

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

Minutes of the December 12, 2019 Special Meeting

Jim Irish called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm.

Attendance:

Members

Others

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

A=Absent

X=Present

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Welcome of Newly-Elected Members

Jim Irish welcomed Michael Skelps to the Board. He also congratulated Mary Wolak on her re-election and she offered Mr. Irish congratulations on his re-election as well.

Approval of the Agenda

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

Public Comment

None.

Election of Officers

Dave Lowry nominated Jim Irish as chairman, seconded by several. Hearing no other nominations, all members were in favor.

Jim Irish nominated Dave Lowry as vice chairman, seconded by Joel Nick. Hearing no other nominations, all members were in favor.

After some discussion about the duties of the Secretary, Joel Nick nominated Mary Wolak for secretary, seconded by Dave Lowry. Hearing no other nominations, all members were in favor.

#### Approval of Minutes from 11/14/19 BOF meeting

Jim Irish noted that he made a correction to the minutes because Michael Skelps had not been sworn in at the time of the meeting. His name was replaced in the list of members by Alice Malcolm, who was also absent.

Joel Nick made a motion, seconded by Jim Irish, to approve the minutes of the November 14, 2019 Board of Finance meeting, as corrected. Motion carried, with Michael Skelps abstaining.

#### Review of Current-Year Spending - Al Rusilowicz

Al Rusilowicz reported that spending should be at about 42 percent and the summary sheet mentioned anything that is over that amount. Some of the items have been talked about earlier in the year, like dues and regional planning. The registrar's office is a bit higher than usual as two attendees went to the Fall conference this year. Mr. Irish mentioned that there will be a school referendum in January that was not anticipated in the budget.

The Senior Bus numbers reflect 100 percent of the cost, but 50 percent will be reimbursed by Durham by the end of the year. Road maintenance is just about at budget, primarily because of the Old Indian Trail culvert restoration. Emergency Management notification system is paid in full. Mr. Rusilowicz stated that DMIAAB has sent a notice that they are anticipating a deficit of \$27,000 for the year ended June, 2019. They have not approached the town for more money, but they did notify the towns that one of the roll-off trucks goes off lease/purchase soon and they may want to buy another roll-off. The vehicles are very well-maintained and have a very high trade-in value. Mr. Rusilowicz also noted that the tipping fee is anticipated to go up significantly. Mr. Irish asked if it would be possible to ask DMIAAB to delay their purchase for a couple of years.

#### Old Business

A. Updates: FY19 Audit progress, Fire Department radio/pager orders, town staff changes, culvert/road survey, other

Al Rusilowicz explained that the final adjustments went to the auditor today and they will start putting their packet together. Hopefully, they can give their audit presentation at the January meeting, but it may take a bit longer. Mr. Rusilowicz also reported that all of the Fire Department radios have been received and are getting programmed. The pagers were ordered yesterday.

Mr. Rusilowicz also noted that the Public Works foreman has retired and Jason Wickham was promoted to foreman. A resident of Middlefield was hired as a Maintainer II. Peter Parker has been helping to take care of snow removal and sanding at the lake and has agreed to help train the new person. They are also accepting applications for the fourth non-foreman position. Mary Wolak commented that the roads have looked very good after both storms. She also stated that the crew seems to be a bit more interested in training and they will now have a computer.

Mr. Irish also reported that the town has hired a shared Town Planner with Durham, Robin Newton, who lives in Coventry. Dave Lowry stated that she was heavily vetted by both Planning & Zoning Commissions as well as Bill Warner and Geoff Colegrove. Mr. Lowry also noted that Durham's P&Z Commissioners are elected while Middlefield's are appointed. Al Rusilowicz added that CCM had fielded the resumes, interviewed applicants, presented options and made the recommendation of who to hire before the towns ever got involved. Mr. Rusilowicz was not sure what CCM charged for that service. There was some discussion about making sure Middlefield gets their share of the planner's time.

Al Rusilowicz also reported that the culvert/road survey is in process. A subcontractor has been hired to do the culvert assessment and they have obtained the maps and assessed some of the culverts. He does believe the road survey is also in process. Mr. Irish stated that he would like the survey activity to be far enough along for the board to be able to plan expenses for next year's budget. He explained that he has reviewed the report that Nathan Jacobson did for Killingworth and it was very thorough, including a dollar value.

