



TOWN OF MIDDLEBURY

*Board of Finance
1212 Whittemore Road
Middlebury, CT 06762*

Regular Meeting Minutes Wednesday September 9, 2020 Via ZOOM

Present: William Stowell, Chairman
Rita H Smith, Board Member
Dawn Albizu-Calabrese, Board Member
Joseph Drauss, Board Member
Vincent Cipriano, Board Member

Absent: Keli-Ann Bollard, Alternate
Stephen Ruccio, Board Member

Also Present: Ed St John, First Selectman
Robin Stanziale, CFO
Ralph Barra, Selectman
Elaine Strobel, Selectman
Rachel Primus, Recording Clerk

William Stowell opened the meeting at 7:00 PM with the pledge of allegiance.

Approval of August 12, 2020 Meeting Minutes

VOTED: Unanimously on a motion by Joseph Drauss and seconded by Dawn Calabrese to **APPROVE** August 12, 2020 meeting minutes.

Rita Smith abstained.

Reports

• Chief Financial Reports

Robin Stanziale stated the reports were included in their packets. She reported they have received over 50% of the property taxes in total so far. She said they don't have any major issues at this point in the fiscal year. Robin said that Park and Recreation summer programs did well. Betsy is looking over the expenses for ways to spend the extra money. These accounts are not supposed to be income earning, rather self-sustaining accounts. Robin reminded the board that the boat rentals will come in at the end of the season and the gate receipts came in at the end of last fiscal year and beginning of this fiscal year. She said she will have a conversation with Betsy to see how she feels it went for the year. Robin said they did sell quite a few MRA passes at the beginning of the year. She said the new Park and Recreation director was doing a good job. Robin reported some smaller accounts are over budget. Department 11 is over, which effects Department 10 due to a transfer of expenses that was from last year. She said she will

have Connie fix it. Robin said the letter they inserted in with the tax bills regarding deferred payments cost the department \$800.00 which was not an anticipated expense. She said she will be keeping an eye on building and grounds because of increased spending. Robin reported that the fire department insurance changed, but will be an overall savings to the department. Bill asked if the tax collectors letter was posted under dues and publications. Robin explained they didn't budget for it, so it can be put in any account. Bill noted that the registrar of voters account was low. Robin said they only budgeted \$500.00. She said they will be reimbursed by the State for the elections, and the expenses incurred from the primary can be carried over to the election. Mr. Stowell asked about the \$2,000.00 that came out of the fire department for the dive team and if the letter Ed had requested was received. Robin said she did not see a letter from the dive team from the other towns, but she will check with Connie to see if she had. She will also follow up with Bret to see if the paperwork had come in. Ed St John said he had made it clear to Connie not to release that payment until he had seen that paperwork. He said he didn't notice that line item until Bill just brought it up. Bill pointed out that the computer maintenance account at the police department has already spent \$14,900.00. Robin said that part of that was the required upgrades and purchase of equipment. She reviewed the special duty account. Chief Dabbo explained that Asplundh had switched to electronic billing and are a little behind on payments. He said they are just closing up with the August billing.

- **Tax Collectors Reports**

Included in packets. Brenda said that people have been taking advantage of the 3% interest program and are hoping to have a big chunk of the payments by the end of September. She said they will send out one more reminder letter asking to let the tax office know if they are having difficulties making payments. Brenda is willing to work with residents, but only if they let her know. Bill thanked Brenda for doing a good job.

Old Business

Bill said he wanted to discuss the present auditor situation that was brought up at the last meeting. Robin said she emailed Sandra today asking if they would be able to get out of their current contract. Sandra replied that it would be fine and that she would be willing to let us out of the contract. Robin said it is up to the board on how they wanted to proceed.

New Business

- **Appointment of Auditor Discussion**

Bill reviewed the discussion from last month's meeting regarding the letter from the auditor concerning the Covid-19 requirements additional billing of an estimated \$7,000. Last month the board agreed to find another auditor and the State had no problem with us switching. They did check around with several companies. One in Waterbury unfortunately would not be able to perform the audit this year. They also checked with Blum Shapiro, who did the town's audit before Sandy, who are now under State contract. They said they would be able to do the audit, but most likely it wouldn't be done until January or February. Their proposal was a 5 year contract. Robin asked if they could have a 3 year contract with a possibility of an additional 2 years after that. Bill said he recommends they accept Blum Shapiro for the first year costing \$38,400, second year \$39,200 and the third year \$40,000, with a 2 year option after that. He said they have used this company before and they were satisfied with them.

VOTE: Unanimously on a motion by Joseph Drauss and seconded by Rita Smith to **ACCEPT** the proposal from Blum Shapiro for a 3 year contract with the option of 2 additional years.

VOTED: Unanimously on a motion by Vincent Cipriano and seconded by Rita Smith to formally **TERMINATE** the contract with Welwood Audit Company for the last year of the

agreement.

Bill Stowell said there was an item that needed to be added to the agenda. Attorney Jennifer Yoxall was present tonight to have an informal discussion regarding WPCA.

VOTE: Unanimously on a motion by Vincent Cipriano and seconded by Rita Smith to **ADD** the informal discussion with Attorney Yoxall regarding the WPCA to the agenda.

Attorney Yoxall, representing WPCA, explained that their regulations require that if they are offering any sewer extension they need to notify the town and the BOF. They are planning a 537 foot extension of the sewer main on Straits Turnpike from the proposed Subaru Dealership up to Park Road Ext. This will consist of the sewer main and laterals to the properties. This project was approved in 2005 by WPCA. They are just giving the board a heads up and asking for them to review the plans. She was present tonight solely for informational purposes. WPCA will be meeting this month to review the applications for the properties. This project is not funded by tax payer money or by the town. Ed St John gave a brief background regarding the EDC expansion project involving the Cumberland Farms and Subaru projects, as well as a proposed medical facility further up the street.

Ed St John wanted to get the board up to speed in regards to the Covid-19 issues. He thanked Brenda for the letters that went out with the tax bills. He said that tax collections are coming in better than what was anticipated. He mentioned the August storm that wreaked havoc on the town, in which they are still cleaning up the mess it created. He said they have put the Capital Projects on hold temporarily. He said the State was declared a Federal Disaster area. They will fall into the federal reimbursement up to 100%. He discussed the bond interest rate that the town received of 1.42%. Ed said that last year they had an outstanding end to the fiscal year and this year he feels they will have a great end with the undesignated fund. He said they were having trouble with the auditor, and now they will be switching auditors, in which he doesn't see any issue with. He is only disappointed in the delay it will create. Ed discussed the septic issue on Fenn's Farm and how it was pumped out. He said that John Calabrese is in the process of looking at alternatives, including a possible new septic system or hooking up to the city sewer. He said he will get back to the board with how much this will cost and when they have a plan in place.

Bill Stowell wanted to make Ed aware of 2 storm related issues. He said that on Ed Ashland's yard there is a transformer that has been sitting by the side of the road since the storm. Also, there is a Frontier line down along Lakeview and Elfin Place as well as the pole on his own property that is leaning about 10-15%. Ed St John said he will look into these issues.

Public Comment

None

Adjournment

VOTED: Unanimously on a motion by Vincent Cipriano and seconded by Joseph Drauss to **ADJOURN** the meeting at 7:52 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rachel Primus, Recording Clerk

Cc: Board of Selectmen
Board of Finance and Alternates
Robin Stanziale, Town Treasurer
Email Notification for Website
File