

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

Minutes of the June 21, 2022 Regular Meeting

Call to Order

Bob Yamartino called the meeting to order at 6:41 PM. Bob Yamartino, Jim Irish and Carol Bufithis were present.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Agenda

***Carol Bufithis made a motion, seconded by Jim Irish, to approve the agenda, as presented. Motion carried unanimously.***

Public Comment

Alma Elder is very interested in some of the aspects of the American Rescue Plan and asked for the status of the maintenance on sewer system. She also asked about the Economic Recovery Coordinator and commented on the amount of empty offices in Middlefield. Mrs. Elder is also curious about the Local Wellness Coalition and what they will do with the \$85,000 grant.

Approval of Minutes of Regular Board of Selectmen Meetings

- a. April 4, 2022 - Regular Board of Selectmen Meeting
- b. April 19, 2022 - Regular Board of Selectmen Meeting
- c. May 2, 2022 - Regular Board of Selectmen Meeting

***Carol Bufithis made a motion, seconded by Jim Irish, to approve the minutes of the regular Board of Selectmen meetings of April 4, 2022, April 19, 2022 and May 2, 2022, as presented. Motion carried unanimously.***

New Business - 6:51 PM

- a. Repair of monument in town-owned section of Middlefield Cemetery

Bob Yamartino received information from the Cemetery Board that manages the cemetery at the Federated Church noting that the Town owns a portion of the cemetery, with the other portion owned by the Cemetery Association. There are three headstones that are badly damaged and one monument that stands about eight feet tall is teething. It is currently supported by a piece of wood. If someone were to lean up against it, it could fall over and kill someone. Mr. Yamartino has had someone from Public Works fence it off with construction fencing.

Ken Twombly got a quote to repair all three headstones, with a total cost of \$6,500. That company offered to restore a fourth one for free. Work was started today. Mr. Yamartino did ask Al Rusilowicz to include the restoration of these headstones under the ARP funding. Mr. Yamartino authorized the work to be done because he was told the town is responsible for that portion of the cemetery.

Upon looking at town records, Mr. Yamartino has now found that there is no record of the town possessing any portion of the cemetery. He is looking through past contracts and it is possible that a contract was signed but not registered. He will also reach out to the Cemetery Commission and ask them if they have record of the town taking possession. Bob Yamartino reviewed that there had been a meeting when the Cemetery Commission stated that they may have to abandon the cemetery and the town would take ownership under state statute. Since that time, Ken Twombly has stated that they are now solvent but this expenditure could put them back.

#### ARP Funds - 6:58 PM

Carol Bufithis shared a list of the ARP funding with both Mr. Irish and Mrs. Elder. Under sewer projects, pump stations were listed and Brookside Pump Station handles Zygo and other businesses on Brookside Drive. That pump station has been in need of repair and/or replacement for a number of years. Since the original estimate of \$225,000, they have received revised pricing of \$152,000. The pump will be replaced at the King Road pump station services Lake View Estates and the grinder pump on Lake Road services a residence that the WPCA must provide water for. The Middlefield Housing Authority leaching fields will also be repaired.

Bob Yamartino explained that when the ARP funds were released, they were approved for very specific things, including infrastructure, social and emotional well-being and economic development. Since then, that has been revised to the first \$10 million can be spent on whatever the community would like. Anything above that \$10 million has to meet those requirements. He noted that 100 percent of the \$1.29 million Middlefield receives can be spent however they'd like.

Mr. Yamartino reviewed that all of the items listed have been previously voted on by the Board of Selectmen. The Middlefield Housing Authority also needs a second well pump. Youth and Family Services used a grant to hire a person to do outreach, create programs and apply for

grants. When that grant expired, a second grant was awarded. That grant has now expired and the \$85,000 will cover a two-year commitment from the Town of Middlefield. He believes that the Town of Durham will also approve \$85,000. Mr. Yamartino noted that this person recently provided resources after the tragic event with a student in town and Mrs. Elder asked where people go for this help. He explained that they do outreach in the community through the Local Wellness Council and various churches as well as the schools. The Town of Middlefield recently started a Facebook page to help get the word out about these services and they are looking at making the website more interactive. Carol Bufithis added that there are a lot of programs for the kids happening as well and Bob Yamartino added that they run a peer leadership program as well as a program about date rape. They also run a program on Friday afternoons where students can pick up a backpack full of breakfast and lunches for the weekend. Carol Bufithis asked if Durham has officially approved this money and Bob Yamartino wasn't sure that they had. He added that the \$85,000 is for a two-year commitment (\$42,500 each year).

