

MIDDLEFIELD BOARD OF SELECTMEN
405 Main Street
Middlefield, Connecticut 06455

Minutes of the March 16, 2021 Regular Meeting

Call to Order

Ed Bailey called the meeting to order. Ed Bailey, Carol Bufithis, and Bob Yamartino were present.

Approval of Agenda

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

Public Comment

Pastor Bekah Forni was present. Jim Irish was in attendance also. No Public Comment was made.

Approval of Minutes of the Board of Selectmen

a. January 19, 2021 – Regular Meeting

Carol Bufithis made a motion, second by Bob Yamartino, to approve the minutes of the January 19, 2021 Regular Meeting of the Board of Selectmen. Motion carried.

b. February 16, 2021 – Regular Meeting

Bob Yamartino made a motion, second by Carol Bufithis, to approve the minutes of the February 16, 2021 Regular Meeting of the Board of Selectmen. Motion carried.

Affordable Housing Plan Informational Presentation – Tyche Planning & Policy Group; John Guskowski & Michael D’Amato

Ed introduced John Guskowski and Michael D’Amato to the group and explained that they would share an informational presentation regarding the affordable housing plan the town is working on as required by the State of Connecticut.

Mr. Guskowski shared a presentation to give some background on what affordable housing plans are statutorily, what affordable housing is, and finally on the process of plan development. He then went on to discuss his and Michael D’Amato’s background and experience in planning with municipalities and private sector.

Connecticut State Legislature passed public act 17-170 in 2017 which became statute 8-30J, which requires every community in the state, at least once every five years, to prepare or amend and adopt an affordable housing plan. The plan shall specify how the municipality intends to increase the number of affordable housing developments in the municipality. John explained that this is the entirety of the requirement of the state. There are no numerical or percentage targets, no suggested format or review board and no specific entity that is responsible to prepare, amend, or adopt the plan; it is up to the municipality. Each municipality has a lot of freedom in preparation of the plan. John felt it most important to have that implementation road map, not simply that we set goals, it’s important the town establish a pathway to get to those goals. An actionable document that can demonstrate results.

When the state refers to affordable housing it is defined as income restricted or asset limited. John went on to explain how the state calculates the amount of affordable housing a municipality should have and explained naturally occurring affordable housing and how it adds to the diversity of housing in the town.

Housing is considered affordable when people are spending 30% or less of their income on housing. In the event people are paying more than 30% on housing they’re considered to be “Burdened” while paying more than 50% they are considered to be “Severely Burdened”.

The overall goal for Affordable Housing Plan and efforts to increase affordable housing stock throughout a community is to find those opportunities to make those rents and mortgages affordable at 30% of their income or less.

In an effort to dispel some misconceptions John displayed some photographs of Housing Developments throughout the state but mostly in Middlesex County. These developments were specifically designed to fit into the community aesthetic and are deemed affordable. Another misconception is that multi family housing especially multi family affordable housing could negatively impact property values, which is not the case and John shared a graph that illustrates that housing values remained nearly flat in the example town. He shared another graph that showed the minimal impact of affordable housing on schools.

Some people are concerned as to how the town could potentially change fundamentally with affordable housing but as John had shown in the photographs he shared earlier; the

developments are designed to blend into the community. Currently Middlefield is made up of about 91% detached single family, owner occupied homes, with 2 developments of about 10 apartments each, and some two-family homes.

John discussed several different statistics that impact Middlefield including income needs, types of available housing and cost burdens for residents.

Finally, John reviewed a couple of relatively simple options to consider: Making accessory dwelling units or accessory apartments as of right so that everyone could add a rental unit to their property. He explained there are a number of ways to do so without constructing an addition or adding to the property like renovating older larger homes in a way to preserve their historic quality but makes several apartment opportunities available. Tax credits for those who already have apartments that aren't currently restricted in terms of their income could chose to become restricted as affordable housing. Promotion of CHFA/USDA mortgages, which is absolutely no cost to the town, by making homeowners, buyers, realtors, and lenders aware that these programs are available, to name a few. Most importantly, John said, is to make sure this process is someone's responsibility so that Affordable Housing doesn't get forgotten.

In closing, John reviewed the steps of creating the Affordable Housing plan.

COVID-19 Update

The next age group eligible for vaccinations begins this Friday which includes individuals 45–54-year-olds. On April 5th, vaccinations will be available for those 16 and older. Ed explained that it will likely be a mad rush for people to schedule appointments. Vaccine supply in the state has increased slightly. A clinic was held this past Saturday at the Oakdale Theatre for RSD13 staff. Additional clinics will be held for those that could not attend. Ed noted that there has been a downward trend in cases in our Health District. Ed believes that youth sports should be able to start up in the Spring. He shared a map depicting active cases throughout the state and reviewed case numbers in surrounding towns. With restrictions easing and Easter holiday gatherings coming up, it will be interesting to see if cases increase.

First Selectman's FY22 Budget

Mr. Bailey shared his proposed budget with the board. He spoke about the "American Rescue Plan" which could provide the town funding. The funding is to respond to the pandemic or its negative economic impact including assistance to households, small businesses, non-profits, and the impacted industries such as tourism, travel, and hospitality. Our allocation could be about \$430K. Ed had been talking with Laura Francis in Durham about sharing an Economic Development Coordinator and the possibility of using these funds to cover the salary for this position. Ed noted that this expense has already been accounted for in his budget proposal however, these funds could cover that cost until 2024. Ed is awaiting guidance as to whether

these funds could be used in this manner. Ed said that one of the first steps would be to survey local businesses to better understand the impact the pandemic had on them and what they would need to recover. Discussion continued around other possible uses for these funds.

