Select Board Members
X Liz, Scharf, Chair
_Randy Drury, Vice Chair
X Vic Dwire
X Peter O. Hood
X Zara Vincent

MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD
Tuesday, August 20, 2024
Middlesex Town Hall and via Zoom*
Middlesex Town Clerk's Office
5 Church Street
Middlesex, Vermont 05602
(802) 223-5915

MINUTES

PRESENT: Chair Liz Scharf, Select Board members, Peter Hood*, Vic Dwire and Zara Vincent (Chair of the Town Roads Subcommittee). Treasurer Cheryl Grandfield. Assistant Treasurer Dorinda Crowell. Town FEMA Coordinator Steve Martin. MVFD President Jeff Koonz. Conservation Commission Chair Adrienne Magida. Town Hall Committee Sandy Levine and David Magida. Elle O'Casey* and Jennifer Tuttle*. Select Board Assistant Sarah Merriman took the minutes and the meeting was recorded by ORCA. (*indicates attended via Zoom)

Call to Order

Liz called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM. Guests were welcomed.
MOTION: Zara moved, and Vic seconded approving the minutes from the August 6, 2024, Middlesex Select Board meeting. The motion passed and the minutes were signed by those present.
MOTION: Zara moved, and Vic seconded approving the agenda for the August 20, 2024, Middlesex Select Board meeting.

Roads/FEMA Update

Liz said the road crew has been helping Dirt Tech on improving Bolduc Road.
Steve said Dirt Tech is working on their last emergency work project for the 2024 flood on Brook Road. They'll also be ditching and stone lining on East Hill and installing culverts on Center Road after installing culverts on South Bear Swamp. After that, Dirt Tech is going to concentrate on East Hill and Center roads to have 100% complete soon after school starts. Steve said there have been discussions with FEMA about separating emergency 2024 work from 2023 repairs. Dirk suggested awarding a contract for 2024 work so they can work in concert. Steve suggested doing a contract for East Hill, Center and Brook to complete the gravel and ditching under two different contracts. Zara said according to FEMA it would make more sense, including economically, to extend those contracts to Dirt Tech instead of starting over with a brand-new bidding process.
Peter urged written approval from FEMA to award Dirt Tech a separate contract. Peter questioned whether the 2023 contract work failed and if the roads were sufficiently crowned. Zara said she's working with FEMA on Build Back Better, hazard mitigation, and she wasn't sure those contractors in 2023 were involved in hazard mitigation. Vic said Dirt Tech never got to finish their 2023 permanent work before the July 2024 rains hit. Zara suggested that since Vic's on Team Fix on the Town roads subcommittee, that he should survey the repairs to see that they're being done correctly.
Liz asked about billing for Dirt Tech going forward; Steve said there would be 2023 bills and 2024 bills. Liz also reminded the Board that according to the experts at the public forum on August 6th, even well-maintained roads cannot withstand these 100-year storms. Steve said he's touring the roads on Friday with Eric to prioritize the work left to do in 2024.
Noting an emergency declaration has just been declared for the 2024 storm
Zara said her FEMA committee is close to wrapping up three roads from 2023 to be submitted to FEMA. Cheryl said the last payment from FEMA was August 5th. Cheryl said the Town plans to borrow the remaining $1.5 million and then extend the loan. Expenses for the current flood are $1.6 million.
Peter said he's received questions about whether the town's insurance would cover them for doing their own road repairs. The Board agreed the town would not cover them. Liz asked about sandbags.

MVFD Update

Jeff said the past month since the last report was one of the most devastating he's ever experienced. A horrific accident on I-89 in which two passengers were killed instantly and resulted in a car fire on July was understandably disturbing for the six members of the MVFD who attended. They were offered counseling if necessary. (Please see below for entire MVFD report.)
Liz asked about turnout gear and whether it would have to be changed in two years due to potentially carcinogenic materials. Jeff said he was aware of the concern, but that there are currently no products on the market that meet those specifications.
Zara asked how often the gloves need to be replaced; Jeff said there was no deadline since they often get wet.
Originally $50,000 of ARPA allocated for turnout equipment.
MOTION: Peter moved, and Zara seconded an increase in allocation of $3,268.25 in ARPA funds to pay for gloves. The motion passed.
Jeff said the MVFD is up to 15 members and thanked the Board for being supportive of the department. Steve and Jeff left the meeting.

