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**Town of Middlebury  
Infrastructure Committee  
Thursday, September 14, 2023  
Meeting Minutes**

Members Present: Heather Seeley, Gary Baker, Erik Remsen, Judy Wiger-Grohs, Alternate Jef Bratspis and Andy Hooper attended via Zoom. Candy McLaughlin arrived prior to the approval of the Minutes. Luther Tenny was absent, so Alternate Bratspis would be voting at this meeting.

Staff Present: Town Manager Kathleen Ramsay, Director of Public Works Planning Emmalee Cherington and Director of Planning and Zoning Jennifer Murray.

Others Present: Abby Dery of Trudell Consulting Engineers (TCE) and interested parties.

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 9:01 a.m. by Chair Bratspis.

**2. Approval of Agenda**

Wiger-Gorhs moved to approve the agenda and Baker seconded the motion. The agenda was approved as presented with 6 in favor, 2 absent. **MOTION PASSED**

**3. Approval of Minutes**

Bratspis said he had a small change on Line 86: It should read "Chevy Bolt" and not "Chevy Volt"

Seeley moved to approve the minutes of August 10, 2023 with the small change, seconded by Wiger-Grohs. The motion carried with 7 in favor, 1 absent. **MOTION PASSED.**

**4. Citizen Comments**

Wiger-Grohs said the Tree Committee had been at Middlebury College yesterday for the Vermont Urban and Community Tree Forum to see what the College has been doing with their trees. She said the reason the Tree Committee was invited was to showcase the work the Committee has been doing in town. She wanted to thank the Infrastructure Committee and the Selectboard for supporting their work, and said it was apparent from the other municipalities in attendance that everyone is realizing how important the planting of trees is, because the recent flooding indicate that the best way to mitigate flooding is by planting more trees and not filling in wetlands.

**5. Project Updates**

Paving - Cherington said that all the paving projects scheduled for this summer have been completed, and the work came in \$22,255 under budget. She said it was over the amount set aside for paving in the Capital Budget, but the budget was supplemented by the ARPA funds allocated for highway improvements.

51 Bratspis asked the status of the Colonial Drive Project, and Cherington said they have  
52 contacted the company that has the infrared equipment needed to soften the pavement to take  
53 care of the problem with the pavement around the manholes, but the last she heard it would be  
54 a month or more before they'd be available.

55  
56 South Street - Cherington said Casella has begun work on South Street and are working from  
57 the South Main Street intersection south to Green Mountain Place and are maybe about 100'  
58 from tying into that line. She said at that time they'll have to stop and see if realistically they can  
59 go any further this year. They are looking to pave by the mid-week of October but then they  
60 could do a segment of work outside of the paved area, and then they'll come back in the spring  
61 to finish. Remsen, who lives on South Street, said Casella has been really good at  
62 communicating with property owners.

63  
64 Cherington let the Committee know that the Selectboard had approved the purchase and  
65 installation of three new valves in South Main Street related to this project for a "not to exceed"  
66 price of \$40,000.

67  
68 Halladay Road - Cherington said Champlain Construction pulled out of the Halladay Road pump  
69 station project to help with storm cleanup, but they were back last week and were able to do the  
70 excavation of the valve vault, bypass sewer manhole and the sewer manhole. She said they  
71 have pulled off the site again for a few weeks, but when they return around mid-October, the  
72 generator and electrical work will begin.

73  
74 Route 116 - Cherington said the portion of the box culvert that VTrans obtained from  
75 somewhere in NY is being installed, and once backfilled, they'll begin replacing the water line.  
76 She said VTrans will be sending her an update on the project in a day or so, but she thought it  
77 was possible one-lane could be open within a couple of weeks.

78  
79 Middlebury River - Cherington said Casella completed the initial efforts for flood mitigation in the  
80 Middlebury River, and she'd asked for an estimate to open the chutes by the Grist Mill Bridge,  
81 but they couldn't get the necessary equipment here in time, so she has requested Acker  
82 Excavation look at it, since they need to be out of the river by October 1<sup>st</sup>.

