

**MIDDLEFIELD BOARD OF SELECTMEN**  
**405 Main Street**  
**Middlefield, Connecticut 06455**

Minutes of the September 22, 2020 Regular Meeting

Call to Order

Mr. Bailey called the meeting to order. Carol Bufithis, Bob Yamartino, and Ed Bailey were present.

Approval of Agenda

***Carol Bufithis made a motion, second by Bob Yamartino, to approve the agenda. Motion carried.***

Public Comment

Anne Koba was present to discuss a new group that has formed in light of recent events, the Middlefield & Durham Racial Equity and Justice Group. She explained that the group has about 50 members and are looking to educate themselves and others through activities such as book readings and group discussions, displaying inclusive signage around the community, and inviting speakers to present educational information. The group recently did a group reading of the book *White Fragility* and Anne highly recommended it as a great book. Anne said that the group began a letter writing campaign which turned into a petition inviting members of the community to join in on educating themselves on antiracism and sending a message of inclusion throughout our towns. As the board members didn't have an opportunity to read over the petition Bob suggested that this topic be added to another agenda for further discussion. The board agreed and Carol thanked Anne for joining the meeting.

Bekah Forni, pastor of the Middlefield Federated Church, was also present. She spoke about a group at her church that organized in 2015 and has been focused on racial justice as well. The group is working towards educating white people about race issues and racism. Bekah said that there are about 6 people in the group currently and their goal is to educate people through reading and discussion groups. She said that the group recently selected a book for a group read called "So You Want to Talk About Race" which is written by a bi-racial woman, which she spoke about and read some details about. Bekah has set up discussion groups through the library in Durham in November via Zoom and suggested that this might be a good opportunity to introduce this as a community read. Discussion continued around how to set up group discussion sessions. Jim Irish who was also present thanked Bekah for adding a book to his reading list and also suggested "How to be an Anti-Racist". He then inquired about using the

Everbridge system to notify people about important news such as the change in location for voting for the upcoming election and the upcoming flu clinics. Ed stated that the service could be used however, it is more so for Emergency communications. Bob reiterated his desire to have an electronic sign.

#### Approval of Minutes of the Board of Selectmen

##### a. September 17, 2020 – Special Meeting

***Bob Yamartino made a motion, second by Carol Bufithis, to approve the minutes of the September 17, 2020 Special Meeting of the Board of Selectmen. Motion carried.***

#### Storm Isaias follow up Report

Ed reported that the clean up process has been completed. All of the brush that was staged at the Strickland Farm on Cherry Hill Rd has been ground up and removed. Ed stated that his preliminary estimate of storm expenses that will be submitted to FEMA for reimbursement is approximately \$96K. If the state meets the required threshold and the declaration is approved then the town should recover 75% of the expenses. Ed also noted that his preliminary estimate for COVID-19 expenses are approximately \$35K but has found that FEMA is covering less and less items. He noted that items that are not specifically related to an emergency situation will not be reimbursed such as plexiglass shields and other accessories to deal with daily life during the pandemic.

#### RSD-13 Update

Ed commented that he has been on conference calls with out Health District and school leaders from RSD-13, Plainville, and Southington discussing issues at schools with new cases and the extent of contact tracing. Bob announced that the Board of Education recently passed a resolution stating that RSD-13 would follow the recommendation of the Department of Public Health rather than the CIAC in regards to students playing sports. Bob went on to say that school is now in session and following the Hybrid Model in which half of the students attend in person school Monday & Tuesday and the remaining half attend in person school Thursday & Friday. Wednesday all students attend distance learning class in order to allow for the schools to be cleaned. He explained that they are in the process of gradually expanding in person learning for students with special needs.

Mr. Yamartino said that a policy has been adopted requiring face masks. Adopting the policy will allow for it to be enforced. He noted that this policy precludes neck gators, bandana's, and valve style respirators. Additionally, an associated policy states that the local Health Director will make the final call regarding school sports ultimately making the Plainville/Southington

Health District the governing body. Bob said that the health district has been very helpful with all of the planning that went into reopening schools.