Approving a $2.5 Million Town Hall Bond Ballot Question for the Nov. 5 Ballot

Sandy and Dave summarized the efforts of the Town Hall Committee to review plans and pinpoint costs for a possible rehabilitation of Town Hall. Sandy said she and Liz met with Vermont Integrated Architects and EF Wall, which has been selected as the construction manager, to come up with a more refined cost of the rehabilitation. Sandy said, unfortunately, the prior estimate of roughly $2 million ticked up to $3.25 million due to unforeseen costs. She asked the Select Board to place a question on the November 5, 2024, General Election ballot asking voters whether to approve a bond for $2.5 million. Meanwhile, the committee will continue to research other funding sources such as grants and fundraising. She said the committee realizes the Town is facing many financial uncertainties with the recent flood, but believes that at least the voters should be asked to make the decision. *****
Liz added that a lot of costs have to do with making the building ADA compatible. She said the committee was very disappointed by the total figure and feels bad that this build has become so expensive.
David cautioned against the trap of removing features now that are likely to be more expensive if added later. He said commercial buildings need to follow a set of codes that don't apply to residential buildings. He said the committee worked to lower the project's costs and feels confident the rehabilitation can happen for $2.5 million with other funding sources.
Peter said it's important to tell the voters that just because the bond is passed, that doesn't mean the Town is committed to taking the bond.
Lauri said the MVFD building, and Town Hall are each eligible for only $100,000 in funding from the Municipal Energy Resource Program, which is disappointing.
Zara asked about other options besides rehabbing the current Town Hall. David said the architects looked at building new vs. rehabilitating. With $2.5 million the Town will be able do a lot of improvements that must happen. If the Board does not approve the committee's suggestion, then he said the committee will have to consider revising the plans and putting this before the voters at the March 2025 Town Meeting. At that point other options might be considered including changing the Town Plan to allow the municipal offices to be located outside the Village, possibly near the Town Garage in some sort of combined building. That said, the least expensive option was rehabbing Town Hall.
Liz noted the MVFD bond will soon reach maturity which will ease the taxpayers' burden. Vic said he was opposed to the bond. He said it was ludicrous to ask voters to fund this after all the money that's been spent on repairing the flooded roads. Liz said there never will be a good time to do this; it'll always get more expensive. David said this new estimate is the result of more detailed work.
Zara said she has concerns about human beings working in the building due to the mold, insufficient septic, radon, etc. Peter said the Board owed the voters an opportunity to vote on this question.
MOTION: Peter moved to put forth the following question: *Shall general obligation bonds of the Town of Middlesex in an amount not to exceed Two Million Five Hundred Thousand Dollars ($2,500,000), subject to reduction from the receipt of available state and federal*

grants-in-aid, be issued for the purpose of financing the cost of renovating Middlesex Town Hall at an estimated cost of Three Million Two Hundred and Fifty Thousand Dollars ($3,250,000)?
Dorinda said she does not think the bond will pass, noting the Town Hall rehab process started before the July 2023 flood. The Town has already spent $1.6 million for repairs for the 2024 flood. Meanwhile, FEMA is reimbursing at a very slow rate. She suggested waiting for the March 2025 Town Meeting when the Town will have more information.
Liz said the problem with March is that the costs are likely to go up and construction contracts are awarded in December. In addition, the November election will have a much higher voter turnout since every active, not-challenged voter will be mailed a ballot.
Zara seconded the motion because, she said, she feels the question should be put before the voters. Vic said he'd approve the motion if it didn't raise taxes. Dorinda said the MVFD bond expires in 2030, and Liz said the bond payments won't kick in to 2026. He said the townwide reappraisal will also be taking effect at that time. Liz said the payment the first significant payment will be $211,000 in 2027 if the bond passes.
Liz, Peter and Zara voted to approve putting the question on the ballot; Vic voted in opposition. The motion passed.
***Because the Vermont Secretary of State's Office is mailing every active, not-challenged voter a November 5, 2024, General Election ballot, as a practical matter all ballot questions must be approved by pertinent legislative bodies by August 23, 2024, which is outside the statutory time frame for bond warnings as outlined in 24 V.S.A. § 1756. The Select Board will then institute the procedure for warning a bond, complete with timely notices and public hearings, no sooner than 30 days and no more than 40 days before the November 5th vote as outlined in 24 V.S.A. § 1756. This procedure has been approved by the Secretary of State to accommodate for time constraints caused by printing and mailing early ballots.*

