

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

Minutes of the May 1, 2023 Regular Meeting

Call to Order

Bob Yamartino called the regular meeting to order at 6:30 PM. Carol Bufithis (via Zoom) and Jim Irish were present. Anne Olszewski was also present via Zoom.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Agenda

*Carol Bufithis made a motion, seconded by Jim Irish, to approve the agenda, as presented. Motion carried unanimously.*

Bob Yamartino asked to add item 13 f, executive session to discuss a personnel matter.

*Jim Irish made a motion, seconded by Carol Bufithis, to amend the agenda to add item 13 f, Executive Session - Personnel matter. Motion carried unanimously.*

Public Comment

Mike Olszewski, from Rockfall, explained that he is an Eagle Scout from Troop 33 and is now cubmaster with Pack 33. He has sat on Eagle Scout Boards of Review and has talked to Eagle Scouts who are waiting to do their paperwork. He was at the meeting tonight to ask the Board of Selectmen to waive the fees for building permits for Eagle Scout projects. He didn't find it fair that the scouts have to do fund-raising for their projects and, most of the time, the projects benefit the town.

Bob Yamartino agreed to take this under advisement. He noted that if a project is for the community, the town itself does not pay building permit fees. Jim Irish asked what the magnitude of the fees is and Mike Olszewski noted that permit fees are based on the cost of the project.

Anne Olszewski added that she was also a scout leader and their projects are a huge benefit to the town. The scouts have to raise the money for every part of the project and if the town could be good-hearted enough to waive the permit fees, it would be a huge benefit to the scouts.

Mr. Yamartino agreed and noted that he would speak to the Land Use Office to see if these could be considered municipal projects. Mike Olszewski cautioned the use of municipal and suggested just using Eagle Scout projects in town.

#### Tax Refunds

***Jim Irish made a motion, seconded by Bob Yamartino, to approve the tax refunds (attached) as submitted by Anne L. Olszewski, Tax Collector of Middlefield, for the date submitted April 19, 2023 and totaling \$1,198.26.***

Bob Yamartino then read the requests for refunds into the record, as attached.

***Motion carried unanimously.***

#### Approval of Minutes of Selectmen Meetings

a. April 18, 2023 Regular Meeting

***Carol Bufithis made a motion, seconded by Jim Irish, to approve the minutes of the April 18, 2023 Regular Meeting, as presented. Motion carried unanimously.***

#### Public Communications

Bob Yamartino has received a couple of communications involving the use of motorbikes and quads doing damage on personal property and sometimes on town property. What is also disturbing is that people are not calling 911 to report these issues because they feel it takes too long for the police to get there. Mr. Yamartino knows that during the time of the last two instances, the resident trooper was in town and could have gotten there quickly. He reminded the town's citizens to dial 911 and report any instances. He added that the State Police assign resources based on how many calls they get and Troop F is running at about half the staffing level that it should be right now. The entire State Police department is at about 60 percent of the staffing level.

Carol Bufithis reported that she had to call 911 about something happening in her neighborhood this past weekend and she was very impressed that the police were there in six minutes.

Jim Irish asked if the communications are primarily about the west side of Lake Beseck and Bob Yamartino noted that one instance was on the Strickland Farm property and one was on private

property on Strickland Road. Mr. Irish explained that they continue to have motorbike activities at Lake Beseck with no licenses. He will request notification on the Friends of Lake Beseck website to notify community members that they can call 911 to report incidents like this.

A member of the public explained that she had her catalytic converter stolen, but didn't call 911 because she startled the guy and he left. She wasn't sure that the average person knows which types of motorcycles are legal to be on the road. Mr. Yamartino explained that a moped doesn't need to be licensed, but usually dirtbikes need to be. He felt that if someone sees a bike and it doesn't have a license plate on it, you can assume it's not registered and shouldn't be on the road. Mr. Yamartino added that he sees posts on Facebook about cars driving around and wishes that people would report that activity to 911 as well.

