



Town of Middlefield Board of Selectmen

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January 31, 2024 Middlefield/Washington Joint Selectboard Meeting Minutes

The Meeting was declared open by Ann Marie Visconti, Chair of Middlefield Selectboard, and Kent Lew, Chair of Washington Selectboard. Also present were members of the Middlefield Board: Curt Robie and Tamarin Laurel-Paine; and from the Washington Selectboard: Mike Case and Dave Ellis. Also present from Middlefield was Adair Laurel-Cafarella, and Mark Doane, Middlefield Administrative Assistant. Sean Curran, Split Town Administrator of Middlefield, and Washington was present via phone, and for approx. half the meeting time.

Ann Marie reported that the grant for the Administrator went to June of this year. So, there is about \$50,000.00 left for salary and benefits. The grant will no longer be available for next year.

Kent reported that it was budgeted for 2 Dell computers, but Sean has been only provided one via Washington. Middlefield should be able to get him one for use thru the IT grant. Any monies left over in the grant, will go to the Town Administrator salary in order to decrease the Town's responsibility for salary. The Town Administrator is receiving benefits from his other employer, thus, that will allow the grant money to be used for salary.

A motion was made, seconded, and carried by both Selectboards to continue the Town Administrator contract for one more year.

Kent is concerned about the Town Administrator becoming burnt out. He is concerned Sean is burning the candle at both ends. He raised questions of allocation of hours. Ann Marie wondered if Monday and Tuesday Sean could be in Washington, Wednesday and Thursday in Middlefield, and Friday would be a split between both towns.

Sean Curran then came into the meeting via telephone. Sean reported he is enjoying his tenure in both towns; he has obtained executive training. His contract he signed was for 9 AM to 5 PM. He is also driving 2.5 hours per day, and an occasional Saturday. He is putting in long hours, and add in the travel of 500-600 miles in a week. He felt that with the upcoming improvements to the Middlefield Town Hall, he would like to work remotely 2 days a week, (Tuesday, Thursday). This would save him six hours of travel, and 300 miles a week. He would then be able to do twice the work in less time. The other 3 days

would be split between the towns so a presence would be in each town. He suggested trialing this during the months of February, March, and April.

Ann Marie feels those months are reasonable. Kent is not opposed to remote work, but Middlefield needs to respond to the change of schedule request. Ann Marie was fine with it, as Mark and Suzanne are here as well as other Town employees.

Kent says they can work on the details. He was questioning if townspeople were taking advantage of him being in the building. Tamarin asked the same question in regards to Middlefield.

Sean responded that in his seven months of employment, he has had approx. 3 people in Middlefield, and up to 12 in Washington. Tamarin asked for specific/regular that could be posted for time availability to be for towns people to meet with the Town Administrator. Kent felt some consistent hours are necessary and should be posted, and should be an alternate date in addition to Selectboard days. Sean felt Friday mornings in Middlefield, and Wednesday in Washington. Tam feels we could advertise the hours. We could trial the need and follow.

Kent proposed the following hours: Monday: 6 hours Washington; 2 hours Middlefield
Tuesday: Work remote
Wednesday: 6 hours Middlefield; 2 hours Washington
Thursday: Work remote
Friday: 4 hours Middlefield; 4 hours Washington

Sean reported that 2 weeks ago he was in a meeting in the morning in Northampton, that started at 9:00 AM, and concluded the day at 10:00 PM. Kent is still concerned about burnout. Curt brought up Section 2 Article 6 of the Intermunicipal Agreement Between the Towns of Middlefield and Washington. He agreed to go along with the schedule change but wants it in writing. Dave from Washington is willing to give it a shot. Tamarin questioned hours on meeting nights. Sean stated he understands how town government runs. Kent questioned use of comp days for hours over. Curt wants accountability and should a log be kept of what he is doing. Kent questioned a time study; he suggested Sean might want to keep a log for his own purposes. Tamarin recommended it not be a "busy work" log. Sean stated he could initiate a study.

Sean Feels the Springfield City Council is not a distraction but an opportunity for networking. He also stated that by working for the City Council, it enabled him to take the split Town Administrator position at \$80,000.00. He provided three area Town Administrator salaries as a reference; all over \$130,000.00. Questions were raised about getting to meetings on Mondays in Springfield. The Town of Washington was agreeable to Sean being on Zoom meetings with the Springfield City Council nights.

Sean questioned if more sharing of resources between Washington and Middlefield was possible. Kent explained that the overall contract was not to share resources. It would be more difficult to track payroll issues. Kent feels a Municipal Policy regarding mileage reimbursement be instituted at the Federal Reimbursement Rate. Sean concluded his portion of the meeting and hung up.

Ann Marie feels keeping a log is a good idea, but he doesn't need to hand it in. Kent feels it should be available if asked for. Curt stated that the Contract needs to be changed to allow Sean to work 2 jobs, as it is prohibited in Section 2.1. A vote was taken by each Town Selectboard and it was unanimous to change section 2.1 to allow Sean to hold the Town Administrator Position, as well the Springfield City Council.

The discussion continued to focus on keeping a log of activities, and it was suggested that Sean do it, and make it available should he be requested to provide it. Further discussion felt this should be added into Section 11.6: Schedule of the Town Administrator. A motion was made by each Selectboard to modify this section, and Kent will come up with the wording and forward for signature. The amended Section shall read:

- (a) It is expected that the Town Administrator will devote approximately one half of his or her time To each town each week, adjusted as appropriate to successfully perform the duties set forth herein. The Parties will set out an initial schedule in the Employment Agreement to be negotiated between the Town Administrator and the Parties. The Town Administrator shall keep a reasonable summary log of daily activities and hours worked in a form acceptable to the Parties and as set out in the aforesaid Employment Agreement, and such records shall be available upon request for public review.

Following all discussion, the Town Administrator Performance Evaluation needs to be done by March 30, 2024 according to protocol set by Selectboards, and Sean will be provided a Self-Evaluation form. Questions were then raised as to where a Performance Evaluation form could be obtained. It was thought that maybe Berkshire Regional Planning or the MMA might have one. Ann Marie stated she would call Don Humason in Chester to see if they have a Town Administrator Performance Review tool.

It was recommended to put Sean's public work number on the Website. Kent feels Sean is doing a great job especially concerning issues Washington had with a Railroad Culvert failure.

The next joint meeting between the Washington Selectboard and the Middlefield Selectboard will be on February 28, 2024 at 6:30 PM in Middlefield, and the Performance Appraisal will occur at 10:00 AM on March 29, 2024; location to be determined.

No further business to come before the meeting, each Selectboard adjourned at 8:20 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mark W. Doane,
Middlefield Administrative Assistant

Ann Marie Visconti, Middlefield Chair:



Curt Robie, Middlefield Member:



Tamarin Laurel-Paine, Middlefield Member: 

Washington Selectboard:

Kent Lew, Washington Chair: _____

Mike Case, Washington Member: _____

David Ellis, Washington Member: _____