

MIDDLEFIELD BOARD OF SELECTMEN
405 Main Street
Middlefield, Connecticut 06455

Revised Minutes of the January 21, 2019 Regular Meeting
italic Denotes Revision

Call to Order

Ed Bailey called the meeting to order at 6:42 PM. Ed Bailey, Bob Yamartino, and Carol Bufithis were present.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Agenda

To add items:

- 6.a. Executive Session to discuss pending litigation
- 10.a. Board of Education Update

Carol Bufithis made a motion, second by Ed Bailey, to approve the agenda as amended. Motion carried.

Public Comment

No comment made however; a Scout from Middletown was present to observe the meeting in order to obtain the "Citizenship in the Community" Merit Badge.

Approval of Minutes of the Board of Selectmen

- a. November 19th, 2019
- b. December 17th, 2019

Bob Yamartino made a motion, second by Carol Bufithis, to approve the minutes of the November 19, 2019 Board of Selectman meeting. Ed Bailey made motion, seconded by Carol Bufithis to approve the minutes of the December 17, 2019 Board of Selectman Meeting. Both motions carried.

Presentation by Habitat for Humanity regarding acquisition of 171 Hubbard Street

Middlesex County Habitat for Humanity of CT members Sarah Bird, Executive Director, Chris Aresco, Finance and Operations Director, and Curtis Weybright, Project Manager were present for the presentation.

Sarah gave an overview of the projects done by Middlesex County Habitat for Humanity and how their process works once a home is built by their teams.

She then reviewed "A.L.I.C.E." Candidates (Asset Limited, Income **Constrained**, Employed) who are typically the individuals their group supports and what qualifications they must meet in order to apply for a Habitat for Humanity Home.

Sarah described the mortgage process and partnership that is created with the new homeowner once the application process has been completed and the applicant has been chosen. She then explained that if the town agreed to have Habitat buy the property at 171 Hubbard St. that they would like to designate it as a Military Build, meaning the home would go to an applicant who is a member of our Armed Forces.

Chris Aresco continued the presentation by explaining the construction process and that they focus on making the homes Energy Star rated and very efficient to help save the new homeowner as much as possible. He reviewed the extensive issues that are present and would need to be addressed at the Hubbard Street property.

Ed explained that the town acquired the property by foreclosure for unpaid taxes. The town has incurred legal fees, miscellaneous expenses such as covering the roof and cleaning the house, and those same unpaid taxes which collectively total \$55,705. In his discussion with Sarah and her team Mr. Bailey learned that Habitat would be willing to cover that expense in acquisition of the property. Ed did explain that the appraisal shows the property being worth about \$175,000 and had originally hoped to sell it in a private sale however, the Habitat sale would also be beneficial for the town. The group reviewed the "Memorandum of Understanding" regarding the transfer of the property and if there could be some relief or abatement on the tax burden for the property while the home is renovated. Some figures were discussed and the consensus was to have the process handled by Town Council, Bruno Morasutti, to create a sale contract which would then need to be approved by the Board of Selectman and then presented at a Town Meeting.

Open Executive Session

Bob Yamartino made motion, second by Carol Bufithis, For the Board to enter into Executive Session at 7:50 pm to discuss pending litigation.

****Close Executive Session at 8:12 pm****

No votes or decisions were made during the Executive Session.

Bob Yamartino made motion, second by Carol Bufithis, to Authorize First Selectman, Ed Bailey, to enter into a settlement with Lightning P.C. and Mark Whither per terms discussed in Executive Session as recommended by Attorney John Blazi and our Insurance Carrier.

Resolution of Endorsement and Authorization for the Regional Performance Incentive Program

The Resolution of the Middlefield Board of Selectman for the Regional Performance Incentive (RPI) Program Resolution of Endorsement and Authorization was read and discussed. (also attached.)

Ed Bailey made motion, second by Carol Bufithis to adopt a resolution regarding the Regional Performance Incentive (RPI) Program. Motion carried.

Public Safety Radio Communication Equipment Update

Radios have been received; we are still waiting on the pagers to arrive. Mr. Bailey closed on the lease agreement about two weeks ago.

LED Streetlight Conversion Update

The project is underway and installation should begin soon. Eversource has been rather difficult to deal with in identifying which lights need to be replaced.

Preliminary Budget Discussion

As budget season is approaching Mr. Bailey has been working with all departments to gather information. He said that Personnel Enhancements are needed going forward in order to meet work load demands. Capital Budget is always a primary focus and Ed felt that most areas are in good shape. Turnover in the Public Works Department will cause a different budget outcome with two new hires joining the team.

