner for 18 months, at one point even doing the Road Foreman job. He was an engineer for the State of Vermont for almost 50 years and that this was important because 90% of the Town's monies go toward the Highway Department. He said historically a Road Commissioner has been a member of the Select Board.

Jason Merrill said for the past 27 years he's been volunteering for Middlesex on the MVFD or as Town Fire Warden. He spent many years coaching at Rumney School and has lived here his whole life. He was on the MVFD for 18 years and helped them get the first new fire truck in 30 years and was on the building committee that helped to get fire station. He manages his own commercial and residential rental business and runs a construction company. He said he feels at this point in his life with his kids older that he has time to serve on the Board and keep the community as it is. He said he's a "straight shooter" and likes listening to opposing views. His views aren't always the correct views, he said.

Peter asked if candidates would run in March if they were appointed today. Almost all said they leaned in that direction, but would have to know how they fit in with the Board. Peter reminded them they can always run in 2023.

Randy asked about putting the Town first over individuals' agendas. Sarah said she has no pet project. Sky said she doesn't have kids in school and lives on a Class IV road so she has no hidden agendas. Jason said he wants to apply common sense so Middlesex doesn't end up like Montpelier, not to throw Montpelier under the bus. Vic said he has no agendas other than making sure Middlesex is an affordable place to live.

Liz noted Board members currently cooperate despite their political differences due, in large part, to open communication. She asked the candidates how others might rate their communication skills on a scale of 1-10. All four put themselves at 8-9.

Peter called for nominations. Randy nominated Jason. There was no second. Liz nominated Sky. There was no second. Phil nominated Victor. Randy seconded. Liz nominated Sarah. Phil seconded Sarah. Vic and Sarah were therefore moved and seconded. Sarah received one vote, from Liz. Victor received votes from Randy, Peter and Phil. Victor won the appointment.

Peter thanked everyone. Liz thanked everyone and said they are all talented. Randy encouraged everyone to attend meetings as citizens as he did a year before running for office.

Victor took the Vermont Oath of Allegiance and joined the Board.

**Errors and Omissions - Correcting the 2022 Grand List**

The Listers presented the Board with two errors that needed to be corrected on the 2022 Grand List. The first involved a 5-lot subdivision at the end of Leland Farm Road. A 45-acre parcel retained by WJH Realty was erroneously attached to a 3.47-acre parcel owned by Eitan Romanoff. The parcels needed to be separated and properly designated. The other involved a 2-lot subdivision owned by Manosh Properties LLC on South Bear Swamp Road. The entire 395.97 acres appeared on the 2022 Grand List as being owned by Christopher and Kristen Amanti when they purchase 390 of those acres. Manosh retained a 5.97-acre approved lot and the list needed to be corrected to show that. Shelly said the changes will not affect the 2022 Grand List, just the individual property owners.

**MOTION:** Liz moved and Phil seconded accepting the Listers' proposed corrections to the 2022 Grand List due to "Errors and Omissions." The motion passed and the Board signed the Errors and Omissions certificates.

**Setting the 2022 Municipal Tax Rate at 0.5945 per \$100 of Valuation**

Dorinda presented the Board with four potential Town tax rates for 2022. The first proposal – at 0.5621/\$100 of valuation – would generate enough revenue to just cover the budget approved by the voters at the March 2022 Town Meeting. Each additional proposal added another penny. She said every penny raises \$23,577. She suggested adding two pennies to the tax rate in anticipation of high fuel costs, etc. due to inflation. The Board wavered between adding two or three pennies to the town tax rate. Dorinda said adding three cents would raise an additional \$70,726 and still lead to an overall homestead tax rate that's less than the 2021 homestead tax rate thanks to a lower education rate. It would increase the non-homestead tax rate by .0174 over the 2021 non-homestead tax rate.

Liz asked about borrowing. The Board discussed where costs were expected to increase: diesel fuel, heating, health insurance and materials for the paving projects. These were not anticipated when the Board compiled the budget last winter. Peter asked about the fund balance. Dorinda said the fund balance is used to cover budget shortfalls, to maintain cash flow. As a result, the Town has never had to go out and borrow to pay bills in anticipation of taxes. There is \$147,000 in the fund balance as of the last audit, Dorinda said, though some of it was used to cover the mid-year increase in wages.

Randy and Liz chose option #4, as did Phil and Vic.

**MOTION:** Randy moved .5921 as the Town tax rate for 2022 with a local agreement .0024 for a total of .5945 for the total Town tax rate. Phil seconded. The motion passed.

**Treasurer's Update**

Dorinda said Bourne's won't commit to a diesel rate. The Board discussed locking in rates and decided against it due to the current volatility of diesel prices. The Board will take this up at its next meeting.

