

Select Board Members

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

MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2022
Town Clerk's Office and 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, Phil Hyjek and Vic Dwire, who is also Road Commissioner. Treasurer Dorinda Crowell. Energy Committee Members Lauri Scharf* and Enrique Bueno. Budget Committee members Mark Harris* and Elias Gardner*. Road Foreman and MVFD Fire Chief Eric Metivier. MVFD President Jeff Koonz. Wrightsville Recreation Director Collin O'Neill. Middlesex Wrightsville representative George Longenecker* and Adrienne Magida. The meeting was recorded on Zoom and by ORCA. Select Board Assistant Sarah Merriman took the minutes. (*signifies attendees via Zoom)

Call to Order

Peter called the meeting to order at 5:05 PM and welcomed guests. There were no amendments to the agenda.

Town Hall Feasibility Study

Dave said he and Peter met with two principals from Vermont Integrated Architecture, PC, the firm chosen by a subcommittee with the Board's go ahead, to discuss the details of a proposed contract for a feasibility study of Town Hall. The result was a proposed contract of \$27,740 that would include a civil engineering facility evaluation at no cost. The total cost is a "not-to-exceed fee estimate," though the Board should budget for a possible contingency fee. If the Board approves this contract, VIA will be ready to start work in mid-December.

Jeff raised questions about water access at the building for sprinklers. The Board took this into consideration, but advised this was an issue to be considered down the road. Liz, who has been working on submitting a Municipal Planning Grant to pay for the study, said she'll meet with a VIA principal to work out a budget and billing schedule. The grant application is due December 1, but notification of the award won't be until February 1st. And since the grant won't cover costs already paid by the Town, the Town doesn't want to pay VIA before then on the chance it'll be awarded the grant. Liz also said there'll be many community outreach opportunities while VIA conducts its study, including a couple of community meetings where Middlesex residents can express their needs. VIA is also very much involved in looking at energy efficiency. She reminded the Board this is a long process. In a best-case scenario, provided there are no permitting or financing issues, a new or remodeled Town Hall won't be completed for at least three years.

Lauri said the Energy Committee hopes planners will consider forward-thinking energy-efficient uses such as electrical vehicle charging and energy-related technology. Peter said the Energy Committee should forward any ideas to Dave. Enrique noted the Inflation Reduction Act will provide money for weatherization and asked if the Town plans to apply for that. Liz said the Town likely would, but right now the process is still in the very early stages. Liz said the maximum award possible for the Municipal Planning Grant is \$26,400 and there is a 10% match.

Vic said he's received calls from residents questioning what the Town will be getting for \$27,000. Peter suggested Vic review VIA's proposal. Peter said the study is necessary due diligence before the Town commits to a major financial expense against which \$27,000 will be relatively small. He said the Board wants to make sure it's taking the right steps so when the proposal is presented to the Town voters at the March 2023 Town Meeting, the Board will be able to say here are the recommendations based on a consultant's study as opposed to the opinions of five Select Board members. The purpose is to gather as good as information as possible on whether Town Hall should be renovated or if a new Town Hall should be built. Liz said since she's representing the Board on this matter, any calls regarding the project should be directed to her.

Vic asked where the \$27,000 will come from if the Town doesn't get the grant. Peter said likely ARPA funds. Randy said there are more funding sources that could be a backup to the grant and that the VIA report will also help with this. Vic asked why the sense of urgency. Liz reminded him of prior Board meetings discussing a grant that didn't come through and that the Town Hall building has numerous challenges including a failing elevator and crowded vault, so waiting six months doesn't make sense.

Enrique asked if there'd been an energy audit; Randy said no. Randy said he's volunteered to make that effort on the part of the Town and use that as part of a match.

Dave said no matter what options are selected, a new or rehabbed Town Hall is going to be costly. As a taxpayer, he, personally, wants to make sure the homework has been done.

