

Town of Middlebury
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
Middlebury Union High School
Monday, March 3, 2025
Meeting Minutes

Citing the warning to the legal voters of Middlebury, Moderator Susan Shashok called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

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

Laura Asermiley moved for the adoption of Article 1; Nick Artim seconded.

Moderator Susan Shashok introduced the members of the Selectboard present and town officials. Selectboard Chair Brian Carpenter, Vice Chair Andy Hooper, Isabel Gogarty, Dan Brown, Farhad Khan, Fred Dunnington, Heather Seeley, Town Clerk Karin Mott, minute taker Monica Sanchez Webb and Town Manager Mark Pruhenski.

Madame Moderator requested admittance to the meeting for the following non-resident members of the Town administration: Director of Administration Crystal Grant, Director of Engineering Emmalee Cherington, Director of Finance Nicholas Gill, Director of Public Works-Operations David DiBiase, Fire Chief David Shaw, Library Director Dana Hart. With no objection they were allowed.

Selectboard member Isabel Gogarty spoke on:

- The Dedication of the Town Report to Gary Baker for 50 years of service to the town of Middlebury and New Haven.

Appreciation for the services from:

- Heather Seeley Selectboard member for 9 years.
- Tom Hanley Interim Town Manager and former Police Chief.
- Kathleen Ramsay serviced 24 years as town manager
- Bob Wells with 28 years of service as Wastewater Superintendent.
- Jerry Skira with 27 years of service as Wastewater operator
- Vegar Boe with 25 years of service with the Police Department.
- Sgt. Bill Kernan 8 years of service as Director of Public Works- operations.
- David Wetmore 7 years of service as Assistant Zoning Officer.

Robert E. Collins award for extraordinary commitment and dedication to the Parks & Recreation Department is awarded

- Casy and Marc McDonough.

Moderator Susan Shashok asked if there were any questions and or comments.

Discussion was had.

MOTION PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE

ARTICLE 1 ADOPTED

ARTICLE 2: Shall the voters of the Town of Middlebury vote to adopt the proposed budget for the Fiscal Year 2026 (July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026) in the amount of \$14,548,535 with a portion thereof in the amount of \$9,162,148 to be raised by taxes and \$1,065,863 to be allocated from annual local option tax receipts in excess of debt and maintenance requirements of the Cross Street Bridge to offset spending for Capital Improvements?

Heather Seeley moved for the adoption of Article 2;Farhad Kahnabel Gogarty seconded.

Town Manager MarK Pruhenski presented the budget the Selectboard adopted

- FY26 (July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026) budget requiring an increase in the estimated tax rate from \$0.8894 to \$0.9427, an increase of 5.33¢ or 5.99%
- Inflation being a major diver.
- Town commitment to a robust capital improvement, vehicle and equipment maintenance plan.
- Draw on reserves to minimize increases in the tax rate.
- Use Local Option Tax revenue in excess of what is needed for Cross Street Bridge Fund debt to fund infrastructure improvement projects;
 - Fund capital improvements
 - Reduce amounts borrowed and or interest/expense
 - Leverage grant and other funding.

The Major Budget Drivers :

- Capital Improvement \$123,451
- Employee Wages & Benefits \$492,369
- Park & Recreation Administration \$28,500
- Equipment Maintenance and Purchases \$91,474

Major Budget Offsets- Decrease:

- General Fund Interest \$150,000
- Weybridge Library Allocation \$25,811
- Transfers from Water & Wastewater Fund \$61,399
- Parks & Recreation (Day Camps) \$25,000
- Article 3: Local Option Tax Revenue for PD Adaptive Reuse Debt & Exchange Street Bike Ped

Town Manager Mark Pruhenski continued by updating the town on the Cross Street Bridge

- Cross Street Bridge -Debt \$834,137
- College Gift for Cross Street Bridge \$600,000
- Portion of Local Option Tax for Cross Street Bridge Debt \$234,137

