

**Middlesex Town Meeting Solutions Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**January 9, 2006**

Present: Susan Clark, Sandy Levine, Dave Shepard, Barb Whitchurch, Greg Whitchurch

**1. Zoning Proposal Information Session**

The TMSC will be hosting an information session about the proposed zoning regulations on January 18, 2006, at the Town Hall. It will be organized by breaking the town into five neighborhoods with a table for each. A member of the Planning Commission will be at each table to answer questions from town residents. Members of the Town Meeting Solutions Committee (TMSC) can act as greeters and direct people to their neighborhood. Ideas for publicizing the session included The World, possibly the Times Argus and WDEV. Barb offered to check with WDEV and Greg with The World. Susan has provided a notice to go into the weekly Friday Notes that go home with students at Rumney School.

TMSC members agreed to call at least three Middlesex residents to notify them of the informational session and encourage them to come. TMSC members will also call the members of the Planning Commission to ask them to make some phone calls. Dave agreed to call Commission members Paula Crossett and Steve Martin and Barb and Greg offered to call Lowell Smith and Greg Faber.

The TMSC has no position on zoning (for or against). This committee's work is focused purely on making sure all voters are informed on the issues.

A second informational session will be offered on February 8<sup>th</sup>.

**2. Town Web Site**

Dave noted that the 2004 zoning proposal that was defeated by voters in November, 2004 remains on the web site. Greg said he would remove it. Dave also mentioned that the Conservation Commission would like to put more material on the website and asked if Greg thought the organizational structure proposed for a Conservation Commission page was doable. Greg responded that the structure looked acceptable to him and that the Commission could send him content.

**3. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

Minutes from Town Meeting Solutions Committee (TMSC) meeting of December 12, 2005, were reviewed. Greg made a motion to approve the minutes with a second by Barb. Minutes were approved.

**4. Middlesex Town Budget Information for Town Meeting**

Susan reported she met with John Riley about the charts he has prepared detailing the town budget. The information includes a spreadsheet with information on the cost of individual articles as compared to a specific property value (e.g. cost to an owner of a \$100,000 home). Once the Select Board has prepared the budget to be voted on at Town Meeting they will send the information to John Riley so that he can add it to his charts

and tables. The budget presentation will need to include a disclaimer that there are some unknowns in the budget that can't be precisely presented at the time of Town Meeting.

#### **5. Childcare for Town Meeting**

Susan and Kelly Ault will meet with Ann Gilbert of Community Connections on January 20, 2006, to plan the details of childcare to be offered for Town Meeting. The plan will include one paid staff person with the rest to be volunteers. A suggested donation will be requested. Any money beyond the cost of providing the childcare will go to Community Connections.

#### **6. Town Meeting Invocation**

Susan has contacted U32 for a list of Middlesex students who are new voters this year. The plan is to ask one of these new voters to read a town meeting invocation that was written by the town of Danville and used at their town meeting.

#### **7. Town Meeting Preparation**

TMSC will again organize a cleaning of Town Hall for February 23 at 7:00 p.m.

Dave agreed to be the contact for anyone who may wish to request transportation to Town Meeting.

#### **8. Middlesex History Book**

It is not certain yet if this book will be available for sale by Town Meeting but residents could at least order a copy at Town Meeting. It may also be possible to have a slide show running during the day of images from the book.

The next meeting of the TMSC will be on February 13, 2006 at the Town Hall at 7:00 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Dave Shepard

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**Middlesex Town Meeting Solutions Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**February 13, 2006**

Present: Susan Clark, Dave Shepard, Barb Whitchurch, Greg Whitchurch

**1. Minutes of the January 9, 2006 Meeting**

A motion was made by Greg Whitchurch to approve the minutes of the January 9, 2006, meeting of the Town Meeting Solutions Committee (TMSC). The motion was seconded by Barb Whitchurch. Discussion ensued with Susan Clark adding the following clarification to the report on the zoning information session: *The TMSC has no position on zoning (for or against). This committees work is focused purely on making sure all voters are informed on the issues.* With this change the minutes were approved.

