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

MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD
Tuesday, October 1, 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, Vice Chair Randy Drury. Select Board members, Vic Dwire, Peter O. Hood* and Zara Vincent (Chair of the Town Roads Subcommittee). Road Commissioner/Foreman/MVFD Chief Eric Metivier. CVRPC planner Lincoln Frasca. MVFD President Jeff Koonz. Treasurer Cheryl Grandfield. Assistant. 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 September 3, 2024 Select Board meeting minutes. The motion passed.

MOTION: Vic moved and Zara seconded approving the September 17, 2024, Select Board meeting minutes.

MOTION: Vic moved and Zara seconded approved the September 24, 2024 Special Meeting (vicious dog hearing) minutes. The motion passed.

MOTION: Randy moved, and Zara seconded approving the amended agenda for the October 1, 2024, Middlesex Select Board meeting with the addition of the annual approval of the 2019 Town Road and Bridge Standards. The motion passed.

2023 EWP Construction Projects Awarded to J. Merrill

Lincoln asked the Board for authorization to send a notice of award to the only subcontractor who bid on the 2023 Emergency Watershed Projects – J. Merrill Construction. However, Merrill's bid of $662,766 is $244,759 over the $418,007 the Natural Resource Conservation Service has allotted for the program. He said this is further complicated by the federal fiscal year coming to an end on September 30th since it will take two-to-six weeks for funds to rolled over to FY25. One way to resolve this lag would be to create a priority list.

Liz said her concern is that the Town may not know until after the contract is approved if the Town is going to get the additional money. Lincoln suggested sitting on the contract until the money is earmarked. The only problem with that is that the end of the year is fast approaching and the projects must be finished by December 15th.

Zara asked for details on the 2023 projects. Lincoln said much of the work is bank stabilization, armoring those banks and there might be some debris removal. Adrienne said the EWP projects for 2023 are down to six sites which are facing imminent danger.

Four options available: Middlesex 1) covers costs 2) requires property owners to cover the costs 3) holds off on signing the contract until fully funded or 4) prioritizes projects in consultation with the EWP engineer. Randy said he would support option #4 as long as that doesn't jeopardize full funding because at least it would get the projects moving. Zara agreed and asked if HMP money was available. Lincoln said no.

Adrienne said some people had to have a redesign after the 2024 flood, so they might fall into the 2024 category. Liz said she asked Jason why his bid is so much higher. He said the 2024 flood created a larger coverage area.

MOTION: Randy moved to authorize the notice to proceed up to $418,007 while awaiting the remaining $244,759 from the Natural Resource Conservation Services and authorizing Dexter Lefavour of New England Consulting Engineers, LLC, to prioritize the projects; Zara seconded. The motion passed. Lincoln said he would return to the Board on October 15, 2023, with a contract reflecting the approved motion.

Approving the Warning for the November 5, 2024 Bond Vote

Liz read the Warning for the "Special Town Meeting," i.e. $2.5 million bond vote to rehabilitate Town Hall. Vic asked about the process since this question is already on the ballot; the Board discussed the Secretary of State deadlines vs. the statutory bond-vote deadlines. Liz said if the bond passes and the Town is not approved for additional grant funding, the Town will go back to Vermont Integrated Architecture and ask them to address only those issues which must be fixed.

MOTION: Zara moved to approve the Warning for the "Special Town Meeting," i.e. $2.5 million bond vote on November 5, 2024. Peter seconded. The motion passed. Victor opposed. All members physically present signed the Warning.

Highway Report

Eric said work on East Hill is completed. There were no incidents re: the culvert. Road Crew is on East Bear Swamp and will then move to South Bear Swamp to ditch the Class 4 section. Peter said he's gotten calls about pot holes on Shady Rill. Eric said they will be properly fixed before winter.

Eric inventoried right-of-way culverts that could pose problems for Town roads if not repaired. The box culvert for Portal Road has been constructed and will be installed at the end of this week or the beginning of next.

