

Select Board Members

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

MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD
TUESDAY, JULY 19, 2022
Remove via Zoom and in Town Hall
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. Road Foreman and MVFD Fire Chief Eric Metivier. MVFD member Patty O'Neill. Trails Committee members Adrienne Magida and Mitch Osiecki. Jan Thouron, JJ Vandette and Sam Rosenberg. Select Board Assistant Sarah Merriman took the minutes. The meeting was recorded by ORCA.

Call to Order

Peter called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM. There were no amendments.

Discussing North Bear Swamp Trail Situation

Peter said the full Select Board met at the Class 4 section of North Bear Swamp Road as warned for a 5 P.M. meeting with Adrienne and Mitch of the Trails Committee as well as the Road Foreman and Road Commissioner to inspect the area of road that's pitted with puddles and that the Trails Committee has suggested might benefit from being downgraded to a Legal Trail. Adrienne clarified the Trails Committee is not wed to the downgrade; they were just trying to come up with a low-cost approach to making this route an accessible trail.

Peter said neighbors have expressed interest in keeping the road open for emergency purposes and to avoid being blocked in by parked cars. He reiterated opposition to downgrading through-roads. He suggested tasking the Road Foreman and Commissioner with creating a plan to manage the puddles and creating a road passable to hikers and bikers and, when necessary, vehicles. Liz added that she was not in favor of downgrading the road, but would like to see it accessible for bikers and walkers while doing the minimum amount of maintenance to keep it passable to vehicles. She would not like to see an increase in traffic.

Randy asked the Trails Committee if there are volunteers who could cut brush, etc. to expand access on the right of way. Adrienne said she is new, but said she expected there were volunteers who would love to help, citing the Conservation Commission as a model. Mitch said there were people who've expressed interest in maintaining trails.

Speaking as the only private land owner abutting that portion of the road, Jan said it's basically been a trail since she moved there in 1978. She likes the big puddles because they stop vehicles from zooming through, but said downgrading the road would lower her property values and she's opposed. She said she's happy the way it is.

Another issue is that GPS systems route people to the Hunger Mountain parking lot by directing them up East Bear Swamp Road to North Bear Swamp. The Board agreed improved signage directing motorists to access the mountain via Story Road to North Bear Swamp would help. Peter said the Town should continue to close that portion of the road in winter and during mud season to keep off 4-wheelers who may further erode conditions.

The Highway Department will return at the next meeting with some ideas.

Monthly Meeting with the Middlesex Volunteer Fire Department

The Board reviewed Eric's report on monthly calls (please see below). He asked about the status of air packs. The Board revisited the issue of whether ARPA money should pay for them. Randy said it would be helpful to revisit the ARPA list and narrow it down to make those decisions. Phil suggested doing so at the next meeting.

Peter brought up the process of merging the MVFD into Town government and how that should be publicized among the Town voters, perhaps notifying people of a September public hearing even though the Board can make the decision to incorporate the MVFD into the municipality without a Town vote.

Liz asked about public hearing(s) on how to spend the ARPA funds. Peter said the only time limits on hearings have to do with proposed zoning regulations that the Planning Commission will bring to the Board on August 2. Peter said he'd like people to have a one-page information sheet on the MVFD merger so they can be informed.

Patty said she is attending a 40-hour class to become a child-safety-seat instructor. Her certification will place Middlesex on a national list as a source for free, new child car seats for qualifying parents. They can apply and, based on income, will receive the seats as long as Patty instructs them on how to install and use them properly. Randy asked if that service will be limited to Middlesex residents; Patty said there might be work arounds for parents who don't have certified technicians in their own towns. The goal is to get children in to safe, approved car seats, she said. Right now, the only technicians in the area are in Berlin and the Washington County Sheriff's Office, she said.

Treasurer's Report

Dorinda said the interest rate on the loan for the new Kenworth truck that should be available in a little more than a month is 2.79% on \$176,000 to \$236,000 of financing over five years depending on the trade-in value of the current truck. She said that was a surprisingly good rate and the Board agreed.

