

MIDDLEFIELD BOARD OF SELECTMEN
405 Main Street
Middlefield, Connecticut 06455

Minutes of the October 3, 2022 Regular Meeting

Call to Order

Bob Yamartino called the meeting to order at 6:30 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

None.

Boards and Commissions

- a. EXECUTIVE SESSION – 6:45 PM TO 7:30 PM - Interview Candidates for Economic Development Commission

Jim Irish made a motion, seconded by Carol Bufithis, to move into Executive Session to Interview Candidates for Economic Development Commission. Motion carried unanimously.

The Board of Selectmen returned from Executive Session at 8:10 PM and the meeting resumed. No votes were taken and no motions or decisions were made.

- b. Appointments – Discussion and Vote

Economic Development Commission
Appointments for term of 10/1/2022-9/30/2027

Jim Irish made a motion, seconded by Carol Bufithis, to appoint John Giammatteo (D), Shaun Hayes (I), Darin Overton (R), Ruth Vizard (D) and Jennifer Huddleston (U) to the Economic Development Commission for terms of 10/1/2022 through 9/30/2027.

Bob Yamartino thanked the five individuals for stepping forward to volunteer for the commission. Each of them brings a very different background and have very different business interests as well as having served on different boards and commissions. The one thing they all share is energy and willingness to serve the town. Carol Bufithis added that all of them are interested in finding a balance to bring in businesses to increase taxes while being mindful of open space and the residents. Jim Irish was excited to have people with diverse backgrounds and energy to step and really care about what will happen.

Motion carried unanimously.

Public Communications

a. Update

Jim Irish reported that he attended a commission meeting and the concern about tires on a property continues. Bob Yamartino noted that the owners of the property were at Superior Court on September 15, 2022 with misdemeanor charges. The defendants stated that they would do everything in their power to remove the tires within a month and the judge gave them until their next hearing on October 26, 2022 to remove them. Mr. Yamartino has since been in touch with the State's Attorney's office and provided documentation that countered their claims of rectifying the situation by the end of the October and that they continue to bring tires onto the site. The town's attorney is working with the state's attorney to seek an immediate civil injunction to prevent any more tires from being brought into the site. Once that happens, the defendants would be in contempt of court and, depending on the judge's ruling, may actually be arrested if they bring any more tires onto the site. Jim Irish felt that that was a positive step.

Bob Yamartino has had communications about speeding at the lake and a speed hump is going to be installed on the flat area of Lake Road. Mr. Yamartino will write a letter to the resident who first requested this and explain where it will be installed. They will be doing the catch basins at the Fowler development as well. He explained that Charlie Augur had signed an agreement that the town would take care of that road.

Charter Revision Commission

a. Update

Bob Yamartino has not received a formal update, but he has answered a few questions that they had asked and knows that they have had discussions with various individuals at Town Hall.

They have asked about whether the Town Clerk and Tax Collector should be elected positions. Mr. Yamartino feels that they are actively working through the charter and he feels comfortable with their progress.

Carol Bufithis asked if the length of terms could be looked at. She specifically noted that the Economic Development Commission appointments were for a five-year term. Bob Yamartino explained that that is part of what they are looking at. Jim Irish felt that having people on commissions for a longer term is a good thing. Ms. Bufithis was concerned about being able to get people to commit to those time lengths and Mr. Irish added that if they need to resign, they can.

Town Fund Investment

Al Rusilowicz received a phone call from Webster Bank telling him that they will pay 3.05 percent if the town moves its money to their bank. The town currently has \$12.9 million in liquid assets invested at various facilities, with about \$900,000 was invested with the state which pays 2.90 percent. This past month, the town made roughly \$24,000 or \$28,000 in interest which is almost more than all of last year.

Al Rusilowicz reached out to TD Bank where the town has about \$9 million with the first \$2.5 million not earning any interest and the remainder earning minimal interest. They said they would need to set up a new account which was opened today at 3.02 percent and \$8 million was transferred into that account. He also reached out to Liberty Bank who offered 2.99 percent, but felt that they could be competitive. The town currently has about \$1 million at Liberty Bank.

Mr. Rusilowicz has asked if the town should open an account at Webster Bank. Bob Yamartino works for Webster Bank and would need to recuse himself from any decisions about that. He summarized that the town has over \$10 million earning over 3 percent a year which would result in approximately \$300,000 in revenue if those rates don't change. If they move money to the higher interest rate at Liberty Bank, they have to commit to leaving it there for 60 days. If they move money to Webster Bank, they can take it in or out in two days. TD Bank was not looking for a commitment.

Bob Yamartino questioned how they would select where the money would be invested and if \$8 million is invested in a single account, there is no FDIC insurance. They would have the option to buy insurance. He reiterated that he would like to recuse himself from any decisions about this and asked if the Board of Selectmen would want to appoint an ad hoc committee to do this. He suggested the Treasurer, the Finance Director, a member of the Board of Selectmen and a member of the Board of Finance. He did note that the Treasurer has a relationship with Liberty Bank and may have to recuse herself from that part of the discussions.