**2. Town Meeting 2006**

John Riley has completed charts for the town budget and Peter Hood has approved them. They are posted on the town website and will be published in the Town Report. Barb will also make large posters to be displayed in the Town Hall during Town meeting.

There was additional discussion of what property values to use in a table that will show how much each article to be voted on will cost in taxes for a property with a specified value. The TMSC recommended computing this for three representative property values: \$100,000, \$150,000 and \$200,000. This table will be made available at Town Meeting but will not be in the Town Report.

Kelly Ault has interviewed Dick Alderman and Fred McCullough, the candidates for the open Planning Commission position, for an article to go in the Middlesex Monthly.

Child Care for Town Meeting:

Ann Gilbert will put out a flyer about child care to be offered during Town Meeting that will go home with Rumney students. A food request will be included in the flyer.

**3. Zoning Proposal**

Susan reviewed the two information sessions that were held about the zoning proposal.

**4. Town Hall Cleaning**

June Lakin would like TMSC to set up the chairs for Town Meeting following the cleaning session to be conducted on February 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**5. Town Meeting Legislation**

The League of Women Voters is supporting a bill in the state legislature pertaining to Town Meeting and allowing employees time off from work to attend. There was discussion about what if anything the TMSC wants to do regarding this bill. It was agreed that Susan would draft a letter in support of this legislation for the TMSC to review. Dave Shepard suggested the letter, once approved, could be printed in the Middlesex Monthly.

**6. Middlesex Website**

Greg asked TMSC members to review postings on the website related to Town Meeting.

**7. Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the TMSC will be held on April 10, 2006, at 7 pm at the town office.

This meeting was adjourned at 8:50 pm.

Minutes recorded by Dave Shepard

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**Middlesex Town Meeting Solutions Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**April 3, 2006, 7:00 pm**

Present: Susan Clark, Barb Whitchurch, Greg Whitchurch.  
*Arriving at 8 pm:* Ron Krauth, Anita Krauth.

**1. Minutes of the February 13, 2006 Meeting**

A motion was made by Greg Whitchurch to approve the minutes of the February 13, 2006, meeting of the Town Meeting Solutions Committee (TMSC), with the notation that the next meeting was set for April 3, not April 10. The motion was seconded by Susan Clark. With this change the minutes were approved.

**2. Town Meeting 2006 De-brief**

Members expressed satisfaction with the meeting, and with our work. We got very positive feedback on the pie charts and graphs, including an e-mail from Barry Goodman noting that the "What each item means for your taxes" was excellent, and he hopes we do it every year. We only got one evaluation form back; it noted that it was helpful when people called the question when discussion went on too long.

Susan reported on the child care collaboration with Community Connections. There were 12 kids in attendance, generally in the 2-6 age range. Three teenagers and one parent (Nancy Reilly) generously donated their babysitting time. Two Community Connections staff were paid, costing approximately \$200. We took in \$83 in donations from parents (plus parents donated all the food for the kids' dinners). We need to consider getting more parent volunteers (possibly exchanging child care with other towns) to make this more sustainable. Other than that, it seemed to run smoothly, according to Ann Gilbert. The committee expressed its gratitude to Community Connections for supporting this important effort.

**3. Planning/Zoning Update**

Susan reported on discussions she and Dave Shepard have had with Conservation Commission and Planning Commission members regarding updates to Middlesex's zoning and Town Plan. It appears that with the planning consultant's contract already signed, there is little we can do in this short time frame to create comprehensive public involvement. Our committee will stay tuned and assist in outreach as needed, possibly organizing more small-group discussions as we did in April.

**4. TMS Committee Involvement in Middlesex Affordability Exploration**

Susan reported on an e-mail she received from Heath Wilson, who is concerned that Middlesex is becoming unaffordable. He wondered whether our committee would be interested in getting involved in this issue. His e-mail echoes the sentiments expressed by Fred McCullough in a recent letter to the editor of the Middlesex Newspaper.

