Select Board Members
_X__Liz Scharf, Chair
__X__ Zara Vincent, Vice Chair
__X__ Stacey Skadberg
__X__ Larry Rooney
__X__ Paul Cerminara

Middlesex Select Board Meeting
5:00 PM
Tuesday December 16, 2025
Middlesex Town Hall and via Zoom*
5 Church Street
Middlesex, Vermont 05602
(802) 223-5915

Meeting Minutes

Attending: Elizabeth Scharf**,** Zara Vincent**,** Larence Rooney, Mark Harris, Eric Metivier, Brenda Edelschick, Cheryl Grandfield, Dorinda Crowell, Jeff Koonz, Brendon Lareau, Michelle Johnston

Zoom: Matt Rkiouak, Paul Cerminara, Samanth Beaudoin, Sean McVeigh, Shelly Desjardin, Bill Preis, Rubin Bennett, Carol Maloney, Stacey Skadberg, Ben Abare, Elias Gardner

5:00PM

- **Call to order and welcome guests**
- **Approve minutes of December 2, Regular Select Board Meeting**

Motion: Approve Dec. 2nd 2025 SB meeting minutes

- Larry moved, Liz seconded, motion approved, Zara abstained due to absence from meeting

Motion: Approve agenda with three amendments

- Approve agenda for Tuesday December 16, 2025, and consider any amendments to the agenda
- Amendments to agenda: consider SB report for town report; table Welch Park discussion until next meeting; add Fire Dept. budget
- Larry moved, Zara seconded, motion approved

5:05

- **Town IT Needs – Rubin Bennett from RB Technologies**
  - A lot of deferred maintenance in the town's systems, including migrating email and replacing an outdated server, desktop computers
  - Annual report is provided to the board and last one in May reported that entire "tech stack" is in need of replacement/update
  - Recommendation to make town up to date; full work plan comes to about $34k – includes MS365 migration for $11k, 6 new work stations, and migrating off the physical server. Cheryl questioned the 6 and said she'd look into what has already been replaced over the last few years and would get in touch with RB to clarify.
  - Rubin reported town and RB have been talking about this scope of work for three years
  - Rubin recommended the town not wait until after July 1 to do the work – expressed some urgency because security as a municipality is not what it needs to be

Motion: Approve migration of email hosting, decommissioning of physical server, replacement of network equipment, and purchase of up to six workstations with a budget not to exceed $34,000 as a capital expense for this year

- Zara moved, Larry seconded, motion approved

5:18

- **Fire Dept Report**
  - 6 calls this period
  - Engine 1 out 4 times
  - Rescue out four times
    - Vehicle fire on East Hill Rd.
    - Vehicle rollover on I89 – 2 separate incidents
    - School bus rollover on Route 12
  - Jeff shared it's his last meeting as chief; believes dept. is in good shape
  - New chief will be Brendon Lareau
  - SB thanked Jeff for his many years of serving as fire chief

5:23

- **Highway report and FEMA roadwork update from Eric Metivier and Zara Vincent; ANR update from Liz Scharf**
  - **Highway Update:**
  - Eric reported there are no running issues with any vehicles

- Eric highlighted road work/issues
  - Old Brook Rd- Waiting on design/permits
  - Regular work of plowing, sanding and salting
  - Working on replacing missing signs throughout the town (sill in process as weather and work load allows)
- Eric led discussion about new truck options
  - Tandem axle dump truck is needed and Eric shared information about two options – 2026 Western Star 49X Tandem Axle and 2026 International HX620 Tandem Axle – price and warranties are similar
    - Recommended going with Western Star
    - Paul leans toward Western Star due to ability for better servicing
  - Another option to go with 2026 International HV515 Single Axle but Eric doesn't think it is the best plan
    - Process – Eric said if town orders a truck now it would be available with plow and dump capabilities in 8 to 18 months
      - Plow and dump body come from a different company than the truck itself
      - One of the trucks was supposed to be replaced last year
      - Eric will ask company to build the truck in 3rd quarter of calendar year 2026

Motion: Approve purchase of 2026 Western Star 49X Tandem Axle, with debt service beginning in FY28 for truck and FY29 for plow and dump