Local Option tax available for Capital Improvements:

- Local Option Tax Revenue \$1,300,000
- Portion of Local Option Tax Used for Cross Street Bridge Debt \$234,137
- Local Option Tax for Capital Improvements \$1,065,863

Local Option tax Reserve:

- Balance of \$2M* FY25 Ending Balance (Est) \$2,398,473
- Article 3: PD Reuse Debt Service & Exchange Street Bike Ped \$256,264
- FY26 Ending Balance (Est) \$2,142,209

Featured Agencies increases from fiscal 2025 to 2026:

- Habitat for Humanity of Addison County from \$3,000 to \$5,000
- Middlebury Community Television (MCTV) from \$5,000 to \$6,000
- Middlebury Area Land Trust (MALT from) \$7,000 to \$10,000

Madame Moderator opened up for questions on Article 2 with Department heads present to answer questions:

- Town Manager Mark Pruhenski
- Assistant Town Manager David Sophrin
- Director of Administration Crystal Grant
- Finance Director Nicholas Gill
- Director of Engineering Emmalee Cherington
- Police Chief Jason Covey
- Fire Chief David Shaw

Discussion was had

MOTION PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE

ARTICLE 2 ADOPTED

ARTICLE 3:: Shall the voters of the Town of Middlebury vote, pursuant to 24 VSA §2804(a), to authorize the Selectboard to apply up to \$125,000 from the Cross Street Bridge fund for the purpose of funding to offset Exchange Street Bicycle-Pedestrian engineering and construction expenses & up to \$131,264 to offset debt service expenses for the Police Department Building Adaptive Reuse project?

Jeremy Rahbun moved for the adoption of Article 3; Andy Hopper seconded.

Selectboard member Farhad Kahan spoke on Article 3:

Capital improvement Offset For Debt Service

- Transfer \$256,264 from the Local Option Tax Reserve for Debt service on PD Reuse & Exchange Street Bicycle-Pedestrian Engineering and Construction Expenses
- If approved, the transfer from Local Option Tax Reserves will shave 2.58¢ off the tax rate estimated for FY26.

Madame Moderator opened up for questions on Article 3:

Discussion was had.

MOTION PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE

ARTICLE 3 ADOPTED

ARTICLE 4: Shall the voters of the Town of Middlebury vote to collect taxes on real property for fiscal year 2025/2026 in TWO equal installments due in the Treasurer's Office on the 15th day of November 2025 and the 14th day of March 2026?

Farhard Khan moved for the adoption of Article 4; Heather Seeley seconded.

Selectboard member Dan Brown spoke on Article 4:

- Two equal installments due on November 15, 2025 and March 14, 2026
- Second year of two installment payments
- First installment in November allows time for the receipt of up-to-date and accurate state education property tax residential/homestead data from the state
- Reduces the number of corrected tax bills that must be issued
- Early partial payment option is available through the Finance Office for those preferring to pay in three (or more) installments.

Madame Moderator opened up for questions on Article 4 there was none.

MOTION PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE

ARTICLE 4 ADOPTED

ARTICLE 5: To transact other business proper to be done

[For voting by Australian Ballot on Tuesday, March 4, 2025, polls open from 7:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M.]

ARTICLE 6: Shall the voters of the Town of Middlebury vote, pursuant to Section 1308 of the Middlebury Town Charter and 24 V.S.A. § 138, to remove the sunset provision of the Town's 1% local option tax originally enacted at the Special Town Meeting vote of May 20,

2008, such that the 1% sales tax, 1% meals and alcoholic beverage tax, and 1% rooms tax will continue indefinitely instead of expiring on September 30, 2038?