83  
84 Seeley said the excavation on Halladay Road where they worked is rough and needs some  
85 gravel or something to help fill in the area.

86

87

88

## 6. Public Works Car Bid

89 Cherington said there was confusion with the minutes from the last meeting that didn't describe  
90 the hybrid vehicle as a plug-in hybrid, so the Energy Committee read that and there was  
91 concern expressed by them at the Selectboard meeting, but she believes that has now been  
92 cleared up. She said the Selectboard did, however, want Director of Public Works Operations  
93 Bill Kernan to go back out to do some comparison shopping.

94

95 Cherington said Mackey Chevrolet said they wouldn't be able to supply anything until 2025; G.  
96 Stone Ford Motors and Stone CDJR Dodge had no full EV's but is working up a price for both  
97 purchase and lease on a plug-in hybrid; and, Key Chevrolet has a full EV and is working up a  
98 price for both purchase and lease.

99

100 These two vehicles would replace the former police cruisers that were used by Wastewater  
101 Superintendent Bob Wells and Cherington. Wells' vehicle has not been used in two years, and  
102 Cherington isn't driving hers now because it is unsafe. Cherington said a small SUV would be  
103 ideal for her.

104  
105 Wiger-Grohs asked if there was a reason why we weren't looking at Toyota. Cherington said  
106 Kernan did have a Toyota on his list at one point, but she thought he was trying to prioritize local  
107 dealers. Hooper said if the local dealers don't have what we want, he didn't see any reason to  
108 not look beyond the local dealers. Wiger-Grohs thought the two Toyota dealers, Alderman's in  
109 Rutland and Heritage in Burlington, were both trying to get vehicles, but she didn't think getting  
110 a RAV4 or Highlander is as difficult to obtain.

111  
112 Energy Committee member Richard Hopkins said he's pleased the discussion is between a  
113 plug-in hybrid or a full EV. He said he and his wife bought an electric vehicle a few months ago  
114 and they do not require a great deal of service, so thinks that makes it more feasible to buy a  
115 car from a dealer who's in Rutland or Burlington. Hooper did a quick search online and said it  
116 shows one of the out-of-town dealers with 8 plug-in hybrid RAV4's on the lot., so he thinks there  
117 is availability outside our immediate community.

118  
119 Baker mentioned that Great Britain has pollution concerns about the EVs due to the vehicle  
120 weight and the tire and road wear that weight causes. Bratspis said the culture here is to drive  
121 a pickup truck to go to the grocery store, so that's weight on the roads too. He said he hopes  
122 we can plan a path forward, despite the ethical arguments surrounding these vehicles.

123

## 124 **7. South Street Water Line**

125

126 Cherington said there is a section of the water line project that goes through a wetland and ties  
127 the Benedict Lane line to South Main Street, and one of the initial considerations was to change  
128 the pipe material we were using for that section from 12" ductile iron to 14" HDPE. She said the  
129 ductile iron requires digging a trench installing a trench box, laying the pipe and removing the  
130 trench box, but if we switch to HDPE, the contractor can use a smaller machine, dig a smaller  
131 trench and roll the pipe in and backfill without the need of a trench box. She said personally she  
132 is not in favor of HDPE pipe, and the possible issues that may appear many years down the  
133 road, but then we've had problems with ductile iron in other areas of town due to the way it was  
134 installed.

135

136 She said we have \$32,000 of ductile iron pipe already for this project, but EJ Prescott said they  
137 would take it back, but since the cost of pipe has come down since we purchased it, she doubts  
138 we'd get back what we paid for it.

139

140 Seeley said she doesn't want to use the HDPE and asked if the engineer had reviewed it.  
141 Cherington said they had, and they're okay with it. Seeley feels we have the ductile iron pipe  
142 and since it's a 12" main line, she would like to stick with the ductile iron, since we know it has a  
143 long lifespan and we don't know how long the plastic will last.

