

Received 1/22/2025

9:04am

Tonya Hogan, TC

Town of Middlefield, Connecticut

Church Exploratory Commission

405 Main Street, Middlefield, CT 06455

Thursday, January 16, 2025 Meeting Minutes DRAFT

Date and Time: January 16, 2025 at 6:30 pm

Location: 405 Main Street, Room 2, Middlefield, CT and remote via video conference

Attendees: Robert Yamartino (First Selectman), John Giamatteo (arrived at 7 pm), Susan McNamara (arrived at 6:45 pm), Cheryl Pizzo, Ken Twombly, and Al Rusilowicz, CPA, Town Finance Director (non-voting member of the commission).

Meeting Notes:

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:42 pm by Robert Yamartino, First Selectman.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. Public Comment

Bill Konefal, President of the Historical Society, suggested appointing Fran Gudelski, Curator of the Historical Society, as a member of the commission. Anne Malcolm expressed her ambivalence about the project. Jim Irish, a member of the Board of Selectman, was also present.

4. Charge of the Church Exploratory Commission

Robert Yamartino read the official Charge of the Church Exploratory Commission (attached) as voted by the Board of Selectman on 1/8/2025.

5. Election of Officers

a. A motion to elect Ken Twombly as chairperson was made by Cheryl Pizzo.

The motion was seconded by Susan McNamara. The motion was approved unanimously with no abstentions.

b. A motion to elect Susan McNamara as secretary was made by Susan McNamara. The motion was seconded by Robert Yamartino. The motion was approved unanimously with no abstentions.

6. Discussion

a. Charge of the Commission: The Board of Selectmen received a petition with over 250 names requesting that the town pursue the acquisition of the Middlefield Federated Church property, which is for sale for \$1,350,000. The Church Exploratory Commission (CEC) members were chosen from a cross-section of town interest groups and charged with informing the public

of the potential acquisition and potential uses of the property and make a recommendation to be presented at a public hearing.

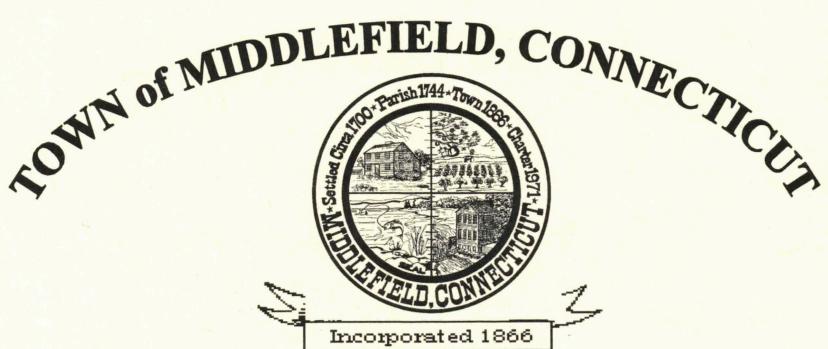
Robert Yamartino noted that the church is a centerpiece of the town and is zoned residential. A developer could apply for a variance. The town green is owned by the church, and the town has a long-term lease on that property. The current property for sale is the church plus the education building. Potential uses include consolidating all town functions in one building to provide improved service, either in the church building or the education building. Members of the community may have other creative ideas. We should meet with the real estate agent and do a walkthrough of the property. Other concerns are how we would fund the acquisition if that is what is decided upon, how much would it cost to operate the buildings, potential rental income, and uses of the old town hall building (the Economic Development Commission is aware of this). The two buildings share a well. Should we hire a real estate agent to represent the town in any transaction? If it is decided to try to acquire the property, we will have to give appropriate notice, have a public hearing one day, and then have a vote two weeks later.

Susan McNamara noted that the Education Building has a lot of stairs and is not easily accessible. Is there any asbestos in either building?

- b. Regular meetings and public hearing schedule: A discussion was had about the importance of moving forward promptly. A motion was made to set the meeting schedule as Tuesday, 1/21/2025, at 4 pm and every other Tuesday at 4 pm after that by John Giannatto. The motion was seconded by Susan McNamara. The motion was approved unanimously with no abstentions. The commission would like to tour the property on 1/21/2025 at 4 pm and Robert Yamartino will contact the real estate agent and try to schedule this. Robert Yamartino suggested that the commission aim for a public hearing in early March.

7. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made at 7:42 pm by Cheryl Pizzo. The motion was seconded by John Giannatto. The motion was approved unanimously with no abstentions.



The Board of Selectman

January 8, 2025

RE: Charge to Church Exploratory Commission

The Middlefield Board of Selectman give Charge to the Church Exploratory Commission on this day, January 8, 2025.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert C. Yamartino".

Robert C. Yamartino
First Selectman



Charge of the Church Exploratory Committee

Commission Members were chosen to represent a cross section of Town of Middlefield interest groups. It includes representation of Board of Selectmen, Economic Development Commission, Historical Society, Board of Finance, Financial Director and at large resident.

The Board of Selectmen received a petition with over 250 Middlefield Residents requesting the town pursue acquisition of the Federated Church property.

It is the desire of the Board of Selectmen that the Church Exploratory Committee:

- Define the reasons for the Town acquiring the property (Historical, Environmental, Fiscal, Town Character etc.)
- Identify specific assets to be acquired
 - Church Hall, School Building, Town Green
- Identify potential uses of the Church property should the town acquire it
 - Relocation of Town Hall
 - Imposition of development and use restrictions in advance of property resale
 - Other
- Participate in and or support the property negotiation terms and conditions

The Board of Selectmen is directing the Committee to meet with the real estate agent to discuss the current terms and conditions and to familiarize themselves with the current property condition.

Hold an initial public hearing to inform the public of the present current offering and to hear input from input residents on their view of the acquisition and potential uses of the property post-acquisition.

After careful thought, respectful debate, and deliberate considerations, bring forward a recommendation to be presented at a public hearing to inform the committee's recommendations, and receive input from the town.

The recommendation should include:

- The Plan to Acquire or not Acquire the property, including justification.
- Property Disposition (plan)
- Budgetary Implications
 - Acquisition Cost
 - Annual Operating Costs
 - Capital Improvement Budget (including Timing)
 - Rental Income Projections
- Timeline for project
 - Approvals, Hurdles, etc.

A final report will be submitted to the Board of Selectmen including the concerns from the public hearing and how to address those concerns.

The Board of Selectmen thanks you for taking the time to participate on this commission, stand ready to provide any all support necessary to carry out your charge and wishes you Godspeed.