

TOWN OF MIDDLEBURY
Public Health & Safety Committee
Middlebury Police Dept Community Room
Monday, Oct 15, 2018* Draft Meeting Minutes

Attending the meeting: Committee members Selectboard Member Laura Asermily, Porter Hospital EM Dir Mike Leyden, Gary Baker, Fire Chief Dave Shaw, MREMS Dir Teena Betourney, Addison County Sheriff Don Keeler, Middlebury College Public Safety Dir Lisa Burchard, MUHS student Kyle Mitchell. Absent: Town Manager Kathleen Ramsay, Health Officer Tom Scanlon, Police Chief Thomas Hanley (arriving 4:55 pm) and Ira Schiffer. Guests: DPW Operations Dir Bill Kernen, Charter House Dir Doug Sinclair.

Call to Order. Chair Laura Asermily called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

Approval of Agenda. Gary Baker moved approval of the agenda, after discussion agreeing to proceed as planned even though Police Chief Hanley would not be present as his comments in Sept meeting minutes reflected his concerns. David Shaw seconded the motion, which was approved by the Committee.

Approval of Sept 17, 2018 Meeting Minutes: Don Keeler moved approval and Gary Baker seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Citizens Comments. None.

Homelessness/Transients Discussion (with Charter House). Charter House Dir Doug Sinclair said they were more than willing to help with the concerns of offensive behavior on the Town Green and surrounding properties “visited” by individuals who may or may not use Charter House and most likely were not the ones staying overnight at Charter House. He said it would be helpful to have specifics about who, what, when from law enforcers or others. Rules violated in Town constitute the breaking of Charter House rules and can lead to an eviction from Charter House services so could be leverage for behavior improvement. Doug explained Charter House services and hours (toured this past Saturday in Open House and outlined at www.charterhouse.org)

Don Keeler suggested that power on the Gazebo be turned off to discourage loitering there to charge phones and such. Bill Kernen said it could easily be done with one breaker switch controlling it. Laura asked if there was any policy or safety concern about keeping power on and the Gazebo lit. No one knew for sure. Charter House has a day station where computers can be used and phones charged so if the Town did decide to turn off Gazebo power, people would have a place to go and would likely figure out other places.

Laura asked if there was any effort of Charter House, CSAC or faith groups to reach the transient community and find out more and direct them appropriately. No one did. Doug noted that Social Service agencies are greatly challenged.

Gary asked if there was a public park that could be designated as a place for transients to go, in a manner similar to Burlington. It would not necessarily be official.

Wright Park, Chipman Hill and Happy Trail were discussed as preferable to transients because of their downtown proximity but a threat to residents who populate these areas heavily. Don noted past practice of bringing transients to the town clerk's office to arrange overnight lodging and bus ticket out of Middlebury.

The committee acknowledged that the better Middlebury is at serving those struggling with life conditions, the more it attracts this population, especially in the age of cell phones. Burlington's homeless shelters are full and they are referring people down to Middlebury and other areas. The committee thanked Doug for the great work being done by Charter House and will continue to monitor the situation and work with Charter House.

Emergency Management (Ciderfest highlights). Mike Leyden noted that EM coverage and coordination of Ciderfest (3,500 people) was the smoothest running event yet, as their debriefing at Vermont Hard Cider (VHC) in early Oct showed. No major infractions or incidents. Helped having good weather. Teena Betourney concurred. They have refined EM response well after 5 years of practice. Mike said VHC is thinking of taking a year off from hosting Ciderfest and he will miss this opportunity to practice EM coordination of Middlebury's largest attended public events and wondered if there was an equivalent one at which to continue to practice and refine EM coordination. Lisa Bouchard suggested Midd College Commencement and Teena suggested Maple Run, though it would be much smaller. Lisa reported that the college had just hired a part time EM Director (Rick Kristoferson sp?) and she would invite him to join the committee with her and possibly in place of her as he becomes acclimated.

Parking & Traffic Management (Safe Routes update). Laura reported on Middlebury Safe Routes efforts to teach rules of the road and urge all users to slow down, make eye contact and be visible, especially in light of tragic accidents. She referenced the recent International Walk & Roll to School Day and letter to editor on distractedness and speeding sent to Addison Independent, Middlebury College and posted on Front Porch Forum as examples that she shared with PHS committee. The committee recognized that kids were getting the message, but wondered how to get it out more to adults and Middlebury College students. Laura said efforts had been made to reach the college, including hosting a "Lock and Light" bike safety workshop last spring that was poorly attended even though free pizza, locks and lights were provided. Teena and David suggested that we ask Middlebury College students who volunteer with MREMS and MFD to advocate for this. Lisa said that she would include Middlebury Safe Routes rules of the road suggestions in the Public Safety announcement going out to students this month. Laura agreed to send her a PDF.

The committee also discussed the poor timing of repairing sidewalks on Court St and Charles Ave just as school was opening. Bill K acknowledged it was poor timing. Don suggested that future sidewalk repair bids should specify when they need to be installed to avoid this problem in future and would convey this to Infrastructure Committee.

Career Development (MUHS update): Kyle Mitchell reported that MUHS Student Council decided not to host a Halloween Truck and Treat event and that there will be no

Health and Wellness Day this year at which to conduct outreach on public safety careers. The school will promote the VT Cadet Program. Kyle has been working with Tom Scanlon and Activity Dir Sean Farrell on an announcement and brochures to leave with Guidance for students to access. He also noted that Sept was Suicide Awareness month at MUHS and that he was attending a Youth Risk Survey Check In meeting in Montpelier and would report back to the committee on highlights from it.

Updates (cell tower). Laura referred to communication from Kathleen Ramsay regarding a Cell Tower User Group Meeting that summarized concerns shared with Verizon and Town lawyer specifying that Town expects Verizon to comply with its sublicense agreement which includes taking down the old tower by Nov 16, 2018. Teena emphasized the importance of this since it continues to interfere with MREMS radio reception.

Next Meeting. Monday, Nov 19, 2018, 4 pm at MPD, if needed. Gary Baker and Don Keeler reported that they would not be in attendance. If not needed, the next meeting would be Monday Dec 17, 2018 at MPD.

Adjourn. At 5 pm, Tom Hanley moved that the Committee adjourn. David Shaw seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously by the Committee.

Respectfully Submitted, Laura Asermily, Public Health & Safety Committee Chair