Carol Bufithis asked how high FDIC insurance is available and Bob Yamartino explained that it up to \$250,000 per account though private insurance is available. There was discussion about different scenarios and decisions to be made and Mr. Yamartino felt that a committee could help with that. Taryn Ruffino has suggested putting together an RFP.

Bob Yamartino explained that TD Bank provides armored car service to pick up checks and money on a daily basis and that is part of the reason why \$2.5 million is interest-free. They did offer to lower that reserve. He also noted that TD Bank was the only bank to provide a fast loan for the communication equipment and also immediately opened the account to provide the higher interest rate which are certainly reasons to be loyal to them.

Jim Irish felt that if Al Rusilowicz would like to have additional input, they should create the ad hoc committee and he offered to be on the committee. It was agreed to have the Treasurer on the committee and for her to recuse herself, if necessary. Mr. Irish felt it was important to have a representative from the Board of Finance.

Bob Yamartino then asked if Jim Irish and Carol Bufithis are interested in the town opening an account with Webster Bank. Mr. Irish suggested waiting until the RFP responses are received. Ms. Bufithis suggested voting on creating the ad hoc committee with the member from the Board of Finance to be determined at a later date. Mr. Yamartino suggested naming Al Rusilowicz as chairman.

Carol Bufithis made a motion, seconded by Jim Irish, that the Board of Selectmen create a Town Fund Investment ad hoc committee, with Al Rusilowicz as Chairman, along with Taryn Ruffino, Jim Irish and a Board of Finance member to be defined, to help manage the town's liquid investable assets. Motion carried unanimously.

Selectmen/Selectwoman Report

a. Other

Carol Bufithis asked that they look at an Affordable Housing committee. Bob Yamartino explained that he would like to appoint that as a subcommittee of the Housing Authority that the town currently has. He offered to go to their next committee meeting and propose that. Ms. Bufithis felt that the Housing Authority is there just to manage Sugarloaf, but Mr. Yamartino felt that affordable housing would fall under their purview. He will look into their responsibilities and authority.

Carol Bufithis also asked about work facility improvements and Bob Yamartino reported that he has a contract for review and two proposals. The proposals include adding a lunch/break room with a kitchen in a garage bay. They are also looking at turning the dog pound into storage for Town Hall. Mr. Yamartino felt that there should be showers, but was told that nobody would use

them. There is also a possibility of taking the dog pound area and creating an office, break room and locker room. The problem with that is that it is completely away from the garage. Jerry Russ is preparing plans for the options. Carol Bufithis asked if this could be done this winter and where the money would come from. Mr. Yamartino wants to know the costs before making that decision, but there is already \$10,000 dedicated to storage for Town Hall. Mr. Yamartino had also offered to permanently reserve a kitchen in the Community Center for the public works employees to use for lunch break every day, but they all declined the offer. He also offered for them to use the cafeteria area at the Town Hall.

Carol Bufithis also noted that they will meet with Lisa Irish about a memorial for Ed Bailey.

Jim Irish noted that the River COG is getting involved in regional economic development and is looking for input. He will attend the meeting and will notify the Economic Development commission of the meeting as well. Mr. Irish also asked about one of the town's residents who has a job with the state and Paul Pizzo is talking with them about the possibility of state grant money to help with road reconstruction. He asked if there has been any progress on that. Bob Yamartino asked Paul Pizzo a week ago and was told that he would follow up.

Mr. Irish also asked if the town has received the second American Rescue Plan allotment and Bob Yamartino stated that \$124,799.11 will be deposited in their account on 10/4/22. He also reported that the town has been awarded \$500,000 in STEAP funding which will go to replace the pump station at Brookside. They will then have \$220,000 more to allocate, but Mr. Yamartino would like to wait before allocating anything further. There are projects for the Housing Authority and they have also committed money to Youth and Family Services.

The board discussed several other grants as well. There was discussion about having Sue D'Orvilliers' husband do some work and Bob Yamartino felt that that wouldn't be a problem if an RFP was issued. Mr. Yamartino noted that the Fire Department has not spent all of their grant money yet and he will talk to Chief Tyc. Jim Irish noted that both the Assessor and Al Rusilowicz have items that they would like digitized. Bob Yamartino mentioned that there are some documents that the state requires be maintained locally.

Jim Irish asked if the town was ready to go out to bid for the Economic Recovery Coordinator and Bob Yamartino thought that they were. They will revise the job description to be a part-time position, supporting only Middlefield. Mr. Yamartino would lean toward having the position be filled by a consultant, rather than an employee.

Bob Yamartino noted that he will be out of state for the next meeting and asked if the other members wanted to hold the meeting or postpone it a week. Jim Irish asked if Mr. Yamartino would be meeting with the Economic Development Commission before he goes on vacation and he will try to do that. Mr. Yamartino has discussed the charge of that commission with them and he will write it up for them. There was then some discussion about the Economic Development

Commission and whether their charge will need to be revisited at a later date. The EDC will check in with the Board of Selectmen periodically. Carol Bufithis will offer the dates of October 25th or October 27th to the Economic Development Commission.

Adjournment

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 9:37 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First