

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

Minutes of the September 10, 2020 Regular Meeting via Zoom

Jim Irish called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm.

Attendance:

Members

Others

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

A=Absent

X=Present

Approval of the Agenda

Jim Irish made a motion, seconded by Michael Skelps, to approve the agenda, as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Minutes from 8/27/20 Special Meeting

Joel Nick made a motion, seconded by Michael Skelps, to approve the minutes from the 8/27/20 special meeting, as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Old Business

- A. Report on Storm Clean-Up and FY20 COVID Costs for FEMA Reimbursement Submission - Al Rusilowicz

Al Rusilowicz reported that he and Ed Bailey met with FEMA representatives on Tuesday to review their requirements. Equipment usage is based on vehicles used times the FEMA-approved rate per hour and will be \$26,163. Brush disposal are estimated costs based on 2,000 cu.yd. of material that will be paid to DMIAAB. The \$20,000 amount will be subtracted from the town's quarterly payment to DMIAAB. This is also based on the hours anticipated for the chip grinder with an operator and transportation to and from DMIAAB and Strickland Farm. Michael Skelps asked if, in fact, DMIAAB has done more work because of the storm and would therefore be entitled to additional payment for that work. Ed Bailey explained

that DMIAAB has always handled debris and brush removal during storms and they feel that they can handle this under their standard agreement. Mr. Bailey stated that there is no special agreement for that.

Mary Wolak thought that because the towns helped purchase the grinder and they make extra money by grinding for other towns, that is why they do Durham and Middlefield's brush at no extra cost. Mr. Rusilowicz reiterated that there is no additional cost to the town, but it is a reimbursable cost from FEMA.

Contracted services is for the removal of hanging trees and branches and is strictly an estimate. FEMA will also reimburse the town for Public Works normal wages for the time spent moving debris. There was also some overtime. The electric service was ripped off of one of the buildings at Peckham Park and had to be restored. They have received a bill for that and it was actually less than \$1,750. Mr. Rusilowicz reviewed other miscellaneous charges. The total submitted is just shy of \$95,000 and the reimbursement rate will be at 75 percent.

The State of Connecticut is currently gathering this information from the towns and will present it to FEMA to have it declared a disaster area. Until that is completed, no one can be completely sure that anything will be reimbursed. Ed Bailey explained that that would be a major disaster declaration and then FEMA will provide reimbursement. The State is hoping to have this completed by the end of the month.

Dave Lowry joined the meeting at this point.

Al Rusilowicz explained that they had set up separate line items in three categories for COVID-related expenses, including the Registrar's Office, Fire Department and Emergency Management. The total through June 30, 2020 was \$24,043. The town will submit that number of FEMA by the end of September, they will approve or disapprove, and then it goes to the State. Those expenses are also reimbursable by FEMA at 75 percent and Mr. Rusilowicz believes that the State will reimburse the other 25 percent. He did mention that there had been additional costs after June 30<sup>th</sup>, but he was not sure about the reimbursement process for that.

Ed Bailey added that cloth masks will not be reimbursable by FEMA, but paper ones will be. He believes that there may be things submitted that will be rejected by FEMA. He also noted that the Governor stated that they have not used much of the money provided to the state yet.

#### B. FY20 Year-End Summary and Variance Analysis - Al Rusilowicz

Al Rusilowicz began with a review of the Selectmen's Office, stating that it ended under budget by \$2,460.66. Professional Services was over budget in the Computer Consultant line which was related to the Windows 10 upgrade. Insurance Deductibles were over by \$2,500.00. Street lights were \$18,000 under budget due to the LED conversion that was done. Employee Benefits were all under budget as was the Town Clerk's office other than the Town Clerk's Assistant. Mr. Rusilowicz will speak to Donna Golub about getting reimbursed for that amount. Tax Collector and Treasurer were right on budget. The only item over budget the Registrars' Office was the COVID expenses.

