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

Middlesex Select Board Meeting
5:00 PM
Tuesday December 2, 2025
Middlesex Town Hall and via Zoom*
5 Church Street
Middlesex, Vermont 05602

Meeting Minutes

On Zoom: Shelly Desjardin, Samantha Beaudoin, Kari Bradley (Calais Town Admin), Stacey Skadberg,
In Person: Dorinda Crowell, Sean McVeigh, Eric Metivier, Cheryl Grandfield, Roland Hilbert, Brenda Edelschick, Chris McVeigh, Mark Harris, Ursula Stanley, Ben Abare

5:00PM

- **Call to order and welcome guests**
- **Approve minutes of November 18 regular select board meeting**
  - Paul moved, Larry seconded, motion approved
- **Approve agenda for Tuesday December 2, 2025 meeting**
  - Larry moved, Paul seconded, motion approved to agenda as written

5:02

- **Kari Bradley, Town Administrator and Road Commissioner for the Town of Calais** – overview of experiences regarding the duties and responsibilities of a Town Administrator
  - Liz gave context for town's consideration of town administrator position and introduced Kari
    - Over past 10 years the requirements of small towns to meet all the state level rules are more than a town clerk, road foreman, or volunteer select board have capacity to deal with; previous clerk probably did many of the duties a town administrator might be responsible for
    - Liz believes the town needs more professional-level help
    - Calais is similarly sized as MDX
    - Kari is also the road commissioner as well as town administrator

  - Kari's comments
    - Calais has 1700 residents and 80 miles of roads almost all gravel – $1.1M highway budget
    - Select board tried a variety of managers and neither worked out
    - In 2022-23 all five select board members resigned, clerk and asst. clerk left, and town road crew unionized
    - Town decided they need a full time professional to help manage the town's business – too time consuming and complex
    - Kari was hired in Nov. 2023 – he shared job description with MDX
    - Primary job is select board administrative support, supervise other employees, and be road commissioner – sees himself as support person for road crew – manages hiring and budget planning
    - Calais is currently re-assessing how time is spent and tasks and responsibilities – about ½ of time is road commissioner and budget related
    - Work of departing ½ time admin position may be absorbed by existing employees
    - Treasurer, road commissioner and budget work is manageable by one person
    - Hardest part is tracking the variety of tasks – creating and overseeing systems
    - Offered to support and train a new administrator in MDX
    - Kari provides research and analysis and recommendation to select board but is not responsible for the decisions

  - Discussion
    - When town decided to move forward did Calais put it on a warning to get voted on at town meeting?
      - Kari thinks the money allocated to other positions may have been shifted to this – the town approved a budget amount; he wasn't sure if the position was specifically warned
    - How has position contributed to getting additional funds through grants and other opportunities?

- Highway grants position has remained while administrator has been learning. Believes there's not a lot of ROI for the position in terms of new funding for the town

- Can the position be part time position – less than 40 hours?
  - Kari responded that it depends on the scope of the position – key functions would need to be narrower than those in Calais – about 1/6 is on road commissioner tasks
  - MDX would be sacrificing some things to reduce hours below full time
  - Liz offered because MDX has a treasurer and a new administrator would not have that responsibility
  - Kari said it's important to identify priorities and key tasks/responsibilities

- Does Calais administrator position include many things MDX employees do already?
  - MDX invited Kari because those duties in Calais may not be the same as needs in MDX
  - Town needs dedicated road commissioner and other areas of specialization (e.g., FEMA related work)
  - Liz is spending more time than she can continue to do on town related task
  - Also concerned about challenges recruiting town residents to serve because of the size of the commitment

- Discussion
  - Is there a set amount of hours a select board is expected to contribute or is anyone tracking what they're putting in?
  - In Calais, Administrator also acts as select board assistant; MDX previous town clerk served the role of responding to emails, supporting select board, and related tasks
  - Cheryl as a new town clerk did not want to be the select board assistant so Liz manages all the work related to governance of town
  - Liz also commented on need for road commissioner who is a roads expert, not an administrative generalist; with a small road crew of four people, having a road commissioner who can oversee the work, employees, and contracts – such as those with Dirt Tech during the flood recovery work – could be beneficial to the town; road commissioner could be 3-4 hours per week in Liz's estimation
  - The Town will consider adding a Town Administrator position in the FY27 (July 1 2026-June 30 2027) budget voted at town meeting March 2026

