

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

Minutes of the May 19, 2020 Regular Meeting

Call to Order

called the meeting to order at 6:34 PM. Ed Bailey, Carol Bufithis, and Bob Yamartino were present. Jim Irish, chairman of the Board of Finance was also present.

Approval of Agenda

Add item 4.b. – April 21, 2020 Regular Meeting of the Board of Selectmen

Add item 9.b. – Tax Refunds

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

Public Comment

Dr. Michael Sambor submitted a letter regarding his concerns about not being able to vote on the Town and School budgets.

Mr. Bailey explained that under the Governor's Executive Orders 7-B, 7-C, and 7-I the Board of Selectmen was required to adopt a resolution to allow the budget making authority to adopt the budget which includes the Board of Finance and the School Board. Ed stated that he would reply directly to Dr. Sambor.

Bob mentioned that he has heard concerns from a few residents regarding use of PPE by DMIAAB employees. It was reported that they aren't wearing face masks and not following social distancing guidelines. Carol commented that she has also observed this on numerous occasions. Ed said that the town has made masks and gloves available to those working at DMIAAB via the site manager. Hand sanitizer stations and signage regarding social distancing have also been installed courtesy of the Health District. Ed said he will address the issue with Dom Delvecchio.

Approval of Minutes of the Board of Selectmen

- a. May 4, 2020 – Regular Meeting
- b. April 21, 2020 – Regular Meeting

***Carol Bufithis made a motion, second by Bob Yamartino, to approve the minutes of the May 4, 2020 Regular Meeting of the Board of Selectmen. Motion carried.***

***Bob Yamartino made a motion, second by Carol Bufithis, to approve the minutes of the April 21, 2020 Regular Meeting of the Board of Selectmen. Motion carried.***

#### COVID-19 Update

Ed explained that he has continued to attend meetings with the Health District. As of May 18<sup>th</sup>, hospitalizations have continued to decline with a decrease of 17. Middlesex County currently has 32 individuals hospitalized. Ed showed the group a graph depicting various COVID statistics. He went on the report that Middlefield has 15 cases, while Durham has 28. Middletown and Meriden both have much higher numbers which is likely due to higher populations.

#### Review of various Executive Orders issued by the Governor that affect municipalities

Ed said that he has attended two meetings with the Health District this week and explained that it has been announced that schools will remain closed through the end of this school year. There is a prohibition on Summer School and other School related activities during the summer. No word has yet been given on what the fall semester will look like. Mr. Bailey also attended a District 13 conference call during which they discussed how things might be this fall and the need to start preparations. One issue of concern with the continuation of online learning is the lack of student engagement and participation, however, District 13 superintendent felt that there is a good amount of engagement and participation in district. There are a lot of factors that will go into determining how next school year will be.

Businesses will begin to re-open on May 20<sup>th</sup>. Ed reviewed the states reopening plans for Phase 1 and which businesses can open and what recreation activities are allowed. Ed stated that there is still a question of whether or not swimming will be allowed at Lake Beseck. Our Park is open and the beach will open to town residents, however, no life guards are currently on duty as no guidance has been provided. If the beach becomes over crowded people will be turned away but that has not been an issued so far.

Outdoor dining can begin May 20<sup>th</sup> as well. The Town Planner, who was on the committee to formulate the rules by which Restaurants would be allowed to reopen, put together a handout for guidance for these businesses which is available on our website. Links to various forms needed are also available on the site. The Governor's executive order allows for permits to be issued by the Zoning Enforcement Officer for outdoor dining to restaurants that don't already have outdoor seating areas.

Blackbird is going to offer limited outdoor seating on their deck and see how that goes. Powder Ridge will be opening their large deck area on May 21<sup>st</sup> and Ed stated that there was an inspection to see how their social distancing practice was going. Indian Springs is considering opening their café as they already have an outdoor area, however, no date has been established for their re-opening. Kim's Confections AKA Baileyville Bakery is planning to put

tables on the lawn in front of the building. Guida's is reopening as well and they already have picnic tables in place.

Reopening of Salon's and Barber Shop's has been postponed until early June. Ed stated that he received many emails from Salon and Barber Shop workers who expressed their concerns about reopening and said that they didn't want to open this soon. Bob pointed out that there were also Salon owners in New Haven that were protesting in favor of opening.

Ed explained that in the event complaints are heard about safety in operations at businesses and restaurants that the Governor has suggested police will be called upon to investigate and enforce the Guidelines. Ed said that he plans to appoint the Zoning Officer or Inland Wetlands Officer to handle investigations as well as these officers are well equipped to work with the local public.

Ed explained that the Park and Recreation commission has cancelled summer camp. He said that this could change if guidance from the state changes which is highly unlikely. Ed pointed out that Hannah Malcolm, Park and Recreation Director, worked with her senior councilors to develop a plan to follow the guidance provided by the State which, he said, was a very good plan, however, it would be far too difficult to manage and ultimately the commission voted to cancel camp all together.

