

**MIDDLEFIELD BOARD OF FINANCE**  
**405 Main Street**  
**Middlefield, Connecticut 06455**

Minutes of the April 11, 2019 Public Hearing

Jim Irish called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Attendance:

Members

Others

X	Irish, Jim	A	Bailey, Ed
X	Kowal, Melissa		
X	Lowry, David		
X	Malcolm, Alice		
X	Nick, Joel		
X	Wolak, Mary	X	Rusilowicz, Al

A=Absent

X=Present

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of the Agenda

Jim Irish proposed eliminating item 7 and moving item 8e up to its place. Jim Irish made a motion, seconded by Alice Malcolm, to approve the agenda as amended. Motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment

None.

Discussion by Tax Collector - Suspensions and Tax Collector FY20 budget request

Anne Olszewski reviewed the personal property, motor vehicle and motor vehicle supplemental suspense lists from the 2016 Grand List. She explained that she will not stop trying to collect this money, but added that if people pass away, move out of state or business go out of business that money is gone. She added that real estate taxes are never put on suspense. Mrs. Olszewski explained that Matt Willis is the attorney she works with on foreclosures and she is very comfortable working with him.

Jim Irish asked about motor vehicle supplemental and Anne Olszewski explained that they are bills for motor vehicles that are registered after October 1<sup>st</sup>. Mr. Irish explained that last year, the suspense list was \$29,700 and is \$26,800 this year.

Dave Lowry made a motion, seconded by Jim Irish, to approve the presented suspense list consisting of \$4,356.52 personal property, \$18,188.98 motor vehicles and \$4,280.67 motor vehicle supplemental for a total of \$26,826.17. Motion carried unanimously.

Jim Irish noted that the First Selectman's proposed budget includes a collection rate of 99.5 percent and Mrs. Olszewski would like the Board to keep it at that number. Everyone agreed that Mrs. Olszewski does an excellent job.

Moving to the Tax Collector's budget, Mrs. Olszewski has requested an increase of \$500 for her assistant. She asked that the software system be budgeted at her number rather than Mr. Bailey's number so that Quality can do a full backup of the information. Al Rusilowicz explained that Quality has asked the town for a statement regarding the backup of all of the information, including WPCA, the tax collector's office and the assessor's office. He explained that he and Mr. Bailey had removed the \$252 from each of those line items as the data is already backed up by TAB. He did note that he has no problem with the \$252 being added back to the tax collector's budget. It was generally agreed that the software system will be budgeted at \$10,539.

Mrs. Olszewski reviewed that she did not go up on conferences and dues or office expenses. Jim Irish asked about the tax collector assistant and Mrs. Olszewski explained that the salary had been \$3,000 for quite a while and wasn't being used, so she dropped it down. However, she now needs the assistant more often. Al Rusilowicz explained that there is no one else to cover when Anne isn't in the office. Everyone agreed that it was reasonable at \$3,000.

#### Discussion with Town Clerk - FY20 budget request

Donna Golub reviewed her budget line items, noting that her assistant went up 1.21 percent and records restoration has gone down. She will apply for a grant for records restoration. Jim Irish asked if the \$33,500 for the assistant is enough as this year's expenses are higher than that and Al Rusilowicz explained that that was the union-negotiated amount. That line item is over by \$4,000 so far this year and Mr. Rusilowicz explained that a non-budgeted person is doing the cross-referencing of maps and those expenses are being charged to that line item. He explained that Mrs. Golub will reimburse the general fund from her records preservation account to balance that budget line. It was explained that there is a very small amount of money in these accounts and the Town Clerk has discretion as to how it is spent.

Donna Golub went on to review that conferences and dues can be decreased to \$800 because she doesn't go to a lot of conferences. Office expenses are primarily used for printer cartridges, special paper and hardcover books. Mrs. Golub stated that she has an issue with the Assistant Town Clerk doing the Board of Selectmen's meeting minutes. Going back to 1976, Fran Pac used to do the minutes until 2003. In 2003, Wendy Parker was hired to do the minutes and she did them until 2014. Leanne Henry, the Town Clerk's assistant, did them in the office because the Board of Finance gave her 31 hours a week which allowed her to do the minutes and the website. Leanne Henry left her position, but continued to do the

minutes at home until she resigned in 2017. In 2018, Leanne Henry only did the January minutes with the remainder being done by Debi Waz.

