

**Selectboard Town Informational Meeting
Monday, February 28, 2022
Meeting Minutes**

******DRAFT******

Subject to approval by the Selectboard

**NOTE: The meeting was held both remotely via video conferencing and with
Some present in the Town Offices Conference Room**

Members Present: Brian Carpenter, Heather Seeley, Farhad Khan, Lindsey Fuentes-George, Nick Artim, Dan Brown and Esther Thomas.

Staff Present: Town Manager Kathleen Ramsay, Fire Chief David Shaw, Director of Public Works Planning Dan Werner and Ilsley Library Director Dana Hart

Also Present: Town Moderator Susan Shashok and members of the public.

Call to Order

Town Moderator Susan Shashok called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. She read the Annual Town Meeting Warning and stated this was an informational meeting only and there would be no voting on ballot items that would be voted on by Australian ballot on March 1, 2022. She asked if there were objections to non-resident Town staff and others at the meeting participating, and there were no objections. She then introduced the members of the Selectboard.

Article I – Budget

Town Manager Ramsay began with a presentation on the FY2023 budget. She said the Selectboard had adopted the FY23 budget (7/1/22-6/30/23) after careful deliberation, and for the first time in several years there will be a small increase in the estimated tax rate, from \$0.7969 to \$.8269 (3 cents or .39%) for consideration by the voters. She said the tax rate had remained about the same for several years and even dropped slightly in FY22, the result of a Selectboard decision to hold the rate steady in response to the financial uncertainty caused by the pandemic, combined with a small increase in the Grand List.

She said the proposed budget is a reflection of the increase in inflationary pressures, the Board's commitment to a vigorous capital improvement plan, and the need for an efficient maintenance and replacement plan for Town vehicles, all the while continuing to maintain the current levels of Town services.

Ramsay reviewed a breakdown of where tax dollars will be spent, by department and expense category, in FY23 budget as well as sources of offsetting revenues. She also discussed the major expense drivers in the budget, noting increases in Wages and Employee Benefits, Capital Improvements and Equipment Fund Replacements expense as significant contributors. Turning to the Capital Budget, Ramsay reviewed

a breakdown of budgeted expense by department for FY23, and briefly discussed a list of the major road, sidewalk and water infrastructure projects that are expected to begin this summer. She concluded with highlights of the maintenance and improvement projects scheduled to be made to the Town's Parks & Recreation facilities. From FY2002 to FY2023, capital improvements spending has risen from \$283,502 to \$1,560,585, she said, thanks to the dedication of the Selectboard and support from Middlebury voters.

Ramsay concluded her presentation with a review of Health & Human Services Agencies requesting an increase in Town funding for FY23 and the supporting rationale for those requests:

- Age Well: \$4,000 (vs. \$3,000 in FY22)
- Open Door Clinic: \$5,500 (vs. \$3,000 in FY22)
- Red Cross of VT: \$3,000 (vs. \$2,000 in FY22)

Article 2 – Tax Due Dates

Shashok read Article 2 regarding approving the tax due dates as August 15, and November 15, 2022 and March 15, 2023. There were no questions.

Article 3 – Exempting Middlebury Regional Emergency and Medical Services (MRENS) Property Tax

Shashok read the article asking voters to exempt the property taxes for MREMS facility for a 5-year period beginning April 1, 2022.

David Fuller and Kate Rothwell from MREMS were both present to answer questions. Rothwell said that, historically, the residents of Middlebury have exempted MREMS from property taxes and this is a request to continue the exemption that they are so grateful for.

Article 4 – Request for Funds for Addison Allies Network, Inc.

Shashok read the article asking voters to approve the request by Addison Allies Network (AAN), Inc for an appropriation of \$750. Addison Allies works with migrant farm workers and immigrants living and working throughout Addison County.

Joan Stevens spoke in favor of this appropriation for Addison Allies Network and read a summary of the services, training and necessary household items provided by the organization to the estimated 350 to 650 migrant farm workers in the county.

Dedications and Appreciation

Selectboard chair Brian Carpenter began by thanking the community for its continued support of the Board's work apologized for not being able to hold an in-person Town Meeting.

Carpenter said the Town Report has been dedicated to Chief of Police Tom Hanley who has served the Town incredibly well as its Emergency Management Director. While Hanley was recognized by the State in 2002 as Emergency Management Director of the Year, Carpenter noted, the Town Report was dedicated to him because of his service to the Town.

Carpenter asked Nick Artim to join him at the podium and offered appreciation for all of Artim's endless hours he's given to support the community and noted that, while he is stepping down from the Board, he will continue to serve on committees. He said Artim's engineering degree has proved valuable with all the major infrastructure projects in town over the last few years, most recently the Bridge and Rail Project. In recognition of his contributions, Carpenter presented Artim with a hard hat and sweatshirt commemorating the project.

Artim thanked all the Board members he has served with, the wonderful group of Town employees and administration, as well as all the townspeople.

Carpenter asked the residents to support the budget that the Board has worked carefully to put together and said if anyone has questions to please reach out to the Town Manager. He said due to the hard work of our Town staff there is a lot more being done than what you see in this budget. He said the staff has been going out for grants and funding for different projects that we have not had to pay for as taxpayers.

Candidates Running for Office

Shashok said now was the time for candidates running for local offices to introduce themselves and provide information on their interest and experience for the position they're running for. Candidates who spoke included:

- ACSD School Board candidates – James Malcolm and Steve Orzech (Middlebury), Amy McClashan (Ripton) and Jamie McCallum (Weybridge)
- Ilsley Library Board of Trustees – Steve Gross
- Middlebury Selectboard – Andy Hooper, Esther Thomas and Heather Seeley

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:03 p.m. upon motion by Khan, seconded by Carpenter.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Dow