

Middlesex Town Meeting Solutions Committee
Meeting Minutes
January 22, 2008

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

1. Approval of Meeting Minutes from December 4th Meeting

Minutes from the December 4, 2007 meeting of the Town Meeting Solutions Committee (TMSC) were approved.

2. Middlesex Operator's Manual

The revised Operator's Manual may be ready in time for Town Meeting. Whether it is completed or not, the TMSC could staff a table for Town Meeting to hand out the manual if it's ready or let residents know it will be coming out soon and provide an opportunity for people to make donations to defray the cost of producing the manual.

3. Technology Committee

The Technology Committee met yesterday at Town Hall with Onion River Community Access (ORCA) television to scope out the potential for providing a means to attend Town Meeting from a remote location. ORCA believes the project is an appropriate one for them and they are enthusiastic about helping. The cable line at the Town Hall is adequate for this purpose. So far, one Middlesex resident has agreed to test this out for this Town Meeting. It would be desirable to also have someone attend remotely with a dial-up internet connection.

ORCA wants to train someone to operate the camera and be able to handle some of the other technical details. It would be best to have more than one individual trained. Several training sessions will be necessary. Tim, Greg and Ron are all interested in the training and Tim will also check with a Middlesex college student to see if he might also be interested.

Some portion of this project will require funds. TMSC could apply for a grant from the Central Vermont Council on Aging to provide the required funding. All TMSC members agreed to move forward with a grant application.

The Office of the Secretary of State (OSS) has confirmed that people can vote from a remote location on voice votes but can't have someone else actually present at the meeting vote for them (no surrogate voting). Greg suggested a procedure be developed that would be used to determine if it is appropriate for a given individual to attend Town Meeting in this manner. Ron suggested such a policy might be guided by the requirements for being eligible for a handicapped parking sticker. The procedure would also need to address those who can not be present in town during Town Meeting (e.g. away on military service). From what has been learned from the OSS it does not seem that a vote needs to be taken at Town Meeting to approve the remote participation of a Middlesex voter. The Technology Committee will also look into whether the video and

audio from the meeting can be fed to Rumney School for the children and the childcare providers.

Members of TMSC will be attending the February 12th Selectboard meeting to update them on this project. At that time it will be possible to check whether any funding could be available from the town.

4. Informational Meeting on Australian Ballot Items

An informational meeting will be held concerning items to be voted on by Australian ballot at Town Meeting. In particular this will include the updated Town Plan and the bond to purchase land for a new firehouse. The meeting will take place on February 26th during the regularly scheduled Selectboard meeting. TMSC will help to publicize and organize the meeting. A postcard type notice will be prepared to advertise this informational meeting and the meetings for the Kellogg-Hubbard Library and school budget.

5. Budget Pie Chart

John Riley has agreed to again produce the pie charts that break down the municipal budget and the total Middlesex expenses. Lauri suggested that the informational charts include some kind of trend to compare prior years' spending to the current year's proposal. Barb and Greg will prepare the large versions of the charts to be posted at the Town Hall.

Next Meeting: February 20, 2007 at the Town Hall at 7:00 pm

Minutes recorded by Dave Shepard

Middlesex Town Meeting Solutions Committee
Meeting Minutes
February 20, 2008

Present: Susan Clark, Tim Murphy, Ron Krauth, Chris Reilly, Lauri Scharf (via speaker phone), Dave Shepard, Barb Whitchurch, Greg Whitchurch

1. Approval of Meeting Minutes from January 22nd Meeting

Susan offered a clarification to the minutes that the issue with a hand vote or written ballot vote for a remote participant at Town Meeting is that it is not legal for a surrogate actually present at Town Meeting to vote for that person. With this clarification the minutes from the January 22, 2008 meeting of the Town Meeting Solutions Committee (TMSC) were approved.

2. Remote Town Meeting Participation

Greg met with the individuals who are planning to participate in the 2008 Town Meeting from a remote location to set up some of the equipment they will need. The information meeting for Town Meeting will include remote participation from at least one individual and will provide a test run of the technology. Onion River Community Access television is willing to loan equipment for Town Meeting despite the fact that there is unlikely to be money to pay them.

