



Town of Middlefield
Board of Selectmen
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Selectboard Minutes

September 25, 2024

The meeting was opened at 6:30 PM, at the Senior Center, by Ann Marie Visconti, Chair, with Curt Robie and Tamarin Laurel-Paine, members also present. Sean Curran, Town Administrator and Mark Doane, Administrative Assistant were also in attendance.

Multiple Town residents were also present: Adair Laurel-Cafarella, Kenneth Murray, Maureen Longobardi, Doreen Black, Doanld Trask, Karri Trask, along with Kristen Smidy, Superintendent of Gateway Regional School District.

The warrants were signed, the minutes of the September 11, 2024 minutes were signed off on, and no mail was necessary to review.

Kristen Smidy gave an update on activities occurring at the school. Kristen reported that under the BARR foundation, the District will be receiving \$400,000.00 over the next 2 years. This will allow education for students as to why they are learning various subjects, and how it applies to real life situations. This money will also allow High School Seniors to work with Elementary students as mentors. Kristen also reported that the District has 48 students in Vocational programs and 28 students in the Early Childhood program. Kristen would like to have an Exploratory program at the District level, for non-residents, but the District currently only has 2 programs, and requirement is for 5 programs. With the hiring of a new woodshop teacher, they have been able to offer that curriculum to the middle school students. The Early Childhood program is able to meet 5 days a week. Gateway continues to pursue grants for after school programs. For this program to receive funding, you need 40 students and can guarantee 400 hours, including summer hours. The District currently cannot meet these requirements, and Kristen is meeting with Ann Gobi, and other state politicians to work on a plan for smaller communities. The District is also hosting 45 students from Germany, all in the band program. The area band members are acting as host families for the students from Germany, they are in the United States for 2 weeks, and hopefully will be able to do a joint band concert. In regards to current violence in schools nationwide, Kristen reported that students reported a threat at Huntington School, however, it turns out Huntington School is a completely different school in another area of the country, and Kristen commended the students for acting in a correct manner

in their reporting of it. She also reported that Gateway teachers and para-professionals are CPI instructed. This allows them to de-escalate incidents and allows use of restraints, if necessary. A question was raised about MCAS scores and the effects of COVID on the scores. Gateway is making gains in scores since COVID, and Littleville Elementary was named as a school of excellence in Massachusetts with their scores. Kristen will be talking with Curt in regards to the High School-Middle School roof and potential contractors for the roof. Stephanie Fisk is retiring this year. The contract for busing is due for renewal. The District will be requesting 2 bids: 1 for single run for all ages, other for 2 separate runs (high school and elementary) like current contract.

Under public input, Mark Doane appreciated the clarification on the timeframes for posting agendas for various boards. This has led to a new recommendation that all agendas need to be to the administrative assistant the Wednesday before the week of a meeting.

The Selectboard then appointed Ray Gero to the COA advisory board and Wayne Main as an alternate.

Doreen Black spoke about the need to have the various Board chairs given access to the website to post their own agendas and meeting minutes, but it was decided that it will continue to have the Administrative Assistant and/or the IT consultant be the ones with access to the website. Doreen also spoke for the residents of Town Hill Road about the need for potholes to be filled.

Sean Curran discussed the position of Consultant Accountant pending the hiring of a new Town Accountant. Sean asked that the Selectboard make a motion to hire Lynne Lemanski as the Accounting Consultant at a rate of \$50.00 per hour up to \$3,500.00 total. A motion was made, seconded, and carried. Sean also reported that Beverly is still working on closing out FY 2024, but most likely free cash won't be available for certification prior to Beverly leaving on October 15. Sean also reported that he had been in touch with the Department of Revenue in regards to read only live access to VADAR for the Finance Committee. The DOR does not recommend granting access. The Finance Board had originally asked to receive regular paper copies of the Condition of Accounts; only asking for read-only log-in when that was posed as the way for officials to access regular updates.

Further discussion took place on the hiring of a new Town Accountant, and Sean reported that it had been posted on the State Wide Job Posting Site, and that he has had two responses, but the candidates would be remote. It was stated that we need to make sure any candidate would need to be bonded, and must understand municipal accounting practices. Sean also reported that the JAG grant is available until October. This is a public safety grant and will be used to try to get new emergency radios for police/fire departments. The Green Community Grant is still available, and is a potential grant for Middlefield to use. Sean also reported that Ira Bresinsky is no longer working at PVPC, and that Eric Weiss is back to work after an extended medical leave. The Town needs to re-establish communication with PVPC and continue to work on the Capital Plan.

Ann Marie Visconti reported that a Flu/Covid Clinic is being held on October 16 at the Senior Center, she is continuing to work on the Transfer Study Re-Configuration, Getting the report

from Huntley Associates on the Skyline Dump closure. Ann Marie is also trying to find an electrician to run power from the Town Garage to the town gazebo, so there is power at that site.

Curt Robie reported that all the asbestos in the Town Hall has been abated, air quality test are posted on the bulletin board of the Town Hall, and that the tiling of the auditorium will begin on Thursday, September 26, 2024. He also reported that new bookcases have been purchased, and is looking into getting the Town Hall Stage elevator fixed. Curt also reported that the Town does not have contract to service the town generators. Lee Audio is continuing to address the fire alarm system, Ken Murray has volunteered to put the threshold back in at the Town Hall, baseboard in the Town Hall closets needs to be installed. Curt also reported he, and the other two Selectboard members will be attending the regional MMA information session in Ludlow on October 4, 2024.

Tamarin Laurel-Paine reported she will be attending the Municipal Council on October 8th the Department of Local Services, and will also attend What's New in Municipal Law on the 26th. Tamarin also reported that the a police phone didn't take messages, but that was only one of the two different numbers listed on the website. Tamarin also asked if Sean had called local accountants who are part time to see if any interest in Middlefield could be obtained. Tamarin relayed from her call to the accounting firm of Eric Kinsherf. They charge \$3,000.00 per month for month by month accounting, or \$30,000 for full year. And \$5,000 flat fee for conversion from Softright to VADAR, with the assumption that some work on FY24 balances would be required.

Tamarin also asked that the Selectboard receive a copy of the contract Sean mentioned signing for Lynne as Accountant Consult (signed September 16, 2024). Tamarin also presented information from Capital Strategic Solutions, which is a company that can assist municipalities in writing and submitting for grants. If the Town were to use this service, or another service, an account would have to be established for payment.

Following all individual reports, a motion was made, seconded, and carried to proceed with legal notice to the owners of the remaining illegal campers on West Hill Road, and the corner of Skyline Trail and Clark Wright Road.

Trick-or-Treat was set for Saturday, October 26, 2024 from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm.

The Community Compact Grant was brought up. This is a two-part grant: one is Efficiency grant which is being considered for police radios. This portion of the grant is open for applications from September 16 thru October 10, 2024. The other portion is IT grant which is available to apply for from January 6, 2025 thru February 6, 2025. But Middlefield would be ineligible because of receiving an IT Grant in FY24.

A Special Town Meeting won't be held until free cash is certified, and at that time, the Veteran's and Senior Work Off articles will be presented to the Town. Questions were also raised if the STM could include resubmitting the warrant article on the new town trunk to having the town buy the truck outright.

There was no old business to come before the board.

A motion was made, seconded, and carried to adjourn at 8:40 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mark W. Doane,
Administrative Assistant

Ann Marie Visconti, Chair

Curt Robie, Member

Tamarin Laurel-Paine, Member