

**Town of Middlebury  
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING  
Monday, March 6, 2017  
Meeting Minutes**

Citing the warning to the legal voters of Middlebury, Moderator Gov. James Douglas called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

**ARTICLE 1: To act upon the reports of the Town Officers.**

***RJ Adler moved for the adoption of Article 1; Bill Schneider seconded.***

Selectboard Chair, Brian Carpenter, delivered opening remarks, thanking the School Board and MUHS for hosting Town Meeting in their auditorium. Carpenter introduced the other members of the Selectboard: Vice Chair, Nick Artim, Laura Asermily, Donna Donahue, Victor Nuovo, Heather Seeley and Susan Shashok.

Carpenter requested admittance to the meeting for the following non-resident members of the Town administration: Town Manager Kathleen Ramsay, Assistant Town Manager Chris English, Director of Public Works Planning Dan Werner, Director of Public Works Operations Bill Kernan, Library Director Kevin Unrath, Fire Chief David Shaw and Parks and Recreation Program Coordinator Dustin Hunt, as well as the following health and human service agency representatives: Jessica Danyow, Homeward Bound; Sherry Greifzu, Addison County Home Health and Hospice; Miche Chamberlain Modiba, Addison County Restorative Justice Services and Matt Witten, Addison County River Watch Collaborative.

**NO OBJECTION**

Selectboard Vice Chair, Nick Artim, presented the dedication of the Town Report to a lifelong resident of Middlebury, Walter Richard Calhoun. Middlebury's own "Guardian of the Ballot Box". On behalf of the Town and Selectboard, Nick extended his deep appreciation to this "great Gentleman" for his years of outstanding service to the Town, State and Country. Walter was unable to be present but was acknowledged with a plaque and a long standing ovation.

Parks & Recreation Director Terri Arnold and Program Coordinator Dustin Hunt, presented the Bob Collins Award to Kellie Thomas. She is a 5th degree Master of Tae Kwon Do and owner of KKD KICKS. She teaches 200 + students from Orwell to Hinesburg from toddlers to grandparents. She has presented Middlebury Parks and Recreation with several \$500 Scholarships. This is money that is raised by her hosting what are called "Breakathons" - where participants break boards. Arnold stated that the Scholarship Program is very important to the Parks and Recreation Department.

Selectperson Victor Nuovo paid tribute to retiring Selectperson Donna Donahue. Nuovo did so with mixed emotions: gladness for her and sadness for the board losing a great colleague who brought many skills including intelligence, clarity, discourse and reasonableness to her duties.

46 Nuovo complimented and thanked her on her hard work and dedication to the town serving from  
47 September 2014- March 2017.

48  
49 **MOTION PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE**  
50 **ARTICLE 1 ADOPTED**  
51

52 **ARTICLE 2: Shall the Town vote to adopt the proposed budget for the Fiscal Year 2018**  
53 **(July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018) in the amount of \$10,321,456 with a portion thereof in the**  
54 **amount of \$7,106,034 to be raised by taxes?**  
55

56 ***Ann Webster moved for the adoption of Article 2; Nick Artim seconded.***  
57

58 The Selectboard, Town Manager and Social Service Agencies gave the following budget  
59 presentations:  
60

61 Town Manager Kathleen Ramsay presented the Fiscal Year 2018 Budget in the amount of  
62 \$10,321,456 with a portion thereof in the amount of \$7,106,034 to be raised by taxes. This  
63 includes an increase in expenses of \$198,791 or 2% and the increase in amount to be raised by  
64 taxes is \$155,879 or 2.2%. The major budget drivers are wages and benefits, with an increase  
65 of \$55,833, and capital improvements of \$ 77,994. The budget increase includes funding for  
66 master planning of downtown and a half time assistant in the Parks & Recreation Dept. The  
67 budget impacts are offset by increasing the use of surplus funds by \$32,500, \$117,500 in FY17  
68 to \$150,000 in FY18, while retaining an undesignated fund balance of over 10% of the annual  
69 operating budget, as recommended by the auditors, and by an estimated 1.7% increase in the  
70 Grand List.  
71

