

MIDDLEFIELD BOARD OF SELECTMEN
405 Main Street
Middlefield, Connecticut 06455

Minutes of the January 3, 2023 Regular Meeting

Call to Order

Bob Yamartino called the regular meeting to order at 6:39 PM. Bob Yamartino, Jim Irish and Carol Bufithis were present.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Agenda

Jim Irish made a motion, seconded by Carol Bufithis, to amend the agenda to include item 5b, November 22, 2022 Special Meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Minutes of Selectmen Meetings

- a. December 5, 2022 - Regular Meeting
- b. November 22, 2022 - Special Meeting

Jim Irish made a motion, seconded by Carol Bufithis, to approve the minutes of December 5, 2022 and November 22, 2022, as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Search Committee

- a. EDC Coordinator

Jim Irish reported that the Search Committee (Bob Yamartino, Jim Irish and Jen Huddleston, with Carol Bufithis absent) interviewed three candidates for the EDC Coordinator position and have ruled out one candidate. The committee would like to look at the costs of an individual vs. a consulting firm and hope to receive a proposal from Goman+York early this month. Bob Yamartino noted that he received the proposal and wasn't aware that no one else received it.

Jim Irish has had a discussion with Robin Newton, the Town Planner, and she has already spoken with both Jen Huddleston and Darin Overton multiple times and has a meeting scheduled for this Friday. Mr. Irish asked Ms. Newton if it would make sense to look at her firm as well as Goman+York to take advantage of her background with the town. One of the principals of her firm is the economic coordinator for two towns. Robin Newton said that she would create a proposal which would be a revision of her Statement of Work to include the additional work and modify the charges with rates for other principals in her firm.

Bob Yamartino had also set up a meeting with Robin Newton and Jen Huddleston because he had a concern that some of the work that the EDC would be doing might cross over with Planning. Mr. Yamartino also spoke to Robin Newton about the Plan of Conservation and Development and she believes that it should be revised in total. He added that Goman+York reviewed the POCD and felt it was lacking as well. Many towns have their Planning and Zoning commissions develop their POCD, but it also involves Economic Development and Conservation and Mr. Yamartino feels that all three commissions should be involved.

Mr. Yamartino forwarded the proposal from Goman+York to the other board members. He explained that the scope of work is pretty detailed and provided a price schedule for all of the participants at their firm. They proposed two years at 20 hours per week for a total yearly fee of \$50,000. Mr. Yamartino felt that they paid very close attention to what they were told were the town's needs. He then reviewed the specific needs that were requested. Mr. Yamartino noted that it is a little more expensive than what the town budgeted, but felt that any dollar spent on this is an investment in the town's future.

Jim Irish had offered to hold an interview with Robin Newton and representatives from her firm. Bob Yamartino would like to talk with them and then see their quote. Carol Bufithis felt that \$100,000 for two years may not be realistic. Mr. Yamartino added that Robin Newton's firm works with Goman+York and she stated that they are a great firm. Mr. Irish added that \$50 per hour is really nothing for a consultant.

The board generally felt all of this was positive and Mr. Irish encouraged them to move it to conclusion and hiring. He also asked if this line item will be included in the budget even if it was ARPA funded and Mr. Yamartino explained that ARPA funds, like other funds, are not part of the general budget. Mr. Irish asked that Al Rusilowicz weigh in on this and Mr. Yamartino felt that it should be part of the budget discussion, but not in the budget itself.

Public Communications

Bob Yamartino received a communication from the town's coordinator at Eversource who commended Rob Poturnicki for his diligence, perseverance and looking out for the townspeople during the past storm. Mr. Poturnicki worked directly with Eversource, getting a list of everyone

without power, and Mr. Yamartino visited each household. He found that most people were being helped out by their neighbors. Carol Bufithis thanked Mr. Yamartino for doing all of that.

Affordable Housing Committee

- a. Middlefield Representative as a RiverCOG Affordable Housing Advisory Committee Member

Carol Bufithis reported that several people are interested, including Taryn Ruffino, the Town Treasurer. Matt Rabino, a research and statistical analyst whose wife is head of the DTC in Middlefield, also wants to get involved in town. Nadine Ernst has also been suggested, but Ms. Bufithis has not reached out to her yet. Carol Bufithis added that she will serve on the committee as well. Bob Yamartino added that they will reach out to the RTC as well.

Conservation Commission Appointments

Carol Bufithis had no names to propose and Bob Yamartino will reach out to both the RTC and DTC for recommendations. Jim Irish suggested Dr. Brown for the commission as they are both birders. Ms. Bufithis suggested that Ruth Vizard ask her mom for any recommendations.

Sustainable CT

Carol Bufithis thanked Jim Irish for his email about what needed to happen for Sustainable CT. She also received a list from Jen Huddleston and has also printed out a resolution supporting participation in a Sustainable CT Municipal Certificate program. Ms. Bufithis reached out to Ruth Vizard to gather these initiatives to apply for credits. She and Ms. Vizard have a Zoom meeting scheduled for Friday with Sustainable CT.

Ms. Bufithis also reported that there are 13 interns in the state that can help this summer and the town has signed up for that. Bob Yamartino reviewed several items that the town has already done and Carol Bufithis explained that they have to touch on all areas across the board. She summarized that this is a good thing that the town is doing.

Carol Bufithis added that she thought it would be a great idea to have new businesses on Route 66 have electric car charging stations and would like to work with local businesses on this. Bob Yamartino added that they have thought about putting them in at Town Hall, the Community Center or at the Firehouse. Jim Irish felt it would make sense to consider electric vehicles for town vehicles as well when they are ready to be replaced. Mr. Yamartino added that there are fire issues with electric vehicles that may be a concern.

