Town of Middlesex
Facilities Improvement Team (FIT)
Regular Meeting
Wednesday May 6, 2026
5:00 PM

Meeting Minutes

Kevin Thompson, John Rahill, Dorinda Crowell, Dave Magida, Eric Metivier, Lauri Scharf, Sandy Levine, Susan Clark, Zara Vincent, Larry Rooney

5:17 – Delay in start time due to technical challenges with Zoom

- Welcome
    - Approve minutes of April 1, 2026 meeting
        - Lauri Scharf said he tested the AI function for the minutes from the April 1 meeting. His impression was generally favorable.
        - Zara Vincent asked that the notes be posted on the web site

Motion: Eric Metivier moved to approve minutes of April 1, 2026 meeting, Kevin Thompson seconded, motion approved

- Approve or amend agenda for May 6, 2026 meeting

Motion: Dorinda Crowell moved to approve agenda for May 6, 2026 meeting, Eric Metivier seconded, motion approved

5:21

- Guest – Sam Lash, Climate & Energy Planner, Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC)
    - Sam is working on a few grant opportunities – both the town garage and the town hall projects might fit well into a few of these programs
        - Sam shared a slide deck with information
        - She summarized grant and funding opportunities
        - Town is eligible through ***direct pay*** program for federal funds, including for things like heat pumps; let Sam know when decisions are made re: technical equipment and she'll match funding options to equipment needs
        - Vt. Bond Bank has hired people to help towns file for direct pay and navigate that process – for a fee
        - Federal Tax Incentives for construction related work
            - Vt Bond Bank – strong bonds available and are likely to be part of any funding "stack"; pilot for this funding is the Charlotte Town Garage
                - New builds are eligible
                - Need voter approval and three years of audits
                - Original terms are 10 years and interest rate of 2.125%
                - For shovel ready projects
                - It's not too early to get on their radar at this point

        - This program target is 15% energy cost saved and min. is 5% (over 2020 standards) – won't be hard to meet with any solar, or energy recovery efforts
    - MERF – revolving loan fund – on the horizon in the coming year; interest rate will be higher than 2.125% but not set yet
        - MERF is in same legislative act at MERP but entirely different program
    - Vt. Bonding – market rate interest rates; up to 30 years; two application periods – summer and winter
    - Northern Border Regional Commission – timber for transit program; have feasibility award which can cover many planning efforts and also an implementation component; typically town garages are not included in transportation infrastructure but Sam said she argued for "transportation adjacent" – would need to tie into other transportation needs such as linking to school transportation
        - Suggests setting up a meeting with Vt. NBRC representative – make case for need for facility to keep transportation pathways open and accessible for local transportation
        - Federal transportation funds are part of their income
        - Sam believes there is room for MDX argument
        - Next Steps: Pursue the project interest form and set up a meeting
        - Pre-application is due in August
        - Requires a 50% match
    - Zara Vincent thanked Sam for her work; wants to help make the case by saying town is buying vehicles they cannot fit in the garage; would like to move forward with NBRC process
    - Sam said NBRC describes transportation very narrowly; public transportation facilities have been awarded grants (e.g., BTV airport, railroad station)
    - Need to help NBRC see that town garage has public transportation benefit
- Eric mentioned when open house was held he said people asked about having a public meeting space; Sam believes this will help make the case; suggested not changing the plan to meet grant confines but to see if there are opportunities to meet needs with this funding source
- NBRC is primarily interested in economic development so if there's any training or related program it would create stronger linkages to the grant guidelines
- John Rahill asked about lunch room in fire station – asked if another room is needed if that room is not very well used
- Sam said some of the technical schools might want to leverage the facility
- Susan Clark stated town hall project needs a meeting space; when fire house was built people were told the meeting space would be available and it hasn't been
- Zara Vincent said road commissioner and town administrator may need space in the town garage
- Lauri Scharf said if the transportation link was made, would NBRC fund the whole project; Sam's response was if it's an eligible project they will fund the full amount, and town would be responsible for match
- Sam said the town can make an argument for high visibility of timber projects with proximity to the school; the connection to economic and workforce is a way to make the case stronger