Donna Golub stated that Ed Bailey had changed the job descriptions and she quoted the job description as far as helping other departments. Mrs. Golub does not feel it is the job of the Town Clerk or the Assistant Town Clerk to do the minutes. When Leanne Henry left, the Assistant Town Clerk position's hours were decreased to 29 hours per week evidently due to Obamacare. She did note that other employees work 32 hours per week. Mrs. Golub reviewed that it takes time to do the website, post the minutes, post the agendas and post legal notices which takes time away from the job that she was hired for.

Mrs. Golub noted that some people say that the Town Clerk's office is not busy, but she noted that they find things to do. Melissa Kowal asked how many hours Mrs. Golub felt would be needed to do the minutes and Mrs. Golub noted that the person doing the Park and Rec minutes gets paid \$20/hour where the person doing the Board of Finance minutes gets paid \$35/hour. Jim Irish stated that the Board of Selectmen minutes take between 4.5 and 8 hours per meeting. Mrs. Golub noted that she argues with Ed Bailey about this issue all the time. She also noted that her assistant has recently been nominated to be president of the union and Mrs. Golub feels that that was very unfair.

Mary Wolak appreciated the information, but noted that the Board just allocates the money. She noted that the Board of Finance does not deal with personnel issues. It was agreed that neither the money or the hours can be increased since it is a union position. Al Rusilowicz stated that the Board cannot change the dollars per hour, but they can change the total compensation which would, by default, change the number of hours. He also mentioned that he reviewed Judi Rand's personnel file and she had signed a job description that included doing the minutes for the Board of Selectmen. Tonya Hogan also had a job description attached to her offer letter stating that she would do the minutes of the Board of Selectmen and the Park and Rec Commission. He felt that it was very clear to the employee that doing the minutes was part of the job description. He felt that Donna Golub should have been aware that that was part of the job description of the person she was hiring. Mrs. Golub stated that Ms. Hogan told her she signed the contract, but did not see Board of Selectmen or Park and Rec. Mr. Bailey, Mrs. Golub and Ms. Hogan have not had a conversation together about this issue. It was recommended that the three of them have a conversation about this.

Jim Irish stated that they would like to see a resolution as to whether it is in the job description or isn't. He would like to see a job description fully satisfied for the salary that the position represents and if that is in there, they would like to see those tasks done. If not, they should be removed from the job description. Mrs. Golub stated that the job description was changed to include the minutes in June, 2018 when Fran Pac left.

Dave Lowry commented that if he were Ms. Hogan, he would do the minutes and grieve it. He felt that was the only way to get a solution to this. Mrs. Golub commented that the state statute says that the Assistant Town Clerk is under the direction of the Town Clerk, not the First Selectman. Mr. Lowry stated that if she acknowledged the job description at time of hire, she will lose the grievance and have to do the minutes. It would be different if she was not a union employee. Al Rusilowicz explained that this is a union position and that individual employees can opt out of the union, but the position remains a union position.

Mrs. Golub also noted that Judi Rand had not done the Board of Selectmen or Park and Rec minutes in the time she was in the position. Melissa Kowal asked if there is so much work in the Town Clerk's office that it needs almost two full-time people. She noted that the Town Clerk is 32 hours a week and the Assistant Town Clerk is 29 hours. Jim Irish added that while it may take 4 to 8 hours to do the minutes, the people in the Town Hall are vulnerable to interruptions and that time will increase. Mrs. Kowal noted that the labor is double that of the Tax Collector's office and was trying to wrap her head around the amount of work.

Al Rusilowicz stated that the transaction volume for the Town Clerk is directly related to the population of the town. The Town of Durham is substantially larger than Middlefield and their combined Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk work 3,120 hours a year. In Middlefield, it is 3,172 hours a year. He stated that the bottom line is Middlefield works more hours and has less transactions.

Mrs. Kowal just wanted to make sure that they are not wasting any money and questioned if the minutes could be put back into that job description to get the full money's worth. Alice Malcolm noted that a work study was done and was accepted. She felt that it was irrelevant what Durham does as they have agreed to the Middlefield terms. Mary Wolak reiterated that the Board's purview is funding and not personnel issues.

Mr. Irish stated that the funding used to date is \$2,771 for minutes for the Board of Selectmen and Park and Rec. He also noted that from 2016 to 2018, the job description did include the Board of Selectmen minutes and Park and Rec minutes were added after that.

Donna Golub stated that she would do the minutes herself since she gets a salary and can stay as long as she wants to do them. Jim Irish stated that the \$3,000 will then be removed from the other budget line items. Al Rusilowicz stated that that will, in effect, reduce the Assistant Town Clerk's hours down to 23 or 24 and Mrs. Golub did not agree with that. Mr. Irish explained that the Board of Selectmen and Park and Rec Commission are currently being charged for the minutes and if the Town Clerk's office agrees to do those minutes, that amount will be removed from the other two line items. They will not touch the Assistant Town Clerk's line item.

