

Select Board Members

- Peter Hood, Chair
- Liz, Scharf, Vice Chair
- Brigid Browning
- Randy Drury
- Vic Dwire

Middlesex Select Board
Tuesday, May 2, 2023
Middlesex Town Hall and via Zoom*
Middlesex Town Clerk's Office
5 Church Street
Middlesex, Vermont 05602
(802) 223-5915

MINUTES

PRESENT: Peter Hood, Chair, Liz Scharf, Vice Chair. Members Brigid Browning, Randy Drury (who is also a member of the Budget Committee) and Vic Dwire, who is also Road Commissioner. Treasurer Dorinda Crowell. Road Foreman and MVFD Chief Eric Metivier. The meeting was recorded by ORCA and Select Board Assistant Sarah Merriman took the minutes.

Call to Order, Welcoming Guests, Approving Minutes and Agenda

Peter called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM and welcomed guests.

MOTION: Vic moved, and Liz seconded approving the minutes of the April 18, 2023, Select Board meeting. The motion passed and the minutes were signed.

The Board reviewed the agenda for the May 2, 2023, Select Board meeting. The agenda was amended to include a revised access permit for the Carkeets and signing a Letter of Intent to apply for a FY24 VTrans Grants in Aid.

MOTION: Randy moved, and Vic seconded approving the May 2, 2023, agenda. The motion passed.

Reviewing the Town's 2022 Personnel Policy

The Board reviewed the Town's Personnel Policy, last updated in May 2022. (Sentences marked with *s indicate proposed changes.)

Section 4: Conduct of Employees. The Board discussed whether the Town could curtail social media posts of off-duty employees and agreed their posts were fine if they did not represent that they were speaking for the town.

Section 5: Hours of Service and Pay Period. Randy brought up summer hours since this section speaks to the regular work week. There's been a lot of conversation about how wishy washy the time frame is for when summer hours (four, ten-hour days for the Road Crew) begins and ends, he said. Does the Board simply want to set the hours? He said he's seen a change in the summer hours since he's been on the board. Peter said the time frame varies from year to year, depending on the conditions. Eric said this year he has already scheduled two employees to drive the grader on Friday and two on Monday so the grader can work all week long before the entire crew switches to 10-hour summer hours. Vic and Eric can consult and come to the Board, Randy noted, referring to the opening paragraph of Section 5. Vic commented that this didn't happen this year and should have. Liz said re: townfolk perspective, if there's a week of rain and no one sees the road crew out on, say, a sunny Friday, then maybe there should be a change in that week's schedule due to public perception. The Board discussed what regular hours are. Randy brought up road conditions during the shoulder seasons. He said people ask what the crew is doing when it's dark in the morning; Randy said he tells people they're preparing for the day. Eric said there's plenty of work for them to do. The Board suggested posting about the change in hours, especially transitioning from the 5-day work week to 4-day work week. Peter said he likes the idea of Eric and Victor having the flexibility to manage the Road Crew, so perhaps this section should be left alone. He suggested posting the hours on the Town website and putting up a post on Front Porch Forum. Randy asked about the 8:30 call; Eric said it hasn't been an issue. Usually, people call the night before if they can't make it the next day. *Peter said the policy should be changed to require employees to call their supervisor as soon as possible and no later than 1 hour after the start of the workday. *

Section 6: Gratuities and Gifts. No change.

Section 7: Outside Employment. Employees may not engage in any outside business activities during their normal working hours *excluding approved vacation and/or personal leave. *

Section 8: Political Activity. No change.

Section 9: Nepotism. No change.

Section 10: Alcohol and Drug Use. No change.

The Board will continue its review starting with Section 11 during the May 18th meeting.

Highway Department Report

The Board agreed to submit a Letter of Intent to participate in the SFY24 Municipal Grants-in-Aid Program for funding to offset costs involved with bringing Town roads into compliance with Municipal Roads General Permit (MRGP) standards. Eric agreed it was a good idea.

MOTION: Randy moved, and Victor seconded approving the above Letter of Intent. The motion passed and Peter signed the letter.

Imposing a 5% Penalty for Late HS-122 Filers

The Board discussed why it was necessary to impose a penalty on taxpayers who file their HS-122's (Homestead Declarations) after the state's deadline of April 15th. (Or whenever state income taxes are due.) Towns that have higher homestead, vs non-homestead, tax rates may impose penalties on the education portion of tax bills of up 8% on those who file late. This is permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 5410.

Dorinda said the Town office spends a lot of time on tax bills and when people file their Homestead Declarations late, that time is multiplied. The Listers must update their records, the Town has to

reissue new bills, the financial department has to readjust its accounting to support the bills and there's additional. A penalty is not a money maker, she said, but it does offset some costs.

MOTION: Liz moved to reimpose a penalty of 5% on the education portion of property tax bills when homesteads file their HS-122 forms after the state deadline of @April 15th; Vic seconded. The motion passed. The changes will go into effect with the 2023 tax bills.

Welch Park Update

Peter said an attorney hired to dissolve the Welch Park Association will begin working on dissolution this week. One issue: the sprinkler system in the MVFD station is connected by a water pump to the sprinkler system in a building owned by Benderson. Peter proposed that an agreement be reached where the Town would maintain the private Welch Park Road if Benderson maintained the water pump that also serves its much larger building. He said the pump room is very well maintained.

Treasurer's report

Dorinda filed the ARPA report due April 30th. The town has until December 2024 to allocate the funds.

OTHER BUSINESS

Liz said the Town Hall subgroup (Sarah, David Magida, Sandy Levine, and she) met with Vermont Integrated Architects on Monday to review the first conceptual designs of a renovated Town Hall. She described VIA's changes and said the subgroup also proposed a few alterations VIA will take into consideration. The plans will be posted on the Town's website so the public can have a look. The subgroup rejected a plan that would have added a 1,200-foot addition in favor of one with a much smaller addition that would only serve to make the Town Clerk's Office and Town Hall ADA accessible.

The subgroup will next meet with VIA on May 30th and then VIA will present its plans, along with cost estimates and rough comparisons with building new, to the Board on July 18th. Liz said there are many financial incentives to do this renovation now thanks to federal and state funding through such entities as the Municipal Energy Resilience Program which could offer grants of up to \$500,000. Liz acknowledged that the boiler in the MVFD needs to be replaced before the 2023 heating season, which might be addressed with such a grant program though the goal is to move the Town away from oil burners.

MOTION: Vic moved, and Randy seconded approving a revised access permit application for David and Barbara Carkeet on Macey Road. Peter signed the permit application.

MOTION: Vic moved, and Liz seconded approving a mowing bid from Corey Michaud to mow Town properties. The motion passed.

All orders were signed.

The meeting adjourned at 6:23 PM

Respectfully submitted by Sarah Merriman, Select Board Assistant

THE ABOVE MINUTES WERE APPROVED AS A WARNED AGENDA ITEM AT A REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD ON MAY 18, 2023

PETER O. HOOD, CHAIR

ELIZABETH SCHARF, VICE CHAIR

BRIGID BROWNING

RANDY DRURY

VIC DWIRE