The State received \$1.3 Billion in COVID relief funds from the Federal Government. The State will then refund towns 100% of COVID related expenses. Under the current state of emergency, the town qualifies for 75% reimbursement from FEMA, however, the state has advised towns against applying for the FEMA aid since the state is expected to refund 100%. Ed and Finance Director Al Rusilowicz submitted preliminary cost figures to the state and will be submitting another report with up to date figures on expenses in June.

Ed explained that during his Admin call with the School District he learned that about two months ago the lunch program for students was distributing 120 meals per day and that has increased to 500 meals per day. The lunches are available for pick up at the High School and are available for all students in our district. This program may be ending June 30<sup>th</sup>.

Middlefield Food Bank has been very active with donations. Victory Church and Jafaria Islamic Center have held drive up food drives and donated to our bank. The senior lunch program continues to be successful as well. Seniors are provided 3 frozen meals on Monday's. The senior center has also distributed boxes of canned foods and other non-perishable items as well. This program will continue until the Senior Center is allowed to be reopened. Carol asked if the Giving Garden has started distributing produce and Ed explained that they will begin as items become available for harvest.

Ed continued the update by reviewing a new executive order allowing for a town meeting to elect people to boards. Previously the governor had issued an order prohibiting town meetings but that has since changed. In Middlefield we have two expiring terms on both the Board of Education as well as DMIAAB. The new order that has been put in place will allow for the Town Meeting to be held between June 27<sup>th</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup> for the purpose of electing people to these boards. Ed has been working on different options to hold this meeting safely and is considering the use of the Pavilion and a large tent at Peckham Park. Carol suggested perhaps avoiding the tent and saving that cost and scheduling the meeting with a tentative rain date. Bob noted the need for handicap accessibility and suggested holding the meeting at the High School

Auditorium or possibly the “Cow Palace” at the Durham Fair Grounds. Ed responded that he would be very reluctant to hold a town meeting outside of the borders of our town and felt that it would greatly upset many residents. Bob stated an outdoor meeting could pose issues for people to be able to hear what was being said. Ed plans to discuss this with the Health Director for guidance.

The discussion continued around different options and the logistics of where, when, and how to hold the meeting especially with the need to practice proper social distancing.

### Budget Update

Ed reiterated that he had reviewed the budget adoption process at the beginning of the meeting. The Board of Finance has made available a draft proposed budget for the public to view on our town website. The proposal was reviewed with the board members and the revised proposed Mill Rate of 32.23 was pointed out. Jim Irish explained that this revision was a result of the addition of \$5,000.00 of support given to the Durham & Middlefield Youth & Family Services as they will suffer a loss due to the cancellation of this year’s Durham Fair. The Board of Finance felt that the DMYFS lunch program would continue to see higher than normal use and didn’t want this program to be jeopardized. Ed noted the expectation of a lower estimated tax collection rate, in this case 97.5%, which is normally closer to 100%.

The Public Hearing for the budget will be held via video conference on Thursday, May 21<sup>st</sup> and an email address (BOFcomments@middlefieldct.org) has been posted on the town website for people to submit questions, concerns, and comments regarding the budget.

Ed made note of an increase in the “Office Expense” line item which was made in order to hold an appreciation event for our First Responders who have kept our community safe during the pandemic. Ed also noted the increase in our Capital / Nonrecurring Fund.

Bob and Carol both expressed their concerns with using the “Office Expense” line item for the appreciation event and felt that a separate line item or other line item, for example “Old Homes Day’s”, should have been used.

### L.E.D. Streetlight Conversion Update

Ed discovered that a few lights in Middletown were changed over in error but they are currently getting this corrected, otherwise the project is about 99% completed. He said that the illumination at Peckham is also in need of adjustment.

### RSD-13 Update

Bob reported that the Public Hearing for the School Budget was held last week and said that comments came in writing and all were addressed. Many concerns were heard around playground equipment for John Lyman School, several questions were asked about staffing levels given the reduction in students as well as the per-pupil expenditures going up. Another issue that was raised was the effect on the “MBR” and it was explained that that is based on the net expense and not the budgeted expense.

### Tax Refunds

Mr. Bailey read the request for refunds to be approved into record.

***Bob Yamartino made a motion, second by Carol Bufithis, to approve the Tax Refunds as attached. Motion carried.***

### First Selectman's Report

Ed reported that he has been working on our Hazard Mitigation Plan and it will be going to Public Hearing sometime in the next 30 days. The town is required by the State to have a Hazard Mitigation plan in place and update it every 5 years. The plan involves many of our town staff including the Town Planner, Inland Wetlands Agent, Building Officer, and the Highway Foreman. Ed stated that given our position above sea level we are fortunate to not face as many severe hazards as low-lying areas do, especially when it comes to flooding. This plan is essentially a road map of what needs to be done to reduce hazards going forward.

Ed also reported that he has been working on a couple of different grants. One is an "Open Space Grant" that he has been working with the Town Planner on to possibly purchase a piece of property here in town or perhaps purchase development rights to. The second is a STEEP grant which would involve the Town Center Plan. Ed finished his report by saying many things have been placed on hold due to the pandemic but things are beginning to slowly pick up again.

### 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 \_\_\_\_\_