Select Board Members
_X_ Liz Scharf, Chair
_X_ Zara Vincent, Vice Chair
___ Stacey Skadberg
_X_ Larry Rooney
_X_ Paul Cerminara

Middlesex Select Board Meeting
5:00 PM
Middlesex Town Hall and via Zoom*
5 Church Street
Middlesex, Vermont 05602

Meeting Minutes

Attending: **In-person:** Eric Metevier, Jeff Coombs, Misha Golfman, Matt Rkiouak, Kevin Thompson, Cheryl Grandfield, Brenda Edelschick, Dorinda Crowell, Michelle Johnson, Paul Boffa, Road Crew Staff
Via Zoom: Bill Preis, Shelly Desjardin, Mitch Osiecki, Carol Maloney

5:05

- **Call to order and welcome to guests**
- **Approve the minutes of the November 3, 2025 regular Select Board meeting**
  - Zara moved, Paul seconded, motion approved
- **Approve the minutes of the special culvert meeting of November 10th**
  - Paul moved, Zara seconded, motion approved
- **Approve agenda for Tuesday November 18, 2025 and consider any amendments to the agenda**
  - Amended to add Brenda Edelschick to present on health insurance options for town employees
  - Zara moved to approve with amendment, Larry seconded, motion approved

5:07

- **Radon mitigation in vault update**
  - Energy committee recommends insulating foundation in the spring
  - Furnace has some corrosion but is otherwise in good shape
  - $1,600 to vent vault and move radon from it
  - There will need to be some electrical work
  - **Motion to approve radon mitigation system not to exceed $5,000**
    - Zara moved, Paul seconded, motion approved

5:11

- **Misha Golfman, director of the Mad River Path on the proposed Mad River Valley path**
  - Misha Golfman handed out a scoping study and shared a slide presentation
    - Purpose of study was to connect towns along Mad River with a multi-use path – from Warren to Middlesex
    - Study included public meetings and engineering work
    - The study concluded it's possible to do this and it's desirable from public perspective
    - Study's findings were approved by VTrans
  - Misha shared maps of the proposed pathway
    - Work will take place in four segments
    - Segment four is the Moretown to Middlesex village path
      - May not require additional rights of way
  - VTrans recommended each town submits its own plan
    - Will require 4 steps:
      1. Apply for more scoping funds – specifically for the last segment
         a. Requires 20% local match – about $8,000 per town – grant applications are due in June and Nov each year
      2. Complete study – takes about a year
      3. On behalf of towns, the path association together with Cross VT Trails, will apply for funds to start trail work
      4. Middlesex will need to make a plan for sidewalk – VTrans requires connections at each end of the path
    - Local planning commission has not been contacted yet
    - No action taken – more conversation needed in future

5:23

- **Fire department update**
  - Jeff Koonz reported
    - 6 calls during this period
    - Call-outs included:
      - Smoke in Shady Rill area
      - Three car crash on I-89
      - Car in ditch on Center Rd
      - Power pole on fire on East Hill Rd.

- New member attending EMT training currently
- Fast squad out eight times – five for medical only
- Jeff announced he will be stepping down from leading the dept.; no replacement confirmed at this time

5:27

- **Highway report and FEMA roadwork update from Eric Metevier and Zara Vincent**
  - Highway update – Eric reported
    - Started plowing, sanding, and salting
    - Old Brook Rd – barricades going up and widening of road starting Nov. 19
  - FEMA update – Zara reported
    - Per ANR requests, town has done RFP for new engineers and will get quotes by Friday
    - Fed. government has reopened and is having trouble with websites
    - Almost at closeout for 2024 – still have $3M pending
  - Update on outcomes from Nov 10th warned meeting with Dirt Tech to discuss six culverts with deficiencies
    - Select board met with reps from Dirt Tech (DT) on Nov. 10th
    - Paul put findings of previous meeting in Oct. together – and provided overview of each problem area
    - Many of the issues are related to aquatic species concerns
    - DT was eager to make repairs and town appreciates their willingness to work with town to rectify issues
    - Town asked that a meeting be held with town, DT, and ANR to make sure work that is done is approved by ANR
    - Liz reached out to ANR subsequently and they asked her to hold off
      - They want to officially notify the town of their findings through their legal dept.
      - That means the town will be receiving a report that shows out of compliance details and will provide a list of exactly what is needed to get into compliance
      - Liz talked with the ANR rep. who has worked on this with the town and he stated that Vt. is the recipient of significant FEMA funds, and state standards were adopted – the state must assure it is complying with all standards FEMA set and future state funds from FEMA are at risk if state doesn't hold towns accountable for those standards
      - Daniels Farm Rd and Old Brook Rd are the most significant in terms of work that's needed – had hoped to get those done before winter
      - Eric has pulled together an RFP so the town can act on urgent needs as soon as ANR gets communication to MDX
      - MDX had a $10M problem from floods and town didn't have expertise or staffing for this scale of problem
        - Town has learned that future disasters of this scale would require a full time project manager to oversee and coordinate with all the interested parties – e.g., town, ANR, contractors, engineers
      - Dorinda asked if future work will need to be included in next year's budget
        - May need to include legal fees – town attorney recommended town include $50,000 in next year's budget
        - There may be other expenses, such as guardrails, that are not FEMA reimbursement
        - Paul stated that town ought to take safety measures and improvements after the repairs have been made
      - This issue will be on many future meeting agendas until it's resolved
      - Paul reported DT was eager to rectify things but realized with ANR's response this work will likely occur in 2026
      - Bill Preis stated that an engineer must certify completion of any federally funded project and that was not done
        - Liz suggested that ANR provide towns with a guide or list of steps a town needs to follow – towns don't have capacity or expertise to manage these large projects
      - One future scenario could include litigation but the town is hopeful that can be avoided
      - ANR wants this to be as cost efficient as possible
        - Some of the issues, as detailed in 11/10 meeting, may have resolved now that there is more water running through the culverts