Bob Yamartino also met with the head chef of Red Fox and other restaurants. He recently purchased the Red Dog Saloon and is looking at putting in a family restaurant with a price of \$8.00 to \$25.00. He would like to build an indoor/outdoor patio as well. Construction will take a couple of months and the opening will hopefully be in October as he will take the staff from a golf course restaurant and bring them to Middlefield. Everyone agreed that they have great food and really know what they're doing.

Mr. Yamartino had a number of folks reach out, thanking them for the celebration of Ed Bailey's life and the work that that committee did. Jim Irish added that they have received some pictures from Ed's niece.

#### Set a Joint Meeting Date for "Middlefield's Future"

Bob Yamartino explained that the Economic Development Commission has been looking at some activities that can be done to improve economic development and awareness. There are also a lot of projects that the town has. They would like to get the various boards and commissions in town together, open to the public, to share the projects and get a consensus of which ones to move forward on. He would also like to have people step forward to lead the various projects. He gave examples of the town center plan and commercially-zoned properties that are open space.

Mr. Yamartino added that there are many grants available, however many need to be "shovel ready" which means a plan has to be submitted.

Jim Irish agreed that everybody needs to be aware of the variety of projects, do some prioritization and have a champion identified for each of the projects in order to move them forward. Carol Bufithis felt that this will help to get everybody on the same page. Bob Yamartino felt it was critical that the EDC weighs in on and is prepared for the date. He felt that May is a very busy month and asked if everyone felt that June would be good or to wait until after July 4<sup>th</sup>. Carol Bufithis felt it may be difficult to get all the boards and commissions

together and need to look at when they have their meetings. She felt they could try for June and if they aren't successful, they can shoot for July. Jim Irish suggested the EDC meeting on June 12<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM. Bob Yamartino also suggested meeting during the BOS meeting on June 20<sup>th</sup> which would give the EDC more time to prepare. Mr. Yamartino explained that the BOS meeting on June 20<sup>th</sup> would be a joint meeting with all boards and commissions in town. It can be held in the auditorium, with hopefully a good turnout.

At this point, it was agreed to try to schedule the meeting on June 20, 2023.

#### Resolution for Master Municipal Agreement for Construction Projects, Amendment No. 1

Jim Irish read the resolution into the record. Authorizing Resolution: RESOLVED, that the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Middlefield, Connecticut, may enter into with and deliver to the State of Connecticut Department of Transportation any and all documents which it deems to be necessary and appropriate to extend the Master Municipal Agreement for Construction Projects. FURTHER RESOLVED, that Robert C. Yamartino, as First Selectman of the Town of Middlefield, Connecticut, Board of Selectmen, is authorized and directed to execute and delivery any and all documents on behalf of the Middlefield, Connecticut, Board of Selectmen to do and perform all acts and things which he deems to be necessary or appropriate to carry out the terms of such documents, including, but not limited to, executing and delivering all agreements and documents contemplated by such documents to extend said agreements.

***Jim Irish made a motion, seconded by Bob Yamartino, to adopt the above-noted resolution.***

Bob Yamartino explained that the town enters into this agreement with the State and that agreement allows the town to do work on some state roads and allows the state to do work on those roads as well. It also allows the town to receive DOT money. This agreement was originally signed in approximately 1996 and needs to be periodically amended to be continued.

***Motion carried unanimously.***

Carol Bufithis stated that she will get to the Town Hall soon to sign the motions.

