

**Middlesex Town Meeting Solutions Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**January 18, 2007, 7:00 pm**

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

**1. Meeting Minutes**

Minutes from the December 11, 2006 Town Meeting Solutions Committee (TMSC) meeting were reviewed and approved.

**2. Childcare for Town Meeting**

Susan has spoken with Ann Gilbert of Community Connections about this years childcare; Susan and Kelly Ault will meet with Ann on January 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**3. Budget Charts**

John Riley and Bill Callnan have both agreed to work on this. John would like to get the budget spreadsheet from June as was done last year. There may be a few tweaks to charts based on last years experience but they will have the same basic look as last year.

**4. Town Contact Sheet Update**

Copies of the updated contact sheet will be placed on chairs at Town Meeting and will also be printed in the Town Report. After Town Meeting any necessary changes from the election can be made and updated copies will be made available at the town office and distributed through the Middlesex Monthly.

**5. Australian Ballot Petition**

TMSC members reported on potential hosts for living room meetings to discuss the potential Australian ballot article. Susan has worked on talking points that could go into a letter. Greg suggested we might need another meeting after it is certain whether the petition has been filed and the Australian ballot item will appear as an article on the warning for Town Meeting.

**6. Requests for Money from Non-Profit Organizations**

Bill Callnan would like a committee to review the annual monetary requests from non-profit organizations.

**7. Website Update**

Tim gave an update on the website. It's been rolled out with its' new look. The meeting minutes from the various boards and committees still need to be added and new photos of these same entities would be a nice addition.

Next meeting: likely February 5, 2007 at the Town Office at 7 pm.

Minutes recorded by Dave Shepard

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**Middlesex Town Meeting Solutions Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**February 5, 2007 7:00 pm**

Present: Kelly Ault, Susan Clark, Ron Krauth, Tim Murphy, Nancy Reilly, Barb Whitchurch, Greg Whitchurch.

**1. Letter to New Voters**

The group stuffed and stamped envelopes addressed to the households of the 90 new voters added to the Middlesex voter checklist since Town Meeting last year. The “Welcome New Voter” letter is from the Solutions Committee and Selectboard, with postage funded by the Selectboard. The letter encourages participation in Town Meeting, and includes information about the Middlesex website.

**2. Pie Charts**

John Riley has completed the pie charts. With coordination and oversight by Susan Clark and Bill Callnan, they will appear in this year’s town report. Barb and Greg will be in charge of making wall-sized posters of the pie charts for Town Meeting Day. John will complete the third chart with data on cost per taxpayer in the coming days, and if it’s done by Feb. 15 Barb will be the one to make copies of this for Town Meeting Day.

**3. Outreach on Australian ballot issue**

The group discussed the pre-Town Meeting living room meetings planned to date:

Sat. Feb. 10:

11:00 John Demeter and Emily Palmer's house (Barb & Greg co-host)

4:00 Nancy Reilly

Sun. Feb. 11:

1:00 Ron and Anita Krauths'

4:00 Larry Mandell and Marcie Andres'

5:30 Kim Cheney's

Mon. Feb. 12: Rumney Playgroup (9:45 am)

Fri. Feb. 16: 3:30 pm Kelly Young's

In addition, the group discussed a draft letter outlining our committee’s opposition to the Australian ballot initiative. The group agreed that the letter should be placed in the Middlesex Monthly. They also agreed that it should go out to all households on the voter checklist. The group discussed funding the mailing; Greg and Barb will look into the costs involved. The group discussed the possibility of the Selectboard signing onto the letter, and possibly even funding it, but didn’t know if they’d be interested. Susan said she would consult with Selectboard members. The group agreed that they would seek individual donors to fund the mailing if necessary, and everyone committed to asking friends and neighbors to sign onto the letter, with a goal of at least 100 signatures.

**4. Discretionary Funding Committee**

Susan reported that the Selectboard continues to be interested in the Solutions Committee’s help in reviewing (or creating a committee to review) discretionary

spending in the budget (i.e. the various non-profits, etc. that ask for money from the town at town meeting). Susan reported that at the Selectboard's most recent meeting, they asked our committee to look into forming a new committee to review all funding requests and make recommendations to the town. But in a subsequent conversation with Peter Hood, Peter indicated that such a committee might simply ensure that the non-profits supply all the necessary information, and not make recommendations. The Solutions Committee discussed it and agreed that the latter suggestion made more sense. We will suggest to the Selectboard that they announce the formation of such a committee (or possibly a sub-committee of the solutions Committee) and solicit volunteers at town meeting this year.