72 Susan Shashok, chair of the Infrastructure Committee, outlined the following highlights in the  
73 capital budget: boosted funding for capital improvements by nearly \$78,000, increased focus on  
74 facilities and deferred maintenance, continued funding of a multi-year plan to address the pool,  
75 pool house, and warming hut/teen center, added funding for energy efficiency improvements in  
76 older buildings, increased funding for sidewalk repair, matching funds for Seymour St/ Pulp Mill  
77 Bridge and Exchange St bike/pedestrian projects, road improvement projects including a storm  
78 water management component, new basketball courts at Harold Curtis Park, matching funds for  
79 the Flood Resilience project and implementation of the Emerald Ash Borer Preparedness Plan.  
80  
81

82 **Presentations by Social Service Agencies**  
83

84 ● Jessica Danyow, Executive Director of Homeward Bound - Addison County's  
85 Animal Shelter spoke on behalf of her agency which was requesting \$5,000 from the  
86 Town.  
87

88 ● Sherry Greifzu, executive Director of Addison County Home Health and Hospice  
89 spoke on behalf of her agency requesting \$8,542 from the Town. Bill Schneider  
90 questioned the palliative position that was mentioned in the Addison Independent and how  
91 it worked with their agency. The article in question referred to Porter Medical Center  
92 announcing Dr. Diana Barnard will be leading the Hospital's palliative care programming  
93 and that Laurie Borden, an HVS program assistant, will be working to coordinate palliative

94 care programming between Porter Hospital, Hospice Volunteer Services, and Addison  
95 County Home Health & Hospice. Greifzu was not able to provide any update regarding the  
96 new position or its possible impact.

97  
98 ● Barbara Doyle-Wilch spoke on behalf of the Counseling Service of Addison County  
99 requesting \$4,500 from the Town.

100 ● Peter Lebenbaum a member of the Elderly Services Board of Directors spoke on  
101 behalf of that agency requesting \$5,993 from the Town.

102  
103 Carpenter reported that the goals of the Middlebury Business Development Fund had not been  
104 met during its current initiative of 2012-2017. Thus it will end June 30, 2017 and the newly formed  
105 Economic Health Task Force is charged with recommending a new development approach  
106 initiative that the Selectboard will bring to voters at Town Meeting 2018.

107  
108 Carpenter reported that the Land Conservation Fund has been generously supported by the  
109 Battell Trustees from the proceeds of the rental income from the tower on Chipman Hill. He  
110 thanked the Battell Trustees for their pledge of \$48,754 to the Conservation Fund in FY18. As of  
111 June 30, 2016 the balance of the fund was \$398,611.

112  
113 Carpenter noted a very slight decrease in the municipal tax rate from \$.09780 in Fy17 to \$.09738  
114 in FY18, a difference of (\$.0042). Carpenter noted that, as this is the third year proposing a budget  
115 with no tax rate increase, the voters should be prepared for increases in the future. He cited the  
116 unknown impact of future expenses in health Insurance and vehicle and heating fuel, along with  
117 the uncertainty of state and federal funding, and unfunded mandates on the FY18 budget and  
118 beyond

119  
120 Ruth Hardy questioned where the use of surplus funds is shown in the budget documents and  
121 Kathleen Ramsay answered that the use of the fund balance is shown in the revenue section of  
122 the budget and reduces the amount of taxes to be raised. Ruth Hardy also asked if there is a  
123 contingency line item in the budget and Kathleen Ramsay said that there is not.

124  
125 Kathy Wheatley asked if the social services that were presented tonight were already in the  
126 budget. Kathleen Ramsay answered that presentations thus far were included in the budget, but  
127 that presentations made later in the meeting would be new requests that would be voted on by  
128 Australian ballot tomorrow. Moderator Gov. Douglas clarified that the Selectboard had  
129 implemented a new policy that required social service agencies previously approved for funding  
130 to come back before the public at Town Meeting to report on their programs on a rotating basis  
131 every 5 years and any new requests be voted by Australian ballot.

132  
133 **MOTION PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE**  
134 **ARTICLE 2 ADOPTED**

135  
136 **Article 3 Shall the voters authorize the Selectboard, pursuant to 24 V.S.A.**  
137 **§1786a(b), to replace Town Vehicles and Equipment in accordance with the schedule**

138 **hereinafter set forth and to finance the purchase of same by borrowing funds in a total**  
139 **amount not to exceed \$106,000 over a term not to exceed five (5) years?**

140  
141 ***Nick Artim moved for the adoption of Article 3; Susan Shashok seconded.***

142  
143 Selectperson Heather Seeley spoke regarding the proposed purchase of two police cruisers at  
144 an estimated \$56,000, and one wood chipper with an estimated purchase price of \$50,000.