- Zara moved, Paul seconded, motion approved

- **FEMA Update:**
  - Zara reported the following:
  - Repayments still outstanding:
    - 2023 (4720 event)
      - East Hill Rd, still "Obligated/ Pending Award" $798,509 in damages
      - Lower Sunny Brook still "Obligated/ Pending Award" $740,002.58 in damages
      - Portal Rd still "pending PDMG project review" needs permits from ANR $282,322.81 in damages
    - RFP – one person replied and others declined
      - Need to review RFP
      - South Bear RFP needs a review as well
    - 2024 (4810 event)
      - Brook Rd is still "Pending Large Project Review" = $1,410,570.77 in damages
      - Engineering:
        - RFP returned from Evan Fitzgerald of Fitzgerald Engineering on 12/12/25
        - All other engineers politely declined; RFP needs review and approval so town can figure out plans, receive permits and cost out contractors so FEMA can estimate and pay for work starting summer 2026
        - Sending out So. Bear Swamp RFP next
  - Next Steps
    - RFP needs review and approval so we can figure out plans, receive permits and cost out contractors so FEMA can estimate and pay for work starting summer 2026
    - This will determine the costs/ price of the next 6-7 projects to go through FEMA
    - 2023 (4720) work can be extended past 7/13/26 if needed according to Isabela (VT State coordinator)
    - 2024 (4810) extension paperwork due before 2/1/26; Goal is to complete work before fall of 2026
  - Other:
    - Spreadsheet created to verify and double-check all billing and FEMA payments to date
    - Liz, Cheryl and Eric have access and numbers will be verified this week
    - FEMA looking into possible missing $9,796.61 of staging and materials billing/costing on So. Bear Swamp
    - Adding to FEMA numbers once they estimate what the 6-8 outstanding projects will cost
    - If work cannot be done by July 13, 2026 town can request another extension

- Maya Landis has 33 volunteers who will be checking on culverts; dubbed themselves the "culvert crawlers"

- **Agency of Natural Resources' Notice of Alleged Violation dated 11/17/25 and received by the Town 11/20/2025 update**
  - Liz reported that Shannon from "wetlands" gave MDX a list of things to do re: the S. Bear Swamp wetlands area
    - Town needs to measure S. Bear Swamp Rd from edge of forest to the road
    - Size of this area will determine size of culvert – has to be done by Jan. 26
    - Paul is working on ANR notice of violation response – due Thurs. Dec. 18
    - Liz talked with Dan Judkins from "better roads" – going to wait for snow melt in spring to determine what needs to be done to redesign the stream channel and repair the wetland – work will be done through an RFP process

5:47

- **Consider request from WCUUSD to have town distribute ballots via USPS for the WCUUSD Annual Meeting**
  - All other district towns have voted yes
  - The request from WCUUSD is to make sure everyone gets a ballot, more people will respond and is equitable; this is biggest expense on property tax bills
  - Expenses to do the mailing can be reimbursed, including hours of staff
    - This is extra work as people call with questions about where town ballot is
    - Some expressed concern about extra work for town clerk and others; Volunteers can be used to do the mailing
    - Some believe larger turnout will be assured and it's more accessible for older people to have ballot mailed
    - Brenda said there are many populations who cannot get out to vote and thinks it would be good to open the vote to as many people as possible
    - Dorinda said the reason town doesn't send out town ballots is because of cost
    - Board acknowledged there's a push in the state to have voting more accessible to all people – especially since COVID

Motion: Agree to send town ballots via USPS for the WCUUSD annual meeting to all registered voters in Middlesex

- Zara moved, Liz seconded, motion approved –3 yeas Zara, Liz, Stacey and 2 nays Paul and Larry
- Town will ask for volunteers to help stuff envelopes
- Michelle Johnston asked: If town is mailing out ballots for school budget, do people still have to come to town meeting to vote? Liz responded yes because the votes at town meeting are floor votes, not Australian ballot

6:00

- **Directives for the FIT committee in regard to the Town Hall and the Town Garage**
  - Larry asked for this to be put on the agenda because committee has asked what SB wants re: goals, objectives, and timelines – a clear charge for the group would be helpful
  - Liz explained that process for advisory committees generally includes: assess, consider options, get cost estimates and additional information, consider how to pay for project, inform community about need, and share information and advise SB
  - Larry asked for something in writing that describes what and how to present back to SB
    - Zara shared the FIT Committee is an advisory board; it will never vote on something that will be voted on by the town
    - Larry said he is trying to help the committee get clarity about what SB wants
      - Liz shared that the committee needs to look at the problem and identify some possible solutions
      - Dorinda thinks the committee has come up with some good ideas; half the group is working on town hall and other half is working on town garage; will present to SB in January
      - FIT wants to know if SB can "bless" a presentation at town meeting; SB supports this idea
      - Bill Preis asked if information is going to town residents to support the projects – before any request for funding is made
        - Committee is working toward that and hopes to bring information to town meeting
      - Zara or someone on the committee will put out more postings on Front Porch Forum to inform people

