

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

Minutes of the June 13, 2019 Regular Meeting

Jim Irish called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm.

Attendance:

Members

Others

X	Irish, Jim	X	Bailey, Ed (arrived late)
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

Joel Nick made a motion, seconded by Alice Malcolm, to approve the agenda, as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Minutes from 5/9/19 and 5/21/19 Meetings

Jim Irish made a motion, seconded by Joel Nick, to approve the minutes from 5/9/19, as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Melissa Kowal made a motion, seconded by Alice Malcolm, to approve the minutes from 5/21/19, as presented. Motion carried, with Joel Nick abstaining.

Review of Current-Year Spending - Al Rusilowicz

Al Rusilowicz explained that every invoice the town has received is included, through today, with the exception of the State Police (\$330,000) and three payrolls in June (\$110,000). The expected surplus will be about \$370,000 before any normal expenses before the month of June. The items in red are the ones that are over-expended and he reviewed them line by line. One issue was a penalty that had to be paid on the copier lease. Tax Collector office expenses are over because of the attorney's bill for the Kickapoo Road property. Al Rusilowicz also noted that the fiber network was just installed in the community center building and is all connected. This will result in a 100 percent dedicated line between the town registrar and the State.

In the Land Use department, the sanitarian's salary was not budgeted, however it was reimbursed by the Health District. The town does water testing yearly on several homes and replaces filters, as necessary. The Assessor's department is under budget as a whole. The Fire Department is only over on one item, but they were notified of an equipment failure at a cost of \$3,500 to \$4,000 that will be coming up. The Fire Department does have a maintenance contingency account. Mr. Rusilowicz did feel that the Fire Department almost always spends their entire budget, so any favorable variances will probably evaporate.

The town gets billed once a year from the State Police and that bill will be at the end of the year. Overtime is significantly under budget. There was an overage in the Inland Wetlands department due to legal bills. Contingencies are untouched and all loans have been paid.

Jim Irish asked about the projected total expense surplus and Al Rusilowicz estimated it to be about \$250,000 with the revenues somewhere around \$220,000 as well, for a total of just under \$500,000.

Mr. Rusilowicz stated that there is an open line item in the Assessor's budget for \$1 for GIS work and the Town Planner from Haddam presented a proposal to the Council of Governments for a lump sum fee of \$5,000 (\$1,500 for set-up and \$3,500 annually thereafter). The Town would like to move forward with a contract with Tighe & Bond for GIS web hosting if the Board of Finance has no objections. This would allow people to look at properties through the system without having to actually come to Town Hall. Melissa Kowal asked how this interacts with the mapping that happens through the Town Clerk's office and Mr. Rusilowicz did not know enough about that and how it would relate to the physical maps. It was also mentioned that Economic Development could use the system as well.

Al Rusilowicz would like to sign and pay the contract this year and be paid a year in advance, resulting in a budget line item of \$3,500 per year.

Dave Lowry made a motion, seconded by Jim Irish, to endorse the GIS services contract with Tighe & Bond, as presented by Al Rusilowicz, at an initial cost of \$5,000. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Rusilowicz also reported that a random CT OSHA inspection was done about 10 days ago and the town has been working very aggressively to address all of the findings. There will be some costs associated with that. Most of the issues were housekeeping matters, with one minor safety issue. The only finding in the Community Center was a propane tank that had been left in the garage. There were some exterior electric issues at the park and a rail was needed at Town Hall. Some housekeeping issues were found at the Highway department and they have done significant work to clean up the garage. The OSHA inspector will return to follow up on any issues.

Mary Wolak asked Al Rusilowicz if there is a cost for mapping the roads and Alice Malcolm stated that there would be as engineers will be necessary. Nothing has been budgeted at this point. Mr. Rusilowicz noted that the Town of Killingworth had a road assessment done and they have twice as many rural roads as Middlefield does. He was not aware of what the cost was. Dave Lowry agreed that they have not

contracted for the road assessment yet and they will need to decide if that is the most prudent way to spend the money on roads. Mary Wolak stated that the issue of roads is coming up a lot more and she finds it concerning that people are questioning the funds. Jim Irish added that, a year ago, \$20,000 had been allocated for road improvement professional services and is still in capital. Mr. Rusilowicz will ask Killingworth what they paid for their assessment. Alice Malcolm added that Ed Bailey had addressed the topic at a Board of Selectmen meeting. Discussion continued about how difficult it is to talk to community members who don't have enough information. Al Rusilowicz does believe that Ed Bailey will move forward with a project similar to what Killingworth did. Melissa Kowal stated that even the worst roads in Middlefield are not very bad compared to others.

