



**ANNUAL TOWN MEETING MINUTES
TOWN HALL AUDITORIUM
MIDDLEFIELD MA
MAY 04, 2024**

PRESENT: Selectboard Chair: Ann-Marie Visconti, Members Curt Robie and Tamarin-Laurel Paine. Town Administrator Sean Curran, Moderator Noreen Suriner, Town Clerk Suzanne C. Lemieux

Chair: Ann-Marie Visconti announced a Special Town Meeting for June 4 and an All Boards meeting for May 22. The Chair asked for a motion to nominate a Moderator for the meeting. A motion was made and seconded to nominate Noreen Suriner. Motion passed.

Moderator Noreen Suriner called to order the Annual Town Meeting of the Town of Middlefield at 1:30 on May 4, 2024 at Middlefield Town Hall with a quorum of 57 present. A pledge of allegiance was given. Town Clerk announced the results of the Annual Town Election that was held from 8 to 12:00 that morning.

ARTICLE 1. To act upon the reports of the Selectboard, Treasurer, Tax Collector, Assessors, and other elected or appointed officers or committees of the Town. Finance Committee spokesperson Adair Cafarella stated that rough calculations showed that if all the Selectboard columns were voted on, taxes would go up \$50.00. Contributors to the annual town report were appreciated. A motion made and seconded to act on the reports was passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 2. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the salaries and compensation of elected officers; or take any other action relative thereto: A motion made and seconded to accept the SB & FC recommendations of \$28, 456. Motion passed unanimously at \$28,456.

ARTICLE 3. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the salaries and compensation of appointed staff; or take any other action relative thereto: A motion made and seconded to accept the SB recommendation of \$136,158. Motion passed at \$136,158. Few nays.

ARTICLE 4. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of money for General Government; or take any other action relative thereto. The Town Counsel increase generated a lot of discussion. There was a discussion on how free cash was generated. A motion made and seconded to accept the SB recommendation of \$157,000. Motioned was tied. The card vote taken was 25 votes in favor and 29 opposed. Motion failed. A motion was made and seconded to accept the FC recommendation of \$152,000. Motion passed at \$152,000. Few Nays.

ARTICLE 5. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of money for the Expense Accounts; or take any other action relative thereto: Administrator Sean Curran said that because of the high cost of Cyber Security, the requested line-item web site/ technology support of \$5,000 was appropriate. Curran stated that grants awarded to the Town were used to replace computer equipment. Curran will set up a meeting between the IT John Les and the Finance Committee. Discussion ensued. A motion was made and seconded to end the discussion. Motion tied. A card vote taken was 19 in favor and 22 opposed. Motion failed. A motion made and seconded to accept the SB recommendation of \$73,252. Motion was tied. A card vote taken was 21 in favor and 27 opposed. Motion failed. Discussion ensued. A motion was made and seconded to accept the FC recommendation of \$68,252. Motion passed unanimously at \$68,252.

ARTICLE 6: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of money to the Highways; or take any other action relative thereto; Snow Removal and street sweeping and the condition of the playground were discussed. Liability was cited as well as public safety. It was noted that the street lights in the center of town are in need of repair. The playground is being looked at for safety issues. A motion was made and seconded to accept the SB & FC recommendation of \$640,146. Motion passed unanimously at \$640,146.

ARTICLE 7. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of money to the Library, Veterans and Cemetery Accounts; or take any other action relative thereto; Ron Radwich announced his retirement from mowing the town's cemeteries. Radwich is appreciated for his many years of service. Radwich suggested removing the line item 'Cemetery Labor' and depositing its balance of \$500 into line item 'Cemetery Maintenance' as he has always been paid out of the Maintenance account. A motion was made and seconded to remove the 'Cemetery Labor' account and deposit the \$500 into 'Cemetery Maintenance' account. Motion passed unanimously. A motion was made and seconded to accept the SB recommendation \$24,588. Motion passed at \$24,588. Few nays.