The Middlefield Community Service Council works closely with the Local Wellness Coalition and the Giving Garden Grant will probably come in less than \$10,000. The Durham-Middlefield Equity grant of \$5,000 is to help with racial justice issues and counseling is a definite need. The Middlefield Food Bank grant will help with food for families who are struggling.

The Economic Recovery Coordinator is now called the Economic Development Coordinator and is funded for two years, being shared with Durham. That money will not be expended until Durham approves the funding. Mr. Yamartino is beginning to put together an Economic Development Committee. He would like to get Planning and Zoning and Economic Development together with the Board of Selectmen to review the Plan of Conservation and Development and move forward. Mr. Yamartino now has a complete list of all properties owned by the Town and title searches are being done on each of them. He will then approach Planning and Zoning as well as the Land Use office to combine small lots into larger lots to be sold. He would like to begin economic development on Route 66 as well, but would like this to all be included in a complete plan. An updated Plan of Conservation and Development needs to be submitted to the state every 10 years and Middlefield's next plan is due in two to four years. As little as one section can be updated to push the plan out another 10 years. Bob Yamartino has the name of a biologist who can talk about habitat and if the town wants to do conservation correctly, he may be a good resource.

Middlefield Volunteer Fire Department has submitted a list of equipment, training and PPE and they are moving forward with that. The Board of Selectmen had authorized \$47,000 for a very specific list of items. They have not yet moved forward on the basketball court or foot bridge, but are moving forward on the cemetery monument repairs. The board will allocate \$662,3140 for infrastructure at the Lake Shore culvert which totals just about \$800,000 including the STEAP grant which expires in May, 2023. Bob Yamartino asked Al Rusilowicz to reach out to Nathan Jacobson and they may need to apply for another STEAP grant.

The above-mentioned figures total \$1,294,487.87. The Town has yet to receive the second round of funding, so some of these projects have not been started.

Jim Irish stated that this list does not include the 15 percent (about \$90,000) that was supposed to be set aside for River COG opt-in grants. That funding would only be used for River COG projects that Middlefield intentionally opts in. Bob Yamartino will revise the list and put that against the Lake Shore Drive culvert. Mr. Irish admitted that 15 percent seems like a lot of money, but there may be very good projects. Every town in the River COG committed to 15 percent. Mr. Yamartino suggested that they take no action at this time.

Jim Irish left the meeting at this point.

#### Board and Commissions - 7:23 PM

a. Review Current Boards and Commissions

Bob Yamartino and Carol Bufithis will both continue to fill vacancies, but felt that they are doing great. Mr. Yamartino noted that there will be appointments to committees that they haven't talked about before, including the ad hoc Firehouse Building Committee, the Levi Coe Library committee, the Firefighter Supplements Benefit committee and Durham-Middlefield Local Wellness committee. Betsy Dean will be retiring at the end of the month. Ms. Bufithis suggested adding the Affordable Housing committee to the list as well and Mr. Yamartino would like to have that committee appointed by the end of August. He wondered if that should be a standalone committee or a subcommittee of Planning and Zoning. Ms. Bufithis reported that she had a long talk with Jan Wojas, the chairman of Planning and Zoning, and he was very excited about this committee. Bob Yamartino stated that one of his biggest complaints over the last several years has been the lack of a long-term plan for town-owned properties. He also mentioned that there was an oil leak at the Augur property on Jackson Hill Road and it seems that the town dodged a bullet.

#### Charter Revision Commission - 7:33 PM

a. Appointments - Charter Revision Commission

David Lowry (R), Michael Skelps (R), Robert Poturnicki (U), Ken Twombly (U), Alice Malcolm (D) and Peter Neidhardt (D)

***Bob Yamartino made a motion, seconded by Carol Bufithis, to appoint the above-listed individuals to the Charter Revision Commission. Motion carried unanimously.***

Mr. Yamartino explained that the commission will be charged to review all items within the charter to be aligned with all codes and ordinances. There are some specific things they will

look at, such as length of time for someone to come back to a commission after they have timed out. Copies of the charter are available in the First Selectman's office for the commission members.

Bob Yamartino will convene the Charter Revision Commission and ask them to elect a chairman. He will also email all boards and commissions to ask for items they would like to see reviewed in this process. He will also ask Matt Willis to represent the town during this review process. He would like the process to be completed before the November elections. One of the items in the last review is that there is a standing requirement for a charter review every 10 years and maybe that isn't the right number.

b. RSD13 Elections

Lucy Petrella has asked that the Charter Revision Commission to look at the way Board of Education members are elected. Mr. Yamartino stated that he will not accept the reasoning that Durham is doing it one way as a reason to change how Middlefield does it.

