

MIDDLEFIELD BOARD OF SELECTMEN
405 Main Street
Middlefield, Connecticut 06455

Minutes of the February 22, 2022 Regular Meeting

Call to Order

Bob Yamartino called the meeting to order at 6:33 PM. Bob Yamartino, Carol Bufithis, and Jim Irish were present. Michael Skelps, Chairman of the Board of Finance was also present.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Agenda

Remove item #5: Approval of January 18, 2022 minutes as they were approved at the February 7th meeting.

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

Public Comment

Michael Skelps commented that item #10, having live broadcasts of the committee/commission meetings is an excellent idea and would be very helpful.

COVID-19 Update

Bob reported that the Governor's mask mandate expires February 28th. State Legislature has extended school mask requirements through the end of March. State by State requirements differ, many have chosen to relax requirements while some are still enforcing masking. Sue from Plainville Southington Health District will be visiting the Town Hall and Community Center to give some recommendations on masking. Bob felt that departments in Town Hall and Land Use office are so small that it may be best to keep the door locked to limit traffic in those areas. Carol would like to see the Town Hall unlocked. Jim wondered how staff felt about the masks as well. Bob explained that there have been some instances in which several people have come in at once to search land records, make payments, and obtain information from the tax collector which caused a crowd in the office. Discussion continued around masking in both the community center and town hall and what the staff in both buildings may prefer.

Budget Update

(At this point in the recording, background noise from another meeting made much of the following audio very difficult to hear)

The First Selectman's Budget is due March 3rd. Bob has been working with AI to develop a draft that he would like the board to review. Bob is confident that his budget will be completed in time for the filing deadline. The proposed school budget increased substantially for Middlefield due to the enrollment shift this year. Bob would like to review some possible reductions with Dr. Schuch such as a shared principal for the elementary schools. Some other tax increase offsets could be seen with supplemental tax revenue as well as using some of the undesignated funds the town currently has. Discussion continued around enrollment shift and the impact it can have on the budget. The Board also discussed making a long-term plan to address road repairs and improvements based on the recent Road and Culvert Surveys. They reviewed the color-coded map that Jim presented at the last board meeting and discussed several options including bonding and hiring contractors to review the work so that the board could communicate the impact of the road work to the community.

ARP Distribution Plan

Bob is looking to begin executing on the projects that have been selected for these funds. AI Rusilowicz put together a listing of costs that have already been incurred due to COVID that due to recent legislation can be covered under this plan. For the next installment of ARP funds, Jim Irish explained that RiverCog has asked that we put aside 15% of those funds for any projects they are working on that we may, at our discretion, want to take part in. For example, RiverCog is currently working to help communities digitize records and documents that aren't currently in a digital format. Carol will be following up with other groups that had been identified to receive grants from the ARP funds for their proposals. Jim will be following up with Laura Francis regarding the Economic Development Coordinator.

New Business

- a. Infrastructure Grants (CTDOT/Federal)
 - i. Road Survey
 - ii. Culvert Survey
 - iii. Grant writer / Grant opportunity
- b. Boards and Commissions Appointments
 - i. Municipal Drought Liaison – Reappoint Randy Bernotas
 - ii. Vacancies
- c. Affordable Housing Plan
 - a. Much of the Road & Culvert Survey discussion occurred during the budget conversation. Jim pointed out that he would like to make a map overlay of the town's culverts that need addressing for his color-coded road map. This will help them determine which

roads and culverts need the most attention so they can schedule work accordingly and avoid doing double repairs.

Bob would like to make a Budget line item for a grant writer as there are many opportunities available for grants that would be beneficial to our town. Jim Irish has been researching what is available and making a list of recommendations for grants he found to be relevant. He has reached out to RiverCog and CCM for assistance and guidance as well.

b. Boards and Commissions Appointments

Bob reviewed the importance of minority representation and filling vacancies with the vacating party. There is also some concern about staggering terms because many are currently expiring at the same time across several boards. Bob shared a list that details vacancies and expired or expiring terms that he will be sending out to the town committees for review and consideration to fill those terms and vacancies.

Reappoint Randy Bernotas as the Municipal Drought Liaison.

Bob Yamartino made motion, second by Carol Bufithis, to reappoint Randy Bernotas as the municipal drought Liaison. Motion carried.

Bob felt it was important to form a Board & Commission Appointment Committee consisting of the Board of Selectmen and the Chairperson or Member of the relevant Board or Commission with a vacancy whose purpose is to recommend appointees to the Board of Selectmen.

Bob Yamartino made motion, second by Carol Bufithis, to create the Board & Commission Committee as noted. Motion carried.

c. Affordable Housing Plan

Bob reviewed the requirement for the town to have an affordable housing plan in place. He provided a report with proposals for the Board members to review and discuss at a future meeting.

Review of information regarding potential for having live broadcasts of BOS and other town committee/commission meetings

Jim provided details on the “Neat Studio” system which uses Zoom enabled equipment to do live broadcasts of meetings. This equipment will soon be compatible with Microsoft Meetings and Google Meets. He reviewed the features of the equipment that would be used in a “Zoom Room” and the simplicity of the “plug and play” use. Jim went over the start up costs and equipment licensing fees versus an available lease purchase agreement for different systems that he researched. The board discussed logistics of using this type of equipment if they decided to use this type of service.

Selectmen/Selectwoman's Report

Bob reported that CIRMA reviewed the contract for the Fire House Building and made recommendations. The contract is ready to be signed pending one last meeting with the Fire House Building Committee. The engineer working on the Lake Shore Drive culvert project is completing his design drawings. Ordering of some of the culvert section is under way and Bob has been in touch with one of the main abutting neighbors in regards to construction easements. Bob concluded by saying he is looking into a cloud-based licensing system for our computer equipment.

Jim Irish touched base with Bill Warner regarding possible grant options for the Strickland culvert.

Adjournment

Carol Bufithis made a motion, second by Jim Irish, 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 _____