### **5. Contacts Sheet**

Susan reported that she had received information from Greg and Dave on the Middlesex Contacts Sheet, and would try to finish compiling it into a handout by Town Meeting Day.

### **6. Child Care**

Kelly reported that organizing child care for town meeting is underway, and Ann Gilbert at Community Connections is following the same plan as last year. She is working with Kelly and Susan to find more adults and teenagers to volunteer, so that they can end up hiring only one paid staff person for the event.

### **8. Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the TMSC was not determined. However, the group agreed that if we need to meet to stuff envelopes for a mailing, we will set aside Sunday, Feb. 25 at 6 pm to do so (location TBA).

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, 2007 7:00 pm**

Present: Susan Clark, Tim Murphy, Chris Reilly, Lowery Scharf, Dave Shepard, Barb Whitchurch, Greg Whitchurch

**1. Meeting Minutes**

Minutes of the February 5, 2007 Town Meeting Solutions Committee (TMSC) meeting were reviewed and approved.

**2. Reflections on Town Meeting 2007**

Susan reported that a survey pertaining to the 2007 Town Meeting was included in the last issue of the Middlesex Monthly. It asks questions about impressions of this years meeting and about issues that the TMSC should work on.

Lowery said he believes affordability is an important issue and was reflected in a number of comments made at Town Meeting. A number of people have expressed the opinion that this years meeting was very good but the question remains as to how many of the people who supported moving to Australian Ballot will continue to attend Town Meeting.

Greg observed that the attendance this year shows many people can make it to Town Meeting if they are motivated.

**3. Future Town Meetings**

Members discussed a number of ideas that might improve future town meetings and address some concerns and issues that have been raised. The possibility of moving the meeting to Rumney School due to the space limitations at the Town Hall was brought up. Holding the meeting at Rumney for a year to assess the advantages and disadvantages could be informative as residents consider the facilities needs of the town. Acoustics and logistics are two issues that will have to be addressed in order to hold the meeting at Rumney. Susan suggested checking with the Selectboard on how they feel about the potential of moving the meeting to Rumney.

Chris asked about the possibility of moving the meeting to Saturday. Susan said that overall the data shows moving to Saturday doesn't tend to change attendance but for a given town it may result in an increase or a decrease.

**4. TMSC Project List**

The committee reviewed the list of projects that TMSC has been or could be involved with and ranked them according to feasibility and impact.

Child care during Town Meeting – medium to high impact and high feasibility.

Long distance participation in Town Meeting – Legal hurdles need to be defined before we put a lot of time into this. Susan thinks the Secretary of State supports the concept.

The general feeling was that the feasibility is medium but the impact could be high. Susan will follow up with the Secretary of State on the legal issues.

Town website – Expanding the website much beyond the current set-up (e.g. filling out forms on-line) would likely require moving to a commercial server.

Affordability discussion – There are different names that might describe this but it would be an attempt to engage residents of different viewpoints in a discussion of issues affecting the town.

Discretionary money items (i.e. money requests from non-profits) – General support for the concept of producing an objective review of these requests that could be presented to the voters. There will be further discussion of how this item might be addressed at the next meeting.

Update of the Middlesex Operators Manual – There was consensus that updating is a worthwhile effort but would be done in a different format from the original.

Civics education for youth – This would likely require a dedicated TMSC member and an interested teacher at Rumney.

Next Meeting – June 12, 2007 at 7 pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Minutes recorded by Dave Shepard

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**Middlesex Town Meeting Solutions Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**June 12, 2007 7:00 pm**

Present: Susan Clark, Tim Murphy, Chris Reilly, Lauri Scharf, Dave Shepard, Barb Whitchurch, Greg Whitchurch

**1. Meeting Minutes**

Approval of the minutes of the March 8, 2007 Town Meeting Solutions Committee (TMSC) meeting was moved by Barb and seconded by Greg. Discussion ensued and Susan pointed out that some of the TMSC tasks that were listed in the minutes did not include the feasibility and impact ratings that had been assigned at the meeting. The minutes were approved with the understanding that Susan will provide the ratings and the minutes will be amended to incorporate those ratings.

There was also discussion of whether minutes need to be sent to the TMSC list serve or whether everyone who is interested can get the minutes from the town website. It was agreed to pose this question to the list-serve and if no one requests minutes via email, in future they will only be posted to the website.