Selectboard Chair Brian Carpenter spoke on Article 6:

- In 2008, Town of Middlebury voters authorized the establishment of a 1% Local Option Tax
- That tax enactment included a sunset provision, with the tax scheduled to end in 2038 (30-year term)
- Since that time, revenues from this tax has allowed the Town to continue its commitment to investing/improving our infrastructure, better serving residents, businesses, and larger community
- Local option tax revenues have also taken pressure off of local property owners, spreading some of the costs of operating a regional shire town to the entire region
- This Ballot Article proposes to remove the sunset provision of the tax, making the Local Option Tax permanent

Madame Moderator opened up for questions on Article 6
Discussion was had

ARTICLE 7: Shall general obligation bonds or notes or other evidences of indebtedness of the Town of Middlebury in an amount not to exceed Forty Nine Million Five Hundred Eighty Thousand Dollars (\$49,580,000), subject to reduction from available alternate sources of funding, be issued for the purpose of upgrading the Town's wastewater treatment facility including age related improvements (influent screening, structural repairs, hydrogen sulfide mitigation, septage receiving, secondary treatment and sludge storage, disinfection, generator replacement, chemical feed, HVAC upgrades), increased flood protection flood gates, flood doors and raised generator platform), and solid waste handling improvements (dewatering units, polymer feed, drying units) at the Main Pump Station and the Wastewater Treatment Facility, the estimated cost of such improvements being Forty Nine Million Five Hundred Eighty Thousand Dollars (\$49,580,000)?

Selectboard member Heather Seeley spoke on Article 7:

Seeley presented the MCTV Informational Video on the proposed wastewater treatment facilities upgrades with Jeremy Rathbun Wastewater Superintendent on video speaking of the proposed project.

Director of Engineering Emmalee Cherington highlighted the following:

Project Description and Goals

- Improvements proposed at the Wastewater Treatment facilities and the Main Pump Station
- Age-related Improvements

- Technological Advances
- Environmental Resiliency

General Engineering Improvements

- Typical lifespan of Wastewater treatment facilities 50 years
- Corrosive environment leads to equipment failure
- Equipment upgrades necessary every 20 years
- WasteWater treatment Facilities requires 24/7 operation
- Environmental & financial risk with failure
- Replacement parts are difficult to find
- Goal is to limit investment in sunk-costs
- Preliminary engineering to determine most cost-effective alternative

Environmental Resiliency

- Flood resiliency at Main Pump Station
- Potential funding through Hazard Mitigation
- Decrease untreated discharges
- Improve redundancy

Project Cost

- Construction Subtotal - \$38,006,000
- Contingencies - \$3,800,000
- Engineering - \$6,453,000
- Direct Town Costs - \$1,330,000
- TOTAL COST - \$49,589,00

Project Schedule

- Permitting & Final Design 2025 -2026
- Bid Phase early 2026
- Construction 2 years 2027-2029
- 1 year warranty
- Bond payment 2030

How does delaying the project impact costs?

- Inflation: Anticipated annual increase in costs of 3% annually
- Increased cost of operations: Sunk costs will increase operating expenses
- Increased cost of solids disposal: Failure of existing solids handling system could result in sudden significant increase in solids disposal costs (increasing from \$20/wet ton to \$200/wet ton)
- Operator Fatigue: Emergency repairs and equipment failure increases labor cost

Conclusion:

- State and federally funded grant and loan forgiveness programs require community support for eligibility
- Community support is demonstrated through a bond vote

- Bond vote will help leverage additional State and federal funds
- Goal is to reduce the cost to our residents

Madame Moderator opened up for questions on Article 7

Discussion was had

ARTICLE 8: Shall general obligation bonds or notes or other evidences of indebtedness of the Town of Middlebury in an amount not to exceed Two Million Dollars (\$2,000,000), subject to reduction from available alternate sources of funding, be issued for the purpose of the Rogers Road Pump Station Improvements, including the converting of an existing dry well to a wet-well with greater capacity, age-related improvements to the pump station, the installation of new piping and controls, and integration of a stand-by generator, the estimated cost of such improvements being Two Million Dollars (\$2,000,000)?

