

**Select Board Members**

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

**Middlesex Select Board**  
**Tuesday, May 16, 2023**  
**Middlesex Town Hall and via Zoom\***  
**Middlesex Town Clerk's Office**  
**5 Church Street**  
**Middlesex, Vermont 05602**  
**(802) 223-5915**

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**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. Listers Shelly Desjardin and Annette Halasz. MVFD President Jeff Koonz. Stephen Dennis and former Road Foreman Paul Cerminara\*. The meeting was recorded by ORCA and Select Board Assistant Sarah Merriman took the minutes. (\*indicates attended via Zoom)

**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 May 2, 2023, Select Board meeting. The motion passed and the minutes were signed.

The Board reviewed the agenda for the May 16, 2023, Select Board meeting. The agenda was amended to include The Local's request for a catering permit.

**MOTION:** Vic moved, and Liz seconded, approving the May 16, 2023, agenda. The motion passed.

**Reviewing Proposals for a Town-wide Property Appraisal**

Shelly said last fall, the Listers sent requests for town-wide reappraisal proposals to five appraisal companies and the only two who responded were David G. Buckley, who was not included in the solicitation, and NEMRC. NEMRC offered to do the appraisal for \$105,000 with the Town making payments of \$4,375 starting in July 2024 for 24 months. Buckley offered to do the work for \$124,800. Shelly said the Listers were inclined to go with NEMRC which provides the Microsolve software the Listers currently use for their own appraisals, though this software is being phased out statewide in favor of VTPIE. The earliest NEMRC can finish the town-wide appraisal is June of 2026. Since that's after the start of the 2026 appraisal year, the new figures won't impact taxes until 2027. Annette said NEMRC will start its field review in 2024. Due to crazy real estate prices during the pandemic which has affected the common level of appraisals (CLAs) across Vermont, firms capable of conducting town-wide appraisals are backlogged. Other towns won't be reappraised until 2027.

Dorinda says the Town pays a flat rate of @\$5,000 a year to NEMRC and there is currently \$52,000 in the property reappraisal fund to which the State contributes a set amount each year. She said she would research how much money the Town can anticipate. Peter asked if the contract price is fixed once it's signed. The Listers said the price is fixed unless the number of parcels changes. Since the RFP is open until June 1<sup>st</sup>, the Board held off deciding until its June 6<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Vic said it was his understanding the State was going to do the town-wide reappraisals. Shelly said that hasn't been decided by the Legislature. Liz said the Board should keep in mind that Town Hall renovations may be underway during this period. Dorinda asked if signing the contract sooner would have an impact; the Listers said no.

**Highway Report – Certification of Compliance for Road & Bridge Standards**

Eric updated the Board on road-grading status and equipment repair. The boulders blocking the Class 4 section of North Bear Swamp Road for winter have been removed and traffic to the Hunger Mt. trail is now open in both directions.

The Board reviewed the Certification of Compliance for Road & Bridge Standards. Eric said the Town is in compliance with the standards set in 2019, but since the standards are updated every five years, a new inventory will be conducted in 2024.

**MOTION:** Vic moved to approve the 2023 Certification of Compliance for Road & Bridge Standards; Brigid seconded. The motion passed and the members signed the Certificate.

**MVFD Monthly Meeting**

Jeff provided a monthly report for the Middlesex Volunteer Fire Department. (Please see below).

He said two potential fire-fighter candidates showed up for a recent open house. One is on the road crew and lives in Middlesex and has great potential. He praised FAST Squad leader Patty O'Neill for becoming a State-licensed EMT.

Vic asked about the connection between the Fire Warden and Fire Department. Eric said current Fire Warden Jason Merrill is not technically on the fire department. When residents want to burn outside, they need to call Jason and ask if it's okay to start a fire. If it is, Jason issues verbal permission – a burn permit – and then lets the MVFD know when and where the fire will take place so if people see smoke, etc., the MVFD will know if they need to respond.

Sarah asked about the fire hazards of lithium batteries. Jeff said lithium batteries are a concern, that it takes 4,000 gallons of water to put out a burning Leaf, an electric vehicle which operates on a lithium battery. To avoid these hazards, unplug your lithium battery as soon as it's fully charged, whether it's in a car, power tool, laptop or cell phone.

**Continued Review of the Town Personnel Policy**

The Board continued its review of the Town's personnel policy.

**Section 11: Tobacco Use.** No change

**Section 12: Performance evaluation.** Liz said performance evaluations are never fun, but they are handy when dealing with employees who may not be working out. Eric said he does not have a template for performance evaluations. Brigid said positive feedback could be included. Vic said he's never seen an employee review in the Town. Peter said if performance evaluations are conducted, they need to be done for all Town employees. Peter said they might be useful for newer employees; they're worthless for longer term employees. Randy said the existing policy allows for the performance evaluations to be done as need, but not required. He asked if the Town is prepared to look at compensation tied to evaluation. The Board was not in favor. Peter said the situation might be different if the Town had a human resources department. Who would conduct the reviews of office employees? Dorinda questioned how the Town could conduct performance evaluations without permanent job descriptions. The Board decided to leave the section as is.

