



Annual Town Meeting Minutes

May 06, 2023

MIDDLEFIELD TOWN HALL

Present:

Selectboard Chair Ann Marie Visconti, Members Tonya Santaniello & Curt Robie
Moderator, Joseph Kearns; Town Clerk Suzanne C. Lemieux

Moderator Joseph Kearns opened the meeting at 1:30 P.M. with a quorum present of 50 residents and warrant that was duly posted and the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Select Board prior to its April 26, 2023 meeting was notified by the Gateway Regional School District that the assessment for Middlefield, at the last minute, had gone up from what appeared in the first posted warrant due to an increase in the number of children from Middlefield attending District Schools. With many members of the Finance Board in attendance the board voted to change Article 12 in the warrant to reflect the new assessment figure. In an attempt to repost the corrected warrant correcting the change, the wrong copy of the town warrant was reposted. The Select Board has checked with officials including the town attorney to see how the errors could be corrected without having to reschedule the town meeting. The Board has been told corrections can be made from the floor of the meeting before each Article containing a mistake or omission is discussed or voted on.

A motion made and seconded to collectively accept the corrected line items of Articles 2, 4, 5 & 6. Motion passed unanimously.

School Superintendent Kristen Smidy apologized for the mishap resulting in correcting the Town Warrant. Kristen also stated that Middlefield has 24 children at Gateway.

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.

SB Chair Ann Marie Visconti thanked Curt Robie and Tonya Santaniello for their service to the Town. Tonya is finishing up her term this year. Announcement was made about both the Town Administrative Assistant position which is now vacant, and the Town Administrative position which has attracted 4 applicants to be considered.

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 FC sum of \$25,528. Discussion on increases in salary. A stand up verbal vote resulted in a tie of 19 votes. Discussion. A re-vote was taken. 19 voted in favor of

FC recommendation, 20 were opposed. A motion was made and seconded to accept the SB recommendation. Motion passed at \$28,141.

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:

Discussed increase in salaries.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the SB sum of \$105,850. A stand up verbal vote resulted in 21 votes for and 13 opposed. Motion passed at SB recommendation at \$105,850.

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:

A motion made and seconded to accept the SB sum of \$157,000. Discussed increase in legal fees. Motion passed at a stand up verbal count of 20 in favor and 15 opposed at \$157,000.

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:

A motion was made and seconded to accept the SB sum of \$64,159. Motion passed at a stand-up verbal count of 21 in favor and 6 opposed at \$64,159.

ARTICLE 6: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of money for the Highways; or take any other action relative thereto:

A motion made and seconded to accept the SB sum \$635,301. Discussed health insurance increase and highway dept employee changes. Motion passed at a stand-up verbal count of 22 in favor at \$635,301.

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:

A motion was made and seconded to accept the FC & SB recommendation of \$21,758. Motion passed easily on an Aye vote at \$21,758.

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:

A motion was made and seconded to accept the FC & SB sums of \$115,545. Motion passed unanimously at \$115,545.

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.L. Chapter 40, section 6, as amended; or take any other action in relation thereto:

A motion made and seconded to accept the SB sum of \$15,000. Discussed SB & FC sum. Motion passed at a stand up verbal count of 18 in favor and 16 opposed at \$15,000.

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:

Motion made and seconded to accept the FC & SB recommendations of \$47,800. Motion passed unanimously at \$47,800.

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:

Motion made and seconded to accept the FC & SB recommendations of \$9,950. Motion passed unanimously at \$9,950.

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:

Motion was made and seconded to accept the FC & SB recommendations of \$351,804. Curt lauded Kristen Smidy for her exemplary work as Superintendent. Motion passed unanimously at \$351,804.

ARTICLE 13: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the following sum of \$140,000 for vocational education; or take any other action relative thereto:

A motion was made and seconded to accept the sum of \$140,000 as sponsored by Gateway Regional School District and SB and recommended by FC passed unanimously at \$140,000.

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 53E½, to be expended during FY2024 without further appropriation for the purpose of administrative duties, capped at the amounts in the warrant; or take any other action relative thereto:

A motion was made and seconded to accept the article as sponsored by the SB and recommended by the FC for inspection fees Electric \$2, 500 Conservation Commission 2,000, Zoning Board of Appeals 500 and Plumbing 2,000 passed unanimously.

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 FY2024. Collected Transfer Station fees may be used for the Transfer Station attendant's salary, for capital equipment, grounds improvement, or other related expenses to benefit the Transfer Station. The Selectboard may spend up to \$7,500 in revolving fund monies for the Transfer Station during FY2024 and retain in this account all collected fees; or take any other action relative thereto:

A motion made and seconded to remove the wording "Transfer Station attendant's salary" from Article 15 passed unanimously.