**2. Middlesex Contacts List**

The contacts list is currently available in pdf format for printing on the website. The following actions were agreed upon regarding the contacts list:

- put a notice in the Middlesex Monthly that a printable version of the list is available on the website
- have copies available for Rumney School and the town offices
- look into having the list sent out with the Rumney Notes

The TMSC will plan to complete the above actions in September.

**3. Feedback on TMSC Priorities List**

Susan reported that she has spoken with Sarah Seidman and Fred McCullough. TMSC members reviewed our previous ranking regarding feasibility and impact and there was general agreement with those rankings.

**4. Enhanced Democratization Project**

Susan introduced a proposal from Bill Rossmassler for a facilitated discussion in town on a range of issues of concern to Middlesex residents. Some concern was expressed that this needs to be a long term effort and can't be accomplished in too short of a time frame. Building on areas of common agreement will be an important first step. Identifying challenges may be a longer term effort. A good first effort would be to reach common agreement on the main issues facing the town.

**5. Review of Non-Profit Funding**

Tim has found examples of forms that some other towns send to non-profits seeking funding at Town Meeting.

## **6. Efforts over the Summer**

Greg and Lauri agreed to look into the issue of participation at Town Meeting from an offsite location. The question arose whether there needs to be an opinion from the Secretary of State's Office that such participation would be legal. Susan said the Secretary of State's Office has indicated such participation would likely be acceptable, so the next step would be to design a proposal and have it reviewed. If a technological approach can be worked out it could be demonstrated at Town Meeting. The TMSC agreed to work on this issue and the legal issues can be resolved once a proposal has been made.

The TMSC is interested in putting out an updated Middlesex Operator's Manual and format options were reviewed.

## **7. Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for September 18<sup>th</sup>.

Minutes recorded by Dave Shepard

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**Middlesex Town Meeting Solutions Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**September 11, 2007 7:00 pm**

Present: Susan Clark, John Demeter, Theo Kennedy, Chris Reilly, Lauri Scharf, Barb Whitchurch, Greg Whitchurch.

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

We welcomed new participants, and did a round of introductions and a brief overview of the committee's work to date.

**2. Minutes approved**

Minutes from June 12, 2007 meeting approved, with one change on Item 6: the addition of Chris Reilly's name to the list of people looking at the issue of participation at town meeting from an offsite location (the technology sub-committee).

**3. Review of priorities**

The committee reviewed priorities as we last set them at the last meeting, in the rough order in which they appeared on our spring "Impact/Feasibility" grid assessment:

1. Discretionary Spending cttee -- High impact /High feasibility
2. Website -- Med-to high / High
3. Town Meeting Child Care -- Med-to high / High
4. Update Midd. Operator's Manual-- Med-to high / Med-to-high
5. Technology (long distance participation) – Med/Med
6. Public discussions on Middlesex issues of interest – med / med (but possibly high feasibility if CC takes on)
7. Civic Ed –med/low

This overview launched lively feedback from new members of additional ideas to pursue. These included:

--Re-instituting school meeting: The group agreed this is a hot-button issue but that we should continue to keep an eye on public opinion on this.

--Interactive website: John suggested an ongoing "post your opinion" comment board for the website, with the idea that citizens should have more ways to interact and voice their opinions throughout the year. Greg voiced his concern that not everyone has web access.

--Training for town civics (how to read a budget, how to get involved, etc.): John noted that the pie charts created by the committee in the past have been helpful, and perhaps educational gatherings throughout the year on related topics would be of interest.

--Social capital-building events: Theo said that he greatly enjoyed the bandstand this summer, and that this type of non-issue-oriented gathering was important to building the trust and understanding ("social capital") needed by citizens going into town meeting.

--Moving town meeting to Rumney: Another hot-button issue that continues to be discussed. John noted that people were extremely uncomfortable at town meeting this year due to crowding at town hall; however, issues of acoustics in the Rumney gym, historic divisions in the town, and other plusses and minuses were discussed as well. The

Rumney School board is interested in moving the town meeting to the school. Susan agreed to meet with the selectboard and ask what their reservations might be regarding moving the meeting, and then the committee could work to address some of these issues.