MOTION: Liz moved and Phil seconded entering into a contract with Vermont Integrated Architecture PC for an amount not to exceed \$27,740 to conduct a Town Hall feasibility study. The Board discussed whether to include ARPA funds in the motion. Dave asked about how to incorporate contingencies. Vic asked how far the study will go. Dave said VIA won't move on to construction documents without going to the Select Board. Vic asked, for example, what if the boiler breaks, etc. Phil said addressing doesn't necessarily mean repairing. Maybe, the Town moves operations somewhere else. Regarding the contingency, Dorinda suggested the contingency should be a budget item instead of building it into the contract. The Board agreed.

Peter called the question. All but Vic voted for the motion, which passed. The Board authorized Dave to relay the information to VIA. Enrique Bueno, Dave and Lauri left the meeting.

Middlesex Volunteer Fire Department Budget Discussion & Monthly Meeting

Since the Fire Department will become a Town department on January 1st, Peter suggested holding its first meeting of the year at the fire department.

FY24 Budget Discussion with MVFD

Eric presented the Fire Department's proposed operating budget of \$9,77, a 3.9% increase over the previous year. Much of the increase was due to increased energy costs. The radio dispatch system is in a process of transition, so Jeff said that's a shot in the dark. Dorinda said even though it's up in the air, if the Town doesn't start planning for a new dispatch system, it'll be a huge hit. Stipends have remained level. Debt service has gone down by -.36% as the Town continues to pay off the debt. Even though the structure of the fire department will change, how the money's managed won't change, Jeff said, noting the department will "watch the budget like a hawk."

Randy asked Eric to fill out a form for capital improvement projects; Eric agreed.

Monthly Meeting with the MVFD

Jeff delivered the report documenting Fire Department activities since the last meeting with the Board. (Please see report, attached below.) He said the Middlesex Community funded new radios and that the AirPaks were delivered. He said he hopes that with more visibility, the community will see how professional the Department is and people will join. Jeff also noted the benefit of including the Fire Department in discussions with such matters as renovating/rebuilding Town Hall, referring to his previous comment about the sprinklers. He said the Department is looking forward to more involvement. As Middlesex starts to grow, the Fire Department needs to be on the ground floor. Peter said there would be discussions about a water system for the village. Randy asked about number of members; Jeff said there are ten. Dorinda has notified the Town's insurance carrier about the Fire Department's transition. Jeff said elections for Fire Department officers will be on the first Tuesday in December. He told the Board because the Board will have to approve the incoming chief. Jeff left the meeting.

Highway Department Update

Eric said the asphalt pad to hold road salt will be installed Thursday or Friday. As far as a salt shed, he can build a temporary structure with concrete blocks and asked the Board to approve up to \$3,000 to pay for materials. Peter asked about using a tarp to cover the salt. Eric said the problem with a tarp is snow would pile up. This will be a three-walled cinderblock structure with support of two I-beams donated by Bolduc Salvage told hold up the tarp. Some blocks on site are broken, so more will have to be purchased.

MOTION: Phil moved and Randy seconded authorizing expenditure of up to \$3,000 to purchase material to construct a temporary salt shed. The motion passed.

In response to residents' concerns about a drop off on Center Road before it merges with Brook Road, Eric said he investigated the cost of putting up a guardrail. Guardrails cost \$38/foot new and \$19/foot used. Since the section is over 770-feet long, the Town would spend either @ \$30,000 or \$15,000 on the railing. The Board did not address the expenditure. Eric left the meeting.

Request to Increase Wrightsville Per Capital Spending Cap to \$4/Person

Collin asked the Town to consider raising the spending cap the Wrightsville Recreation District can assess for annual dues from the current \$1.50 per Middlesex resident to \$4.00. Having worked for Wrightsville 21 years, he said this is only the second time the district has had to raise the cap. The last time the district raised the cap was eight years ago when the Town approved a \$1 increase and that was quickly eaten up by the increase in minimum wage.