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- Paul stated the good news is the culverts are the right size and won't have to be dug up
    - FEMA payments are also not jeopardized
- Michelle Johnson asked: Where is the accountability of ANR regarding work being completed?
    - Liz thinks the town attorney needs to review ANR's responsibilities and town's culpability
    - Many conversations took place while the work was being done among town, DT, ANR, and VTrans
    - More information is needed to determine when or if ANR may share responsibility for mistakes

5:57

- **Health Care for town employees**
    - Brenda Edelschick reported for town employees – all employees appeared at the meeting in-person
        - High current deductibles prevent employees from seeking care
        - Aggregate plans hurt families
        - Town employees agree town cares about its employees
            - Current plan deductible is $6,000, and more than one person on plan is a $12,000 ded. – this means in a multi person plan the first person has to meet a deductible of $12,000
            - Pharmacy ded. is $3,400 for multi person plan
            - The town is currently paying $964 monthly premium for the coverage – employees do no pay anything toward monthly premium
            - Any new plan with cost increases will overlap with two fiscal years so inflation in 2027 might need to be built in to the new cost
        - Issues with current plans: deductibles are excessive and create financial stress for employees and lead to decisions to defer care
        - One town employee, Ben Abare, reported he had a baby and covered $12,000 deductible this year and will have to pay a new deductible of $12,000 in new year for additional health services – out of pocket for his family could be $19,000 after HSA funds are used
        - Several employees spoke about their preferences for coverage
        - Cheryl said Dec. 1st is latest date town needs to get forms out to employees and ensure coverage for Jan. 1st
        - Current year's budget through June 30 does not include an increase for the first six months of 2026 so select board would need to come up with a plan to cover any increase
        - Brenda also shared dental and vision coverage options – town has not included these two coverages in the past

    - **Motion to approve switch to MVP Gold plan – if employees agree to switch plans – and to include dental and vision coverage, totaling $18,200 increase for town (before HSA consideration)**
        - Zara moved, Larry seconded, motion approved, Paul abstained

- **Review Budgets**
    - **Recreation Department – Mitch Osiecki reported**
        - Responsibilities include:
            - Maintenance for Walter Kelly Park
            - Rumney field brush hogging
            - Buy out property maintenance including brush hogging comes out of this budget
        - Bid went out for mowing in 2025 and typically the contract goes for two years
        - Facility amenities – port-a-lets are about $300/month
        - Shed next to tennis courts has an electric meter and that fee is included
        - Rolled the bandstand contribution of $1,500 into the Rec. budget to consolidate
        - Matt on budget and cemetery committees suggested there are joint efforts for mowing contracts – Mitch and Matt will connect
        - $19,430 total request
        - Basketball court – Mitch needs to get better information about repairing them
        - Tennis courts also need work but no specific information was shared – need quotes
        - Mitch will get more information in 2026 for repairs to basketball and tennis courts
        - Baseball field also needs work – this is not a firm project and Mitch believes independent fundraising will be required for this work

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- **Animal Control (via email)**
  - Liz reported that person in the position isn't taking a salary currently
  - Dorinda reported that usually there is a $300 incidental expense line

- **Bandstand – Paul Boffa reported**
  - $1,500 budget collapsed into Rec. Budget
  - Paul asked for clarification about budget process with select board
  - Liz explained that the select board decides on budget recommendation to town in December and January using information from each committee
  - Nothing more is needed from bandstand committee at this time – the $1,500 they typically request is no longer a special article; bandstand committee will submit its request for 2027 through Rec Committee budget process

OTHER BUSINESS

- **Correspondence – Circle requesting $250 to long list of donations requests for Special Article Town Meeting 2026**
  - Jan. 6 deadline for special funding from town
  - Cheryl is communicating with nonprofits about timelines and requirements

- **Town hall weatherization project final update, thanking volunteers**
  - Liz reported Randy Drury volunteered his time on a Sunday blowing cellulose, with help from other volunteers
  - The board thanked all the volunteers for their efforts on behalf of the town

- **Buyout closings update from Liz**
  - Total of 8 buyouts town is responsible for
    - Kevin will communicate with neighbors about pending demolition to the properties
    - Cheryl saved a shed so road crew can use it
    - Most buy outs are done – one remains and town is waiting for paperwork
  - Town needs to budget $5,000 for costs related to buyouts

- **Cemetery Committee – Matt Rkiouak reported**
  - Communication issues with contractor this year
  - $8,500 is needed annually for mowing and maintenance in cemetery - $2,000 increase over budgeted amount reflects what is actually spent

7:10

- **Meeting adjourned**

Submitted by: Carol Maloney

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