Bob reported some great news regarding the playground at John Lyman. He stated that the town budget included funds to replace the playground equipment that had been deemed unsafe last year and the new playscape has been installed and children are using it. He also detailed the Memorial School Tennis Court project that should begin next week. The upgrade will feature 1 dedicated Tennis Court, 4 dedicated Pickleball Courts, 1 Hybrid Tennis Court / Pickleball Court, and 6 Four Square Courts. Bob went on to give a shout-out to the Cuginchaug Soccer Club who invested in an irrigation system and field maintenance at the Memorial School Soccer Field and the field has never looked better. Bob noted that there is plans to install a new playscape at Memorial School as well. In closing Bob thanked the town for funding for the playground equipment as well as the upgrade to the courts at Memorial and again thanked the Cuginchaug Soccer Club for their work on maintaining the field.

### COVID-19 Update

Ed explained that there has been an uptick in cases in Connecticut which is a concern. Currently the infection rate is 1.2% and hospitalizations remain around 60. Middlefield cases increased again this week with 26 total, while Durham cases increased to 54. Some are attributing cases to college students gathering in large groups as the age range for several new cases is the 18-30 age group. He noted that cases have increased in Middletown and Meriden as well. One case was reported at Southington High School which caused students to get to remote learning while the school was cleaned. The travel advisory has been updated and a few new states were added including RI. Ed said that there are guidelines with the advisory and fines for violating quarantine. Fines are also being imposed for people who do not wear masks and for people who do not follow guidelines for gatherings.

### Closure of Cider Mill Rd to thru traffic October 9 – 11 for railroad track repairs

Cider Mill Road will be closed during the Columbus Day Weekend. The Providence Worcester Railroad will be rebuilding the crossing which will require the road to be completely closed at Main St and Cherry Hill. The contractors will be placing detour signs in the area. Details about this closure will be posted on the website.

### November 3<sup>rd</sup> Election to be held at Memorial School. Election Day Registrations will be at the Community Center

Due to Social Distancing requirements it was decided to move election day voting to Memorial School where elections were once held prior to the renovation of the Community Center.

Ed explained that the school cafeteria will be used and has the capability to maintain a “one way” traffic flow. Election Day Registrations will be held at the Community Center so that the Registrars can use their office equipment. Ed said that he plans to order signs and banners to be posted around town as well as a press release and direct mailing to inform people of this

change. That being said, the electronic sign was again discussed. Ed stated that he plans to rent or borrow an electronic sign for the week leading up to the election to reiterate the change in venue for the election.

#### Tax Refunds

Ed read the request for refunds into record.

***Carol Bufithis made a motion, second by Bob Yamartino, to approve Tax Refunds as attached. Motion carried.***

#### First Selectman's Report

Ed reported that he has been applying for a few different grants to benefit the town which include a Neglected Cemetery Grant for the Old North Burial Grounds. While there is a budget line item to maintain the cemetery, this grant will give additional funds to restore and clean markers, remove trees and make necessary repairs.

He also applied for a Connectivity Grant which could result in about \$500K of funds for the Town Center Plan.

Lastly, he applied for a STEAP Grant which requires the town to contribute some funds to but would provide funding to repair and rebuild a culvert under Lake Shore Drive and to complete road repairs in the area.

Ed explained that the Open Space & Watershed Grant is currently pending on the Pogmore Farm Property.

Touching on Elections again, Ed noted that the Clerk's Office has been very busy preparing absentee ballots for the upcoming election. In the August Primary approximately 60% voted by absentee ballot and it is expected that will be about the same for the General Election. Many boxes of official materials have arrived from the Secretary of the States office and scanners and label makers have been ordered to facilitate in processing the applications and ballots. The Registrar's office has been working with volunteers to create PPE bags to give to in person voters on election day. The bags include gloves, a mask, a pen, and the "I Voted Today" sticker.

#### Adjournment

***Bob Yamartino made a motion, second by Carol Bufithis, to adjourn the regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen. Motion carried.***

Respectfully submitted,

*Tonya Hogan*

Tonya Hogan  
Assistant Town Clerk

Minutes Approved \_\_\_\_\_

Confirmed by \_\_\_\_\_