The parking lots at the Town Hall, Fire Department, Community Center and the Library will be striped in the Spring as part of the crack sealing project. They will also get the use of a special machine for filling larger cracks for one day in the Spring. Al Rusilowicz added that they have recently received a bill from the Connecticut Department of Transportation for about \$21,000 for a bridge audit that was completed 12 years ago. All of the town records have been destroyed on the project and Mr. Rusilowicz has reached out to Nathan Jacobson who was the project manager. Mr. Rusilowicz felt that they should be ashamed of themselves for sending that invoice out after 12 years. He will contact the audit division to get a copy of the grant if Nathan Jacobson doesn't have it. Mr. Irish suggested that Ed Bailey reach out to Buddy Altobello or Mary Abrams to have them talk with the DOT. Mr. Irish summarized by saying that Al Rusilowicz has strong support from the Board of Finance to resist this with whatever political actions might be successful.

### New Business

#### A. Meeting schedule for CY2020

Jim Irish had sent out a meeting schedule, with the meetings being on the second Thursday of each month. There are also possible workshops in March and April, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Ed Bailey will present his budget on March 12, 2020, the public hearing will be on April 23, 2020 and the town meeting will be on May 11, 2020. The school board's vote will be on May 4, 2020.

Mary Wolak made a motion, seconded by Joel Nick, to approve the meeting schedule for CY2020, as presented. Motion carried, unanimously.

#### B. Update from recent BOE meeting

Jim Irish reported that there had been a BOE meeting on Tuesday. They reviewed enrollment and a recent Milone and MacBroom estimate was that the district would lose 200 students over the next two years. The old estimate had been a loss of 93. This loss will result in about 100 students per class, with even less at the high school. There was no discussion about the reasons behind this decline, but it will be discussed further at the January board meeting.

Discussion continued about the decline in enrollment, with students going to other schools and the mass

exodus from Connecticut. Mr. Irish explained that the school board has set priorities for their budget, but continue to have this erosion of enrollment.

Mr. Irish then went on to review the teachers' contract, with a reduction in insurance expenses. The salaries will increase 9.4 percent over three years and the overall impact is between \$300,000 to nearly \$500,000 per year based on the fiscal 2020 budget and staffing. There was discussion about possible staff reductions with the decline in enrollment.

Mr. Irish also explained that the Board of Education voted to move all grade six students from Memorial to Strong School beginning in September, 2020. They also voted to move Brewster grade three to Memorial next September. They also decided to poll the community on whether or not to include Lyman's current fourth graders at Memorial for one year or to keep them at Lyman. These changes are being made to get halfway through the transition that is needed for when Lyman closes and to help alleviate the space problem at Brewster.

There will be a public hearing on January 8<sup>th</sup> for the changes in the charter, one to allow the Board of Ed to make these types of changes and the other to allow the members from Durham to be voted in during the November elections per the Durham town charter. These changes will be voted on in a February referendum. The additional referendum will be held in May, along with the budget.

Mr. Irish also noted the BOE voted to donate Korn School to the Town of Durham. He reviewed that the current cost to keep Korn mothballed is \$160,000 per year, including the bond payment. There are also over \$1 million in capital costs required. One option would be to donate the building to Durham, but they may not take it. The other option would be to demolish the building at a cost of about \$1 million. Middlefield would, in fact, save money by the district giving the building to Durham. The grant that had been associated with Korn School was forgiven by the state. Mr. Irish reminded everyone that Durham had voted not to fund a \$7 million bond issue for Korn School and Laura Francis has told the Board of Ed that the town is not interested in the school. Letters will be sent shortly to the First Selectmen stating that the district is willing to donate the building. Mr. Irish felt it was likely that Durham will not accept the donation. Mrs. Wolak wondered if Middlefield will be in the same position when Lyman gets closed, but several people felt that Lyman may be able to be sold.

C. Other

None.

#### Adjournment

Jim Irish made a motion, seconded by Joel Nick, to adjourn the meeting. Motion was carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:52 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz  
Alwaz First