#### **4. Project Updates**

We moved on to updates on the ongoing projects (as listed on the impact-feasibility grid):

1. Discretionary Spending: This follows up on the Selectboard's suggestion that the Solutions Committee help in reviewing (or creating a committee to review) discretionary spending in the budget (i.e. the various non-profits, etc. that ask for money from the town at town meeting). Such a committee would work to ensure that the non-profits supply all the necessary information, but would not make recommendations. No action was taken on this item at this time. John Demeter said that he would likely be willing to work on this in the future.

2. Website: No update since webmaster Tim Murphy was absent.

3. Child care: Susan reported that Ann Gilbert (Community Connections) has indicated that they will collaborate again this year on town meeting child care.

4. Middlesex Operator's Manual update: Susan and Barb agreed to push forward on this project.

5. Technology Sub-Committee (investigating long-distance participation in town meeting for those who are homebound or in the military): Greg, Chris and Lauri worked on this project since our last meeting.

--Lauri reported that the town clerk's office (Town Hall) is equipped with high speed cable internet. However, he is not sure yet whether it is adequate for our needs.

--Chris described a scenario the sub-committee envisions, whereby two mechanisms are at work at once: Off-site participant is hooked in on speaker phone, and a person at the town hall acts as his/her "agent," putting a hand up when the participant wants to speak, and pressing the speaker-phone when that person is called on. In addition, there would ideally be live streaming of the town meeting on the internet.

--Greg reported on an email exchange with the Secretary of State's office; they suggested that both VPIRG and VPR do live-streaming and perhaps they could be helpful with the tech aspects.

The group discussed the problems with Middlesex's limited web access; live streaming won't work in all parts of town at this time. We also discussed the statutes on town meeting, and whether a person can legally vote at town meeting if they are only "present" by phone. (The Secretary of State's office has issued the opinion that selectboard members may vote by phone.) Theo agreed to look into the legal meaning of the word "present" in this context.

The sub-committee will continue its research, and plans to have a demonstration of some combination of the technology this fall.

6. Public discussions on Middlesex issues of interest

This idea was a priority of the Conservation Commission; Susan reported that she had not heard back from Bill Rossmassler on this yet.

7. Civic Education at Rumney

The committee agreed that this continues to be of interest, and Theo Kennedy agreed to pursue this project, provided that curriculum materials are available. (This item now moves from “low feasibility” to much higher!) Susan offered to partner with Theo on this, and will provide Theo with the Secretary of State’s curriculum materials for different ages. Theo is considering starting with 3<sup>rd</sup> graders.

**5. Future Projects**

Susan noted that in January, the group will pick up projects needing to be addressed before Town Meeting Day: pie charts for use in town report/town meeting, letters to new voters, etc.

**6. Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the TMSC was set for Tuesday, October 9 at 7:00 pm at the town hall.

This meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Minutes recorded by Susan Clark

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**Middlesex Town Meeting Solutions Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**November 7, 2007**

Present: Susan Clark, Tim Murphy, Ron Krauth, Chris Reilly, Lauri Scharf, Dave Shepard, Barb Whitchurch, Greg Whitchurch

**1. Town of Middlesex Website**

Tim reported that several businesses have been added to the listing on the website and that he is looking for a copy of the draft town plan to post. Apparently it will need to come from the Selectboard at this point; Cindy Carlson will likely have a copy.

**2. Middlesex Operators Manual**

Susan has obtained estimates for printing an updated manual from several printers. Printing in the preferred format, bound 8.5" by 11", came in at about \$2000 from both Minuteman Press and Capitol Copy. The Times Argus could do it for about \$500 but it would be newsprint size paper and not bound. Committee members felt the newsprint format would not be very useful to people. National Life who printed the original manual are working up a quote as well. It is possible that they may donate some or all of the printing cost.

The next step is for committee members to review the current manual and make suggestions for what material should definitely be retained in the updated version and what type information could be deleted. For cost reasons the updated manual will need to be shorter than the current version. The current version is 48 pages and the updated manual will need to be reduced to 36 or possibly 24 pages. It was agreed that the contacts list can be an insert for easier updating. This feedback should be provided to Susan by one week prior to the next meeting.

**3. Middlesex Community Building/ Enhanced Democratization Project**

Bill Rossmassler is still looking into this potential project and may seek grant funding to assist with bringing in speakers and facilitators.

**4. Technology Committee Report**

The TMSC members who have been looking into the options for remote participation at Town Meeting reported on their findings so far:

- Streaming video - Greg has contacted ORCA, the local access television group. They might be willing to provide equipment and possibly also some technical assistance. So far they haven't gotten back with more specifics. Lauri will follow up further with them.
- Web Cam: - This could be an option.
- There may also be potential for some assistance through U32.