Ed explained that his budget is due to the Board of Finance on March 1st. The Governor's budget comes out around February 15th which is always taken into account for the Town Budget. Middlefield's Grand List is due January 31st and is expected to increase. He said that the

Capital Budget typically receives the most changes up until the due date and of course the Board of Education fluctuates greatly due to changes in enrollment. Bob stated that enrollment projections are showing a continued decline over the next seven years, mostly from Durham. Bob explained that that means Middlefield's percentage is projected to consistently increase over the seven years meaning Middlefield will take a higher percentage of the budget.

Board of Education Update

Bob reported that there is an upcoming budget meeting/ workshop on Saturday (1/25) which is open to the public. Bob hopes that it will be conveyed that the budget should be kept flat. It is anticipated that the district will close one school and reconfigure grades housed in each remaining school. He looked to the board members for feedback to bring to the meeting. Ed said that the goal of maintaining costs is a priority and looking for ways to keep per-student costs down is key, especially in an environment of declining enrollment. He did acknowledge the efforts of Regional District 13, the Board of Education, and the Superintendent of Schools for their efforts in reducing unnecessary costs.

Regarding budget priorities, Bob reviewed a couple of items that will need attention. He explained that the playground at John Lyman School was condemned by the inspector about a month ago and was removed over the Christmas break. Construction requirements and the cost of rebuilding are hindering replacement of the playground. The playground and tennis courts at Memorial School continue to be in disrepair and are in need of replacement. Bob put together a proposal to convert the current area to a new pickleball, basketball, and tennis court and also a Four-Square court. The preliminary cost he determined for the whole project would be approximately \$100K. He noted that the courts would be available to townspeople only (Durham and Middlefield).

Jim Irish and the group discussed the topic of the salary budget and union contracts for teachers to be brought to the Board of Education Budget Meeting/Workshop. Jim also suggested taking into consideration having a contingency plan to create budget modifications in the event the Referendum fails.

Bob went on to discuss the first referendum question which will be voted on at the February 11th Referendum. He explained that the question is basically changing the language in the Regional Plan to specifically allow for the Board of Education to close a school. The language in the current plan is ambiguous to this action and Bob noted that the driver for these changes is the enrollment projections and steady decline in enrollment.

Bob then discussed the improvement and replacement needs at the Field House. He noted that there have been many donations to the project already equal to about 50% of the cost, which he estimated at about \$120K.

Appointments

- a. Conservation Commission Correction to Term Dates
 - i. Christopher Hurlbert – Term 1/1/2017 to 12/31/2020 Fill Vacant Term
 - ii. Robin Heath – Term 1/1/2019 to 12/31/2022 Fill Vacant Term
 - iii. Brian McDermott – Term 1/1/2019 to 12/31/2022 Fill Vacant Term
- b. Conservation Commission
 - i. Thomas Capega – Term 1/1/2017 to 12/31/2020 Fill Vacant Term

Bob Yamartino made a motion, second by Ed Bailey, to approve the appointments as stated above. Motion carried

First Selectman's Report; Legislative Issues Affecting Municipalities

Mr. Bailey reported that he has continued to attend meetings regarding Legislative changes affecting municipalities. Three items of note are: Trash, Tolls, and Trees. Of those three, Ed stated the one that will have the largest impact on our town is Trash. The Trash to Energy plant in Hartford is in immediate need of renovation. Currently we are facing an increase of \$9 per ton in the tipping fee that the town is currently paying totaling \$91 per ton effective July 1st which will amount to a \$30K increase for DMIAAB. Further increases in fees within the next six to eight months will result in a tipping fee of \$145 per ton. Cities and towns are looking to the State for some relief of these increases. If the plant isn't rebuilt Middlefield will be forced to ship our municipal waste out of the state which will create a much larger environmental impact including, but not limited to, increased traffic, air and ground pollution. The group continued to discuss costs of disposal of waste and processing of recyclable materials. Ed then provided a copy of a presentation which illustrated statistics on waste disposal throughout many areas. He noted that it shows that Connecticut is the Western Hemisphere leader in Sustainable Waste Management.

Ed briefly touched on the issue of Trees throughout our state. Here in Middlefield we have kept up with tree maintenance and have spent approximately \$250K over the last ten years. Unfortunately, other towns that were harder hit by the Gypsy Moth infestation are in much worse shape and in need of hundreds of thousands of dollars to handle their tree problems.

Adjournment

Bob Yamartino made a motion, second by Carol Bufithis, to adjourn the regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Tonya Hogan

Tonya Hogan
Assistant Town Clerk

Minutes Approved _____

Confirmed by _____