$1/Hour Pay raise for Road Foreman/Road Commissioner

Zara calculated that the Town saved approximately $8,000 when Charles Pelchar left and before his replacement was hired. Therefore, she argued, the Town has enough allocated in the FY25 budget to accommodate a $1 per hour pay raise for Eric. She said Eric's pay needs to be on par with his contemporaries in other towns which are advertising to hire road foremen at hourly rates between $35 and $45. Currently, Eric is making just under $35 per hour. Vic said it's unusual to give pay raises twice a year

and said the crew will point out that they worked hard during the floods as well. Zara said Eric works far more than 40 hours per week. As for this year's pay raise that was implemented July 1, that was a cost-of-living increase, not a merit raise. She said he's putting in the time and deserves the money.
Liz said the overall duties of the Road Foreman have been expanded due to the floods to include a lot more administrative work than in the past. Zara said Eric is doing an excellent job managing the stress and answering the calls and that employees should know their valued. Randy acknowledged Eric's valued, but disagreed with this approach and suggested a one-time incentive bonus noting the Board made "a significant adjustment" to employees' pay mid-year in 2021. Peter agreed with Randy. Zara disagreed with a bonus and said the pay needs to be brought up so the Town doesn't lose valuable employees. Vic said he's worried a precedent is being set. Liz asked, is this person taking on more responsibilities than we anticipated? What is their salary worth for that? Things are going to happen mid-year like a flood that's not part of budget season. She said it's better to have a pay increase because the next pay increase will be even that much greater. Zara urged the Board to look to the future.
MOTION: Zara moved to raise Eric Metivier's pay by one dollar an hour; Liz seconded. Zara, Liz and Peter voted in favor. Randy and Vic voted against. The motion passed.

Policy for Right-of-Way Culverts

Under the current policy, property owners are responsible for installing and maintaining driveway culverts located in the Town rights-of-way. Zara said the Town Road Subcommittee is in favor of the Town assuming these responsibilities. The Board discussed this and decided to pass over the policy until later.

Zara Vincent FEMA Coordinator for 2024 Projects

The Board discussed Zara's role in assisting former Town FEMA Coordinator Steve Martin with the 2023 FEMA projects, including doing all the data entry, creating spreadsheets and meeting with FEMA's Project Development Manager twice a week, on average since July. Sarah informed the Board that in talking with Vermont Emergency Management, the Board would be free to appoint Zara as Steve's replacement for the 2024 projects without going out to bid considering her track record of volunteering on FEMA projects for over three months provided that her hourly compensation is within range of other Town employees.
MOTION: Liz moved to hire Zara as Town FEMA Coordinator at $36.34 per hour; Peter seconded. Eric would still be involved in assisting with these projects. The position would be temporary with Town paying only FICA. All voted in approval except for Zara who recused herself.
MOTION: Liz moved to pay Zara a $2,300 bonus for her FEMA work so far; Randy seconded. The understanding is the bonus would be paid from the Town's discretionary fund and would likely not be reimbursed by FEMA. Zara recused herself from the vote. The motion passed.

Readopting the Town Road and Bridge Standards

MOTION: Vic moved and Randy seconded certifying the Town's compliance with the 2019 Road and Bridge Standards. The motion passed and those physically present signed the Certification of Compliance.
Peter said he and other Town officials received an email from John Rahill suggesting that the Town apply "experimental changes" to the way roads are graded in town. Zara said the Town Roads Subcommittee discusses this at every meeting and that the Highway Department may not have time this season to try this experimental grading.

Approving Owen Dalton's Appointment to the Middlesex Conservation Commission

MOTION: Zara moved and Vic seconded approving the MCC's recommendation that Owen Dalton be appointed to the Middlesex Conservation Commission. The motion passed.

OTHER BUSINESS

All orders were signed by those present.

The Board reviewed Patty O'Neill's letter of resignation from the Middlesex Volunteer Fire Department and decided there was no need to go into Executive Session.
MOTION: Vic moved to accept Patty O'Neill's resignation and to thank her for her service; Peter seconded. The motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 6:42 PM

THE ABOVE MINUTES WERE APPROVED AS A WARNED AGENDA ITEM AT A REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD ON OCTOBER 15, 2024.

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LIZ SCHARF, CHAIR

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RANDY DRURY, VICE CHAIR

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VIC DWIRE

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PETER HOOD

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ZARA VINCENT