



## Town of Middlefield Board of Selectmen

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### Selectboard Meeting January 10, 2024

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 by Ann Marie Visconti, Chair with Curt Robie and Tamarin Laurel-Paine, members, also present.

Towns people present were Sherry Vendetti, Suzanne Lemieux, Doreen Black, Adair Laurel Cafarella, Crystal Kruszyna, Ken Murray, David DiNicola. Al Sirard, Logan Judge, Jenny Dion, Skip Savery, Alfonso Longobardi, Maureen Longobardi and Jonathan Freiermuth.

The Warrants were reviewed and signed.

The mail was reviewed and the minutes of the December 13, 2023 Selectboard meeting were approved and signed off on.

#### Sean Curran, Town Administrator, report:

1. FRTA has accepted Middlefield, and riders/users need to sign up in advance. Copies of the application are with the TA, and will also be available at the Senior Center.
2. MMDT investment account was set up last week for \$300,000.00 with an interest rate of 5.1%.
3. Thru a State sponsored webinar, it was suggested the Town vote to adopt a flag flying policy. Those flags should be the American Flag, State flag, Town Flag, and the POW/MIA flag. A motion was made, seconded, and carried to adopt the policy. The TA will write up the policy, and when ready, the Selectboard will sign off on it.
4. The TA will meet with 3 PVPC (Eric Weiss, Joe Hagopian, and Ken Comia) planners to go over the By-Laws and Capital Plan. Michael Hitchcock from the Planning Board will be at the meeting via phone. He will also meet with Eric Weiss, Joe Hagopian on the Senior Center Grant. Curt reported he received an email this date from them stating PVPC wants to apply for a grant for a study. Curt feels we do not need another study but the capital money.
5. The Town Luncheon is this coming Saturday, January 13, 2024 at noon. Senator Paul Mark is supposed to be in attendance.
6. A grant in the amount of \$25,700.00 was awarded for new computer equipment, including the ability to do ZOOM meetings and OWL capabilities.

**Earmark Discussion:** Curt has a letter for signing to be sent to Rep. Richard Neal asking for a Federal Earmark of \$2,000,000.00. These funds, if awarded are for the Town Hall, Council on, Aging and new roofs on the Highway and Fire buildings. Curt reported that he had a positive call with Rep. Neal's chief

of staff, and the time for Federal Earmarks has arrived. Curt also reported that as tax revenues are down in the State, that state earmarks are being cut by 50%.

**Update on Transfer Station:** It was reported that \$20,000.00 to \$25,000.00 will be spent just for civil engineering plans. As of now, Fuss and O'Neal. The offices of Huntley and of Levesque are also interested in putting in bids. The cost of the plans is due to need to delineate the wetlands, but we have no one certified to make that delineation. It was also reported that Mark Stinson of the DEP knows that we are probably in violation, but at this time, isn't making an issue of it.

**Discussion of Selectboard Budget Items for Discussion with Finance Board:** Curt felt this needed to be done this evening, or the Selectboard would not be ready to meet with the Finance Board next week. Need to discuss Cost of Living Adjustments, TA salary for this year, Police and Fire Department Insurance due to a rate hike, and to look at the Librarian's Salary. Ann Marie felt this should be discussed at the end of the meeting or on the 17<sup>th</sup>. This was due to the number of items on the agenda for the evening.

**Town Sign Discussion:** It was brought up about exploring the possibility of getting an electronic communication board on the Town Hall lawn. The current one is beginning to show wear and tear at the foundation, and the doors are dangerous to brace. A new sign at the max. end would be approx. \$55,000.00, but Curt reported the Town does not need to go that high. A rather lengthy discussion took place, and some present felt there was no need for a sign, since so few people go by it, or, the current sign could be modified for safer use.

**Town Office Conversion:** The TA has been looking into restructuring the office space in the Town Hall so that there are defined Offices. It would include walls, and doors. He feels it is necessary to have defined office space for security and privacy. The floors will also need to be replaced, and the new computer equipment in place. Many felt that this was not discussed with all involved, and some who have been spoken with do not want to be enclosed in an area where they cannot see who is coming in. Ann Marie says that is not what she is hearing. The TA will call a meeting of all departments on a Friday morning, but does not feel this is a bad thing to happen.

**Capital Projects Update:** The TA will meet with Eric Weiss of the PVPC, who has all the information.

**Investment Progress:** Already reported that \$300,000.00 has been invested.

**Skyline Trail Dump Capping:** Curt reported that the attorneys are awaiting all of the family members involved to sign off.

**Service Zone Update:** Crystal made one recommended change and that being: "90% of the time" being added to call time expectations. We do not have a contract with Hinsdale, but it was recommended by the Regional Representative to send it in. Ann Marie will sign off on, a copy will be on file. Crystal explained about the plan to those present. A question about going to Baystate Hospital was raised, and as of now, the transport to the nearest facility.

**Building Inspector:** Unable to attend.

**Media Policy:** the TA feels all Town Hall events go thru him or the TAA to submit to the Country Journal, so that there is no contradictions in the info being put out there. Ann Marie has asked the TA to come up with a Media Policy.

**All Boards Meeting Date:** No date was agreed upon. It was questioned about doing it before a Selectboard Meeting or on an off Wednesday of the Selectboard. Ann Marie questioned doing a Friday.

**Annual Town Meeting Reports:** Due by March 15, 2024. The TAA will send out reminders.

**Chapter 90 Funds:** Enough funds to do a project (possibly paving Chipman Road) and use \$250,000.00 to \$280,000.00 for a new truck, and pay for it from Chapter funds over three years. The Highway Superintendent reported that all the WRAP money went into road repairs.


**Old Business:** None

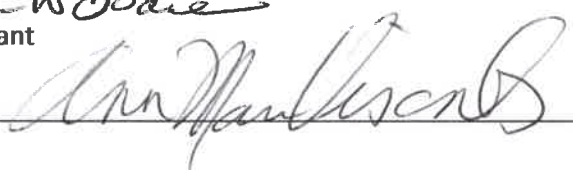
**New Business:**

1. Health Agent: His services are going up \$260.00 this year and Full Circle Software went up to \$2,800.00, which, according to Ed Fahey, health inspector, is more than any other town. A contract with Berkshire Planning Commission has not been signed. Ed stated that he would be willing to go back to paper permits being written from people calling him. Ann Marie is in talks with Northampton to see if they can supply the services. Lauren, from Northampton, will get back to Ann Marie on agents.
2. The Town had voted to do an interim audit and David Irwin has already been in touch with the accountant. It was reported that we have done very well with our audits, and a discussion will take place at the Annual Town Meeting if we want to continue with the audits.

**Public Input:** Many topics were discussed rather extensively during the public portion of the meeting. These included the Town Hall Communication sign, the Senior Center repairs and using the Town Hall Auditorium for the Senior Center, the housing of the newer Highway vehicles, and the Police cruisers, the tax increase that occurred, but was voted at the ATM. The biggest expenses we are facing are the school district and the Highway Department. A continued discussion on the Office space plan took place on where the money is coming from, and it is coming from ARPA funds.

Following this rousing discussion, and there being no further business to come before the Selectboard, it was closed at 8:45 PM

Respectfully Submitted,  
Mark W. Doane,   
Town Administrative Assistant

Ann Marie Visconti, Chair: 

Curt Robie, Member: 

Tamarin Laurel Paine, Member: 