Selectmen/Selectwoman Report - 7:44 PM

a. Update of DEEP adding Lake Beseck to TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Loading) Study for their awareness of total nutrient loading in their lake

Bob Yamartino had hoped for an update from Jim Irish on this, but he was no longer at the meeting.

b. Other

Bob Yamartino reported that he had a discussion Santos DeJesus from Emerson Cooper Corp. who have officially notified the town that Emerson Cooper is relocating their manufacturing operations to Texas. There are 75 employees and seven or eight will be offered positions working remote from home, a couple may relocate to Texas or Georgia and the facility in Middlefield will shut down. They anticipate that shutdown to be fully effective by March of 2023. Emerson Cooper will reach out to the Department of Labor to notify them about the closure. Emerson Cooper does own the property and the town receives approximately \$54,000 in taxes, with \$13,000 of that being personal property tax.

Bob Yamartino also reported that Robin Newton tendered her resignation on Friday, effective July 1<sup>st</sup>. She has accepted a position with a consulting firm where she will be a planner and they will pay her considerably more, with unlimited vacation time and fully remote. Robin Newton has offered the capability for the town to contract with her firm which they may do on an interim basis. Middlefield currently has an agreement with the Town of Durham that requires 30 days' notice to break. Carol Bufithis stated that Robin has been invaluable to both towns and they

have used her a lot. Mr. Yamartino met with Planning and Zoning and Robin has agreed to get things done before she leaves.

Mr. Yamartino also reported that the town has finally received the court order to remove the debris on the property at 119 Peters Lane. The property owner had asked for additional time to do it himself and had promised it would be done by Memorial Day weekend, but he did not fulfill his obligations. The town started to remove material this week and a bill will be presented to the property owner. If he fails to pay, the town will put a lien on the property. There is already a lien on the property from several years ago which has not been completely paid off yet. In addition, a little over a month ago the Plainville-Southington Health District served the property owner of 198 Ross Road with a cease and correct order relative to the tires accumulated on the property. Planning and Zoning issued a cease and correct order as well. As of last Friday, no action has been taken and they may even be accelerating the rate of bringing in tires. Since the appeal time has expired, the Plainville-Southington Health District is filing to get a court injunction to allow them to remove all of the debris. They will provide a bill to the town and Middlefield would put a lien on the property to get it paid off. Last October, an ordinance was adopted at a town meeting for Land Use and Inland Wetlands to allow for a citation to be issued with a fine of \$100 a day to anyone not complying with an order. That citation will be issued by the end of the week. This property has been in this condition for some time and Plainville-Southington Health District actually relocated a mother and a three-year-old child to a hotel, then brought in dumpsters and completely cleaned the inside and outside of the house, but never submitted a bill to the town. They are now completely back to where they were. The owner of the property is an elderly woman and there are two males as well as a woman and a child. Mr. Yamartino had a meeting with the Health District, Planning and Zoning, Durham-Middlefield Youth and Family Services, the Local Wellness Council and Senior Services and explained the situation. He also explained that one of the men in the house was convicted 12 years ago of sexual abuse of a 12-year-old girl in Florida which is public record.

Bob Yamartino is also doing a thorough review of all of Powder Ridge's permits and applications because, over time, some of the approvals look contradictory to other approvals and he would like to streamline the process. Powder Ridge is approved to have 35 events a year that involve camping of no more than three days, yet they are required to get a permit every time.

Carol Bufithis reported that the compost containers are only going to be \$50 and she has received an invoice. There will be another bill for the bags. She would appreciate if this could be completed in the next week.

Bob Yamartino also noted that no one is allowed to keep abandoned cars on their property and there are quite a few of them in town. The town can start issuing orders and sending out fines, but Mr. Yamartino would like to hire a hauler to take the cars away in one load. The town would notify people that it is a zoning infraction and offer to get rid of them at a lower expense. After a specified date, people would either need to remove it or put it on the personal property list.

Mr. Yamartino reiterated that he has had a number of people tell him that they like that the town makes a decision and moves forward. He feels that the Board of Selectmen is not just ceremonial and all selectmen work on projects. Carol Bufithis stated that in the Fall, she is going to take on Sustainable CT with the help of Jen Huddleston.

Adjournment - 8:12 PM

***Carol Bufithis made a motion, seconded by Bob Yamartino, to adjourn the regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen. Motion carried unanimously.***

The meeting was adjourned at 8:12 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz  
Alwaz First