145  
146 **MOTION PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE**  
147 **ARTICLE 3 ADOPTED**

148  
149 **ARTICLE 4: Shall the Town vote to collect taxes on real property for fiscal year**  
150 **2017/2018 in three equal installments due in the Treasurer's Office on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of**  
151 **August 2017, the 15<sup>th</sup> day of November 2017 and the 15<sup>th</sup> day of March 2018?**

152  
153 ***Ann Webster moved for the adoption of Article 4; Natalie Peters seconded.***

154  
155 **MOTION PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE**  
156 **ARTICLE 4 ADOPTED**

157  
158 **ARTICLE 5: To transact other business proper to be done.**

159  
160 Selectperson Laura Asermily asked residents to fill out a survey the Selectboard had developed  
161 to learn the most effective ways to communicate with and provide information to town residents.

162  
163 Ballot item: **Article 6: Shall the voters increase the annual Selectboard stipend from**  
164 **\$1,500 per member and \$1,800 for the Chair to \$2,500 per member and \$3,200 for the**  
165 **Chair?** Town Clerk, Ann Webster, read a letter to the editor written by Ross Conrad that was  
166 printed in the Addison Independent. Webster mentioned that the town charter had to be  
167 updated in order for Middlebury residents to have the authority to adjust the Selectboard  
168 stipend, and this process had been started and completed over the last three years. Ruth  
169 Hardy also spoke in support of this article and commented that we need to support and value  
170 our elected officials if we want to encourage diversity in our local representation. Laura  
171 Asermily also supported the article and mentioned that school officials should also be  
172 compensated fairly and encouraged the public to participate in town government.

173  
174 Ballot item **Article 7: Shall the Town appropriate the sum of \$30,610 to support the**  
175 **establishment of a police canine program?** Laura Asermily, chair of the Public Health and  
176 Safety Committee, and Police Chief Tom Hanley spoke on the proposed canine program.  
177 This will be a companion/patrol dog, not a search dog or narcotics dog. This dog can help by  
178 being another set of eyes and ears for the officer, particularly at night.

179  
180 Tim Page asked if a vest was included in the budget, as well as training costs, and liability  
181 insurance. He also asked how much the dog would be used. Chief Hanley indicated that all  
182 these costs are included in the budget and that Middlebury has previously had a canine  
183 program with no liability issues. Chief Hanley did not see an increase in crime where the dog

184 would be utilized, but that the primary duty was as a companion for the officer which would  
185 be a continual use of the dog.

186

187 Beth Diamond asked what length of service we could expect from a dog. Chief Hanley  
188 answered that it is approximately 8 years, depending on the breed.

189

190 Dave Silberman was concerned that there is no such thing as a “friendly” police dog. Chief  
191 Hanley responded that is one reason they are researching all breeds and the expectation is  
192 to frequently introduce the dog to the public in friendly settings as had been done successfully  
193 during the previous canine program.

194

195 Ballot item **Article 8: Shall the voters of the Town of Middlebury vote to exempt the real**  
196 **property of the Middlebury Regional Emergency & Medical Services, Inc. from taxation**  
197 **for a period of five (5) years commencing April 1, 2017?** Teena Betourney, Director of  
198 Middlebury Ambulance, spoke about the changes over the years in creating a professional  
199 rescue service and the many financial challenges they face. Ann Webster clarified that this is  
200 a request that must be renewed every five years and is not a new exemption.

201

202 Article 9: **Shall the Town of Middlebury appropriate \$2,500 for Addison County**  
203 **Restorative Justice Services, Inc (f/k/a Addison County Court Diversion & Community**  
204 **Justice Projects, Inc.) to support restorative justice projects offered to qualified**  
205 **offenders?** Miche Chamberlain Executive Director spoke about the programs offered by  
206 their agency, whom they serve and their level of success. This is their first request from  
207 Middlebury.