Jim Irish asked Al Rusilowicz to provide an estimate of the reductions in the two accounts. Mr. Rusilowicz had some information for the Board, but asked that it not be part of the minutes and the recorder was paused at this point in the meeting.

#### Discussion of Replacement of 2008 International Truck for Public Works

Al Rusilowicz reviewed that there had been a question about what fiscal year this truck would be funded in and it has been decided that it will be a FY20 expenditure. He explained that Jason Wickham has done an extensive amount of his research on his own.

Jason Wickham reviewed that most of the neighboring towns are going with the state-contracted cab and chassis which is a Freightliner. Mr. Rusilowicz stated that the Freightliner contract with the State is for \$110 million. Mr. Wickham stated that the cab and chassis is \$94,931, with the extended warranty being additional. He reviewed the two quotes and stated that he would prefer to go with Equipment Service as

that is who Durham uses and they are happy with them. He also pointed out that the Equipment Service provides a lot more detail and value.

Mr. Wickham also provided information comparing prices to what Durham paid for their truck and Middlefield's cost would be less. Durham paid \$188,000 and Middlefield's cost would be \$174,929, including warranties and the plow.

Al Rusilowicz stated that there is currently \$142,000 in the capital budget and another \$21,626 will be added on July 1, bringing the total to \$164,000. Jim Irish noted that the additional funding would be easily available by shifting the \$10,000 from an allocation of a later truck to this truck.

Jason Wickham also noted that there will be stainless steel corner posts in the rear of this truck and will last the lifetime. He also had a quote for a removable stainless steel conveyor system for an additional \$8,000. Mr. Irish asked if those items had corrosion and Mr. Wickham stated that they had, but they have never had to replace that part of the conveyor of any of the trucks. Al Rusilowicz added that the proposed conveyor would be steel and would not be removable. Mr. Wickham would go with the stainless steel and all of the warranties, if money wasn't an issue. If money was scarce, he felt that they technically did not need the plow.

Dave Lowry asked about the life span of the truck and Mr. Wickham stated that that would be based on maintenance. He stated that his current truck is 11 years old and felt that it could be used as a spare for another four or five years. Jim Irish stated that all of the trucks are categorized at 15 years in the capital plan.

Discussion continued about the maintenance of the stainless steel parts and probable resale value. Mr. Wickham also mentioned that the new system will automatically calibrate the salt distribution. Al Rusilowicz stated that the Board would need to give approval for the purchase in order for them to place an order.

Jim Irish made a motion, seconded by Mary Wolak, to endorse the purchase of the Freightliner truck and the equipment package with the stainless steel option as indicated in the quote from Freightliner Hartford and warranties. Motion carried unanimously.

#### Old Business

##### A. Update - Monthly Park and Rec Checkbook Reconciliation - Al Rusilowicz

Al Rusilowicz stated that the process is in place on a month-to-month basis.

##### B. Consideration of Budget Capital and Non-Recurring Budget

Jim Irish then distributed the capital planning information, including the chart, the long-term budget layout and the details. He noted that, at this point, the mill rate is 32.49 which is lower than what was proposed by Ed Bailey and a whole 2 mills below last year. The reason that is possible is that the Town just got an additional \$60,000 from the school district because of the renegotiation of benefits. The Fire

Department also decreased Ed Bailey's budget by \$150,000 by counting the grant for the breathing apparatus.

Mr. Irish explained that the current capital for 2020 is \$777,000 which is up from last year by \$60,000. This includes nearly \$100,000 of additional capital at the Town Hall and Community Center. Looking out several years, the numbers are higher in the first couple of years and then drop back down.

Jim Irish then went on to review the spreadsheet line by line and explained that these all go out several years. Town Hall improvements total \$16,703 and include carpet, exterior brick work, exterior paint, interior kitchen and bathrooms, HVAC, interior paint and parking lot repairs. Moving to the Community Center, improvements total \$118,552 and include the auditorium entrance (which can be removed), auditorium floor, boiler replacement, brick work, exterior paint, flooring and carpet, hardware refurbishment, heat pumps, HVAC replacement, interior paint, bathrooms and kitchens, stage, stage curtain, air conditioning, paving the parking lot, roof, windows and doors, etc. Mr. Irish explained that Ed Bailey had identified all of the Town Hall and Community Center needs.