144

145 Hooper asked if there was a plastic lining in the ductile iron pipe, and Cherington said not inside  
146 the pipe, it was on the outside of the pipe to allow for more protection from the topsoil.

147

148 Remsen asked why the change was proposed and if it had to do with going through the wetland.  
149 Cherington said it was to benefit the contractor because of the added labor needed to install the  
150 ductile iron.

151  
152 The consensus of the Committee was to stick to using the 12” ductile iron pipe we already have  
153 purchased.

## 154 8. Middlebury WWTF Preliminary Engineering Report

155  
156 Cherington began by saying the sludge dryer that is set up as a demonstration at the WWTF is  
157 exciting since it's the first time a Vermont facility has looked at this technology, and there have  
158 been several engineers and State people who have come to view it. She said based on the way  
159 wastewater is heading in Vermont, this is exciting technology that greatly reduces the solids  
160 generated at the plant. She said if Vermont regulations change to prohibit field application of  
161 solids, this technology would put us in a better place if we had to haul to the landfill. She said if  
162 we adopt this technology, we could become a regional center for other wastewater facilities to  
163 bring their waste, and this would help offset some of our costs. She said we won't know the  
164 cost until we get the final engineering report in a couple of weeks.

165  
166 Richard Hopkins asked what fuel it uses on site, and Cherington said right now it's just 3-phase  
167 power, but its typically gas fired. Hopkins said at some time in the future we might be able to  
168 produce the gas on-site to run the facility, but we need to reduce our use of fossil fuel at this  
169 facility. Cherington said solar would not be an option for this without an alternative power  
170 source, but some places could produce their own gas to run the dryer.

171  
172 Cherington said we hired the engineering firm of Hoyle Tanner last fall to modify and complete  
173 the preliminary engineering report (PER) that began with Tata Howard. She said part of the  
174 reasoning for going with Hoyle Tanner was that they were local. She said Jennie Auster P.E.,  
175 who came and gave the presentation to the Infrastructure Committee and Selectboard, has  
176 given her notice to Hoyle Tanner and will begin work for Wright Pierce next week. Cherington  
177 said Wright Pierce was her choice from the beginning, since they specialize in water and  
178 wastewater, so she is recommending terminating the contract with Hoyle Tanner and negotiating  
179 a contract with Wright Pierce. She said Hoyle Tanner is known mostly for their highway  
180 projects, and Jon Olin, P.E., who is the engineer that would be taking over our wastewater  
181 project, is a bridge engineer, not a wastewater engineer. She said Olin has looked at this project  
182 and he has recommended we terminate this part of the contract with them and move to Wright  
183 Pierce to complete the PER. She said Auster would stay on as the lead on the project, as would  
184 some other members of the team, but it's too early to know if there are financial implications.

185  
186 Seeley said she's fine with Cherington's recommendation to move this phase to Wright Pierce,  
187 and she moved to recommend to the Selectboard to approve the termination of the contract with  
188 Hoyle Tanner. McLaughlin seconded the motion.

189  
190 Remsen wondered if we should terminate with Hoyle Tanner before knowing the financial  
191 implications of going with Wright Pierce, but Seeley pointed out that Hoyle Tanner  
192 recommended terminating this part of the contract. Cherington said she could get more  
193 information on the cost prior to the Selectboard meeting, and right now we're just looking at the  
194 PER portion of the contract, not the entire project, so we might pay a little more now, but we  
195 have time to negotiate before agreeing to the larger portion of the project.

