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
SPECIAL MEETING
Tuesday, January 14, 2025
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, Peter Hood*, Vic Dwire and Zara Vincent (Chair of the Town Roads Subcommittee). Road Foreman/Road Commissioner/MVFD Chief Eric Metivier. Treasurer Cheryl Grandfield. Budget Committee member and Lister Samantha Beaudoin. Listers Shelly Desjardin and Annette Halasz. Budget Committee Chair Mark Harris and Budget Committee member Elias Gardner*. Planning Commission member Paula Otenti*. The meeting was recorded by ORCA. (*indicates attended via Zoom)

Call to Order

Liz called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. Guests were welcomed.
MOTION: Randy moved, and Vic seconded approving the minutes for the December 17, 2024, Middlesex Select Board meeting. The motion passed. The minutes were signed by those present.
MOTION: Vic moved and Randy seconded approving the agenda for the January 14, 2025, Special Meeting. The motion passed.

FY26 BUDGET WORKSHOP

Mark said he was still trying to get the budget to a 10% increase or less, which wasn't easy because there aren't that many places to cut. Mark asked about ARPA funds. He said two budgets ago, the operational surplus was over $100,000. Is it the Board's goal to replenish that reserve?
Liz said a modest amount is healthy to have in reserves; right now the Town has no reserves.
Peter said reserves used to be used to cover Town expenses before tax revenues came in. Historically, the Town usually underspends budget by a small percentage. That's largely where the reserves have come from, he said.
Liz noted FEMA might not reimburse the Town fully for two to four years. There will be a deficit regardless. Therefore, the ARPA money is gone. That might be the purpose of a bond, to get the Town through the upcoming difficult years.
The Board discussed the Town's match of FEMA funds and estimated that with $12 million of work required to repair the 2023 and 2024 road damage as well as hazard mitigation, the match required will be close to $450,000.
Zara said she is talking to people in U.S. Senator Peter Welch's office; she's outlined the frustrating process. The Town had paid out $7 million, but FEMA has paid only $500,000 with another $152,000 promised to come soon.
The Board discussed interest due on the various loans the Town took out to pay for the roadwork. A significant payment is due to Community Bank next month, Cheryl said, and Community Bank is not allowed to extend the loan. There is a workaround, though, for now.
The Board proceeded to go through the proposed budget line by line. Mark suggested stockpiling gravel for the next fiscal year if there's money left over this year for it. Cutting that line item means the Town could buy only 2,500 cubic yards of gravel next year, Zara and Eric said.
The Board suggested reducing Lister hours which Cheryl said would be a saving of $14k. Shelly said the Listers will be trying to lower the cost of the townwide reappraisal by doing much of the work so NEMRC doesn't have to pay that. Sam says the Listers were under budgeted for FY25 and would definitely be going over budget since only 657 hours were budgeted.
Mark reviewed a list of cuts proposed by former Treasurer Dorinda Crowell. Zara said she would need 250 hours as FEMA Coordinator. The Board broke down the office staff pay and hours as follows: Town Clerk/Treasurer 1,664 hours at $37.79 (with the 4% COLA increase.) Assistant Clerk/Select Board Assistant at 832 hours each position at $25/hour. Bookkeeper at 250 hours. Zara said she did not want the 4% COLA increase. The Board agreed to a 4% cost-of-living pay increase for all fulltime employees.
The Board discussed dental plans for employees. After the cuts – delineated below – the budget increase was down to 9.71% not including special articles that, if passed, would add another 3.6%. Samantha said voters need to be informed about the impact of special articles.
Budget readjustments:
Line 34, tax abatements = $5,000
Line 54, Lister mileage expenses = $1,000
Line 61, website development = $20,000
Line 83, speed enforcement = $0
Line 84, dog pound, animal control = $300
Line 85, emergency management = 0
Line 137, road gravel = $60,000

DRAFT

Line 141, tree service = $0
Line 522, cemetery contracted services = $6,500
Line 276, bandstand = $1,500
Line 285, zoning legal fees = $2,000
Line 294, planning commission postage = $800
Line 312, highway garage fund = $5,000
Line 324, tennis court rehab = 0
Total proposed FY26 budget after cuts = **$2,022,439**.
The Board decided not to make a contribution to the Conservation Fund which will have approximately $31,000 in its account at the end of the fiscal year. The FY26 proposed budget will be voted on at the January 21, 2025, regular Select Board meeting as part of the Warning being submitted for voter approval at the March 4, 2025 Town Meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

MOTION: Randy moved and Zara seconded approving a 1st class restaurant/bar license for the Blacksheep Food Company's new restaurant at the old Filling Station site on US Route 2. The motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM.

THE ABOVE MINUTES WERE APPROVED AS A WARNED AGENDA ITEM AT A REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD ON JANUARY 21, 2025.

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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

DRAFT