        - Eric Metivier offered the option for evacuation of school and needing a safe place – could be an evacuation location
    - Efficiency Vt – for planning and construction
        - TA for mechanicals and could help with custom incentive; has seen sizable awards; would depend on retrofit or new build; grants up to $60-90k; utilities provide custom incentives too
    - Vt Community Dev. Program – ABA modifications fund; $5-100k funds; 25% match requirement; a relatively unreliable funding source; ABA is an ingrained part of the program
        - Components – brownfields, and other specific components
    - Funding stack could get very complicated depending on variety of funding sources
    - USDA was not included because of complexity of their funding
    - Key recommendations from Sam:
        - Talk to neighboring towns – Sam is talking to 9 towns that may be interested in facilities improvement projects
            - For procurement and how potential sharing/collaboration might work
        - Support for planning – March deadline for next year
        - Congressionally directed spending could be another source of funds – Sam can help
        - Community engagement helps funders see how close town is to being ready; she thinks that Middlesex is doing a nice job keeping the community involved
        - Sam said ways she can help is to talk with recent recipients of timber funds and connect town with state rep. of NBRC
    - John Rahill asked about criteria for municipal planning grant
        - Sam responded there is a 10% match
        - Sandy Levine said she's familiar with these grants and committee would need to wait until next year; maybe a smaller group of three people could meet with Sam to see what can be pulled together soon
        - John Rahill agrees the initial meeting with state rep. from NBRC would be a critical first step
        - Sam suggests the group meet next week as she is away for a lot of the month of June
        - Dave Magida asked for volunteers: he will coordinate by email and get back to Sam by end of the week; m

5:55

- **Updates**
    - Funding for taking of minutes
        - Dave Magida said it's taken care of
    - Discussion at select board meeting regarding miscellaneous funding
        - Zara Vincent reported that the budget committee starts meeting in late summer to start next year's budget build; suggested the group start a list of what's needed.
        - Dorinda Crowell stated that the town budget includes $100,000 for capital projects; this fund could be the source of funds for smaller contracts with engineers, and others
    - Delineation of wetlands at the town garage site
        - Kevin Thompson reported that the select board gave approval to spend up to $2,000
        - Has contracted with Bear Creek Environmental to do a wetlands delineation
        - Mary Nealon is donating much of her time which cut the cost in half
        - Scheduled a site meeting for Friday June 12, rain date Monday June 15
        - Will ask for volunteers if Mary needs help
    - Update on review of Town Garage needs list

        - Eric Metivier reported that nothing has changed from previous reports
    - Pursuit of follow up on the preliminary structural engineering report on the town garage
        - John Rahill reported that the committee is putting together factual information to make informed decisions – e.g., spending a little money to do wetlands delineation
            - The current structure may be undersized
            - He said the committee does not have enough information to say that the structure can be renovated – Can the roof support insulation? The group doesn't know; John doesn't know what the number would be to get an engineering company to do the assessment of structural integrity
            - Dave Magida asked Larry Rooney and Zara Vincent if funds could be available
            - Zara Vincent reported select board is going through budget to actuals now to see if there are unspent funds – just approved $2,000 for the delineation and it's possible to ask again
                - Suggested the committee ask in June when the select board knows how the fiscal year's budget is doing
            - Need conceptual design work and knowing what can and can't be done to existing building – need to follow up on the report from 5 years ago
            - DeWolf wrote initial letter and Engineering Adventures might be able to do that work
            - John Rahill will pursue the conversation with firms to find out potential costs to get that information
                - John Rahill reported that Lauri Scharf has started to look at "nasty energy envelope" of the building
                - Enrique Bueno has done an energy model that is not ready for sharing

6:05

- **Initial Review and Discussion re: Survey**
    - Common priorities?
        - Lauri Scharf presented on survey results
        - 59 responses to survey
        - Some of the findings were put into graphs and presented:
            - Should town keep garage in current location – overwhelmingly positive response
            - Combine town office with town garage – positive but not overwhelming
            - Most important factor for town garage location was cost and next was suitability of location
            - Most important factor in decision to renovate or build is cost
            - Most important factor in town office location is cost
            - Most important feature of town office is location, with meeting space second, and location supported by town plan came up third
            - Least important feature of town office is historic feature
        - Written comments: Seemed to be strong feelings towards keeping things simple and cheaper; also strong sentiment to keep town office in town center; many spoke about consolidating
        - Dave Magida spoke about comments related to Rumney and potential for more utilization there
        - Cost is overwhelmingly the most popular concern

- Town Hall can be a gem again was one person's comment
- Zara Vincent said that committee should be careful when posting comments and assure they cannot be identifiable to an individual
- Dave Magida reported that there seems to be a common comment that there is no choice about safety and code compliance costs; it will be important to communicate about those requirements to the public; one respondent to the survey asked if it is possible to break out those costs
- John Rahill suggested looking at different options and laying out
- Larry Rooney asked Sam Lash – What kind of opportunities would open up for grants if the town combined buildings?
    - Sam responded that potentially it might open up funding sources
    - Co-location can help but should not dictate plan
    - Voting aspect of the facility can open up options
    - Would depend on if the plan is to keep current buildings/facilities or if some would be to build new
- New fire station could be another option or opportunity for consolidation
- Lot of comments thanking the committee for reaching out