After discussion, the committee decided that Susan would respond to him explaining that while our committee does not take stands on issues, we would be glad to consider helping to organize a community-wide exploration of this issue. Possible ideas include:

- small-group discussions to define concerns and commonalities;
- a forum (inviting the Vermont League of Cities and Towns or other experts) to explore where spending decisions come from (town meeting, selectboard, state, or federal levels, etc.) and how to affect them; and/or
- articles in the Middlesex Newspaper and/or website with a pie chart that shows where spending responsibility lies.

### **5. Web site update**

Greg reported that he has responded to website posting requests as they have come in, and the website is up to date. He noted that the Conservation Commission has plans to re-vamp their part of the website, but he hasn't received anything specific from them yet. He reminded Susan that she needs to give him the feedback on our site from her meeting with Karen Cornish (Hinesburg's webmaster).

### **6. Priorities for the coming year**

We agreed to spend our next meeting setting priorities for the coming year.

Susan reported that Kelly Ault could not come to this meeting, and has informed Susan that she would prefer to attend meetings only in the fall and winter. The committee agreed to spend time at the next meeting discussing how many meetings per year we should hold, and how much of the summer we should take off. Maintaining our committee members' energy and making sure our involvement in the committee is sustainable is important to us all.

### **7. Cemetery inquiry**

Anita Krauth has met with neighbors on her road who are thinking of sprucing up the Carr Cemetery (corner of Bolduc Road and East Hill Road). She wondered what advice our committee could offer. We suggested that she contact June Lakin and Janet McKinstry (Assistant Town Clerk and cemetery commissioner) for more information, and the selectboard if money would be involved. She is aware of the *Middlesex in the Making* book write-up regarding Middlesex's various cemeteries.

### **8. Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the TMSC will be held on May 8, 2006, at 7 pm at the town office.

This meeting was adjourned at 8:50 pm.

Minutes recorded by Susan Clark

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**Middlesex Town Meeting Solutions Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**May 8, 2006, 7:00 pm**

Present: Susan Clark, Ron Krauth, Dave Shepard, Barb Whitchurch, Greg Whitchurch.

**1. Town Plan Survey**

The Town Meeting Solutions Committee (TMSC) and the Middlesex Conservation Commission (MCC) both believe it would be best to survey all town landowners rather than the random sample of approximately 50% of the landowners originally conducted. Dave and Susan will attend the next Planning Commission meeting to discuss surveying the remaining 50% of the town landowners.

**2. Website**

A proposal from the Middlesex Conservation Commission (MCC) for a new structure for their spot on the town website was reviewed. Greg thought the concept was fine; the MCC will coordinate with Greg and provide him with the material to upload.

**3. Affordability Issue**

Susan referenced two recent letters in the Middlesex Monthly on the topic of the affordability of Middlesex. This might be an area where the TMSC could facilitate discussion.

Ron questioned whether the town tax bill could break out the amount of tax that goes to pay various town expenses so that residents could better see where their tax dollars go. Greg suggested including contact information for tax payers where they could ask questions or express concerns about specific portions of their tax bill. He also suggested a discussion of what people want Middlesex to be like in the future.

Helpful discussion might include a good breakdown of where tax money is allocated and how a taxpayer might be able to influence this.

Ron asked if voting ballots could include more information about what an item being voted on will cost and more background to explain the purpose of the item.

There was discussion on how to structure a meeting to address affordability. It will be important that the Select Board support such a meeting and be in attendance. Susan will run the concept of such a meeting by the Select Board.

Meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Dave Shepard

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**Middlesex Town Meeting Solutions Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**June 14, 2006, 7:00 pm**

Present: Susan Clark, Dave Shepard, Barb Whitchurch, Greg Whitchurch

**1. Meeting With the Selectboard**

Susan reported on her recent meeting with the Selectboard during one of their regular bimonthly meetings where the following items were discussed:

- Susan provided an update on childcare during Town Meeting.
- The Town Meeting Solutions Committee (TMSC) will take a break from cleaning the Town Hall prior to Town Meeting in 2007. It was noted during last years cleaning that the outsides of the windows need cleaning.
- The budget charts prepared for Town Meeting this year were generally well received but a few negative comments were also noted.
- Affordability is a concern that has been raised; Susan mentioned it to the Selectboard who supported the concept of a discussion on this issue. It was recommended that such a discussion outside of Town Meeting would be helpful.