A motion made and seconded to accept the article as sponsored by the SB and recommended by the FC passed unanimously at \$7,500.

ARTICLE 16: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the \$1,000 for Debt & Interest; or take any other action relative thereto:

A motion made and seconded to accept the sum of \$1,000 as sponsored by the SB and recommended by the FC passed unanimously at \$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 made and seconded to accept the article as sponsored by the Board of Assessors and recommended by the FC & SB passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 18: To see if the Town will vote to accept the Franklin Regional Transit Authority as the official transportation agent for the Council on Aging; or take any other action relative thereto:

A motion made and seconded to approve the article as sponsored by the SB and recommended by the FC 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 relative thereto:

A motion made and seconded to approve the article as sponsored by the SB and recommended by the FC passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 20: To see if the Town will vote to transfer \$15,714.00 from Free Cash Account to cover the overage in the snow removal account; or take any other action relative thereto:

A motion was made and seconded to increase the sum to \$22,100.14. Several bills for salt were not passed in on time. Motion passed unanimously.

A motion made and seconded to approve the amended article at the sum of \$22,100.14 as sponsored by the SB and recommended by the FC passed unanimously at \$22,100.14.

ARTICLE 21: 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 relative thereto

Motion was made and seconded to see if the Town will vote to approve the article as sponsored by the SB and recommended by the FC passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 22: To see if the Town will raise and appropriate the sum of \$12,000 to purchase a new snowplow for the Highway Department; or take any other action relative thereto:

Motion made and seconded to approve the sum of \$12,000 as sponsored by the Highway Department & SB and recommended by the FC passed unanimously at \$12,000.

ARTICLE 23. To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$10,000 towards the cost of replacing the existing playground equipment at Chester Elementary School or take any action thereto. Note: The Towns of Chester and Blandford have both committed the sum of \$10,000 each towards this project.

Motion made and seconded to approve the article as sponsored by the SB and recommended by the FC. A Chester PTO representative spoke on behalf of this article. Motion passed unanimously at \$10,000.

ARTICLE 24: To see if the Town will vote to accept the Town Investment Policy or take any other action relative thereto.

Motion made and seconded to approve the article as sponsored by the SB and recommended by the FC passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 25: To see if the Town will vote to give the Select Board 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.

Motion made and seconded to remove "or take any other action thereto" from Article 25. Motion discussed. Amendment did not pass on a Nay vote.

Motion made and seconded to approve the article as sponsored by the SB and recommended by the FC passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 26, 27 & 28: Chair Ann Marie Visconti explained the following three articles and read a letter to the Selectboard and Residents of Middlefield from Hilltown Community Ambulance stating that they have chosen not to enter into contract with Middlefield to be their primary ambulance. Discussion followed.

Motion made and seconded to table the following three articles 26,27 & 28 was passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 26: To see if the Town will vote to have the Town enter into a contract with Hilltown Community Ambulance Association Inc., for FY 2024 or take any other action thereto.

Sponsor: Select Board

Finance Committee: Does not recommend

ARTICLE 27: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate funds the sum of \$10,625 dollars for ambulance service to be provided by the Hilltown Community Ambulance Assoc. Inc., for FY2024 or take any relative action thereto.

Sponsor: Select Board

Finance Committee: Does not recommend

ARTICLE 28: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$903.13 which represents Middlefield's annual share of Hilltown Community Ambulance Assoc. Inc., Ambulance Replacement Fund cost for FY2024 or take any other action thereto.

Sponsor: Select Board

Finance Committee: Does not recommend

ARTICLE 29: To see if the Town will vote to transfer the sum of \$10,000 from 2023 Free Cash to the Capital Stabilization Account and \$10,000 from 2023 Free Cash to the School Stabilization Account or take any other action thereto.

Motion made and seconded to transfer the sum of \$10,000 from Free Cash to the Capitol Stabilization Account and \$10,000 from Free Cash to the School Stabilization Account as sponsored by the SB and recommended by the FC passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 30: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$57,010 to pay the balance owed on the 2021 Tandem Axle Truck or take any other action thereto.

Motion made and seconded to accept the sum of \$57,010 as sponsored by the SB and recommended by the FC passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 31: To transact any other businesses to come before said meeting.

Curt Robie announced that the pickle ball equipment has arrived and that a time will be scheduled on a Saturday morning for training.

Meeting dissolved at 5:00.

Respectfully submitted by Suzanne C. Lemieux, Town Clerk

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Suzanne C. Lemieux".