Susan mentioned potential legal concerns about limiting who can participate remotely. Peter Hood has indicated he doesn't foresee a problem this year since it is a demonstration project. He suggested TMSC draft criteria after this Town Meeting if it seems the town will want to continue this in the future. Draft criteria would be reviewed by the Selectboard and the Board of Civil Authority.

At this year's Town Meeting a brief introduction will be provided about the remote participation and it will be made known that residents can provide feedback at a future Selectboard meeting. This year is a pilot but the Selectboard has decided that the remote participants can vote on any voice votes. Susan provided a write-up describing the remote participation that will be handed out at Town Meeting.

2. Middlesex Operator's Manual II

It is uncertain when the Middlesex Operator's Manual II (MOM II) will be available. If it is ready before Town Meeting TMSC could staff a table to hand it out to voters. If it is not available until after Town Meeting it will be distributed with the Middlesex Monthly.

If MOM II is available for Town Meeting, the following volunteered to staff the table and hand them out:

10:00 - 12:30 Tim
12:30 - 3:00 Dave
3:00 - 4:15 Barb

3. Informational Meeting

TMSC will help with publicity and provide refreshments for the informational meeting on the Town Plan and land purchase for the new fire station. Barb, Chris and Susan will provide the refreshments.

4. New Voter Letter

Chris reported the letter to new Middlesex voters was mailed today.

5. Town Meeting Child Care

Greg indicated it will likely be possible to feed video and audio from Town Meeting to Rumney School. Lauri will check with Chip Hedler about the technical details.

6. Youth Involvement

Theo Kennedy is interested in doing something with youth around the presidential elections and is already well along in the planning. There will be a meeting over the summer with Rumney teachers and the principal Adam Rosen about incorporating democracy into the school curriculum.

7. Organizational Memo from June Lakin

June has sent a memo to all town commissions and committees regarding organizational details such as procedures for posting agendas and requirements for meeting minutes. Given the status of the TMSC it doesn't seem like these requirements apply.

8. Town Meeting Legislation

Susan reported on several bills in the Senate that have bearing on Town Meeting that members may want to be aware of. Two bills, S.45 and S.46 have to do with employers allowing employees to attend Town Meeting. Another bill, S.243 would allow towns with a population of over 5000 to have a representative Town Meeting (as does Brattleboro) without the need for a charter change.

9. Other Business

Susan announced that she will be away from late March until June 22nd.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, March 11th at 7:00 pm at the Town Hall.

Minutes recorded by Dave Shepard

Middlesex Town Meeting Solutions Committee
Meeting Minutes
March 11, 2008

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

1. Approval of Meeting Minutes from February 20th Meeting

Minutes of the February 20th meeting of the Town Meeting Solutions Committee (TMSC) were approved.

2. High Speed Internet

The Selectboard has inquired whether the TMSC is interested in looking into means to bring high speed internet to Middlesex. Susan told them that certain members of TMSC might be interested but the TMSC won't take this on as it is not that closely connected to our mission.

3. Review of Articles for Funding Non-profits on the Town Meeting Warning

Susan suggested TMSC should take a look at this topic and make a recommendation for how this should be handled in the future. Some suggestions were received on the comment forms that were distributed at Town Meeting. One suggestion was for the warning to reference the page number in the Town Report where the report for a given organization can be found.

A suggestion was made to develop a standard layout for what information a group seeking funding should provide in its report and this could be made available on the Town website.

4. Publicity for Meetings of Town Government

There was discussion of some means to record town government meetings and hearings and make them available by a download or DVD or such technology. Another possibility would be a list serve to notify residents of upcoming meetings and other town events. Greg suggested questioning residents about how they would like to be notified of meetings and other events. This question could be posed at Town Meeting next year. Barb suggested a table on election day in November with a form that voters could fill out.

