

Middlesex Town Meeting Solutions Committee
Meeting Minutes
April 10, 2013

Present: Susan Clark, Dexter LeFavour, Chris McVeigh, Dave Shepard, Barb Whitchurch, Greg Whitchurch

1. Town Meeting for School Budget

Chris provided background on when the Rumney School budget was voted on Town Meeting Day at a school meeting rather than by Australian ballot. The school budget meeting and vote followed Town Meeting and dinner. The overall budget amount could be changed on the floor but not specific line items in the budget. The vote was changed to Australian ballot at a special meeting in the early to mid 1990's and Chris recalled it being a very close vote.

Dexter expressed concern about the upcoming bond vote for the Rumney School facility that voters aren't well informed and if there was a school meeting where the vote would occur they would be better informed. Susan said she believes that bond votes have to be by Australian Ballot by state law. Voters can get an absentee ballot for the bond vote but may not be aware of this. Several methods of getting information to the voters were mentioned: Front Porch Forum, the Middlesex Monthly and mailings.

Returning the school budget vote to a meeting might result in more voter engagement. In order to gauge potential interest in returning the school budget vote to a meeting an advisory question could be placed on the school ballot next year.

2. Civic Engagement

There was discussion of actions that might promote civic engagement including neighborhood meetings. Dexter noted the large number of monetary requests from non-profit organizations at Town Meeting may act as a turn-off for some to attend Town Meeting due to the time it takes to work through them.

Susan would like to see a vision to action forum in Middlesex as this technique has been successful elsewhere at improving a sense of community. This would include small groups where all viewpoints can be heard. This possibility will be discussed further at a future meeting.

3. Town Meeting Feedback

Susan reviewed the feedback received from residents following this years Town Meeting. Suggestions included:

- provide a reference for warned articles to the pertinent pages in the Town Report
- name tags for participants
- the stage where the Select Board sat was too crowded
- provide mobile microphones for questions from the floor

4. Minutes from the February 1, 2013 Town Meeting Solutions Committee Meeting

Greg moved to approve the minutes of the February 13th meeting, second from Barb. Minutes were approved.

Next meeting: Wednesday, May 8th

Minutes recorded by Dave Shepard