Discussion ensued concerning some of these issues and other issues related to the Selectboard. Regarding the affordability issue, Dave suggested that a forum on this issue could help voters better understand where their tax money goes and how they may be able to influence this. There was a question of when to hold a discussion on affordability and it was felt it should be after the November elections but before Town Meeting.

Barb suggested posting of notices at two places in town to alert residents when Selectboard meetings are taking place.

**2. Priorities for the TMSC for the Coming Year**

A list of priority tasks for the TMSC for the next year was discussed including the following topics:

- Childcare during Town Meeting: there is potential for reducing costs by incorporating more adult volunteers to assist Community Connections.
- Website: Greg is willing to continue as webmaster for another year.
- Middlesex Operator's Manual: Susan suggested that when it is time to update the Operator's Manual, the next issue could be less glossy than the initial one but still look appealing. A look similar to the Vermont Country Store catalog was suggested as an example. It might be time for an updated document in 2008.
- Contacts List: An updated contacts list for the current Operator's Manual should be prepared in time to distribute at the November election. The update work for the list would begin in September.
- Ballots: Greg said he would like to explore the possibility of ballots including a brief summary of the issues being voted on so voters would have a better understanding of what a "yes" or "no" vote will mean. This was a topic also raised by Ron Krauth at the TMSC May meeting.

- Attending Town Meeting from a Remote Location: Greg asked if this issue was something the TMSC still wants to address. All agreed it is something we'd like to examine further but that we don't currently have the technological expertise to really take this on.

- Greg asked if it might be possible to have a recorded message for after hours calls to the Town Office that would provide a list of events for the week (e.g. any town board or committee meetings). It will be necessary to find out if there is a phone line available for such a purpose and check with the Selectboard to see if they would support this.

Meeting adjourned at 9:13 pm.

Minutes recorded by Dave Shepard

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**Middlesex Town Meeting Solutions Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**September 19, 2006, 7:00 pm**

Present: Susan Clark, Tim Murphy, Dave Shepard, Barb Whitchurch, Greg Whitchurch

**1. Welcome Back Tim!**

The first order of business was to welcome back longtime Town Meeting Solutions Committee (TMSC) member Tim Murphy from a posting to Afghanistan with the National Guard.

**2. Meeting Minutes from June 14, 2006**

Minutes from the June 14, 2006, meeting of the TMSC were approved.

**2. Zoning Regulations**

The TMSC will sponsor two informational sessions about the proposed zoning regulations to be voted on in November. These will feature small group discussions at the Town Hall similar to those that were held last January. Greg expressed concern that the sessions last January included too much jargon. It was agreed there need to be some ground rules for those who will be answering the questions in the small groups: limit jargon or at least explain the terms being used and present information and answer questions but it's not appropriate to lobby for a particular point of view. Facilitators need to be sure each person has an opportunity to ask questions.

The two informational sessions will be held on Wednesday, October 11<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday, October 24<sup>th</sup>, both at 7 pm. Publicity will consist of a postcard mailed to Middlesex residents, a notice in The World, a notice in the Middlesex Monthly (if the timing allows), the Times Argus calendar and the Rumney Friday Notes. Greg and Barb will bring popcorn for the October 11<sup>th</sup> session and Susan and Dave will bring some other food items for refreshments.

**3. Contact List Insert for the Middlesex Operator's Manual**

Susan will update the contact list insert for the Middlesex Operator's Manual based on information on the town website and will circulate to the rest of the TMSC who will review and return to Susan will any additional changes they are aware of. Barb and Dave agreed to make phone calls for any further follow-up that may be necessary. Copies of the updated list will be distributed at the polls on election day.

