

MIDDLEFIELD BOARD OF SELECTMEN
405 Main Street
Middlefield, Connecticut 06455

Minutes of the April 21, 2020 Regular Meeting

Call to Order

Mr. Bailey called the meeting to order at 6:34 PM. Ed Bailey, Carol Bufithis, and Bob Yamartino were all present.

Approval of Agenda

Add Item 9B – “Approval of Resolution to Open New Debit Card Account with TD Bank”

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

Public Comment

Jim Irish, chairman of the Board of Finance was present. He commented that he continues to encourage a zero increase in the Board of Education budget. He said that looking at the town budget and the potential cut in tax collection that a zero increase in the Board of Ed budget would assist in keep the MIL rate down. Bob stated that savings incurred this year for not operating during the pandemic would offset costs for next year. Bob pointed out that there are several “unknowns” and several points that need to be reviewed including salaries, increase in the number of teachers, as well as the continued enrollment decline. Jim also mentioned that he had heard the governor of New York say that with out Federal Support his state would likely have to cut school budgets by 20%. Jim said that the \$1,200,000.00 we receive for ECS could potentially be cut by a similar amount and felt this is very concerning. Ed continued the conversation by reviewing and describing some the relief funding that should be coming from the State and Federal level.

Regarding relief funding for small businesses Bob noted that if you’ve applied for funding and have not gotten it or haven’t received notice that you’ve been approved or declined, he said you should contact the lender and be sure that the application is complete and or re-apply.

Approval of Minutes of the Board of Selectmen

- a. April 6, 2020 – Regular Meeting

Bob Yamartino made a motion, second by Carol Bufithis, to approve the minutes of the April 6, 2020 Regular Meeting of the Board of Selectmen. Motion carried.

COVID-19 Update

Ed explained that an Executive order was passed regarding face coverings in public which went into effect on April 20th at 8:00 pm. This order requires individuals to wear a mask or other covering when outdoors within 6 feet of others, as well as inside stores, businesses, and workplaces. Ed is seeking someone who could sew about 50 masks for employees which could be donated or bought. Both Bob and Carol stated that they knew people who would be willing to take on this project and would ask them. Carol also offered additional gloves for use by employees.

Ed said that the State legislature will not meet in their regular session as they are closed until May 6th which is actually the end date of regular session. He felt that they will likely meet under Special Session upon reopening. He also said that the Presidential Preference Primary has been rescheduled to August 11th.

An emergency conference call was held for the Plainville Southington Health District during which the Health Director discussed projections for reopening some municipal activities including summer camps, pools, and beaches. Ed explained that the tentative date was originally set for June 26th however, because the situation has not improved as quickly as originally hoped this date will likely be pushed back to possibly the first or second week of July.

Ed presented the latest stats showing total cases, deaths, and hospitalizations as provided by the Public Health Department which are as follows: Total Statewide Cases total 20,360 Statewide Deaths total 14,023. Middlesex County total cases are 512 with 47 deaths and 40 hospitalized. Middlefield has 7 cases. 64,000 people have been tested so far. The discussion continued around Nationwide infection rates and how our actions have helped to slow the spread here in Connecticut.

Resolution regarding adoption of tax “Deferment Program” and/or “Low Interest Rate Program” as required by the Governor’s Executive Order 75.6

Ed reviewed which programs surrounding towns were planning to select. He then reviewed a form for Individuals or Businesses would use to attest that their income or revenue significantly declined due to COVID-19. The form would be submitted by July 1st with supporting documentation and then need to be approved by the tax collector. A press release will be published to inform residents of the options available. Bob noted that he is pleased with the opportunity to provide tax relief to our residents due to these circumstances.

The programs were discussed to decide which would be best for our town and it was decided to:

Adopt in accordance with the Governor’s Executive Order 75 Section 6 concerning Municipal Tax Deferral and Low Interest Programs the following:

- 1) Deferment Program as detailed in the Executive Order without modification
- 2) Low Interest Rate Program

Bob Yamartino made motion, second by Carol Bufithis, to adopt the resolution. Motion carried.

L.E.D. Streetlight Conversion Update

The conversion has been completed.

First Selectman's Report

Mr. Bailey reported that a lot of town government activities and business are proceeding. Ed will be attending a Natural Hazard Mitigation meeting to adopt a mitigation plan as directed by FEMA. Carol asked Ed what would happen if someone in the Town Hall became ill with COVID-19. Ed explained that the plan that is currently in place would be to close the town hall completely for cleaning and would then consult the Health Director to assist in determining when it would be safe to reopen the building. The memo's that were provided to town staff direct individuals to remain home if they are feeling ill and in the event they have symptoms of the virus to get tested if necessary.

Meetings continue weekly with several different councils and boards to discuss current events happening in town. Use of parks and school grounds for organized games / sports continues to be a challenge. Ed plans to create signs that say "Help keep this park open – Practice Social Distancing" to remind people that if this practice isn't followed that the parks could be closed. Carol mentioned seeing kids riding on the skate park while out for a walk earlier in the day even though there is a sign saying the skate park is closed and a \$90 fine could be imposed if the kids were found breaking the rule. There was a discussion around how to approach people breaking the rules and Ed advised if people seemed to be causing a health issue that a gentle reminder of the temporary rules would be appropriate.

Ed continues to attend weekly meetings with Regional School District and Health District. Meetings with the Governor are happening twice weekly for Q & A on the latest developments. Also, the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security meet twice weekly. Ed also stated that he will be attending a webinar regarding the Economic Outlook for CT. Information from these meetings is then passed along to staff and town residents. Ed said that the virus is not declining as quickly as originally expected and anticipates a very slow reopening process. Ed anticipates that schools will not reopen for the current school year and larger gatherings will continue to be limited. Sadly, he said that it is very likely that the Durham Fair will be cancelled and the Memorial Day Parade that takes place in Durham has already been cancelled for this year.

On a brighter note, Victory Church held a drive-up Food Drive that was very successful and all of the food that was donated will be given to the Middlefield Food Pantry. The food pantry has seen a small uptick in usage since the beginning of the pandemic.

Approval of Resolution to Open New Debit Card Account with TD Bank

Ed explained that due to some procurement issues there is a need for another debit account to be used by Pete Tyc to buy supplies outside of our normal vendors (i.e. Amazon, etc.) who typically will send invoices and be paid by check. This would allow Mr. Tyc to purchase Personal Protective gear online. The account would be funded with a minimal balance and the signers would be: Mr. Bailey, Taryn Ruffino, Al Rusilowicz, and Pete Tyc.

Approve Governmental Entity Certificate of Resolution for deposit account at TD Bank. Bob Yamartino made motion, second by Ed Bailey, to amend the resolution to limit the deposit account balance to a maximum of \$3,000. The amendment was approved by all members.

Carol Bufithis made a motion, second by Bob Yamartino, to approve the resolution as amended. Motion carried.

Adjournment

Carol Bufithis made a motion, second by Bob Yamartino, 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 _____