#### Recognition of Position Changes

Bob Yamartino explained that there have been a couple of position changes.

a. Jan Wojas - Planning and Zoning

Mr. Yamartino received a letter of resignation from Jan Wojas. He has been the chair of Planning and Zoning for multiple years. Jan is expecting to move out of state at some time in the next year and felt that he should not continue in his position. There is currently a vacancy on

that board and this now makes two. Mr. Yamartino thanked Mr. Wojas for all the work he has done for the town.

b. Anne Malcolm - Democratic Registrar of Voters

Bob Yamartino reported that Barbara-Jean DiMauro, Democratic Registrar of Voters, resigned her position after 24 years and they will proclaim a resolution on that. Anne Malcolm has taken over the position and was thanked for stepping up in the role.

c. Peter Cabelus - Park and Recreation, Temporary Landscaper

Bob Yamartino also reported that Park & Rec has hired Peter Cabelus as a temporary landscaper. This is a part-time seasonal position. He has started to make some great strides at Peckham Park and has gotten some help from Public Works.

Mr. Yamartino also mentioned that one of the Resident Troopers has taken a new position with the state and will be working truck traffic on the highways. The town is in flux right now and will be getting another trooper for second shift.

Carol Bufithis asked if someone is replacing Anne Malcolm as the Deputy Registrar of Voters. Anne Malcolm noted that Barbara Jean DiMauro is assisting them and Alice Tucker has been appointed as Deputy.

Commission Members Eligible for Reappointment at the Town Meeting on May 8<sup>th</sup>

a. DMIAAB - 2 members - James Malcolm and Howard Weissberg

Bob Yamartino noted that the terms for James Malcolm and Howard Weissberg are both expiring, but he has not heard if either person is interested in continuing. Jim Irish stated that James Malcolm is going to be moving. Carol Bufithis stated that Howard Weissberg would like to run again and she will also nominate Glenn McNamara at the meeting next week. Mr. McNamara is very interested in working with DMIAAB and had been on the Conservation Commission in the past.

b. Board of Education - 2 members - Maura Caramanello and James Roraback

Bob Yamartino noted that the terms of Maura Caramanello and Jamie Roraback are both expiring. Both individuals have informed Mr. Yamartino that they are interested in retaining their seats if no one else steps forward. If someone else is interested, they may be willing to step down.

c. Board of Education Finance Committee - 1 vacancy

Mr. Yamartino explained that this vacancy has historically been filled by a member of the Board of Finance, but none of those members want to serve on this committee. This committee has been more empowered since Lucy Petrella took over as chair of the Board of Education. Carol Bufithis asked if it was Peter Neidhardt's position that was expiring and he told her that he feels like they have no say in the matter about anything. Mr. Yamartino explained that there are four members from Middlefield, with the vacancy being open now for over a year. Jim Irish added that he saw some comments in the newspaper from Nick Faiella about the Board of Ed's budget. Carol Bufithis recalled that they appointed, not elected, members to this committee. Bob Yamartino stated that they elected a member last year. Jim Irish recalled that Kathy Lowry had stepped down and Peter Neidhardt was appointed to her position.

Bob Yamartino reviewed that they need to make appointments on Planning and Zoning and some other commissions as well. He would like to see if they can get names by their next meeting. Jim Irish felt that the chairman of Planning and Zoning is a fairly significant position and he asked if they should talk to each of the current members to see if anyone is interested. Mr. Yamartino noted that he had discussions with a couple of the members who did not want to take the position. He reviewed that the Board of Selectmen appoints members to the commission and then they elect their chairman. Carol Bufithis asked if Bob Yamartino had any conversation with Mr. Wojas about who he thought would be a viable option. Mr. Yamartino did have the conversation, but did not feel comfortable sharing their conversation publicly. He reviewed that the Board of Selectman's role is to appoint members to the commission. There is only one Democrat on that commission, Taryn Ruffino, and he did speak to her and she is willing to move up to a regular member position. Mr. Yamartino will notice that appointment for the next meeting. Carol Bufithis will speak to the other two alternates as well.

Carol Bufithis added that she feels that the Board of Selectmen have done an excellent job of working toward filling vacancies on the town's boards and commissions, but there seems to be a lot of open positions again. She felt good about the diversity between the political parties as well, but doesn't see that on Planning and Zoning. Bob Yamartino added that they do not currently meet the minimum requirement for minority representation on that commission.