RSD-13 Update

Mr. Yamartino stated that at the next several Board of Education meetings they will be discussing the ongoing issues at John Lyman School. He explained that a lot of equipment at the school is very out dated and in need of repair or replacement and can not be put off much longer. There is a sentiment among some of the members of the board that the school should be closed however, they do not have the authority to do so, nor do they have the authority to fund keeping it open. Those decisions need to be put to the tax payers to vote at referendum. Bob stated that he made an effort to add this to our May Referendum but was told by the attorneys that there would need to be a 60-day public notice, currently not allowing enough time. A special referendum could be held or it could be added to the ballot in November. Bob feels that the vote should be held as soon as possible to allow for necessary changes if the vote should be to close the school or to fund upgrades should the vote be to keep the school open. Bob explained that the attorneys have advised that the question needs to be a "Yes or No" which means our referendum question will be two parts: "Do you want to keep the school open" and "Do you want to fund it". Essentially, if a voter chooses to vote to keep the school open, they really need to vote yes to funding it. Bob's concern is that people will vote to keep it open but not to fund it. He is also concerned about the potential for a breakdown of essential equipment such as, a boiler, causing students to either extend the school year or have to return to remote learning, not to mention the cost of emergency repairs. Bob reiterated the importance of communicating to the community what the options are and what exactly their vote will mean.

Schedule meeting with BOS & BOF with DMIAAB

Ed explained that there had been some confusion around a joint meeting scheduled with Durham BOS & BOF and DMIAAB with Middlefield BOS & BOF. He went on to say that the Durham Board of Finance did meet with DMIAAB and during that meeting a vote was made to increase the sticker fee to \$60.00 annually. Ed reached out to the chairman of the Durham Board of Finance to request a proper joint meeting however, the chairman declined. Ed has since requested a joint meeting with Dom Delvecchio and the Middlefield BOS & BOF, date to be determined. Discussion continued around sticker fees, other expenses DMIAAB may incur for equipment replacement as well as different options for the removal of municipal waste with the eventual closure of MIRA.

Tax Refunds

Mr. Yamartino read the Tax Refunds into record.

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

First Selectman's Report

Mr. Bailey reported that we will be doing a physical revaluation of all of the properties in Middlefield this year as part of a ten-year cycle. A vendor has been selected to complete the work which should begin next week. This will complete the grand list for October 1, 2021. All properties in town will be physically inspected, however, there won't be a lot of interior inspections due to the pandemic. Ed felt that we could see a relatively large jump in the value of the Grand List here in Middlefield as there has been a big increase in the average selling price of homes over the last year.

Ed stated that there are two upcoming Springtime "Community Conversation" taking place April 8th and May 20th and both have been posted on our website. Carol reported that the first two events were very successful. April 8th will be a podcast discussion on "Nice White Parents" and the May 20th conversation will feature a film called "The 13th" which is a documentary about the thirteenth amendment.

Ed continues to work with RiverCog and CCM on a variety of proposed legislation including the states proposed collection of 1 MIL from each city and town as well as Affordable Housing and possible changes to minimum lot size regulations.

Ed spoke about the potential purchase of 385 Jackson Hill Road which was discussed at the previous meeting and provided an update. The Board of Finance met and unanimously voted not to go forward with the potential purchase. Ed felt that this was fine as no plan was currently in place for the property and especially with other expenses on the horizon such as the fire house and road repairs.

Discussion briefly turned to Carol's desire to have a Community Clean up which they will speak about at another time. Jim Irish then circled back to the earlier discussion around DMIAAB and the group spoke about alternate resources for the removal of municipal solid waste.

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,

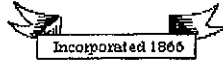
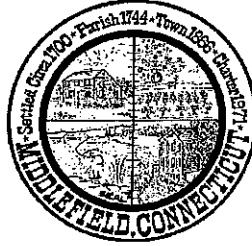
Tonya Hogan

Tonya Hogan
Assistant Town Clerk

Minutes Approved _____

Confirmed by _____

Town of Middlefield, Connecticut



TAX COLLECTOR'S OFFICE: Telephone (860) 349-7117; Fax (860) 349-7115
393 Jackson Hill Rd, P O Box 179, Middlefield, CT 06455

REQUEST FOR REFUNDS TO BE APPROVED BY BOARD OF SELECTMAN

<u>NAME</u>	<u>BILL #</u>	<u>REASON</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
<u>CURRENT YEAR 01-01-4004</u>			
Beik Michael J	2019-03-50347	Check too much	72.84
Colwell Ryan	2019-01-362	Att over pd. Refund to owner	295.01
Humphries Heavy Equip Repair LLC	2019-03-52024	Moved 3-2020	213.20
Liberty Bank	2019-01-359	Check too much	1,500.00
Lyman James	2019-03-529626	Check too much	69.94
Rowe Richard R	2019-03-53867	Sold 6-2020	9.03
Rowe Richard R	2019-04-80537	Sold 6-2020	19.75
Rowe Richard R	2019-04-80538	Sold 6-2020	23.46
Rynaski Richard F	2019-03-53906	Sold 8-2020	<u>9.86</u>
			\$2,213.09

PRIOR YEAR 01-01-4005

Anne L. Olszewski
Middlefield Certified Tax Collector

"This Institution is an Equal Opportunity Provider."