- Next steps from survey
    - John Rahill talked about The Charrette process – survey shows two contradictory strong feelings
        - Don't want to lose half the voters because they're not happy with choices
        - The Charrette process can show how some funding options might help persuade that the final decision makes sense – provides an opportunity to share information and data
        - Structural condition of existing structure is a key information need
        - May want to have someone look at old fire station – is a wood structure that is old; easier to renovate than a steel structure; should be factored into options
        - Have to address both needs – town hall and town garage; consensus is both have to be looked at
        - There are two sites that may make sense so The Charrette may be a good avenue to help bring folks around a common plan
        - Zara Vincent asked how it works – what would be asked of people
            - Normally has people in the same room
            - Present ideas and present to others in the room
            - Can stop and ask presenters questions
        - Dave Magida said it's a process to get to construction documents
            - Will start the process share critical information from consultants
            - Dave Magida and John Rahill are suggesting the best process to move to next step is The Charrette
            - John Rahill said it's a good way to avoid future issues related to not involving the public early in the process
                - This is a way to make sure awkward questions in the process don't shoot down the progress and momentum
                - It assures the community the committee has done their homework
            - Sandy Levine thinks a Charrette is a good idea; she thinks there's work to get people to show up
            - John Rahill asked Sam if there were resources to help with the process

        - Sam responded that Charrettes are common for planners – Vt Council on Rural Development also has people who do this process
        - Suggested the committee frame it with the progress made to date and not start at square one
            - Framing for the conversation is to understand the retrofit vs. new build for town garage
            - Sam suggested coordinating with ANR re: wetland delineation
                - Kevin said Mary Nealon will do that work
- John Rahill suggested that maybe the town hall questions might arise if not part of the conversation
    - What was learned from negative vote of town hall bond?
    - What has been done to make town hall more comfortable? Must answer: Why is it less urgent now? This committee should lead in that discussion
- Kevin Thompson said the committee needs to make it clear which needs that were identified in the bond vote that failed have not been taken care of
    - The town hall is not functioning well
- Susan Clark – Not sure how to move forward with this; it's not clear what the question is; agrees now is the time for big ideas; if this committee can name the specific needs the committee could invite people into an open session to address those needs; this committee struggles because there are two different needs that sometimes get combined; not confident that inviting more people to struggle with question this committee is grappling with makes sense at this time
    - A lot of people agree that town garage needs to be located where it is
    - Town hall feels less urgent
- Dave Magida said the committee needs to get input from consultants before going down the pathway further
- John Rahill said it would help to get people to attend to offer things for them to criticize
    - Can ask people: What would it mean to combine municipal services with town garage/road needs?
- Zara Vincent said for now, agrees with Susan Clark and likes the progress so far; suggests figuring out scientific progress/ information and then figure out what's next
    - There is a lot known now
    - The town hall is worth about $400-500k
    - Urged committee to find the facts first and then make decisions
    - Get people involved by communicating progress
- Susan Clark thinks when the committee gets facts they should be shared; Riverfront park is a potentially a resource and should be in the mix for the conversation going forward; could be a simple structure that could help solve some needs of the town hall

        - Eric Metivier thinks there's some limitations on riverfront – tombstones? Something to keep in mind
        - Dave Magida suggests next steps:
            - Work with Sam to understanding funding opportunities
            - Get consultants to get hard facts about wetlands and structural needs
        - John Rahill said it's a good chance to look at current needs of town hall – updated list of needs
    - Dave Magida said the committee should wait to hear from engineers and decide at that point if a meeting in June is needed; committee needs engineer input to assure that we don't pursue options that are not reasonable
    - Zara Vincent suggested breaking out into groups
    - Kevin Thompson said he thinks there is a working group of the committee that could do the interim work needed
        - Will send email to try to get the group together to go over a few things – especially updated list re: needs at town hall
    - Dorinda Crowell said any funding that the budget committee is working on will not come into effect until July 2027; immediate funding in coming year could come out of building fund that's identified for pre-construction expense
    - Zara Vincent added to Kevin's list for town hall – suggested a key pad for front door
- **Next steps**
    - John Rahill will try to get pricing for preliminary work on structural report for existing town garage building
    - Zara Vincent and Eric Metivier will meet with Sam and NCRB
    - Kevin will convene a group to update needs list for town hall; Dave Magida will be part of this group
    - Other comments were shared:
        - Boundaries of town property and school are not in sync with each other
        - John Rahill said it would be good to have a boundary survey to reconcile the boundary lines

6: 42

- **Adjourn**

Motion: Eric Metivier moved to adjourn, Dorinda Crowell seconded, motion approved

Submitted by: Carol Maloney