



Town of Middlefield Finance Committee

10/29/24 Meeting

In attendance:

Adair Laurel-Cafarella Gita Jozsef Ken Murray
Karri Trask Stephen Harris, Secretary

Also attending:

Tamarin Laurel-Paine Donald Trask
Ira Brezinsky, PVPC Curt Robie

Quorum, call to order:

The meeting was called to order at 5 pm.

Review minutes from previous meeting:

Minutes from previous meeting on 10/15/24 were approved as written.

Capital planning:

Met with Ira Brezinsky of PVPC re capital planning.

He discussed draft bylaw warrant article to create a separate Capital Planning Committee to which members were uniformly opposed for several reasons:

- The Finance Committee has already been delegated this responsibility under current town bylaws, which it has been diligently fulfilling via biweekly open meetings.
- Middlefield is a tiny town that does not have the population necessary to justify having multiple planning bodies.
- Having members of various departments on the Selectboard's ad hoc capital planning committee presents clear conflicts of interest.

Ira recommended that the town should set aside 5-10% in free cash or stabilization.

Since we're such a small town, our capital asset list might include all items over \$10K.

Possible grant to hire a company to do a town-wide inventory of capital assets.

PVPC may be able to help in obtaining grants.

Accounting Issues:

With the departure of our town accountant, the selectboard has been in discussions with the Kinsharf accounting firm to provide professional outside accounting services:

- The three-year contract would be for \$36K per year, as opposed to our current accountant's salary of \$15K per year.
- This highly professional firm appears likely to bring an end to our current accounting chaos.
- Town departments would no longer have their invoices processed without proper documentation and signatures.
- More interim efforts might be required of the town's Assistant Administrator to review invoices from departments that do not submit signed documents charged to the proper accounts.
- Additional training may be required of various departments.

In short, our consensus was that the Selectboard's decision to engage Kinsherf for a three-year contract will bring much needed clarity, consistency, and rigor to the town's accounting practices.

Any other business:

Berkshire Planning Commission and PVPC will help to secure a new town administrator.

A \$62K grant was received for Cone Road culvert assessment.

Since the town had applied for a \$1M one stop grant for the senior center project, yet received only \$100K, the current \$700K plan for senior center has been scaled back by the town architect to focus on urgent crawl space tasks. The redesign is estimated to cost \$3,600.

Including the \$100K grant, the town has allocated \$344,912 to the senior center project. The finance committee has yet to see an accounting of what has been spent thus far.

There are no state funds for municipal repairs.

Town policing options are an ongoing issue, not readily resolved.

The Finance Committee's 2024 Annual Report was approved.

Next meeting:

The next meeting will be at the Town Hall on November 12th at 5 pm.

Adjournment:

Meeting was adjourned at 6:26 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

