

MIDDLEFIELD BOARD OF FINANCE
405 Main Street
Middlefield, Connecticut 06455

Minutes of the October 10, 2019 Regular Meeting

Jim Irish called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm.

Attendance:

Members

Others

X	Irish, Jim	X	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 made a motion, seconded by Melissa Kowal, to approve the agenda, as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Minutes from 9/12/19 Meeting

Melissa Kowal made a motion, seconded by Alice Malcolm, to approve the minutes of the September 12, 2019 meeting, as presented. Motion carried, with Joel Nick and Mary Wolak abstaining.

Review of Current-Year Spending - Al Rusilowicz

Al Rusilowicz reviewed that spending should be at about 25 percent as of now and generally speaking that is where they are. Salaries are a bit off due to pay periods. Several items, including dues, insurance, Town Regional Planning and others, are typically paid early in the year. The property assessment system is a carryover from the prior year due to the necessary upgrade. An agreement has finally been signed for the GIS system software for \$5,000, with an additional \$12,500 needed in capital. The interim Town Planner has endorsed the system. The data in the system is current as of 2015-2016 and the River COG received a grant to update the mapping.

Al Rusilowicz noted that the Regional Health District should be at zero. Public Works is generally on track. Lake Beseck expenses are at 63 percent, primarily because of lifeguards and summer camp payroll. Overtime bills for the Police Department are received quarterly and the payroll bill is received in June. Ed Bailey noted that a DUI program was done, so there will be overtime but it is offset by a grant. Mr. Bailey also noted that Youth and Family Services and the Local Wellness Coalition received grants that they spend on police activity at the fair and other things.

Mr. Rusilowicz reviewed that the Fire Department is on track as well. Payments have been made on the debt service and the Merriam property is now paid in full. The school district payments are on schedule.

Jim Irish stated that the capital plan has the Merriam property getting a \$10,000 payment in FY 2021 and Mr. Rusilowicz explained that that is an error as it has been paid in full.

Old Business

- A. Updates: Windows 10 conversions, LED demo lights and Town retrofit timing, cell tower emergency management hardware, road survey and Town financial auditors

Al Rusilowicz noted that seven new computer installations will begin next Tuesday. The Town will pay for six of them and the Historical Society will pay for one. Ed Bailey hopes to have the Historical Society documents served on the Town's server. Mr. Bailey also hopes to have the website updated next year. Discussion continued about security on the Town's server and network. All computers will be updated to Windows 10 by the middle of January. Joel Nick offered his support in helping the Historical Society to have everything digitized and stored safely. He also noted that students at the high school may be able to help with that.

The LED demo lights are in Ed Bailey's office and will hopefully be installed next week. Some of the lights on Meriden Road and by Rogers Manufacturing have been changed to LED lights by the State. Full retrofit will hopefully begin soon.

Ed Bailey reported that the cell tower vendor still has to apply for a permit to install and Mr. Bailey has given them online access to the portal. He explained that the Town of Middlefield will have one antenna on the tower. Jim Irish explained that Chief Tyc stated that he will likely need to replace some radios and noted that there is \$90,000 in the budget for that. Ed Bailey thought that the town may be able to piggy-back on Middletown's purchase of equipment.

Jim Irish stated that a storm drain near his house is being worked on and other work has been going on around town. Ed Bailey explained that the emphasis this Fall was moved from chip sealing to repairs. Chip sealing will be done in the Spring. Mr. Bailey added that the Town receives \$196,000 in Town-Aid

Road funds, but the timing of the payments can fluctuate. Last year, the Town received checks in August and April. So far this year, no check has been received and Mr. Bailey was informed that the legislature did not approve the legislation to approve the bonding for the Town Aid Road (TAR) funding. It was included in the budget, however the money was not appropriated. Mr. Bailey believes that the Governor is holding the money hostage for the tolls and he's not sure that the Town will see that money this year or ever again. Al Rusilowicz did confirm that there is balance in the account and road maintenance money as well. Last year, chip sealing cost just under \$200,000 and paving was \$60,000 to \$70,000 with total road maintenance being about \$350,000. Mr. Bailey also mentioned that it will cost somewhere in the neighborhood of \$5 million to get the roads up to standard and they should begin to think about how to finance that. He also reported that the engineers have not yet started the road survey, but he hopes that it would be complete before the next budget cycle. Discussion continued about the costs associated with road work and Mr. Bailey noted that roads in some other towns are not as good as Middlefield's.

Al Rusilowicz reported that the auditors were in the office for about four days and work has begun on this year's audit. All of the funds, with the exception of the general fund, are closed. The audit will not be ready, however, for the December Board of Finance meeting, but will be ready for the January meeting.

New Business

Jim Irish explained that he received a letter from the superintendent about a comment that he made at the Board of Education meeting about salary negotiations. Dr. Veronesi outlined the schedule, with discussions beginning on 10/7/19, and parties naming a mediator by 11/26/19 if the contract is not settled. An arbitrator must be named by 12/21/19 if the contract has still not been settled. She also invited the Boards of Finance from both towns to confer with her about this process. The actual negotiation process begins on 10/17/19. Dave Lowry will check his schedule to see if he can attend, but the Board of Finance generally wished her great success.

Ed Bailey explained that they will be working to keep the school district distributions spread evenly from year to year. He noted that they have monthly meetings with school administrators and there is a strong emphasis on keeping costs under control. There are still projected decreases in ECS funding in the coming years as well.

Alice Malcolm asked if Mr. Bailey had heard anything about maintaining an elementary school in Middlefield and/or getting back to an even board split between the two towns. Mr. Bailey explained that the board split is determined by State statute, but he is in favor of a 50/50 split. Before the last election, he and Laura Francis met with Bob Stefanowski, a candidate for governor, and reviewed these concerns with him. People do agree that the State statutes regarding regional school districts need to be reworked and a working group is trying to make that happen.

Alice Malcolm felt that having an elementary school in town reflects on values of real estate and choice when picking a town to live in. Mr. Bailey explained that he spoke to a real estate agent just yesterday and the quality of the schools is more of an issue than where the school is physically located. Ms. Malcolm felt that it would take 40 minutes to get children from where she lives to Brewster and that is a long time. Ed Bailey and Laura Francis both discussed with the administration that there will need to be a policy in place as to how long students will be on buses. There is also an issue with the regional plan regarding wording about where elementary school students attend school. That plan has been violated for many years now. Mr. Bailey felt that the plan also gives the Board of Education the ability to make changes. He also mentioned that Bond Counsel has suggested that that wording be changed and that will likely have to go to a vote.

Ed Bailey also noted that the regional plan report was written quite some time ago and students have been going to schools in both towns for years. Alice Malcolm stated that the original agreement was just to regionalize the high school students and all other students would remain in their respective towns. Mr. Bailey stated that the plan that was adopted covers all educational levels, preK through high school.

Jim Irish will attend the Board of Education meeting next week and report back as to what was done in the committee.

Mr. Irish then announced that the Board of Finance unanimously would like to recognize Alice Malcolm as this is likely her last meeting. She has been on the Board for 12 years now and has consistently made the Board better. They could always count on Ms. Malcolm to challenge them and bring new ideas and opportunities. He thanked her for her service on behalf of the Board.

Adjournment

Dave Lowry made a motion, seconded by Melissa Kowal, to adjourn the meeting. Motion was carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:29 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First