**Route 2 and Riverwalk Scoping Study update**

Sandy open meeting of the Planning Commission noting there was no quorum. She asked the Board to endorse the Riverwalk and Route 2 scoping studies so they can be ready to present to VTrans should the Department make improvements to the Village area of Route 2 in the near future, within the next five years. Dayton presented the study which is available in Town Hall for public inspection. He noted there is a safety, as well as aesthetic, issue to adding bike lanes, crosswalks and traffic calming to the village since recent studies show 85% of motorists entering the village at 57 m.p.h. He noted four public hearings on the plans were held with two of them focusing on the needs of Church Street and other Village residents. He said 143 respondents expressed a strong desire for a walkable village.

Randy asked about sidewalk maintenance. Dayton said sidewalks could be built and maintained in stages. The Board discussed whether the State would continue to plow if the Village Route 2 were narrowed or if this would be the duty of the Town. Dorinda asked about more money; Sandy said the study is done. Randy said approval of the study does not lock in the Town to following its recommendations.

**MOTION:** Liz moved that Board endorse the Middlesex Route 2 and Riverwalk Scoping Study. Phil seconded. The motion passed.

**Planning Commission Update – Asking the CVRPC to Approve the Updated Town Plan**

Sandy said the PC is finalizing the proposed, revised Land Use Regulations after taking into account comments made at a recent public hearing. The commission plans to bring the regulations to the Board on August 2, 2022. She also asked the Board to approve sending a letter to the Central Vermont

Regional Planning Commission asking for its blessing on the updated Town Plan approved by the voters in March. Such approval would give the plan additional gravitas when the Town applies for grants in the future.

**MOTION:** Phil moved sending a letter to the CVRPC asking approval of the 2022 Town Plan; Vic seconded. The motion passed and Sarah Merriman was authorized to sign the letter on behalf of the Board.

**Renaming Private Road Black Bear Lane as Black Bear Hill**

Dorinda asked about who should be paying for these private road signs; the Board agreed owners along the private roads should be billed. It was unclear how this private road off Molly Supple was misnamed; Mitch said it was a miscommunication.

**MOTION:** Liz moved to rename Black Bear Lane and Black Bear Hill and bill for one sign; Vic seconded. The motion passed.

**Spellings of Barnett Hill and Lower/Upper Sunnybrook Confirmed**

Mitch said there were multiple spellings of Barnett Hill and Lower/Upper Sunnybrook. Patty Wiley of the Middlesex Historical Committee confirmed in an email to the Board that Barnett was spelled correctly. Sarah Merriman said Sunnybrook is one word according to Town documents, including the book Ward Knapp Remembers.

**MOTION:** Phil moved and Liz seconded confirming these spellings: Barnett Hill and Sunnybrook. The motion passed.

**Highway Department Updates – Approving Viking-Cives to Add Truck Equipment**

Eric said Tenco, which has moved to New Hampshire, failed to order additional equipment for the new Kenworth T880-510 truck though the Town had ordered \$86,212 of the equipment in December. As a result, delivery of the truck might take 35-45 days. Eric suggested allowing Viking-Cives of Williston to add the equipment. Eric said Viking can match the price. In addition, a \$1,500-part will need to be added to compensate for the truck being manual transmission. The Board discussed a \$700 stainless steel toolbox for the truck and a \$700 spinner that would improve sanding, especially on hills. Eric said the truck could be delivered a month sooner. Paul asked about Tenco's response for dropping the ball after 30, 40 years of Town business. Eric said they apologized.

**MOTION:** Phil moved and Randy seconded moving the truck Kenworth from New Hampshire to Viking Cives in Williston for added equipment with the addition of the \$1,500 adder for the standard transmission. The motion passed.

**MOTION:** Randy moved and Liz seconded purchasing the toolbox and reversible spinner for \$1,400.

Vic said the culverts on Center Road will be finished by the end of week. Hutchins will start reclaiming (ripping up) the old pavement after that.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

**MOTION:** Phil moved and Randy seconded approving the minutes from the July 21, 2022 Select Board meeting. Liz and Vic abstained

**MOTION:** Liz moved and Randy seconded approving the 2022 contract with the Washington County Sheriff's Department to enforce speeding in Town. The motion passed. Dorinda said last fiscal year the Town spent \$1,200 out of a speeding-enforcement budget line item of \$7,000. Randy asked about the Town's speed ordinance that needs to be updated.

Peter discussed whether the Town should hire Dick Picard to paint the back of the old fire station behind town hall.

Michael Levine reminded the Board that the visit to North Bear Swamp Road on July 19<sup>th</sup> was to do more than check out poor conditions on the road, but also to consider trail possibilities.

All orders were approved and signed.

The meeting adjourned at 7:16 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 JULY 19, 2022.

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PETER O. HOOD, CHAIR

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ELIZABETH SCHARF, VICE CHAIR

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RANDY DRURY

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VIC DWIRE

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PHIL HYJEK