196  
197 The motion carried with 7 in favor, 1 absent. **MOTION PASSED.**

198  
199  
200 Seeley also moved to recommend the Selectboard approve advancing discussions to complete  
201 the Preliminary Engineering Report with Wright Pierce. Baker seconded the motion. The  
202 motion carried with 7 in favor, 1 absent. **MOTION PASSED.**

### 203 **Bike & Pedestrian Scoping Study Presentation**

204  
205  
206 Abbey Dery of TCE said she was part of a larger team that helped assemble the information for  
207 the Middlebury Bike and Pedestrian Scoping Study. She said their work entailed organizing the  
208 thoughts of the townspeople, bringing all the studies and plans done previously into one place,  
209 to provide comprehensive mapping, and to make recommendations to help the Town prioritize  
210 projects.

211  
212 She went over the process involved and all the public meetings and surveys held to acquire all  
213 the information needed for the study, and she said the Middlebury Bike & Ped Steering  
214 Committee had been a tremendous help with this work. She said they are in the process of  
215 putting the final report together to present to the Selectboard at the end of September.

216  
217 She said in July and August a survey was distributed and 360 people responded to the survey,  
218 but the ones they focused on were the sidewalks and crosswalk comments and suggestions,  
219 and the comments on traffic speed and safety. She said they found that many people don't feel  
220 safe riding bikes on the road due to traffic volume, the narrowness of the road and the lack of  
221 bike paths. She said all of the survey results will be in the final report.

222  
223 Dery said they held a public input meeting and the attendees were engaged and they had some  
224 good discussions, and they were able to get some valuable information from this meeting.

225  
226 Dery went over the column headings in the matrix that would be part of the study, and Murray  
227 asked the Infrastructure Committee if there were other columns they'd like to see added to the  
228 matrix before they finalized the plan for submission to the Selectboard. There was discussion  
229 over how they perceived the matrix being used and how different people could want different  
230 information from it.

231  
232 Dery shared the connectivity map that shows about 80% of the identified projects, but in the  
233 final plan they'll do different viewpoints to capture all the projects. She said they have been  
234 discussing breaking up some of these larger projects into smaller projects, and there is some  
235 additional work that needs to be done on the map. Bratspis said he would find it helpful to see  
236 the projects divided into smaller ones that might help when prioritizing. He also asked her when  
237 the 5 major projects would be identified, and she said they'll be dividing those out, but as of right  
238 now they're looking at the Marble Works/Maple Street area, the Court Street corridor, South  
239 Main Street, Seminary Street Extension and the Washington Street Extension area.

240  
241 Dery said their traffic engineer will also be making a list of the crosswalk areas and making  
242 suggestions for easy fixes that will improve them that can be used by Public Works and the  
243 Infrastructure Committee. Rogers Road resident Wendy Warren said at one of the meetings,  
244 the engineer had mentioned that some towns have slightly raised crosswalks that make cars  
245 slow down, and she found that interesting.

246

247 Seeley said she had hoped this report would provide assistance in tracking requests that come  
248 in from residents when they want a new sidewalk. She said we have millions of dollars' worth of  
249 projects that need to be done, so these might be bike and pedestrian priorities, but we have to  
250 figure out where these priorities fit in with all the other priorities in the town. Seeley said  
251 personally she'd rather see all the sidewalks we have now improved before putting any money  
252 into constructing new ones.

253  
254 Remsen asked Cherington if she would be able to use this plan and the projects identified when  
255 preparing the Capital Improvements plan and budget, because he is hoping this plan isn't one  
256 that will just sit on a shelf and not be used. He said he also sees this plan as a snapshot of the  
257 issues at this moment, but there will be more identified going forward. Cherington said she  
258 could use this plan, but her concern is that we have a very passionate bike and pedestrian  
259 group in the community, and she hopes they realize that not all these plans will happen  
260 immediately. She said we have a 10-year capital improvements plan, and these projects will  
261 have to be worked into that plan and might have to wait until there's another project going on in  
262 the area that can tie these improvements into.

263  
264 Bratspis said he would like to see this plan be a living document that will be refined and added  
265 to as we move forward and new projects are identified, but he understands Cherington's need to  
266 tie them into other major projects. Cherington said there may be a way of developing something  
267 on the Town's website that will help identify projects and link them to a map to keep the plan  
268 current.