5. Remote Town Meeting Participation

Next steps for this initiative were discussed:

- The TMSC will draft a memo concerning how to prioritize who would be able to use the remote Town Meeting participation (RTMP) technology. A possibility is that the Board of Civil Authority would approve individual applications to utilize RTMP. The memo would include a mission statement and goals for the RTMP process.
- Greg suggested that if an ad hoc group were to develop were to develop the procedure rather than the Town, it might reduce any potential liability for the Town. Peter Hood has suggested TMSC decide what the RTMP program should

accomplish and run the procedure by the Town lawyer. All TMSC members agreed this is an important document to create.

6. Middlesex Operator's Manual II

There could be a listing of Middlesex businesses, a sort of "yellow pages" for Middlesex. Submissions could be sought through the Rumney Notes and the Middlesex Monthly.

When the new Operator's Manual is ready, it will be distributed via the Middlesex Monthly. The contact sheet will need to be added prior to distribution. Copies will also be made available at Rumney School and the Town Office.

7. Middlesex Website

Susan suggested a series of advertisements for the Middlesex website that would go in the Middlesex Monthly. Each issue would highlight a different feature of the website. Barb will work on this.

Next meeting: Tuesday, April 22nd

Minutes recorded by Dave Shepard

Town Meeting Solutions Committee
April 22, 2008

Attending: Greg, Tim, Chris, Lauri

Form letter for those requesting funds:

Does Dave or Susan have the letter we used some years ago?

Greg and Chris now on a subcommittee to crank out the form, to be made available on the town web site. Include a filled-out mock-up on the web site.

The warning would include the responses received that used that form. The form would not be mandatory but recommended.

June has a separate form for petitioning. We should give June a stack of this new form. We don't want to make the process difficult for these organizations that are doing great work.

- Look at Calais, Williston and other area towns for example form to avoid having many different ones
- Make it short; use check boxes
- Perhaps tell those asking for <\$200 that it's not necessary

Let's try to get the form to June early autumn.

Publicizing public meetings:

- a. Ask Red Hen Bakery to post info on their outdoor sign
- b. Three prime locations:
 - a. By the interstate (exit 9)
 - b. Shady Rill and route 12
 - c. Rumney School
- c. Email
 - a. Can secretaries of committees post notice a week before meetings?
 - i. We need to find out if they are willing to use listserv; Lauri to ask:
 1. Dave Shepard (Conservation)
 2. Jeff Farber? on Planning
 3. Cindy (select board)
 - b. Can we automate the whole process?
 - c. Greg to investigate listserv
- d. Tim to move meeting dates to web home page
- e. Phone? Not likely to be used.
- f. We should survey people, somewhat informally, about how they want to be notified
- g. We need to inform the public that we are working on this issue.

Operator's Manual

It's being printed. Dave needs to tell us when we'll stuff them into the Middlesex Monthly.

Can we get a flyer for the fire station informational meeting to stuff as well? Lauri to ask select board; we can stuff them for you.

RTMP

RTMP committee will meet before summer and immediately after summer about creating process for approving applicants for RTMP.

- **May 22nd at 5:30 pm**

Committee will also discuss Rumney situation. Lauri talked to Chip Hedler the other day:

- Auditorium has a phone to tap into; need to understand phone system
- Wireless exists, may be faster than town hall.

Middlesex Web Site

Barb is very busy at present; we tabled the idea of promoting it in the Middlesex Monthly for now.

Next meeting:

May 22nd at 7 PM *but let's see if we can coincide with stuffing the Monthly!*

Middlesex Town Meeting Solutions Committee
Meeting Minutes
September 16, 2008

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

1. E-State Update

Greg and Barb are on the Community Committee the goal of which is to examine how to use technology to promote community.

Front Porch Forum (FPF) –

The City of Burlington uses it to communicate with residents. Is there potential for FPF in the central Vermont area? Greg will check with the person who created FPF to see if there have been any inquiries from central Vermont. Susan will check with Gwen Hallsmith, the city planner in Montpelier, to see if Montpelier has looked into FPF.