5:32

- **Highway report and FEMA roadwork update from Eric Metevier and Zara Vincent**
  - Update on FEMA payments from Zara; update on RFP (Requests for Proposals) process for future culvert projects including Old Brook Road and Daniels Farm Road
    - Repayments still outstanding: **2023 (4720 event)**
      - East Hill Rd, still "obligated/ pending award" at $798,509 in damages
      - Lower Sunny Brook still "obligated/pending award" at $740,002.58 in damages
      - Portal Rd still "pending PDMG project review" needs permits from ANR – $282,322.81 in damages
        - No movement on these since August or September 2025 due to October govt. shut down
      - FEMA director resigned. New FEMA director Karen Evans aka "The Terminator"
    - **2024 (4810 event)**
      - Brook Rd is still "pending large project review" = $1,410,570.77 in damages
      - Keith Cubbin mentioned regarding the 10%'s repayment portion the state is holding up is due to lack of funds on the state's part. State has asked for a Project Completion Report to be filled in which Zara has almost completed. Zara has been told there is no need to rush by state FEMA coordinator; she plans to complete it ASAP
    - **Engineering for Old Brook Rd. and Daniel's Farm Rd.**
      - RFP's sent 11/13/25 due 11/21/25 to 5 engineers for projects and permits needed for work resuming in spring 2026 – No responses received to date
      - Spoke to Tyler Billingsly of East Engineering and Evan Fitzgerald of Fitzgerald Engineering 12/1/25 on the phone. Was told everyone was busy before the floods. Zara assured them town would pay before FEMA paid (another concern) and that town already has A&E dollars in-hand. Resent to all five engineers with a new plea for help. Received two formal rejections today
    - **Next Steps**
      - Once town has an engineer and drawings, will send out RFP for contractors again

        - This will determine the costs/price of the next 6-7 projects to go through FEMA
        - 2023 (4720) extensions were approved. Work MUST BE COMPLETED BY 7/13/26
        - 2024 (4810) extension paperwork due before 2/1/26. Goal is to complete work before fall of 2026

    - Eric gave additional road information about road work
        - Old Brook Road has been widened and barricades installed
        - No barricades needed on Notch Rd.
        - No truck/equipment related issues

- **Update from Liz Scharf on Agency of Natural Resources' Notice of Alleged Violation** dated 11/17/25 and received by the Town 11/20/2025 regarding six box culvert installations and timeline for directives pertaining to corrective actions
    - Notch, S Bear Swamp, 2 areas on Center Rd., and Portal and East Hill Roads had various deficiencies
    - Much of the issues are tied to aquatic organism passage
    - Liz met with ANR to go over the culverts, and held another meeting on Tues. Dec. 2nd with wetlands re: S Bear Swamp – expect forthcoming communication about what is needed
        - Work needed sounds not terribly onerous but will not know until formal information is received by state
        - Liz is reaching out to Rivers and Roads person to learn more about ditching requirements

    - Compliance directives and next steps
        - Paul and Liz met over the weekend and completed response to ANR that had a two week deadline
        - Next corrective action is required within next two weeks – a more thorough response addressing how MDX will work on material issues of noncompliance
        - All of the corrections need to be completed by Oct. 1 2026; town is hopeful about this timeline; there are some remaining complexities but nothing that seems too problematic
        - Roland Hilbert asked: Re: Daniels' Farm Road – Is there a drive to complete this work before winter?
            - The answer was yes, but town ran into challenges with engineering drawings and ANR rejected the permit
            - This is related to the RFP Zara is putting out to engineers to get new design
            - Desire to get done before winter was related to safety of the bridge and people using the road – town wanted to make the repairs as rapidly as possible to the temporary bridge currently in place
            - Tentative schedule is for next construction season – engineer design is needed first and then RFP for contractor will follow
            - All work needs to be done by Oct. 1, 2026

5:48

- **Review of Dental plans and consider changes to health insurance HSA contributions from the town to Employee Health Savings Accounts (HSAs)**
    - Presentation by Dorinda Crowell and Brenda Edelschick
        - Dorinda asked, Does additional coverage being discussed (i.e., vision, dental) include two person or just employee
        - Dorinda shared some numbers for employee only and Brenda did calculations based on employee and significant other/spouse
        - Cost to town with current HSA contribution is $158,000
        - Total for full deductible for employee only is $167,333
        - Full deductible for employee and 50% for 2nd person is $171,000
        - Brenda shared figures related to dental and vision and different HSA contribution levels
            - Brenda thought board agreed to include dental and vision insurance in FY27

        - Two things to consider:
            - Consider employee, or employee and partner?
            - How much does town want to contribute to HSA that family can use toward uncovered expenses?
        - Current year's HSA contribution from town is $2,350 for 2 person, and $1,850 for single (33% of the deductible)
            - MVP deductible (new plan in next calendar year) is lower than current plan
            - – new plan has $3,200 deductible for single person

- Paul suggested using a percentage of the deductible rather than a set amount; this would shift contribution as premiums and other costs increase
- Cheryl – intent originally with HSA was it would cover 100% of the deductible – the amount town is contributing has not changed as deductible has increased over time
- New deductible in 2026 is ½ of current plan – so even if deductible contribution doesn't change the current HSA contribution is a much larger percent of new plan
- Total cost for town for BC/BS plans – $18,000 approx. increase to go to MVP and add dental and vision insurance
- $1,500 cost to town next year to add spouse/partner for all employees who get two person coverage for dental and vision