269  
270 Another Rogers Road resident, Megan James, said ideally their area would have sidewalk to all  
271 three schools in town, but she realizes this would be a very expensive undertaking. She said  
272 people in the neighborhood have a real sense of urgency that something needs to be done to  
273 protect the walkers and bikers, and perhaps a painted line could be added to the pavement to  
274 give a visual space for them to walk and ride. She said it's not a long-term plan, but it's a short-  
275 term plan that's cheaper and might help. Cherington said she understands, but she is  
276 concerned about this painted area giving a false sense of security to those in the space, so  
277 where there are multiple kids walking in an area, she likes to see elevated walkways. Warren  
278 said studies have shown that painted lines slow cars down and pointed to a project in Lincoln  
279 that had created a bike/pedestrian lane on a narrow road with paint.

280  
281 Seeley pointed out that the Exchange Street sidewalk/bike path has been 11 years since the  
282 study was first done, and we're only maybe going to get that project started next year, and the  
283 biggest holdup has been right-of-way acquisitions from property owners, so she wanted them to  
284 understand the struggle on the Town's end to get these projects underway.

285  
286 McLaughlin and Seeley left the meeting at this point.

## 287 288 **9. Stormwater Feasibility Study**

289  
290 Cherington said we received the grant for this project in March and the contracts were awarded  
291 in July. She said the plan had been to bring some of our permitted projects to 30% level of  
292 design and then look at the stormwater projects identified in the Downtown Master Plan. She  
293 said she needed to pull the Mary Hogan area from the plan but would like to get the Adams  
294 Acres to a 30% level of design. She said due to the flooding in August, she has added the  
295 Buttolph Acres area into the scope of the project and would also be looking at the Shaw's



296 retention area. She said these three area exceed the grant funds, but we do have stormwater  
297 funds available in our Capital Account to cover these.

298  
299 Wiger-Grohs moved to recommend the Selectboard approve the Stormwater Agreement for  
300 design services with Aldrich & Elliott. Remsen seconded the motion. The motion carried with 5  
301 in favor, 3 absent. **MOTION PASSED.**

## 302 303 **10. Flooding Updates**

304  
305 Cherington said we're looking at around \$800,000 worth of damage from the August 3<sup>rd</sup> storm  
306 but thinks it might be over \$1 million by the time all the estimates are in, although some of that  
307 will be covered by insurance. She said we also just heard that Addison County has reached the  
308 threshold level in losses to be declared a disaster area, so that should be happening soon.  
309 She's been advocating for the July flood to be combined with the August flooding, but there is  
310 no word on that yet. Ramsay said that Cherington had been working on the local and state level  
311 to get the declaration to include both flooding events and providing all the information they need.

## 312 313 **11. Schedule Next Meeting**

314  
315 The next Committee meeting will be on October 12, 2023 and tentatively a meeting on October  
316 19<sup>th</sup> if needed.

## 317 318 **12. Committee Members Concerns**

319  
320 Bratspis said the rapid flashing beacon at the Creek Road intersection is missing a pole, and  
321 Cherington said the contractor has been called to come and repair that. Bratspis also  
322 mentioned comments on Front Porch Forum about the lack of traffic markings, and he  
323 particularly mentioned the Elm Street/North Pleasant Street intersection. Cherington said she  
324 would follow up on that, because she knew they were going to do crosswalks, but she isn't sure  
325 about road markings. She said there has been a delay due to all the rain we had.

326  
327 Wiger-Grohs said the Grist Mill/School House Hill Road/Route 125 intersection needs markings  
328 as well, but Cherington said that is a State road so VTrans would need to be contacted for that.  
329 Wiger-Grohs said one of those portable "pedestrian crossing" signs in the crossing would help.

330  
331 The meeting adjourned at 11:16 a.m. upon motion by Wiger-Gorhs, seconded by Baker.

332  
333 Respectfully submitted,  
334 Beth Dow

335  
336