If approved, the district would assess residents of Middlesex and the other three supporting communities (Worcester, East Montpelier and Montpelier) \$2.50/person in 2023 and then raise the assessments no more than 3% in a single year. With a new State contract shifting responsibility of maintaining the boat launch along VT Route 12 and the park at the bottom of Shady Rill Road from the Dam Division of the Department of Environmental Conservation to Wrightsville, Collin said the increased fees would allow him to work at 85% time, instead of part-time now, although he puts in over 1,000 per year.

Peter asked about usage numbers. Collin said use has gone up and, therefore, so has revenue and staffing. Collin said he'd like to see increased incentives for residents of the four supporting communities beyond the discounts they already receive when they use the beach and surrounding area. One idea is to rent boats for off-site use. Though the beach is normally open from Memorial Day to Columbus Day, they've opened earlier due to high temps and closed later for the same reason.

George said he looked at the district's finances in detail and approves of the lifting the per-capita cap. The Conservation Commission, which George was also representing, supports this increase as well. Peter explained the Board will incorporate this into the budget that will then be presented to the Town voters. Dorinda clarified that the budget year begins July 1, 2023, so there will be no payments from the Town before then. George said this was understood. No Board members objected to raising the cap. Collin said Middlesex was the first town he approached since this is where the reservoir is located. Collin, the Budget Committee members, Adrienne and George left the meeting.

Treasurer Report

Dorinda directed the Board's attention to the new Owl, laptop and sound bar all purchased for far less than the Board allotted. There were no other updates aside from the availability of hard copies of the FY22 audit.

Approving the CVFiber Easement at 481 Shady Rill Road

The Board reviewed a proposed easement granting CVFiber access to install a junction box for cable fiber by the Town Shed at 481 Shady Rill Road. **MOTION:** Phil moved and Vic seconded granting CVFiber an easement to allow for the installation of a junction box at 481 Shady Rill Road and authorizing the Select Board Chair to sign on the Board's behalf. The motion passed. Peter signed the easement which was then recorded in the Town land records.

OTHER BUSINESS

MOTION: Vic moved, and Liz seconded approving the minutes of the November 1, 2022, Select Board Meeting. The motion passed and the Board signed the minutes.

All orders were signed.

The meeting adjourned at 6:48 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 DECEMBER 6, 2022.

PETER O. HOOD, CHAIR

ELIZABETH SCHARF, VICE CHAIR

RANDY DRURY

VIC DWIRE

PHIL HYJEK

MVFD REPORT

Total calls to date: 61	E-1 out 7 times
Calls over the last month: 10	E-6 out 2 times
Mutual Aid out: 0	T-1 out 3 times
Mutual Aid in: 1	R-1 out 3 times
Max members respond: 9	Tk-14 out 1 time
Min members respond: 2	
Avg members respond: 5.3	

Calls:

20 Oct, I-89, car smoking, blown oil line, E-1, 3 responders
27 Oct, East Hill Road, tree on power line, vehicles held in quarters, 4 responders
30 Oct, East Hill Road, rescue, canceled in route, 6 responders
01 Nov, US Rt 2, stuck door, E-1, 5 responders
05 Nov, Center Road, wildland fire approximately 2 acres, E-1, T-1, R-1, Tk-14, 6 responders
MA in from Worcester
08 Nov, 1078 US Rt 2, State complex, Fire Alarm, false alarm, canceled before could vehicles could respond, 2 responders
09 Nov, 961 US Rt 2, Red Hen, Fire Alarm, false alarm, E-1, E-6, T-1, 5 responders
09 Nov, US Rt 2, burning leaves near residence, E-1, E-6, 9 responders
12 Nov, I-89, car into median, E-1, T-1, R-1, 7 responders
12 Nov, Story and Nellie Chase Roads, tree on power line, E-1, R-1, 6 responders

FAST Sq:

15 total for the reporting period
13 medical only calls
2 in conjunction with FD calls