**4. Town Website**

Tim is willing to take over webmaster duties now that he has returned and Greg indicated he would be happy to relinquish this duty. The TMSC thanks Greg for his willingness to take over the webmaster duties while Tim was away.

A copy of the proposed zoning regulations to be voted on in November will need to be posted on the website. Dave will contact Peter Hood about getting a copy for the webpage.

**5. Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the TMSC is scheduled for 5:30 pm on October 11<sup>th</sup>, preceding the zoning informational session.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Minutes recorded by Dave Shepard

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**Middlesex Town Meeting Solutions Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**October 11, 2006, 6:00 pm**

Present: Kelly Ault, Susan Clark, Ron Krauth, Tim Murphy, Dave Shepard, Barb Whitchurch, Greg Whitchurch

**1. Meeting Minutes from September 19, 2006, Meeting**

Minutes from the September 19<sup>th</sup> Town Meeting Solutions Committee (TMSC) meeting were reviewed and approved.

**2. Middlesex Contacts Sheet**

June Lakin has indicated that only poll workers can be inside Town Hall on election day so it will not be possible to hand out updated Middlesex contacts sheets as had been previously discussed. Instead, they will be distributed as an insert in the Middlesex Monthly, probably the December edition. It might still be possible to put them on a table inside Town Hall on election day for voters to pick up on their way in or out.

**3. Town Website**

Greg has turned over the webmaster duties to Tim. Tim reported he has received the electronic files with the proposed zoning regulations from Cindy Carlson and he is ready to post them on the site.

**4. Zoning Information Meetings**

The details for the zoning informational meetings was reviewed:

- the designation for the small groups for the discussion needs to be set up;
- those who will be answering questions need to be informative without lobbying for a specific point of view;
- any jargon needs to be explained.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m. to set up for the first zoning informational meeting to be held at 7:00 p.m. this evening.

The next meeting date was not determined; Susan will send around an email with prospective dates.

Minutes recorded by Dave Shepard

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**Middlesex Town Meeting Solutions Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**November 15, 2006, 7:00 pm**

Present: Susan Clark, Ron Krauth, Tim Murphy, Barb Whitchurch, Greg Whitchurch

**1. Possible Action Steps**

Susan reported that there is currently a petition circulating in Middlesex to move all financial issues to Australian ballot. A lively discussion ensued. The group discussed the reasons this might be occurring, and possible action steps, including written outreach, neighborhood meetings, facilitating a public discussion/debate voicing both sides of the issue, and other ideas. The group agreed that while the committee has not taken a stand on other issues in town (zoning, etc.) it is appropriate for the group to be opposed to switching to Australian ballot.

**2. New Committee Members**

Barb suggested that we should recruit more committee members, in particular those who have diverging points of view on issues in Middlesex issues. Susan agreed that diversity on the committee was very important, noting that we had better diversity when Wilson Brett was a member. Susan suggested that since the group's charge is to improve town meeting, committee members at a minimum needed to be committed to the success of town meeting. The group agreed to keep our eyes open for additional new members.

**3. Town Website**

Tim reported that he will be updating the website comprehensively next week. Susan presented Greg and Tim with prints of Middlesex Falls, as a thank-you to both of them for their work as webmaster.

**4. Zoning Information Meetings**

We reviewed the feedback forms from the zoning informational hearings, which were generally very positive. Susan typed up the comments (see below). Susan reported that Peter Hood thanked the group for our work on this.

**5. Meeting Minutes from October 11, 2006, Meeting**

Minutes from the October 11 Town Meeting Solutions Committee (TMSC) meeting were reviewed and approved. (Oops, sorry, forgot to do this first.)

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:45 p.m.

The next meeting date is Monday, December 11, at 7:00 p.m. at the Middlesex Town Hall.