Jim Irish asked about the Tax Collector's Assistant which is only one-third spent and Al Rusilowicz explained that tax collector absorbed the time that the assistant would have normally worked during COVID.

The Land Use/Health Department is under budget by \$8,168.00. The Assessor's Office is over budget by \$19,606.54, but that is primarily due to the GIS System Software. System Software and Support was expected, but had not been at the time the budget was developed. Ed Bailey explained that the GIS system is still in beta mode and they hope to have it complete this Fall. Mr. Bailey also explained that revaluation will take place for the October 2021 Grand List and RFP will be put out this winter.

Mr. Rusilowicz reviewed that Social Services is under budget. Public Works payroll was significantly under budget as were storm-related costs. He noted that Road Maintenance is quite a bit over budget, but that number will go down dramatically since some projects have been designed to TAR, LoCIP or the capital account. Garage and sundry expenses will be over budget. Ed Bailey explained that he had encouraged the Public Works department to do whatever work needed to be done in the garage.

Moving to Park and Rec, Summer Camp was not held this year and those expenses are down. Jim Irish mentioned that the lifeguards at the beach were excellent this year. Both Animal Control and Police are right on track. Fire Department communications were over due to the removal of a siren and equipment and supplies were over as well. They did not spend any money on an Appreciation Night. Mr. Rusilowicz did explain that there may be extra costs this year in Supplemental Benefits. The Fire Marshal's budget was generally under budget.

Mr. Rusilowicz explained that the town does not spend a lot of money on Emergency Management and the COVID experience showed that more money is necessary for preparedness going forward. Mr. Bailey added that the current budget will reflect large increases in that area. Mary Wolak asked where the town's shelter is located now and Ed Bailey explained that the town would use the high school if a shelter is needed. He explained that the issue at Memorial School is a generator issue and they are looking at getting that issue corrected. Jim Irish suggested that Rob Poturnicki meets with the Board of Finance during the next budget season.

Looking at Boards and Commissions, the only one over budget by any significant amount is Inland Wetlands and that is primarily due to legal and engineering costs related to one particular violation. Mr. Rusilowicz was not sure if the issue has been resolved at this point.

Moving to Other Town Funds, Mr. Rusilowicz explained that the \$243,205 was the appropriation made for the LED light assessment that has not been booked to the General Fund yet. The project did come in under budget and they are working with Eversource to get the rebate finalized.

The town used almost nothing out of the Contingency Fund and the Debt Service was at budget. Mr. Rusilowicz did confirm that the final payment on the Clean Water Fund will be made in October. Outside Agencies were all at or under budget other than Hazardous Waste and Old Homes Day didn't happen this year.

In summary, the expenditures were under budget by \$576,759.22 minus the \$243,000 for the LED light project, coming out at roughly \$330,000. Michael Skelps asked about the absentee ballots and the work load for the Town Clerks. Mr. Rusilowicz explained that the Town Clerk brought in an assistant for the primary to handle absentee ballots and felt that she would probably do the same thing for the election. He also explained that the town will be reimbursed approximately \$4,000 for the primary election. Ed Bailey confirmed that there will be additional personnel to handle absentee ballots and he has been told by the Secretary of State's office that Middlefield will receive \$5,416.32 within the next two weeks.

Al Rusilowicz apologized that he has not yet been able to finalize the revenue numbers and is unable to give a final surplus number of the fiscal year.

Looking at the Capital fund, Mr. Rusilowicz reminded everyone that the \$243,205 has not yet been transferred to the General fund pending the resolution of the credit from Eversource. The Computer System/Upgrades was over due to having to purchase new computers. The LED street light assessment did come in less than was budgeted. Town Property Remediation was over by \$3,500 and included removing two water tanks and demolition of a barn. Ed Bailey explained that additional funds will be appropriated in FY21 to balance that out. As mentioned earlier, they may move some projects into the Road Improvements line item to bring that number down a bit. Jim Irish asked what the balance of the TAR fund is, but Mr. Rusilowicz didn't have that information with him but felt that they had spent \$46,561 of that account for work on Cherokee Road and crack sealing that was done. Ed Bailey stated that the town receives about \$193,000 a year for TAR. Mr. Rusilowicz also explained that the town sold some small pieces of equipment for \$1,700.

