

Select Board Members

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

MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2022
Remote 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 and Liz Scharf, Vice Chair. Members Randy Drury, Vic Dwire and Phil Hyjek. Treasurer Dorinda Crowell. Road Foreman and MVFD Chief Eric Metivier. Town Moderator Susan Clark. Planning Commission Chair Sandy Levine. Capital Fire Mutual Aid 1st Vice President Joseph Aldsworth. Mike Hill. The meeting was recorded by ORCA and Select Board Assistant Sarah Merriman took the minutes.

Call to Order

Peter called the meeting to order at 5:01 PM. There were no amendments to the agenda.

Town Hall Assessment

Liz presented a draft request for proposals for an architectural assessment of Town Hall. She thanked Planning Commission Chair Sandy Levine for soliciting assistance from the Preservation Trust of Vermont and Dave Magida who used his expertise from managing buildings and grounds at Norwich University to write the RFP. The RFP will be sent to architectural firms who would come back with a cost of what it would take to accomplish the tasks outlined in the request. Sandy and Dave ballparked the assessment at \$20,000 minimum, though inflation could make that higher. Liz suggested using ARPA money to pay for the first step.

Peter said the RFP strikes a good balance. Sandy said this is intended to be a preliminary design type study vs. an engineering study. It gives the Town a baseline to compare against moving to a new location or building out the current Town Hall. Sandy said she based this on the Town of Barnet which wanted to do a similar study. Peter asked if there is a list of people; Liz said she had only four names.

Sandy said Preservation of Vermont Trust had a long list. She suggested starting with Central Vermont firms and perhaps moving toward Burlington. Liz said she wants to get this out this week. Liz asked if the Board is okay with Dave being the contact for now in case the architectural firms have questions about the project. Board members had no problem with that. Vic said a lot of money is going to be spent on Town Hall. Instead of spending this money on an end that's known (i.e., the current site won't work), why not spend the money looking at Welch Park or other sites for a building that would house the Town administration and Town Meeting and maybe the Road Crew? he asked. Why would we spend the money on something we know won't work – there's no space for parking and no space to meet. Peter said this study will address those issues. Peter said it's unreasonable to build a building that can hold Town Meeting. It makes sense to hold Town Meeting at the school. Susan Clark said 250 people attend Town Meeting. In addition, there is voting throughout the day. She said there are other options if there's an extraordinary turnout.

Peter said the Town needs a professional assessment and spoke in favor of going forward with the study. Liz said the Town must do its due diligence to present to the voters a serious proposal. Phil said on a gut level he agrees with Victor, but he agrees the Board must do its due diligence in order to present to the voters the rationale for another option. Randy said he agrees with Vic. He doesn't like spending money on this but agrees with the need for due diligence. His opinion might change if the RFPs return proposals over \$20,000. He said this RFP needs to be posted publicly, not just sent selectively. Peter said all the Board is doing now is submitting the RFPs.

MOTION: Phil moved sending out the RFP to a list of pre-qualified architectural firms and to post it publicly. Vic seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Liz will set the date for return to October 11, 2022.

Capital Fire Mutual Aid: Capital Region Infrastructure Replacement Plan

Joe said mountaintop radios for dispatch services need to be replaced. Capital Fire mutual aid has developed a 10-year saving plan to save for Middlesex's portion of the radio system based on the Town's grand list. Provided the State comes through with \$3.23 million in funding to pay for replacing the current system, Middlesex would be billed \$2,900/year for ten years to replace the new system down the road. The State will apprise the 20-member municipal dispatching organization by September 25, 2022, if that funding has come through.

Eric said he's supportive of the project. If the state funding doesn't come through, Joe said he will again meet with towns to figure out how to pay for the new radios. Randy noted the Budget Committee needs to add this system to the capital improvement plan. Joe left the meeting.

Highway Department Report

Vic said Hutchins will be "cold planing" Center Road on the 12th or the 19th of September. Phil thanked Eric and the crew for putting material in the sink holes. Center Road will not be closed; Hutchins will have traffic control. Randy asked about the process. The Board discussed cold planing vs. reclaiming a road and which creates ruts. Randy wanted to know if the savings from cold planing is worth it. Peter said cold planing is the preferred system across the state.