#### Registrar of Voters and Early Elections

Michael Skelps and Anne Malcolm attended a training session for Registrars of Voters where the Secretary of State was in attendance. There was a lot of discussion regarding early elections and there is a move afoot to increase the days that people can vote in person, anywhere from seven to 10 days. There has been discussion about staffing as well. RiverCOG had a meeting and Mr. Yamartino asked if fellow towns would be interested in signing a petition to the state asking them to extend absentee balloting. Mr. Yamartino has already signed the petition, but asked if the Board of Selectmen might want to endorse this as well.

Bob Yamartino then read the letter from the RiverCOG and noted that it will be signed by each of the CEOs of the member towns. They sent notes to the state representatives and Jim Irish received a note back from Christine Cohen that he read into the record. Ms. Cohen is still working to learn more about this issue and they have not caucused the bills at this point. She noted there has been a tremendous amount of concerns from registrars, but she has also heard from a large number of constituents who would like the ability to have a minimum of 10 full days of early voting. She was happy to have a meeting to hear thoughts from the Board of Selectmen.

Anne Malcolm noted that practically everything said here was part of the conference conversation. Ms. Malcolm has no objection to absentee ballots, but also would defend the individuals that would like to vote in person. Jim Irish noted that the state wanted to give people early voting opportunity, but no one knew if that would be in person or paper ballot. Bob Yamartino stated that everything he has heard was for in person early voting. Anne Malcolm wasn't sure if the Secretary of State or the legislators have thought about how many hours a day that early voting would be. Mr. Yamartino would rather push the legislature to have it not in person. He added that next year's primary for president will take place during Holy Week. Mr. Yamartino then asked the Board of Selectmen to endorse a letter of this same sentiment to the town's legislators requesting absentee balloting. He has spoken to Michael Skelps, the Republican Registrar of Voters, who believes in-person early voting would be deleterious to the town. He also expressed that they will be looking for at least two new Registrars of Voters because he and Janine would both not be able to continue.

Carol Bufithis liked the RiverCOG letter and she and Jim Irish talked a little bit about this at the last meeting. She asked if whatever is decided will be across the board for every municipality in the state or something towns can choose. Ms. Bufithis would like to wait and see a little bit more about this before signing a letter.

Bob Yamartino added that two things were said at the RiverCOG meeting, one of which is that it would be good if the Registrars of Voters in the towns send a letter as well as the Boards of Selectmen and the Boards of Finance. That will send a strong message to the legislature. Christine Cohen was also present earlier in the meeting and made it clear that RiverCOG and individual towns' boards and commissions as well as the people reach out because they really listen when they hear from their constituents. Mr. Yamartino believes the legislative session wraps up in the first week of June and just wants to make sure their voice is heard in a timely fashion.

Carol Bufithis asked again if they are considering this to be across the board and Jim Irish stated that the Secretary of State had suggested it as a statewide mandate. Ms. Bufithis also asked if someone will go to the Town Hall and pick up their no-excuse ballot from the Town Clerk. Mr. Yamartino stated that the process is they pick up an application and the ballot gets mailed out to them, but he felt that this could mean that they can get the ballot when they go into Town Hall.

Anne Malcolm added Town Hall is not a voting place and Bob Yamartino explained that they could fill out their ballot, seal it properly and drop it in the drop box outside the front door. They can also apply online for an absentee ballot. He felt that the biggest logistical question would be how to reconcile the voter registration list if absentee ballots are accepted up until the election.

Carol Bufithis changed her mind, noting that there are still logistics to figure out, but she is willing to sign the letter. Jim Irish stated that he was in favor of absentee ballots rather than the suggestions that have been put forward for early in-person voting. He added that if there were affordable and realistic opportunities for in-person voting, he might be in favor of that as well. Carol Bufithis was concerned for people who do not have the resources to have a computer.