2. Election Day

Lauri will check on the Town Meeting Solutions Committee (TMSC) having a table on Election Day. Items that could be available at the table include:

- forms for having a business listed in the yellow pages on the Middlesex Town website
- Middlesex Operator's Manual II
- Middlesex website publicity
- sign-up sheet for people interested in the TMSC

If approval for having a table is obtained, the schedule for staffing the table is as follows:

7-9 am: Lauri

11 am-1 pm: Susan

3-5 pm: Dave

5-6 pm: Barb

6-7 pm: Tim

3. Middlesex Website

Susan will get a copy of the Middlesex Operator's Manual II to Tim on disc.

4. Transition to Rumney School for Town Meeting 2009

Susan has emailed the Selectboard about the potential need for a task force to work on issues around holding Town Meeting for 2008 at Rumney School with a list of some of the considerations. She will be attending a Selectboard meeting on September 23rd to discuss this.

5. Rumney Students and Town Meeting

An interested parent has had discussions with Rumney teachers about incorporating some aspects of Town Meeting into the curriculum. Susan will be speaking to grades 5/6. There

is potential for an art project to create a mural about Middlesex that might be unveiled at Town Meeting.

6. Organizations Requesting Money at Town Meeting

Greg and Chris presented for review a draft form that organizations seeking funding from Middlesex at Town Meeting would need to fill out to get on the warning. Discussion ensued about how to best obtain information from these organizations that would be included in the Town Report and be helpful to voters. Options mentioned included a list of questions each organization would respond to and a simple checklist that could be accompanied by a letter from the organization. Lauri suggested looking at a three year trend for which organizations have sought funding and how much money has been requested. Susan recommended producing a prototype that could be reviewed by the Selectboard. The letter that was sent to these organizations several years ago should be reviewed for ideas.

Next Meeting: October 21, 2008

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 pm.

Minutes recorded by Dave Shepard

Middlesex Town Meeting Solutions Committee
Meeting Minutes
October 21, 2008

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

1. Proposed Fire Station Public Hearing

There was a brief review of the public hearing for the proposed fire station.

2. Meeting with Selectboard

Susan reported on her recent meeting with the Selectboard. They are interested in setting up a listserve for interested residents to send notices about public meetings or other items of interest related to town governance. The Board would like a sign-up sheet for the listserve to be included with the Town Meeting Solutions Committee (TMSC) display on election day. Greg thought some people might be hesitant about signing up for this due to concerns about getting a lot of email. If the Selectboard has an idea of how many times a year they anticipate sending out announcements this could be added to the information for the display.

3. TMSC Display on Election Day

Lauri got confirmation from June Lakin that we can set up a display table on Election Day. The schedule of volunteers to staff the table is as follows:

7-9 am: Dave

9-10 or 11 am: Lauri

11 am-1 pm: Susan

3-5 pm: Greg

5-6 pm: Barb

6-7 pm: Tim

4. Money Requests from Non-Profits at Town Meeting

Tim presented several comparisons in graph form of the money requested by non-profits compared to the entire municipal budget over a number of years. Ron asked if tax bills could include more information on where the tax money goes? Greg suggested a calculator on the town website that would show how an individual's tax payment is distributed. He will look into this possibility. The next step is to provide an example graph(s) to the Selectboard for their review. There was a suggestion that adding the consumer price index would provide more context for the data. Tim will do this and bring another example for review at the next meeting.

Also discussed was the topic of a letter or form to be sent to non-profits wishing to request money at Town Meeting. Greg will go over comments from the last meeting on the draft that was reviewed at that time and will confer with Chris Reilly to get another draft out for review. Anything that is to be sent out will need Selectboard approval. Possibly meet with the Selectboard on November 11th to discuss this topic.

5. Town Meeting Discussion with Grades 5/6 at Rumney School

Susan reported that she led a discussion on Town Meeting with grades 5/6 and that the students were alert and prepared with questions.

6. Transition to Rumney School for 2009 Town Meeting

Susan has been asked to look into some logistical details for holding Town Meeting at Rumney School gym. The Middlesex Methodist Church is interested in preparing the meal. The School Board is supportive but more details need to be worked out. Child care will need new space as they have used the gym in past years.