There are a number of equipment options at the recipient's home:

- With just a phone line there could at least be an audio connection to Town Meeting.
- A satellite internet connection is a possibility.
- A cell phone might be able to function as the phone connection if necessary.

Lauri suggested TMSC have a document for Town Meeting that would explain the various scenarios for connecting people at remote locations to Town Meeting depending upon what type of technology is available. Susan proposed a demonstration of one technology option with some town group, possibly the Selectboard, prior to Town Meeting. For a demonstration at Town Meeting it would be ideal if it used someone who really can't get to Town Meeting. Members expressed a concern that any technological approach to allow remote participation at Town Meeting should be limited to those who really can't physically get to Town Meeting and not just those who might prefer to attend in this manner but who could get to the meeting.

### **5. Town Meeting Location**

The location for Town Meeting has been a concern in town for some time. TMSC members felt something to address this issue should be done this year. Possibilities include moving to Rumney for one year as a trial to see how it goes or putting an item on the ballot to vote on moving to Rumney for the following year. Susan will meet with the Selectboard to discuss this issue.

### **6. TMSC Meeting Schedule**

There was discussion of whether it would be advantageous to hold TMSC meetings on a specific day each month. The third Tuesday of each month seemed to generally work for everyone and will be considered for the future. That day does not work for December however; so the December meeting will be on the first Tuesday, December 4<sup>th</sup>.

Minutes recorded by Dave Shepard

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**Middlesex Town Meeting Solutions Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**December 4, 2007**

Present: Susan Clark, Tim Murphy, Ron Krauth, Chris Reilly, Lauri Scharf, Dave Shepard, Barb Whitchurch, Greg Whitchurch

**1. Approval of Meeting Minutes from November 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting**

Minutes from the November 7, 2007 meeting of the Town Meeting Solutions Committee (TMSC) were approved.

**2. Town Facilities Planning**

Susan reported on a recent Selectboard meeting that both she and Chris McVeigh from the Schoolboard attended. At this meeting Mr. McVeigh proposed moving Town Meeting to Rumney School. The Selectboard was divided on support for this proposal with most favoring keeping the meeting at Town Hall. Peter Hood suggested a non-binding advisory vote at Town Meeting in March to advise the Selectboard on where future Town Meetings should be held. The proposed facilities plan does have most public meetings, including Town Meeting, being held at Rumney. Informational meetings, like those held prior to the zoning vote, would likely be helpful prior to the voting on Town Meeting day for several significant Australian Ballot items (likely vote on a bond for the new firehouse and a new Town Plan).

The TMSC could assist the Selectboard with publicizing any informational meetings. A question was raised as to whether the facilities plan and Town Plan should be separate meetings or combined into one? It was felt that the topics could be combined but there should be two meetings, perhaps reversing the order of the topics at the two meetings. In addition, Tim suggested a Selectboard mailing that would summarize both articles to be voted on and a flyer advertising the informational meetings.

**3. Technology Committee**

Lauri has visited Onion River Community Access (ORCA) television about their potential assistance with a demonstration of attending Town Meeting from a remote location. They need to see the facilities at Town Hall before they can offer a firm commitment. The likely date for this visit is January 21<sup>st</sup>. Two technologies are possibilities, both including full video, probably at no cost to the town. Susan has briefly discussed this possibility with the Selectboard; Bill Callnan was hesitant to actually allow voting by this method and the board questioned how the video would work.

It was agreed to continue with planning to do a demonstration at the 2008 Town Meeting. Barb will write up a short description for the Middlesex Monthly.

**4. Middlesex Operator's Manual**

Chris has checked with National Life and they have agreed to print the updated manual. Our requested specifications were a color cover and a black and white interior of up to 32 pages. It is likely that the whole manual can be in four color format. The contacts sheet

will be printed separately as an insert by Capitol Copy. The following agreed to be fact checkers for the information to be included in the manual: Lauri, Barb and Dave.

Businesses could be added as an insert like the contacts page. Tim agreed to coordinate this.

### **5. Town Website**

Tim reported that the updated draft Town Plan is not yet available for posting on the webpage. The Planning Commission currently has some handwritten meeting minutes that are apparently not ready for web posting. Tim also gave a visual demonstration of a new layout for the website that he has been working on.

Next Meeting: Thursday, January 22, 2008.

Minutes recorded by Dave Shepard

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