***Jim Irish made a motion, seconded by Bob Yamartino, that the Board of Selectmen endorse and sign a letter similar to the RiverCOG letter supporting the notion of implementation of early voting by no-excuse absentee ballots. Motion carried unanimously.***

#### Selectmen/Selectwoman Reports

a. Cell Tower Update

Bob Yamartino reported that they have provided their comments to SBA, but they haven't heard back as of today. He hopes to have a contract in the next couple of days and schedule a public hearing to vote on it.

b. OSHA Update

Bob Yamartino reported that part of the outcome from the OSHA agreement is that the town will work with them to come and do some audits. An industrial hygienist reviewed the entire SDS program, made some recommendations and is helping to finalize that. Training will then be provided. They have also learned that no audits or fines will happen as long as they are working with OSHA.

c. Celebration of Life to commemorate Edward Bailey

Bob Yamartino reported that he felt that Sunday's turnout, given the rain and terrible cold, was very good. There were over 100 people present and it seemed to be very well-received. He thanked both Jim Irish and Carol Bufithis for their support. They will be doing some fund-raising for a plaque and some flowers. Mr. Irish felt it was typical to have a plaque on a bench and noted that there are three benches at the memorial site. Ms. Bufithis has been walking in the area and liked the idea of putting it on a bench. Mr. Yamartino thought it was a good idea as well and will run it by the committee.



d. Community Road Clean-Up - Saturday, May 6, 2023

Carol Bufithis stated that they are ready to go. Hannah Malcolm is getting coffee from Dunkin and Lyman Orchards is going to donate some doughnuts. All necessary supplies will be obtained and trucks will be available all weekend.

e. Other

Bob Yamartino gave an update on the American Rescue Plan funding and the Lake Shore Drive culvert. They had agreed that the \$500,000 STEAP grant that they received for wastewater treatment would cover the pump station on Brookside Drive, the pump station on King Road, the grinder pump on Lake Road and the Middlefield Housing Authority leaching field. Mr. Yamartino believed that the leaching field will be covered by the ARPA funding. He would like to see the funds in ARPA be moved to the infrastructure for the Lake Shore Drive culvert, bringing the total ARPA funding for that project to \$772,000. The price of that project came in at just about \$1 million.

The existing STEAP grant is for \$128,205 and ARPA funding of \$772,000 which totals \$900,000. The winning construction bid was \$879,050, but may a bit higher because of contingency. Nathan Jacobson is currently at \$73,000 and there are some other miscellaneous costs as well. Total project costs are now at \$970,723 which does not include the additional Nathan Jacobson fees that are expected as they move into construction. This means that they could be short about \$100,000.

Looking back at the ARPA funding, the \$290,000 they thought would come out of that is now going against the STEAP grant. They have spent \$21,000 on social services and \$600 on the Middlefield Community Service Council grant. They have committed \$100,000 for the economic development coordinator and are using at least \$45,000 a year on that. The Volunteer Fire Company has expended \$5,000, but has commitments for the balance they requested. Nothing has been spent yet on the basketball court, the foot bridge or the cemetery monument repair. They also haven't spent anything on the RiverCOG participation which was set aside at \$97,000. This all means there is still the opportunity to move some of this funding around.

Bob Yamartino will send a copy to Carol Bufithis for her to review and hoped to discuss it at the next meeting.

f. Executive Session - Personnel Matter

***Jim Irish made a motion, seconded by Bob Yamartino, to enter into executive session to discuss a personnel matter. Motion carried unanimously.***

Upon returning from executive session, the following motion was made.

*Jim Irish made a motion, seconded by Carol Bufithis, to appoint an executive search team committee consisting of the Board of Selectman and the chairman of the Board of Finance to fill the position of Director of Finance for the Town of Middlefield. Motion carried unanimously.*

Adjournment

\_\_\_\_\_ made a motion, seconded by \_\_\_\_\_, to adjourn the regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at \_\_\_\_\_ PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz  
Alwaz First