ARTICLE 8: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of money for Protection of Persons & Property Accounts; or take any other action relative thereto; Police Chief Jen Dion explained the need of the increase for police compensation. The use of the police cruiser was questioned. The companies that hire the Police and the cruiser pays the Town as well as the police. The money received is deposited to Free Cash A motion was made and seconded to accept the SB recommendation of \$114,152. Motion passed unanimously at \$114,152.

ARTICLE 9: To see if the Town will vote to Raise and Appropriate the sum of money to establish a Reserve Fund to provide for extraordinary or unforeseen expenditures, as provided by M.G.I. Chapter 40, section 6, as amended; or take any other action thereto: A motion was made and seconded to accept the SB & FC recommendations of \$10,000. Motion passed unanimously at \$10,000.

ARTICLE 10: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of money for Health & Sanitation; or take any other action relative thereto: A motion was made and seconded to accept the SB recommendation of \$48,540. The increase is due to a larger increase in the disposal attendants rate of pay. Motion passed unanimously at \$48,540.

ARTICLE 11: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of money for the miscellaneous accounts; or take any other action relative thereto: A motion was made and seconded to accept the SB & FC recommendations of \$14,050. Motion passed unanimously at \$14,050.

ARTICLE 12: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the following sum for Middlefield's Statutory Assessment for the Gateway Regional School District; or take any other action relative thereto: A motion was made and seconded to accept the Gateway Regional School District and FC & SB recommendations of \$416,264. Kristen Smidy stated that there are 5 more students at Gateway. Motion passed unanimously at \$416,264.

ARTICLE 13: To see if the Town will raise and appropriate the following sum for vocational education; or take any other action relative thereto: A motion was made and seconded to accept the GRSD sponsored and FC & SB recommendations of \$120,000 There are 3 students in vocation education. Motion passed unanimously at \$120,000.

ARTICLE 14: To see if the Town will vote to authorize revolving fund accounts for the receipt of inspection fees, pursuant to MGL Chapter 44, Section 53E1/2, to be expended during FY2025 without further appropriation for the purpose of administrative duties, capped at the amounts in the table below; or take any other

action relative thereto: A motion was made and seconded to accept the FC & SB recommendations of \$2,500 for Elect. Insp; \$2,000 for Con Com; \$500 for ZBA; \$2,000 for Plumb. Inspec. Total: \$7,000. Motion passed unanimously at \$7,000 from revolving funds.

ARTICLE 15: To see if the Town will vote to authorize a revolving fund, under Massachusetts General Law Chapter 44, Section 53E1/2, which may be spent on the Transfer Station without further appropriation during FY2025. Collected Transfer Station fees may be used for capital equipment, grounds improvement, or other related expenses to benefit the Transfer Station. The Selectboard may spend up to \$15,000 in revolving fund monies for the Transfer Station during FY2025 and retain in this account all collected fees; or take any other action relative thereto: A motion was made and seconded to accept the SB sponsored and FC recommendation of \$15,000. Motion passed unanimously at \$15,000 in revolving fund monies.

ARTICLE 16: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of money for Debt & Interest; or take any other action relative thereto: A motion was made and seconded to accept the FC & SB recommendation of \$1,000. Motion passed unanimously for \$1,000.

ARTICLE 17: To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Board of Assessors to appoint a member of the Board to serve as the Assessors Clerk at the salary fixed and voted on by the Town; or take any other action relative thereto: A motion was made and seconded to accept the BOA sponsored and FC & SB recommendation. Motion passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 18: To see if the Town will vote to accept the FRTA as the official transportation agent for the Council on Aging; or take any other action thereto: A motion was made and seconded to accept the SB sponsored and FC recommendation. Motion passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 19: To see if the Town will vote to accept Chapter 90 and all other Highway Grant Funds from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, for the purposes of repair, construction, maintenance and preservation of the Town's roads and bridges and other related costs; or take any other action thereto: A motion was made and seconded to accept the SB sponsored and FC recommendation. Motion passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 20: To see if the Town will vote to allow the Selectboard to accept funds and gifts on behalf of the town; or take any other action thereto: A motion was made and seconded to make an amendment to add the words that all gifts are

received, acknowledged and publicized. A lengthy discussion ensued on this motion. Motion failed. A motion was made and seconded to allow the SB to accept funds and gifts. Motion passed. Few nays.