208

209 Article 10: **Shall the Town appropriate \$1,200 to the Addison County River Watch**  
210 **Collaborative for the purpose of supporting water quality monitoring work in our local**  
211 **streams and rivers?** Volunteers Barbara Otsuka and Chris Robbins spoke on behalf of their  
212 organization, describing sampling techniques and the importance of clean water. This is their  
213 first request from the Town of Middlebury.

214

215 Ira Schiffer questioned why water purity is not monitored by the state. Otsuka answered that  
216 they have their own programs and they do share information back and forth.

217

218 Asermily asked if they wanted to comment on the quality of the Middlebury Rivers. Otsuka  
219 said that she was not prepared to respond regarding results at the various sites, but that all

220 their results and reports can be found on the Addison County Planning Commission's web  
221 site.

222  
223 Carpenter updated the residents on what the State's three purposes are for the Downtown  
224 Railway Bridge Project: replace the bridges, get ready for passenger rail, and address long  
225 term drainage issues. The State is now the project lead on this, but the Town still has input.  
226 An Environmental Assessment is being done and is expected to be completed by the spring  
227 of 2017 with an estimated time table for completion of the bridge replacement project in 2020.  
228 To maintain safety until then, the bridges are being examined quarterly. Sidewalks are more  
229 of a concern now with temporary fixes being done. VTrans is considering to remove the  
230 bridges early and put in temporary bridges. Jim Gish, who is Middlebury's Community Liaison,  
231 along with the Selectboard, is working tirelessly on this project. Asermily mentioned that we  
232 have a Hazard Response Group in the event of an emergency.

233  
234 Ruth Hardy, Addison Central School District Board of Directors, gave a presentation of the  
235 ACSD budget proposal to be voted tomorrow by Australian ballot. She gave an overview of  
236 the work done over the past year to formalize the district board and phase out the individual  
237 town school boards.

238  
239 Chris Zeoli reported on the proactive work of the ad hoc Tree Committee to make a plan to  
240 deter the devastation of an ash borer infestation, the inventory of trees which had already  
241 been completed and the information that was now available to the public. The committee is  
242 looking for public input and welcomes new members who would like to join their work.

243  
244 Adam Franco commented that he had just become aware that, during the 2015-16 legislative  
245 session, when they took up the question of legalizing cannabis, the Town's representative to  
246 the Vermont League of Cities & Towns voted, on behalf of the Town, to oppose legalization.  
247 The league went on to hire two lobbyist to oppose the legislation. Franco was not aware of a  
248 Selectboard vote to oppose legalization or public hearings in support of the Town's opposition  
249 to the legislation. He added that the bill will come back up again this session and he hopes  
250 that the Town would speak on behalf of its citizens by holding public hearings on the matter.

251  
252 The Moderator indicated that a motion would not be in order as the matter had not been  
253 warned, but asked for a show of hands from those present who were in favor of the  
254 Selectboard holding public hearings on the issue of legalization of cannabis and a show of

255 hands for those opposed to the public hearings. A majority of those present were in favor of  
256 holding public hearings.

257  
258 Town Manager Ramsay said that the Selectboard had seen the VLCT Legislative Platform  
259 prior to her voting, but asked her to do a better job in the future making the public aware of  
260 the VLCT's legislative platform and garnering more public input before voting on behalf of the  
261 Town.

262  
263 Mark Mooney inquired of the board if the college has been approached to make a donation  
264 to the purchase of a ladder truck for the fire department. Carpenter said they will be having  
265 that dialogue.

266  
267 **Article 11: To elect officers as required by the Middlebury Town Charter.**

268 Candidates were invited to introduce themselves. Those in attendance included:

- 269 ○ **Brian Carpenter - Selectboard**
- 270 ○ **Laura Asermily- Selectboard**
- 271 ○ **Chip Malcom - ACSD**
- 272 ○ **Faith Gong - Library**
- 273 ○ **Ann Webster - Town Clerk**
- 274 ○ **Lorraine Morse- ID #4 School Board**

275  
276  
277 ***Natalie Peters moved to adjourn; Sas Carey seconded.***

278  
279 **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY BY VOICE VOTE**

280  
281 Meeting adjourned at 9:55 p.m.

282  
283 Respectfully submitted,  
284 Monica Sanchez Webb, Recording Clerk