Selectboard member Andy Hopper spoke on Article 8

Rogers Road Pump Station Improvements to existing pump station

- Constructed in late 1970's
- Large Service Area
- No back-up generator on-site
- Antiquated equipment

Project Description

- Age-related Improvements
- Increase capacity
- Increase reliability
- Reduce untreated discharges

Conclusion

- Middlebury has received a \$2M low-interest loan from Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF)
- CWSRF requires a positive bond vote to secure funds
- Community support is demonstrated through a bond vote
- Bond vote will help leverage additional State and Federal funds
- Goal is to reduce the cost to our residents

Madame Moderator opened up for questions on Article 8

Discussion was had.

ARTICLE 9: Shall general obligation bonds or notes or other evidences of indebtedness of the Town of Middlebury in an amount not to exceed One Million Dollars (\$1,000,000), subject to reduction from available alternate sources of funding, be issued for the Adams

Acres stormwater treatment system, including constructing two gravel wetlands, the estimated cost of such improvements being One Million Dollars (\$1,000,000)?

Selectboard member Fred Dunnington spoke on Article 9

Adams acres stormwater improvement project is a subdivision from the 1970's

- 62 Acres including 22 Acres impervious
- Town owns 15% of impervious
- 3-Acre Stormwater Permit
- Cost to be shared by permittees
- Stormwater Project Capital Fund

Anticipated Project Cost - Estimated \$1,104,000

- Town-share - Estimated \$165,600
- Grant - \$232,000 from VTrans Municipal Highway & Stormwater Mitigation Program
- Loan - \$1M low-interest loan from Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF); Requires positive bond vote

Conclusion

- Middlebury has received a \$1M low-interest loan from Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF)
- CWSRF requires a positive bond vote to secure funds
- Community support is demonstrated through a bond vote
- Town is only obligated to pay for the portion related to Town-owned impervious surfaces (roadway)

Madame Moderator opened up for questions on Article 9

Discussion was had.

Ilseley 100 Library Project

Library Director Dana Hart gave a update on the the Ilseley 100 Library Project

- Thank you to the residents of Middlebury and the Selectboard for their support of this project & dedication to Ilseley Library!
- Library Renovation & Expansion Construction Starting in March- Site mobilization by contractors will begin in mid-March- Planned demolition & construction efforts will start in April
- 'Mini-Ilseley' Library at 30 Main Street Now Open to the Public!- Open Monday-Thursday & Saturday: 9am-4pm; Friday: 9am-5pm- Requested books will be brought daily from off-site storage
- Sarah Partridge Library in E. Middlebury also open to the public
- Parking Impacts of Upcoming Construction Project--Beginning in mid-March, there will be no parking available (other than ADA parking spots), or vehicle/pedestrian traffic allowed, in the upper parking lot No traffic will be allowed on the ramp that connects the

lower & upper parking lots All vehicles from the lower parking lot will have to leave using the traffic lanes next to Addison County Counsel Services (on the Mr. Ups' side of the bridge)Exiting traffic will only be able to leave heading eastbound onto the bridge

- Please visit the Library website to see the detailed project plans & sign up for their newsletter for regular updates on the project!

ARTICLE 10:To elect officers as required by the Middlebury Town Charter.

The legal voters of the Town of Middlebury are further notified that voter qualification, registration and absentee voting shall be as provided in Chapters 43 and 51 of Title 17, Vermont Statutes Annotated.

Moderator Susan Shashok offered elected candidates and those running for elected offices to come forward and introduce themselves and say a few words

- Senator Ruth Hardy
- Megan James - Selectboard
- Dianne Lawson - Library board
- Andy Hooper - Selectboard
- Ron MaCliff - School Board
- Isabel Fogerty - Selectboard
- Steve Orzak? - school board

David Silverman moved to adjourn; Ellen Croin seconded.

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY BY VOICE VOTE

Meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Monica Sanchez Webb, Board Clerk

Moderator Susan Shashok

Town Clerk Karin Mott