Approving a Request to Participate in the 2024 Emergency Watershed Program

Adrienne said an emergency declaration doesn't have to be declared for the Town to send a request to participate in the 2024 Emergency Watershed Program. While the Board approved participating in the EWP for the 2023 flood, this round would consider properties vulnerable to erosion and flooding that are not in the flood plain and did not participate in the 2023 EWP. These might have been damaged in the July 10, 2024, flood. She said the standard protocol is for the federal government to pick up 75% of the cost and for the individual homeowners to pay 25%. She said it's unclear if the special provisions last year that resulted in the government paying 100% of the costs will happen again. She said three homeowners have already expressed interest in the 2024 program.
MOTION: Vic moved, and Zara seconded sending the USDA a letter from the Town of Middlesex asking to join the Emergency Watershed Program for 2024. The motion passed and Liz signed the letter.
As for the 2023 projects, Adrienne said the engineering is completed and they are about to go out to bid.

OTHER BUSINESS

CORRESPONDENCE: The Board reviewed an email from Jennifer Tuttle of Brook Road who said her driveway was destroyed due to inadequate culvert maintenance which caused water to fill a ditch and enter her home. She said she was "looking for support" from the Town. Liz referred to the Town's highway policy which notes homeowners are responsible for maintenance of their own culverts, as in Jennifer's case since they are on her property. However, Liz said she would inspect the culverts and discuss the situation with Eric.

The Board passed over an access application from Lila Macey on Macey Road until neighbor Gloria Hobson can review the app and determine if the proposed driveway passes over her spring.

All orders were signed by those present.

The meeting adjourned at 7:02 PM.

THE ABOVE MINUTES WERE APPROVED AS A WARNED AGENDA ITEM AT A SPECIALLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD ON SEPTEMBER 3, 2024.

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LIZ SCHARF, CHAIR

_____N/A_____
RANDY DRURY, VICE CHAIR

_____
VIC DWIRE

_____
PETER HOOD

_____
ZARA VINCENT

DRAFT

20 Aug SB Meeting Notes

Total calls this year: 73
Calls during this period: 14
Mutual Aid out: 3
Mutual Aid in: 2
Max members respond: 12
Min members respond: 2
Avg members respond: 5.0

E-1 out 12 times
E-6 out 1 times
T-1 out 4 times
R-1 out 5 time
Tk-14 out 0 times
POV out 5 times

16 Jul, Guilmette Rd, Lightning strike, E-1, T-1, R-1 POV, 12 responders
19 Jul, I-89 SB mm 54.6, Car vs deer, E-1, 2 responders
22 Jul, East Hill and Davy, Logs on fire, Permitted fire, R-1, T-1, POV, 10 responders
23 Jul, Macey Rd, Truck off the road, E-1, E-6, R-1, 12 responders
24 Jul, Vt Rt 12,Structure fire, T-1, 4 responders
MA out, Berlin
25 Jul, Shady Rill and Wood, Water rescue, POV, 5 responders
25 Jul, Center Rd, Fire alarm, False alarm, E-1, POV, 7 responders
26 Jul, E Bear Swamp, Smoke haze and smell, E-1, POV, 3 responders
28 Jul, I-89 NB mm 60.4, Vehicle fire/crash, E-1, T-1, R-1, 6 responders

2:00 PM August 26, 2024

MA in MFD E-1
29 Jul, Jones Brook Rd, Structure fire, E-1, 4 responders
MA out, Moretown
29 Jul, Corry Rd, Structure fire, E-1, 4 responders
MA in MFD E-1
05 Aug, I-89 SB mm 56.6, Motor vehicle accident, E-1, R-1, POV, 7 responders
08 Aug, Winooski River, Search and rescue, E-1, R-1, POV, 6 responders
MA out Montpelier
16 Aug, Exit 9 and Center, iPhone crash detection, E-1, 7 responders

The members on scene at the car fire and deaths debriefed the call when we returned to make sure everyone was okay. We have been checking in with them as well.

FAST Sq:
11 total for the reporting period
7 medical only calls

Training: Ladder operations
Five members have registered for Firefighter One class being held at East Montpelier VFD. This is a six month course.

Repairs: R-1 new tail pipe

Purchases: New turnout gear (coat and pants), $41,510.04 we're adding a new member, sizing has been completed. Also, we need to get gloves for everyone which comes up to 3268.25.

DRAFT