Bob Yamartino noted that part of Sustainable CT is to integrate sustainability into the Plan of Conservation and Development.

Mr. Yamartino also asked that the board take a look at procurement processes as it relates to local businesses. Jim Irish felt that the Board of Finance should be involved in that as well.

Selectmen/Selectwoman Report

a. Public Works Facility Update

Bob Yamartino reviewed that the board voted not to contract out the dog pound services, so they needed to restore heat and fix access which has been done. Carol Bufithis stated that Taryn Ruffino had asked if she could go in and paint and she had told her to contact Mr. Yamartino. They will also reach out to fence contractors to secure the facility which will probably be done over the summer.

Mr. Yamartino reported that they did a walk-through of public works and was disappointed to learn that the bathroom was not painted last week. They removed everything from the bathroom before Christmas, but the work was not done. New equipment will be installed after the painting is done. Jerry Russ has a plan for building a larger break room, but the Public Works crew believes that it will be sufficient to do work on the existing office area. Mr. Yamartino would like to see a shower facility/locker room.

b. Solar Project Update

Bob Yamartino reported that he was a little disappointed in the presentation given by Greenleaf and they have now been in touch with Titan Energy. They had three contractors at the DMIAAB site today to potentially bid on the project. Titan Energy sent their qualifications, but their fee to the contractor is 10 cents per watt which would be \$200,000 on a 2 megawatt solar system. They do the engineering and the application process, but Mr. Yamartino felt it was quite high. Mr. Yamartino contacted George Eames and he also thought it was high. He also asked Mr. Eames what the going rate was, but has not heard back yet. As of today, neither Mr. Yamartino nor Mr. Eames have signed the agreement. Jim Irish and Carol Bufithis both felt that the fee was outrageous as most of the preliminary work is based on boilerplate documents.

Bob Yamartino will talk with George Eames and propose a new number to Titan Energy. Mr. Yamartino felt that it was very exciting that they can move forward with the project at the transfer station though there are a lot of details to work out. This should generate enough power to cover all of the needs of both Durham and Middlefield as well as a good chunk of the school district. Mr. Yamartino noted that Brewster, Korn School and Coginchaug do not currently have solar, though the roof on Brewster was contracted to support solar. The high school has plenty of land and roof to put in solar.

c. Ross Road Tires Update

Bob Yamartino reported that the town has been successful in securing an injunction that requires the current residents to remove all of the tires prior to March 1st. If that does not happen, the town will then have the right to remove them. The town is now moving forward with action against the bank and the Health District reported that they got no response from the bank. They had been given seven days to respond to the health code violations. They will now move forward with notice of a criminal complaint against the bank for a health hazard. Tomorrow morning, Matt Willis will reach out to Jerry Russ to start action against the bank notifying that failure to correct within 30 days will result in a \$150 per day fine.

Mr. Yamartino continues to work through DEEP trying to get them to file notice that they are operating an illegal landfill which is an environmental hazard. He would like to get that so that he can ask the state to help pay for the town to clean it up after March 1st.

Jim Irish also reached out to Rosa DeLauro's office to see if there were any funding opportunities. Carol Bufithis explained that she was under the impression that DEEP was going to take this on and be responsible for this. Mr. Irish stated that they have not had a lot of success having DEEP help the town with anything at the lake either and he did not expect much. Mr. Yamartino has been talking with Andrew Hawkins, the chief of staff for the commissioner of DEEP, who got involved when the Lieutenant Governor got involved. He will reconnect with Mr. Hawkins and then go to the Lieutenant Governor, if needed. Mr. Irish added that the Commissioner of DEEP spent quite a bit of time talking with the River COG legislative review in December and felt that they could ask them for help. Mr. Yamartino noted that Matt Willis will be reaching out to his contacts on the legal side at DEEP for information tomorrow. He hopes to have some type of resolution by the end of this week.

Jim Irish explained that they do have a place to dispose of the tires, if needed, but it will cost between \$35,000 and \$40,000.

d. Other

Carol Bufithis would like to see the door get fixed and Bob Yamartino asked her to email Jerry Russ with a copy to him tomorrow. She would also like to reach out to Sue D'Orvilliers to ask her husband to do the storage project. Bob Yamartino would have no problem asking him to participate in the bidding process, but they only received one bid.

Bob Yamartino received a note from the Central Regional Tourism District encouraging the town to appoint a representative. Tim Burt was a member, but his term ended as of 2021. Mr. Yamartino thought he had been reappointed, but wasn't sure he had done it. He would like to make sure that all appointments are noted on a list. They then found Mr. Burt's reappointment on the list and Mr. Yamartino will check the minutes of the Board of Selectmen meeting.

Bob Yamartino also noted that a person made application to Sugarloaf and somehow didn't get a spot, but is first in line on the waiting list. They registered a complaint with the Human Rights commission of the state. This action was taken against the Housing Authority, not the town. An official complaint was also logged with OSHA, but Jay Wickham and another employee were out with COVID so they will return in January to conduct an audit. The union had also filed a grievance with the Department of Labor because the town posted a position for a part-time driver for plow trucks without notifying the union and the rate of pay was in excess of what current employees get. Prior to this, the driver had been hired on a contract basis. Mr. Yamartino was inclined to withdraw the posting for a part-time employee and hire a contractor on an as-needed basis. The same person who heads up the union is looking for a wage increase per hour for employees and wants the town to re-open the contract. The current contract was signed in February of last year for a three-year period. Mr. Yamartino will provide more details during an Executive Session at the next meeting.

Adjournment

Jim Irish made a motion, seconded by Carol Bufithis, to adjourn the regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:16 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First