

TOWN OF MIDDLEBURY
Policy Review Committee
Meeting Minutes – June 14, 2019

In attendance: Gary Baker, Donna Donahue, Beth Dow (staff) and Chris English (staff)

- 1. Call to Order.** Chris called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.
- 2. Approve May 17, 2019 Meeting Minutes.** Gary made a motion to approve the May 17th meeting minutes, seconded by Donna. Approved unanimously.
- 3. Discuss Draft Policy on Selectboard Subcommittees.** In light of recent informal Selectboard discussions about the role of its subcommittees, as well as the Policy Review Committee’s own conversations on the subject, Chris said Kathleen had been supportive of the idea of putting together a rough draft of a potential Selectboard policy and set of procedures that could be used as a starting point for a more formal discussion, if the Board were interested in having one. She agreed that the Selectboard’s upcoming Strategic Planning Workshop on June 17th would be a good opportunity to introduce these to the Board, with the suggestion that the Board schedule time to discuss them during an upcoming regular meeting, perhaps in August.

The Committee reviewed the draft documents Chris had developed and agreed to recommend them, with the following revisions, to the Board on the 17th:

Policy Regarding the Appointment of Selectboard Subcommittees

The Selectboard may, from time to time, appoint subcommittees of the Board to focus on specific municipal functions, special projects and/or other issues of broad community interest. Working under individual charters established by the Board, such committees do not function independently but, rather, serve in an advisory capacity, ~~making offering non-binding~~ project and policy recommendations for the Selectboard’s consideration in furtherance of key Board objectives.

Procedure for the Creation and Oversight of Selectboard Subcommittee

Types of Committees

The Selectboard views its subcommittees as ~~a community engagement tool, an effective way to involve interested citizens in~~ an effective way to involve interested citizens in contributing to the decision-making processes of local government. ~~Citizens who volunteer to serve on Selectboard subcommittees bring diverse backgrounds, skills and viewpoints to a particular issue and, ideally,~~ The Board appoints citizens to serve on its subcommittees that represent a balanced cross-section of opinions to inform the Board’s discussions. The Selectboard generally appoints two types of committees – Standing Committees and Ad Hoc Committees –

to meet its needs. The type chosen is dependent upon on the scope and anticipated duration of the issue being addressed, and the level of formality required to address it.

Standing Committees are created to provide sustained focus to issues of high importance regarding the delivery of municipal services or matters affecting the economic and social well-being of the community. Examples include the Infrastructure Committee, Parks & Recreation Committee and Energy Committee. ~~and Economic Health Committee.~~

Ad Hoc Committees are created to work on specific, short-term projects or issues and are disbanded when their work is complete. Ad Hoc Committees can take several different forms; however, the two most commonly used by the Selectboard are:

1. **Task Forces**, whose members are appointed to focus on a single issue that can be analyzed within just a few meetings and to formulate a recommendation for the Board's consideration. ~~Task Forces in recent years have included the Performance Bond Task Force, the Municipal Gymnasium Task Force and the Town Center Finance and Fundraising Task Force.~~ The now-disbanded Economic Health Task Force was a recent example.
2. **Steering Committees**, whose members are typically appointed to focus on a large municipal project or a multi-faceted issue requiring sustained attention. A recent example of a steering committee was the Town Office and Recreation Facilities Steering Committee and the Economic Health Committee.

Committee Appointments

The Town advertises within the community for individuals interested in filling vacancies on Standing Committees in March each year, after Town Meeting, and the Selectboard makes annual appointments in April. When making appointments to a committee, the Board seeks to ensure that there is appropriate subject-matter knowledge and relevant experience amongst its members to address the issues with which it has been charged. Committee vacancies that occur during the year may be advertised immediately, or at the Board's discretion, may be held open until the next annual appointment cycle.

The Relationship of Subcommittees to the Selectboard and Town Manager

Subcommittees are created by, and therefore accountable to, the Selectboard. The work of each subcommittee is guided by a formal, written charge developed by the Board, which describes the area(s) of focus for the committee and, if appropriate, expected deliverables and a timeframe or milestones for the presentation of its recommendations.

On rare occasions, a committee may identify the need to expand or otherwise alter its charge in response to specific events or changing circumstances that might require it to shift its work focus. An amendment to a committee charter requires the approval of the Selectboard which, depending upon the nature and extent of the change, may also elect to alter the composition of the committee, as needed.

Committees function in a strictly advisory capacity to the Selectboard and, as such, cannot engage consultants, sign contracts or otherwise commit Town funds or staff resources. A

committee may, from time to time, find it valuable to consult with or seek assistance from Town staff regarding the matters that it is working on. Requests to engage staff in committee work on an occasional or ongoing basis should be directed to the Town Manager, who will assess the potential impact to other existing work priorities.

Committee members agreed that they needed more time to read through the VLCT Model Policy in depth before discussing how to customize it for Middlebury. This agenda item will be continued at the Committee's next meeting.

Following discussion, Chris said he would make the agreed-upon revisions and send the documents to Kathleen for inclusion in the meeting packet for the Boards' June 17th session.

Beth suggested that the policy and procedure, once approved, should be provided to all committee members each year. Donna said she felt it was critically important that each committee have a clearly defined, written charge from the Selectboard so they understand the matters that are within their purview and their responsibilities to the Board. She also said it would be helpful to have on the website, in addition to a list of official committees, a separate list of informal citizens groups – like the Tree Committee and Dog Park Committee – that have been formed by interested parties to focus on a particular area of interest, but that are not formally chartered by the Selectboard.

Next Steps. The Committee will meet again on Friday, July 12, at 8:00 a.m. to resume work on the VLCT Model Drug & Alcohol Policy for CMV Operators.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 a.m.

Submitted by:

Chris English
Assistant Town Manager