Jen Campbell, the art teacher at Rumney, has an idea of the students working on a mural depicting different aspects of life in Middlesex that would be on display at Town Meeting. She is looking for ideas on content.

7. Remote Town Meeting Participation

Lauri will make up something about this to add to the TMSC display table on Election Day.

8. Minutes of September 16, 2008 TMSC Meeting

Minutes of the September 16th TMSC meeting were approved.

Next Meeting: November 13, 2008

Minutes Recorded by Dave Shepard

**Middlesex Town Meeting Solutions Committee
Meeting Minutes
November 13, 2008**

Present: Susan Clark, Lauri Scharf, Dave Shepard, Chris Reilly

1. Minutes of October 21st Town Meeting Solutions Committee Meeting

Minutes of the October 21st meeting were approved.

2. Election Day Display

A number of residents signed up for being kept informed about activities of the Town Meeting Solutions Committee (TMSC). Not everyone provided an email address so one possibility is to mail them information once and include an inquiry as to how they prefer to receive information in the future. There were also a number of voters who signed up for the Selectboards listserv. In addition to these sign-ups about 30 Middlesex Operator's Manuals were handed out.

3. Town Meeting Transition to Rumney School for 2009

June Lakin contacted Susan about getting a tour of the Rumney facilities and they will do a joint visit. Susan will contact Kelly Ault about coordinating childcare for Town Meeting. Susan also mentioned that Sandra Shenk offered to help with providing rides to Town Meeting for residents who may need one.

4. Communication to Non-Profits Seeking Funding at Town Meeting

Chris offered to pull together a document from earlier drafts. The Selectboard will need to approve the final version; it is uncertain if the timing will allow the final letter or form to be ready for disseminating to the groups seeking funding at the 2009 Town Meeting. Chris suggested for this year the document could be posted on the town website and groups could be directed to it. In future years it could be mailed out as well as posted on the web. Chris will send a draft via email for the committee to review. Following TMSC review it will go to the Selectboard for their review. Another option in the future would be to email the letter/form to non-profits prior to them putting together their petitions for getting on the warning.

Meeting adjourned at 8:08 pm.

Next meeting: December 9th at 7:00 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Dave Shepard

**Middlesex Town Meeting Solutions Committee
Meeting Minutes
December 9, 2008**

Present: Susan Clark, Lauri Scharf, Dave Shepard

1. Minutes of November 13th Town Meeting Solutions Committee Meeting

Minutes of the November 13th meeting of the Town Meeting Solutions Committee (TMSC) were approved.

2. Funding Requests From Non-Profits

The Selectboard has approved the letter and form to be sent to non-profit organizations seeking funding at Town Meeting. The plan is to form a committee that would likely meet once or twice prior to Town Meeting to review the requests for funding that have been received. The committee would introduce the article(s) concerning the non-profits funding request at Town Meeting. It might be helpful to have someone from TMSC be on the committee at least for the first year.

3. Transition to Rumney School for Town Meeting 2009

Susan and June Lakin met with Principal Adam Rosen and School Board member Chris McVeigh. The music room is the likely venue for child care. Child care will probably be limited to 20 children and there will be assistance from Community Connections. There will also be a need for some teenagers or parents to help. Ballot counting will take place in the library or the art room.

Chairs will need to be moved from the Town Office using a town truck on the day before Town Meeting. Some acoustic tiles have been acquired for the gym.

The dinner following Town Meeting will take place in the gym after a quick take-down and set-up.

The Remote Town Meeting Participation Committee will probably need to meet in January. It is anticipated that remote participation should go smoothly at Rumney.

4. Other Business

Lauri inquired whether TMSC was still looking into alternative means of communicating with town residents (e.g. the Front Porch Forum concept). Susan will put this topic on a future meeting agenda.

There was some discussion of the potential for some sort of community visioning process for Middlesex.

Minutes recorded by Dave Shepard
