

Middlesex Town Meeting Solutions Committee
Meeting Minutes
December 6, 2016

Present: Susan Clark, Tim Murphy, Janette Shaffer, Dave Shepard, Barb Whitchurch, Greg Whitchurch

1. Town Budget Charts and Table

Cindy Carlson recently announced she is resigning as Town Treasurer, likely by mid to late January, 2017. The Town Meeting Solutions Committee (TMSC) had been planning to meet with the Budget Committee to discuss the town budget charts and the table that illustrates the cost of each article on the Town Meeting warning. Susan will check with Sarah Merriman on how best to proceed. Tim thinks it should be relatively simple to generate budget charts from the budget spreadsheet. Tim will work with the Select Board and the Budget Committee to create the charts for this year with the goal of setting up an automatic procedure for future years.

2. Displays at Town Meeting

Sarah recently learned from the League of Cities and Towns that there may be a legal issue with solicitations and displays in the same building where voting takes place on Town Meeting Day. This would include the Girl Scouts cookie sale and possibly also the displays of various entities such as the Conservation Commission and Historical Society. Various members of the TMSC expressed concern, particularly if town entities can't put up displays to inform town residents of their activities. Susan will get more details from Sarah on where this directive came from and exactly what is covered. Additional follow-up may be necessary.

3. Energy Facility Siting

Ron Krauth was not able to attend the meeting but passed along information that the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission has grant money available to assist towns with planning for the siting of energy facilities. Town's that have incorporated energy planning standards in accordance with Act 174, the Energy Development Improvement Act, have more ability to influence the siting of energy facilities through the Public Service Board process.

4. New Voter Letter

TMSC will need to request the addresses of new voters from Sarah in January so that TMSC can prepare and mail the welcome letter to these new voters.

5. Town Meeting Preparation

Susan will check in with Community Connections about providing child care for parents during Town Meeting.

Susan will post on Front Porch Forum (FPF) that a ride to and from Town Meeting can be provided. The contact for anyone needing a ride will be Dave.

Dinner following Town Meeting will likely be similar to the past several years.

Remote Town Meeting Participation (RTMP) will be offered with Janette handling the technical details. The flyer describing RTMP will be distributed similarly to last year through Vermont Home Health and Hospice, Waterbury Senior Center and the Area Agency on Aging. There was a suggestion to also contact the Montpelier Senior Center as another potential avenue. There was some discussion of the content of the flyer resulting in a decision to describe the service without getting into the technical details so as to hopefully not put off potential candidates who might be deterred by the technology involved. Greg has a laptop that could be available if a participant needs a computer. Janette will coordinate with Chip Hedler at Rumney School and Bennett Shapiro who has been doing the sound. The wireless microphones had some issues last year, possibly related to battery strength, so extra batteries should be available this year. It would be helpful to have helpers available who could be at an RTMP participant's home if they need assistance in using the technology. Like the RTMP participant, a helper could vote remotely.

Susan will post Town Meeting Tidbits on FPF and welcomes any additions from others.

6. Officers for TMSC

There was discussion on whether anyone was interested in taking on an officer position or stepping down from their existing office. The existing officers were willing to continue serving if there weren't others interested in one of the positions. Susan noted that a change of officers could be healthy for the organization. No change in officers was proposed and no official vote took place. Current officers are: Susan Clark, Chair; Tim Murphy, Vice-chair and Dave Shepard, Secretary.

7. Public Engagement Protocol

Susan noted that an organization she is involved with has engaged a facilitator to develop guidelines for public engagement. The facilitator will be conducting several workshops on this topic. Once the guidelines are available they could be adopted by any town that wanted to use them to guide their public engagement process when conducting town business.

Next meeting: January 10th at 6:00 p.m. at Rumney School

Minutes recorded by Dave Shepard, Secretary.