Though bills from the FY22 are still trickling in, it looks like despite an unusual year with mid-year pay raises and other serious unbudgeted expenses, spending was only about 1% over budget, she said.

Highway Department Updates: Possible New Road Crew Hire/Center Road Height & Vic Dwire's Compensation

Vic said the Town will pick up the repaired International from Buzzi's garage by 7 PM on Wednesday, maybe. The transmission cooler wasn't replaced; it was welded and checked for leaks and is fine. The culverts have been replaced on Center Road and the Board praised Jason Merrill's construction company for a timely, affordable job well done with excellent flagging.

Vic said he and Eric met with Elwin Chambers, who'd been a candidate for the Road Foreman job and was now interested in joining the Road Crew. They agreed that he'd be worth \$25 to \$26/per hour of pay. Randy suggested comparing Elwin's years of experience with current road-crew members. If he has less experience, he should be paid less. If more, then more. Randy suggested a background check. The Board observed Elwin had come to the Town on his own and, therefore, no sign-on bonus needed to be paid. Phil said Eric and Vic should return to the Board with salary suggestions for the Board's consideration and approval. The Board agreed that Eric and Vic had the latitude to discuss salary with the candidate.

Eric said the new truck is in Williston and being fitted with parts. Roadside mowing has been taking place all week.

Randy said the Board needed to review Vic's relationship with the Highway Department beyond his appointed duties as Road Commissioner, having stepped up to serve as interim Co-Road Foreman between Shane Brickey's resignation and Eric's hiring

and then helping Eric transition into the job. Eric praised Vic as being invaluable, saying he's not paid enough. The Board recognized Vic's contribution during this challenging time.

Before addressing that issue, Vic apprised the Board that reclamation on Center Road would not, in fact, remove ground-up old asphalt. Instead, it's more like the old pavement would be rototilled. As a result, by the time four inches of new pavement is added during repaving, the road will be much higher than it currently is. This will be a problem for guard rails which need to be 27" to 28" high; they will be about 21" high. Peter asked about the cost of removing the old asphalt; ~~Vic said it would run about \$2 per square foot. With 16,534 square yards, it would cost about \$300,000 to lower the new road by 4.5"~~; Randy estimated. *NOTE: Vic later corrected the cost to \$1.25 per square yard or roughly \$20,000.

Getting back to Vic's compensation, Vic noted that the contractors laying down the new pavement on Center Road should be supervised by someone from the Highway Department. The Board discussed who and decided that if a new crew member was hired, that would free up Eric to supervise and relieve Vic of that duty.

MOTION: Randy moved and Phil seconded extending Vic's agreement with the Town so that he will work no more than 20 hours per week on average until a new crew member is hired or until otherwise deemed appropriate by the Board. The motion passed; Vic recused himself from voting.

JJ Vandette, who lives on Center Road, seconded that he was concerned about raising the height of the road during repaving and would like that remedied. Peter said the Town was trying to address this.

OTHER BUSINESS

MOTION: Phil moved and Randy seconded approving the amended minutes of the July 12, 2022 Select Board meeting. The motion passed.

The Board reviewed an application for a Class II liquor license for The Local, a new beer and wine store proposed for the Red Hen building. Owner Sam Rosenberg said there would be a tasting room, but it would be only a retail shop. There would be no consumption on the premises.

MOTION: Phil moved and Liz seconded approving the Class II liquor license for The Local. The motion passed and the Board signed the necessary paperwork.

Liz suggested returning to in-person Select Board meetings. Peter suggested the first meeting in September. Liz said the Board should be trained on how to effectively use Zoom while holding meetings. The Board will revisit the question at its next Board meeting.

All orders were approved and signed.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 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 AUGUST 2, 2022.

PETER O. HOOD, CHAIR

ELIZABETH SCHARF, VICE CHAIR

RANDY DRURY

VIC DWIRE

PHIL HYJEK