Mary Wolak stated that she has heard the town applied for a state grant for farming land and Ed Bailey explained that the town has applied for an Open Space Watershed Grant for the Pogmore farm. The grant will cover 60 to 65 percent of the purchase of the land, so if the Board of Selectmen decided to purchase the property it would have to go to a town meeting for approval of appropriating the funds. Mr. Bailey does feel that the concept has been well-received by the Board of Selectmen and the Planning and Zoning Commission.

#### New Business

##### A. Other Miscellaneous Financial Items - Al Rusilowicz

Jim Irish reviewed that the town has received help from the state for the cost of the primary and Ed Bailey had added that the town will receive another \$5,400 for other general election costs.

Ed Bailey reported that they have applied for a computer replacement grant through the Secretary of State's office and he believes it has been approved. Al Rusilowicz explained that the grant will pay 50 percent of the costs and the town bought two computers, both of which are in the Registrars' office and the reimbursement will be approximately \$1,700. Mr. Bailey also stated that they have completed a STEAP grant application for approximately \$127,000 to do some work on Lake Shore Road with the whole project costing about \$200,000. They are also in the process of applying for a Connectivity grant which will encompass the town center plan and may be upwards of \$500,000. They are also in the process of applying for a neglected cemetery grant for the Old North Cemetery.

Mary Wolak asked if there will be any extra costs involved with moving the polling to Memorial School. Ed Bailey stated that there will be, as they have to move equipment over and there may be some additional costs to move the excess furniture that is currently being stored there. He does not feel the costs will be substantial. Mr. Bailey is also hoping to get electronic signs for the town green and various intersections to explain the relocation of the polling. Jim Irish asked why the decision was made to move the polling to Memorial this year and Mr. Bailey explained that it was made to accommodate social distancing.

##### B. Other Discussion Topics

Ed Bailey mentioned that the recent storm diverted the normal work schedule of the Public Works department and some projects have not yet materialized. They are now getting back to working on scheduled projects. Eversource was in town today trimming trees in two different locations and the town also has a contractor working on that as well.

Al Rusilowicz also reported that the audit is underway and the auditors are working remotely as they have not been in their offices since March.

Ed Bailey also reported that there has been an increase of COVID-10 cases in the state in the last several weeks and Middlefield had about five additional cases, bringing the total to 21. The Director of Health is concerned about the spike and the general consensus is that schools might not last well into the Fall and have to move to remote learning. Middletown is one of the towns in the state that have had the most increases in one week.

Mary Wolak asked about contact tracing for Middlefield's cases and Mr. Bailey explained that the last five cases were random though contact tracing is going well. The State had advised that they could open the Senior Center on September 1<sup>st</sup>, but Middlefield did not do that and the Health Director would like that to wait until October. The Governor extended the state of emergency for another five months, ending on February 9, 2021 and all executive orders remain in place. Mr. Bailey does continue to attend meetings about COVID-19. He does not see in-person meetings resuming in the immediate future. Mr. Bailey also mentioned that State employees have not been in their offices since March though town employees have. The town is currently operating by appointment only. While Mr. Bailey is concerned about the health of the citizens of the town, he also needs to be sure that the town's staff stays healthy. He does not want to see a lot of people coming into the Community Center as there are some town offices in there as well. Mr. Bailey summarized that the town is doing everything they can to serve the public.

The next meeting will be on Thursday, October 8<sup>th</sup> when they hope to see the final numbers for the fiscal year.

#### Adjournment

Mary Wolak made a motion, seconded by Michael Skelps, to adjourn the meeting. Motion was carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:36 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz  
Alwaz First