**Section 13: Personnel Records.** No change.

**Section 14: Use of Town Equipment.** No change.

**Section 15: Use of Town computer system.** No change.

**Section 16: Insurance & Retirement Benefits.** The Board discussed whether the \$150 it pays each month to employees not receiving Town health insurance is adequate. Randy said the minimum contribution the Town makes toward employee health insurance is \$9,200 as opposed to the \$1,800 it pays now. He said that's an area where the Town could do better and still save money if folks get insurance elsewhere. Peter said there's discretion in the section for the Town to reserve the right to change the terms of providing health insurance at any time which allows for flexibility. No change.

**Section 17: Safety Approved Footwear.** The Board discussed the Road Crew's request for lighter footwear in the summer. If there is any money left over from the \$200 the Town contributes for heavier boots, it can be put toward the lighter footwear if it meets the ASTM F2413-18 standards.

**Section 18: Dress Code:** No change

**Section 19: Safety Equipment**

**Section 20: Holiday Leave** Liz asked about Juneteenth; it is not a holiday. **The Board agreed to change the name of Columbus Day to Indigenous People's Day.**

**Section 21: Vacation Leave.** The current policy allows employees to rollover 15 days of unused vacation time per year. Randy inquired if employees should also be permitted compensation for days they don't use. The Board discussed the purpose of vacation. Vic said it's so employees can rest up. Peter said vacation on the Road Crew has to be managed since there are times such as mud season and snowstorms when everyone needs to work. Randy said since the Road Crew has operated with three people in the past, maybe there are times when it can operate with three people now. Eric said these issues can be managed.

The Board discussed a prior practice of some Road Crew members working 10-hour days in the summer using 2 hours of their accumulated vacation time each day to work only 8 hours. Eric said that hasn't happened since he came on as Road Foreman in July 2022. Liz asked if Road

Crews are paid 10 holiday hours in the summer; Eric said they're paid only eight. The Board discussed requiring employees to take vacations in four-hour blocks at the minimum and agreed it could not do that. Paul said working four, 10-hour days in the summer is a perk that shouldn't be abused.

The Board discussed how to word this section so these conflicts don't arise. Brigid suggested wording. Peter said managing these issues is the purview of the Road Foreman. The Board decided to include the following line: **Employees are strongly encouraged to take an annual vacation with supervisor approval. Vacations, when possible, should be planned in advance.**

**Section 22: Sick Leave** No change.

The Board to continue its review starting with Section 23 at its June 6<sup>th</sup> meeting. Eric left the meeting.

#### **Approving a Select Board Rules of Procedure**

Instead of passing Roberts Rules of Procedure at its organizational meeting, at the suggestion of VLCT, the Board adopted VLCT's Rules of Procedure with its own changes including not designating a set time for public participation, but permitting it throughout the meeting with the Chair's approval.

**MOTION:** Randy moved and Vic seconded adoption the Select Board Rules of Procedure that incorporates the Board's changes. The motion passed and the members signed the document.

#### **Treasurer's report**

Dorinda said 83% of the FY23 budget has been spent which indicates it won't be overspent by July 1 – good news. Vic asked about a memo from the finance department requiring certain documentation and certificates of insurance from all vendors per the Town's insurance provider. Dorinda said the memo was sent by the bookkeeper. Smaller vendors have been falling through the cracks and need to provide this documentation before work can commence. However, if it's an emergency and something needs to be repaired ASAP, she said it's okay to approve the work and get the documentation such as tax ID and other business info afterward.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS**

**MOTION:** Vic moved, and Liz seconded approving the Planning Commission's recommendation and appoint Mitch Osiecki to the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission. The motion passed.

Welch Park update: Peter said the dissolution of the Welch Park Association is progressing. There's some question about what to do about the pump that provides water for sprinkler systems in the MVFD and another building, but there are compromises on the table.

**MOTION:** Liz moved, and Randy seconded, approving a catering permit for The Local at Camp Meade this weekend. The motion passed.

Correspondence: The Board reviewed a sample survey emailed from Russ Bennett with questions about village water and sewer in preparation for a meeting with him on June 6<sup>th</sup>. Russ wants the Board to consider where the survey should be sent and the Board discussed the pros and cons of sending it to everyone in Town or just those who might be served by a potential municipal water system. Liz suggested everyone should get it; Stephen agreed since a water system originating from the old Colby property on Center Road could impact the wells of homes within a certain radius for years to come. Brigid urged scrutiny of who would be served and how much it would cost.

All orders were signed.

The meeting adjourned at 7:34 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 JUNE 6, 2023

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PETER O. HOOD, CHAIR

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ELIZABETH SCHARF, VICE CHAIR

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BRIGID BROWNING

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RANDY DRURY

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VIC DWIRE