Request for Upgrading a Portion of South Bear Swamp Road

Mike Hill, of 348 South Bear Swamp Road, which is on the Class 4 section of South Bear Swamp, said he's been asking the Board to upgrade his portion of South Bear Swamp Road since 2019. He said deep ruts in the summer and lack of plowing in the winter mean five families on this Class 4 section cannot make it up the hill before the Class 3 section ends.

Peter said over the years the Board gets requests to upgrade roads. Historically, the Board has been reluctant to upgrade roads due to costs. Sometimes neighbors have banded together and sought permission to upgrade roads at their own expense. Not to be mean, but he said everyone on that road knew it was a Class 4 road when they built their houses and chose to live there. They knew what they were getting when bought or build house there.

Vic asked if he's considered petitioning, referring to a section in the Vermont State Statutes (19 V.S.A. § 711) that requires Select Boards to hold hearings on upgrading roads provided 5% of the Town's registered voters sign a petition. Mike said he feels vilified and he has not involved his neighbors so far. He said when he bought the property he didn't know if it was class 3 or class 4. He said this is a democracy and all are allowed to be treated equally.

Peter said the Town struggles to maintain the roads we have. Mike said all he's seeking is plowing and grading. He said that he doesn't accept that he hasn't been retaliated against for standing up against Manosh (re: 2021 appeal of Town Planning Commission decision). Peter said in no way is he or the Board retaliating against him. He said he was merely providing background on history of upgrading Town roads.

Liz asked Vic if that portion of South Bear Swamp ever gets graded. Vic said, yes. However, grading has to be done with reason. There are certain roads like Upper Barnett that are Class 4 which are never graded and there are kids there, too, he said. While the Town occasionally grades Class 4 roads, they are never plowed. That would set a precedent. Liz noted she lives on a private road with four other families and they pay for plowing. She noted Leland Farm Road, with its new development, might also see Class 3 status potentially.

Peter said the only way a Town will plow or grade a road is if it's Class 3. He said there is more strength if neighbors come together and make a request as a group. Mike said he would get back to the Board with more information. Mike left the meeting.

Executive Session: Potential Highway Department Hire

MOTION: Vic moved, and Randy seconded entering Executive Session to discuss potentially hiring a new member of the road crew as permitted under 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3) and to include Eric and Dorinda. The motion passed and the Board entered Executive Session at 6:22 PM. The Board exited Executive Session at 6:46 PM. There was no action. Eric left the meeting.

Treasurer Report

Dorinda brought up issues with RBTechnologies including an increase of 13% in costs over the last four to five months, according to Randy. RB has also submitted a new contract. There are continued problems with the server RB cannot seem to fix. Dorinda said she's unimpressed. Randy said there doesn't seem to be resolutions to problems noted in service tickets. Peter suggested a three-month extension of the contract and then contact vendors. The Board asked Sarah to call other towns for IT services. The Board discussed the when the last contract was signed. In the meantime, Peter said don't sign the contract.

OTHER BUSINESS

MOTION: Liz moved and Vic seconded approving the amended minutes of the August 16, 2022 Select Board meeting. The motion passed.

Dorinda asked if she should send the \$100k check to CVFiber. Since the MOU hasn't been vetted by the attorney, the Board suggested Dorinda hold off.

The Board passed over an agenda item about whether social service agencies should be required to submit petitions in order to ask voters at the 2023 Town Meeting for a certain level of funding.

Correspondence: The Board acknowledged receiving and reviewing a report on access to polls at Town Hall from a study conducted by Disability Rights of Vermont.

Randy said he was in full support of the Select Board resuming in-person meetings. Liz agreed. Vic said he's not a fan of meeting in person. Dorinda urged resumption of in-person meetings since the Board's not able to scrutinize orders with bills/invoices by meeting virtually.

MOTION: Liz moved that the Board resume in-person meetings at its first meeting in October on October 4, 2022, and if members cannot be present, then they attend via Zoom. Randy seconded; Randy seconded. Vic abstained. The motion passed.

All orders were approved and signed.

The meeting adjourned at 7:27 PM

Respectfully submitted by Sarah Merriman, Town Clerk/Select Board Assistant

THE ABOVE MINUTES WERE APPROVED AS A WARNED AGENDA ITEM AT A REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD ON SEPTEMBER 20, 2022.

PETER O. HOOD, CHAIR

ELIZABETH SCHARF, VICE CHAIR

RANDY DRURY

VIC DWIRE