- Larry will report to the SB at least every two months with updates from the committee
- Town garage is a priority and replacement may be included in next budget cycle
    - Town hall is an asset for the town and it's important to maintain it while it's being used by the town; it will have value if it's maintained

6:30

- **Budget overview review – Draft 1 of Town of Middlesex budget**
    - Dorinda reported
        - Salary COLA increase suggested at 2.7% (entered as 3% in preliminary budget)
        - Mark Harris stated that budget committee meeting said there are not a lot of places to look for substantial decreases
            - To get the increase down to 10%, the town would have to reduce budget by $170,000; most of the potential increases in next budget are essential to town operations
            - Mark looked line by line and could not find more than $100,000-$130,000 he could remove or cut – and those cuts would come with risks
    - Liz suggested town administrator position, if SB agrees to move forward with this idea, be put before the voters as a separate item
        - Liz let the SB know that Cheryl is not running for town clerk in 2026
        - Current version of draft FY27 budget includes:
            - Town clerk position at 32 hours
            - Asst. town clerk for 32 hour position
            - Treasurer for 32 hours
            - Town administrator for 20 hours
            - Delinquent tax collector for zero hours
    - When Sarah Merriman was town clerk her work was broken out as 51% SB assistance and 49% town clerk; Dorinda thinks maybe town clerk and town administrator could be combined into one position
    - Mark shared that town needs to balance what's needed to run town and what the town is facing re: school tax increases – is there a way to reduce some things and take some risks; budget committee talked about not cutting services while being responsive to town taxpayers
        - Mark reminded SB that if town budget goes up 12% taxes do not go up that amount because town funding is a minority portion of total tax bill
        - Mark looked at specific lines to see where cuts could be made and suggested these changes, which the board agreed to include in next draft budget for Jan. 6th meeting:
            - Reduce $80k in the building fund
            - Lower town hall CIP from $50k to $25k
            - Defer to another year funding for a flood mitigation account
            - Reduce town grant match fund from $50k to $25k
        - Liz expressed concern about a 20 hour a week town administrator position attracting anyone
            - Town administrator would apply for municipal grants that could help offset costs for that position; Calais experience doesn't show a lot of savings but additional funding can come to town to support town goals
            - Liz suggested full time administrator position; Mark said VLCT data suggests $76,000+ median salary
            - Matt Rkiouak said some town positions are below 50th percentile and some are at 60th
            - Liz asked Dorinda to prepare new draft budget with following positions:
                - Town administrator position at 40 hours per week at $72,000 salary plus benefits
                - Town clerk, asst. town clerk, and treasurer positions at 32 hours each
        - SB will meet on Jan. 6th and 13th to adjust and approve the FY27 budget
        - Liz reminded SB that the budget can be changed up or down by voters from the floor at town meeting

7:23

OTHER BUSINESS

- **Orders**

- **Correspondence**
    - Amber Alexander stating her support of the Town mailing WCUUSD ballots to all voters

- **Asst. Town Clerk Position**
    - Cheryl shared that the news about the possibility of eliminating the asst. town clerk position may mean that Brenda should be job hunting
        - Liz responded that talking publicly about this possibility in the SB meeting was essential to have this process transparent with the public; she apologized for not mentioning it to Brenda privately in advance
        - Zara suggested the draft budget include an asst. town clerk position; she expressed a need to better understand the work of the town positions; she also wants to avoid paying someone more (e.g., town administrator) to do the same work as asst. town clerk
    - Samantha Beaudoin offered support to Liz to be transparent about town positions; if town clerk asst. position is eliminated it would mean a huge change since Cheryl is not returning as town clerk; also stated she thinks it makes no sense to move Brenda's work to a higher paid town administrator

7:33

- **Adjourn**

THE ABOVE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 16, 2025 MEETING OF THE MIDDLESEX SELECT BOARD WERE APPROVED ON JANUARY 6, 2026.

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LIZ SCHARF, CHAIR

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ZARA VINCENT, VICE CHAIR

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LAWRENCE ROONEY

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PAUL CERMINARA

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STACEY SKADBERG

Submitted by: Carol Maloney