- **Liz asked for a motion to include family member in dental and vision coverages**
  - Paul moved, Larry seconded, motion approved

6:17

- **Review Budgets from Highway Department and Fire Department**
  - Eric reported for highway
    - Biggest increase is with sand that will need to be trucked in – town's pit is nearly out
    - Trucking and material costs have gone up for new year
    - Paul shared that exploration in 2020 helped find sand that was used for past five years and the projected budget for next year is about same as town was paying five years ago
    - Tires on grader need to be replaced next year – $13,000 for six tires
    - Added funding for guardrails – estimated $22/linear foot plus installation
    - No new truck costs included – if truck is delivered before July 1 it needs to be in 2027 budget
    - Cheryl suggested the town look at possible leasing options for new trucks
    - The figures will get plugged into Dorinda's draft budget and then the board will look at the details to see what they want to present to the town
    - Mark commented that highway budget comprises a large percent of town budget

- **Fire Dept**
  - Not much change; added a bit to the towing line item
  - Total 2.73% increase
  - Dorinda reported that dispatch expense will change and there may be other changes

- **Budget reports**
  - Liz asked about a budget status report being shared with the board periodically and as the board is looking at next year's budget in detail – it would be useful for assessing new expenses
  - Select board used to get those budget to actual reports regularly and they were useful

6:30

- **Request from WCUUSD to have Town distribute ballots for WCUUSD Annual Meeting**
  - Ursula Stanley and Chris McVeigh from school board presented
    - Asked the select board to mail ballots to the town for school budget voting
    - Each town has to approve this for ballots to go out to the district – Berlin and E Montpelier have voted yes
    - Time for town clerks could be reimbursed by district according to Chris
    - Ursula read that all expenses related to mailing will be covered by school district
    - MDX has voted no in past two years since COVID

  - Discussion
    - Dorinda shared that voters get confused if they only get the school budget and not the town ballot; voters call into the town office to ask why they haven't received the town ballot; putting out the school ballots and then responding to confused voters is a work load issue
    - Concerns expressed about another technical center vote coming in the future and the resulting additional confusion and cost that would
    - Voters would have to come vote in-person if not mailed the ballots
    - Benefits to mailing ballots – gets ballots to everyone increases voter participation – accessibility and equity is greater
    - Liz asked if this is the year the town will be voting on consolidation
      - Ursula and Chris responded those are two different votes – district vote is what is being asked for; if there is a vote to close a school, it will happen in January 2026 within the two towns where the schools are being closed – e.g., Worcester and Calais

- Request is for town to mail the WCUUSD ballot – time line is 20 days before the election – early February 2026
- Town has to make a decision either tonight or at the next select board meeting as information is needed by Dec. 17th
- Liz suggested giving mailing list to a print center and have it mailed – statute requires mailing to be done by town and expenses pad by the district

- Select board members do not agree about whether or not
  - Board decided to defer a decision until the next meeting

6:48

- **Other Business**
  - **Orders**
    - None received
  - **Correspondence**
    - Invoice received from Dexter Lefavour
      - Liz responded asking for more details
  - **Considering increasing Assistant Town Clerk/Bookkeeper's hourly wage by $1.00/hour effective 10/1/2025, action likely**
    - Cost will be about $1,600 for the year – Brenda works 40 hours per week most weeks
    - Discussion
      - Concerns about timing of hiring and how it might impact other employees; always tough to change budget mid-year
      - Asst. clerk is lowest paid position in the town
      - Paul shared that Zara have concerns about other employees' reactions; they believe town is generally in favor of across the board increases
      - Shelly commented that sometimes employers have probationary periods and raises are implemented if the employee performs satisfactory
      - Stacey is concerned about implementing a raise for a single employee because of timing of cost of living increase and her hiring; understands the need to reward good work; if there was a channel for merit increase that would be a way to support this; doesn't like possibility of precedent re: mid-cycle cost of living raise
      - Liz said there is a precedent with Eric getting a rise mid-budget; supports adding the $1 increase and would like the select board to set a goal to come up with a merit increase policy as an incentive to keep employees; concerned about cost of recruiting and training new asst. clerk
      - Shawn stated that considering when Brenda was hired approving a $1 increase seems like a corrective action more than a raise

- **Liz moved to add $1 to salary as a corrective action retroactive to Oct. 1, 2025**
  - Larry seconded, motion approved

7:08

Meeting adjourned

THE ABOVE MINUTES WERE APPROVED AS A WARNED AGENDA ITEM AT A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD ON MARCH 11, 2025.

_____
LIZ SCHARF, CHAIR

_____
ZARA VINCENT, VICE CHAIR

_____
LAWRENCE ROONEY

_____
PAUL CERMINARA

_____
STACEY SKADBERG

Submitted by: Carol Maloney