Minutes recorded by Susan Clark

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## **EVALUATION FORM COMMENTS**

### **Middlesex Zoning "Let's Just Talk" Small Group Information Sessions, October 11 and October 24**

*The Solutions Committee circulated an evaluation form, and many participants filled it out. Here is the complete text of the feedback from Middlesex residents:*

#### **What worked for me about these informational sessions:**

Open-ness; copies of map  
Q & A  
Small group discussion; well-informed planning commission members  
Material and food and greeting us at entrance  
Relevant materials were available as informative resources  
Copies were made of materials not available originally--thanks  
Seating by community was great  
Informal; informative  
Explanations of questions were very clear -- very open to questions  
The calm atmosphere due to the small group  
Easy to talk within a small group  
Small group and easy feeling for stupid questions  
Open forum for any questions

#### **What didn't work for me:**

NA  
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N/A  
Nothing--great plan, great event  
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None

#### **Additional suggestions, comments:**

Thanks  
Good information, open to all questions!  
Good informational meeting 10/11/06  
Thanks for the refreshments! Very organized. Thanks for the postcard invite.  
Update old zoning map so the new and old are comparable  
Thanks for all of your hard work!  
Thank you for all of the hard work in revising the zoning regs from overkill to simpler  
Thank you!

**Middlesex Town Meeting Solutions Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**December 11, 2006, 7:00 pm**

Present: Kelly Ault, Susan Clark, Tim Murphy, Dave Shepard, Barb Whitchurch, Greg Whitchurch

**1. Meeting Minutes**

Minutes from the April, May and November Town Meeting Solutions Committee (TMSC) meetings were reviewed and approved.

**2. Australian Ballot Petition**

A petition is being circulated to vote monetary items by Australian ballot rather than at a traditional Town Meeting. It is likely that this will be an item to be voted on at Town Meeting in March 2007. The committee discussed means to inform residents of this issue prior to Town Meeting and encourage them to attend Town Meeting:

- Kelly suggested phone calls to let people know there are some important issues to be voted on at Town Meeting, including the Australian ballot issue and encourage them to attend.
- Greg expressed concern that calls to people who don't normally attend Town Meeting, particularly if they aren't informed of the benefits of Town Meeting, might not result in many of these people attending Town Meeting.
- A letter to everyone on the voter checklist either from the TMSC or from a group of individuals who are concerned about the preservation of Town Meeting who would all sign the letter was proposed as another option.
- Some form of meeting was suggested with the question of whether a town-wide presentation at a single location, like Town Hall, or a series of "living room" meetings might be more effective? It was generally felt that a town-wide meeting would be likely to only attract those most supportive of either Town Meeting or the Australian ballot proposal. Susan suggested contacting some individuals who are supportive of Town Meeting and asking them to host a meeting where they would invite a few of their friends to attend. TMSC members generated a list of potential names to contact. These meetings could begin in mid January once it is confirmed if the petition has been submitted and if the Australian ballot item will be on the warning for Town Meeting.

**3. Budget Charts for Town Meeting**

Greg asked about creating budget charts for Town Meeting as was done last year. It was agreed it would be valuable to prepare these charts again this year. Susan will contact John Riley who assisted with this task last year to see if he is interested again this year.

**4. Discussion with Bill Callnan**

Susan reported on her meeting with Bill Callnan. He supported the idea of the TMSC screening the annual funding requests from charitable and non-profit organizations and coming up with a list to be put on the warning to be voted on. Susan explained to

Bill that she thought the Select Board should appoint a group of people to perform this task. Greg offered that the budget information prepared for Town Meeting could include information on the service provided by these groups.

#### **5. Contacts Sheet for Middlesex Operator's Manual**

The town contacts sheet insert for the Middlesex Operator's Manual is in need up updating. Greg and Dave agreed to split up the contacts list and check the entries for accuracy and make any corrections they are aware of. They will present the results of this work at the next TMSC meeting.

#### **6. Childcare for Town Meeting**

Kelly and Susan will meet with Ann Gilbert from Community Connections.

#### **7. Town Website**

Tim is overhauling the website and showed the TMSC the results so far. All agreed it looked great. He estimated the new look of the site will probably be up and running at the beginning of the New Year.

Next Meeting: January 18, 2007 at 7:00 pm at the Town Hall.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Minutes recorded by Dave Shepard

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