Jim Irish stated that one of the items underspent this year is road maintenance and the Board has asked multiple times for an actual plan for road maintenance. Mr. Irish will talk to Ed Bailey to ask him to talk to the Highway department about this. He also mentioned that the Town-Aid Road fund balance is not published in the budget and people wonder if there is actually money available to do road projects. Alice Malcolm wished there was a town newsletter and Mary Wolak thought announcements could be made on the website. There was then some further discussion about the public works department. Mary Wolak reminded the Board to listen to Ann Olszewski when she brings comments forward as she has her finger on the pulse of the town.

#### Old Business

Jim Irish reviewed the State budget and its impact on Middlefield, with the major impact being the change in ECS funding. The legislature raised the ECS funding and the net result is that Middlefield will get \$101,000 more than was budgeted. There had been a question about the MBR and whether the towns would have to contribute more money and that has turned out to not be the case. The district can now use a five-year look-back on enrollment as a tool to use in establishing the MBR.

Mr. Irish added that the legislature also took away the teachers' retirement benefit payment obligation from the towns. That had not been included in the town's budget because the school district put it in their budget. That will now be a possible surplus item for the district. Alice Malcolm noted that she had read an article about teachers' benefits and Connecticut doesn't treat its teachers very well. They get a retirement, but they do not get the right to collect Social Security. State police and college professors as well as public works all get their benefits and still have the right to collect Social Security. Ms. Malcolm reminded everyone that this is not the teachers' fault.

Ed Bailey arrived at this point in the meeting and Dave Lowry asked him about the road assessment. Mr. Bailey explained that he has gotten plans from a bunch of towns and the one from Killingworth is probably the most in-depth and thorough one. He has met with Nathan Jacobson and the town will be proceeding with a survey of the roads. Mr. Bailey reviewed that the vast majority of roads in town have been built up over the years with tar and gravel. Roads built after World War II are basically in small subdivisions and were done with bituminous concrete or asphalt. Roads built after the 1970s were built to a much higher standard. Roads that are in really bad shape may require a total reconstruction. Mr. Bailey estimated that if they had to bring all of their roads into the upper third in quality, it would cost in the neighborhood of \$5 million. He also explained that they have been spending between \$225,000 and \$275,000 per year on major road maintenance.

Mr. Bailey also stated that they are surveying all of the culverts and some will need to be replaced. They have found one failure and will have to replace pipe under the road. Mr. Bailey stated that the road survey will begin as soon as it can be scheduled and will take approximately six months. He hopes to have the results before the next budget planning season.

Dave Lowry asked what the Grants for Municipal Projects is used for and Al Rusilowicz explained that that is to complement the Town Aid Road funds and is unrestricted money to supplement the Public Works department. Mr. Bailey explained that in addition to the \$275,000 that was spent on major road maintenance, there was another \$65,000 of regular maintenance spent as well.

Mary Wolak asked who will be doing the road survey and Ed Bailey explained that the town engineer, Nathan Jacobson Associates, will do it. Mr. Bailey added that if any major bridge or culvert work needs to be done, there is grant money available. He does not feel that there are any town-owned bridges that need work. There are also LoCIP funds available through the River COG which can be used for collector roads and he gave examples of collector roads. Mr. Bailey gave several examples of possible road projects.

Dave Lowry asked if the State was looking to do anything with the state roads in town and Mr. Bailey stated that they have done some work, but the pavement isn't holding up as well because it is all eco-friendly now. Mr. Bailey summarized by stating that the town will have to decide if they will self-finance or go to bond. He felt that the roads and the firehouse are the two things that will need to be looked at over the next 10 years.

Jim Irish asked if the town engineers were qualified to do a road survey and Ed Bailey assured him that they were and that they were the ones who did the Killingworth study.

Mr. Irish also asked Mr. Bailey if he had firm amounts for the cost of LED lights and Mr. Bailey expects the final proposal soon. He will then review it with the Board of Selectmen and then to the Board of Finance to recommend that it be sent to a town meeting. He will leave it up to the Board of Finance as to how it will be financed, but he believes it will come out of the Undesignated Fund. It is likely that that will not happen until at least July. Tree work has begun in preparation for the lighting project.

#### New Business

None.

#### Adjournment

Mary Wolak made a motion, seconded by Jim Irish, to adjourn the meeting. Motion was carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:36 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz  
Alwaz First