Mr. Irish went on to review the underground storage tank and vehicle replacements. Melissa Kowal was concerned about the number in the spreadsheet for the vehicle replacement for the First Selectman, but it was explained that it will be purchased under State contract. Telephone and computer system upgrades remain the same. Jim Irish added additional funding to Accrued Benefits to keep the \$65,000 level. Dave Lowry asked about the accumulated time and Al Rusilowicz commented that Nancy Davidson has a significant balance as does Jason Wickham.

Statistical revaluation is coming up in 2022 and will be fully funded by that time. Jim Irish will take a look to see if they can get a better estimate on that. The balance will be removed from the Senior Bus. Moving on to Public Works, Jim Irish reviewed the individual items. He also mentioned that a street lighting project will probably be considered in early FY 2020 as a separate town meeting-funded item and funds will be available to self-fund the first costs of this project. Alice Malcolm asked if the school system has done anything about LED lighting, but no one knew the answer to that.

In Public Works equipment, the Freightliner truck that was discussed earlier will require another \$18,000. That can be taken from the 2016 truck replacement. There was discussion about the resale value of the trucks and if they can be used as trade-ins. It was decided to increase the funding numbers on the replacement trucks in next year's budget. Al Rusilowicz will check into the Zero Turn mower.

Moving to Park and Rec, Jim Irish explained that Hannah Malcolm had requested a total of \$33,450 for park improvements, but details are now available. The pavilion roof will be done this year and the beach and beach improvements are done. Hannah Malcolm did not ask for the skating rink, however it can be funded. The new total is now \$55,330. These additions were possible through the windfall from the Fire Department. Dave Lowry suggested someone double-check the bleachers, but continue to budget for replacement in 2024. Al Rusilowicz thought that Ed Bailey wanted money to remain in park improvements as a contingency, but he will check with him.

Looking at the Fire Department, the numbers have pretty much remained the same. The thermal imaging camera was initially projected to cost \$12,875 and it ended up costing \$22,750. Mr. Irish changed that number in the spreadsheet to fund the next replacement. They also put \$5,000 into the water supply and reduced the tanker. The total for the Fire Department is the same.

Jim Irish continued to move through the spreadsheet and reviewed that the capital budget total is \$777,000 which is down about \$50,000 from what Ed Bailey had proposed, mostly because of the grants that were received.

Everyone agreed that they are comfortable with the current capital plan.

C. Other FY20 Budget Discussion

Al Rusilowicz reported that they had received eight bids for mowing Peckham Park and he could not believe the spread. It ranged from \$225 to \$1,000 per mow. Hannah Malcolm had budgeted \$400 per mow as they had been paying \$385.

D. Approval of Minutes from 2/6/19 and 3/14/19

It was decided to table this item.

New Business

A. Motion to approve auditor for review of FY-10 town finances

Al Rusilowicz strongly recommended that the town stay with Seward and Monde.

Joel Nick made a motion, seconded by Jim Irish, to appoint Seward and Monde as auditor for the fiscal year 2019. Motion carried unanimously.

B. Updates: Durham and BOE Budget Public Hearing feedback

Al Rusilowicz stated that even though the school district will absorb the TRB, the towns are still responsible for making those payments. Jim Irish stated that Kim Neubig had told him they had money in the benefits account to pay those payments for both towns. Mr. Rusilowicz will check with Ms. Neubig. Mr. Irish also added that TRB amounts are not included in Durham's town budget. Al Rusilowicz believed that if the town didn't make the TRB payment by December 31<sup>st</sup>, the town's ECS payment would be reduced by that amount. Jim Irish also noted that the legislature has taken the TRB payments out for the moment, but Ed Bailey felt that it would be put back in.

Jim Irish also noted that nobody went to the school district's public hearing last night. Rick Parmelee and one lady from Durham were the only people who talked. After the public hearing, the Board incorporated the additional benefits savings into the budget and Bob Yamartino opened up a 45-minute discussion about keeping the budget at the MBR level. At the end of the day, the Board was concerned that the district would have to come back to the towns for additional money if the legislature raised the ECS and voted down Mr. Yamartino's amendment. Lucy Petrella then offered another amendment to split the difference, but that was also voted down.

C. Other

Al Rusilowicz reported that the Board of Assessment Appeals met and he hopes to have final numbers by Tuesday. The Grand List is going up and the mill rate may even go down a little bit more.

Jim Irish stated that the Board will go through the operating budget at the workshop on Tuesday and the public hearing will be on Thursday. Mary Wolak will not be at the meeting on Tuesday and was concerned about taking the money out of Park and Rec and the Board of Selectmen for the minutes.

Adjournment

Melissa Kowal made a motion, seconded by Mary Wolak, to adjourn the meeting. Motion was carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 10:16 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

*Debi Waz*

Debi Waz  
Alwaz First