ARTICLE 21: To see if the Town will vote to give the Selectboard approval to enter into future discussions with the Middlefield Congregational Church Council to discuss the future and possible disposition of the Church and property; or take any other action thereto: A motion was made and seconded to accept the SB sponsored and FC recommendation. The land that the Church sits on belongs to the town, this vote will allow further discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 22: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$4,500 to perform water testing at the site of the closed Town Dump located on Skyline Trail as directed by the Commonwealth Department of Environmental Protection or take any other action thereto: Note: This will become an annual expense line item in the Annual Town Warrant as long as the Town is directed to perform the testing by MDEP. A motion was made and seconded to accept the SB sponsored and FC recommendation of \$4,500. In the future, the Selectboard will get best estimates. Discussion ensued. Motion passed at \$4,500. Few nays.

ARTICLE 23: To see if the Town will vote to transfer the sum of \$10,000 from 2024 Free Cash to the Capital Stabilization Account; or take any other action thereto: A motion was made and seconded to accept the SB sponsored and FC recommendation of \$10,000. Cafarella stated that we could use the money. Motion passed unanimously at \$10,000 from Free Cash to Capital Stabilization.

ARTICLE 24: To see if the Town will vote to transfer the sum of \$10,000 from 2024 Free Cash to the School Stabilization Account; or take any other action thereto: A motion was made and seconded to accept the SB sponsored and FC recommendation of \$10,000. This article requires a two-thirds majority vote. Motion passed unanimously at \$10,000 from Free Cash to School Stabilization Acct.

ARTICLE 25: To see if the Town will vote to borrow the sum of \$160,000 to purchase a 2025 Freightliner MM2 4×4 plow truck/30,280 GVW, including all costs incidental and related thereto, and to meet said appropriation, the Treasurer, with approval of the Selectboard to authorize to borrow such sum under and consistent with M>C>L> c. 44,7 or 8 pursuant to any other enabling authority; or take any other action thereto: A motion was made and seconded to accept the SB sponsored and FC recommendation to borrow \$160,000. This article requires a two-thirds majority vote. The estimated cost of the truck is \$256,000. The Town is being asked to approve a loan that would be made next year. The

smaller truck has a cracked frame. Skip will be able to take \$128,000 from ½ of Chapter 90. Lengthy discussion. Motion passed to borrow \$160,000 next year. Some nays.

ARTICLE 26: To see if the Town will vote to include the sum of \$2,000 in the Treasurer's budget to issue bonds, as needed; or take any other action thereto: A motion was made and seconded to accept the SB sponsored and FC recommendation. The Treasure will need this to be able to borrow if we're going to borrow. Motion passed unanimously at \$2,000.

ARTICLE 27: To transact any other business to come before said meeting.

The lack of VNA coverage in Middlefield and the difficulty in attaining it was discussed.

AARP funds whereabouts were discussed.

A motion was made and seconded to accept this wording of a veteran's work off program:

'Qualified homeowners could reduce their taxes by up to \$1,500 by volunteering their services in accordance with MGL 359 8510 for veterans. Requirements and Eligibility consistent with Middlefield's bylaws as well as state and federal regulations or take any other action thereof.'

This action needs to begin in a Selectboard meeting to be published in a sufficient manner to allow the residents to consider this.

Adjournment

Moderator Noreen Suriner dissolved the meeting at 4:00

Minutes submitted by: Town Clerk Suzanne C. Lemieux