

**Middletown Springs Selectboard • Special Meeting  
Approved Minutes • December 19, 2019**

**Board Present:** H. Childress, C. Fenton, C. Haynes, P. Kenyon, T. Redfield

**Officers Present:** Town Clerk Laura Castle; Town Auditor Sarah Grimm

**Public Present:** Art Castle, Joe Castle, George Gonda

**Called to order:** 7:00 p.m.

**Public comment & Guests:** Joe, Art, and George requested a status update on the lease/ownership of the firehouse and its site. P. Kenyon moved to hire attorney Gary Kupferer to do advise strategy on the ownership of the firehouse and its property; H. Childress 2<sup>nd</sup> [*all in favor, motion carried*]. H. Childress will contact Gary K. on Friday 12/20.

HC informed the Fire Association representatives of the numerical outcomes from the questionnaire, and we had an extensive discussion over how to get responses to the voters. The first priority project from the questionnaires was the town office (without library), at roughly 60%; the West Street town yard, at 25%; and the firehouse, at 15%. When considering which projects respondents named at any level of support (first priority, second priority, or “both of the other projects”), the town office (without library) was at 93%; the town yard at 76%; and the firehouse at 51%.

The Selectboard received a letter from the Library Trustees informing us that they were willing to step away from participation in the Town Office construction project. However, there are substantial unmet needs at the present location that will require prompt attention. Their letter is appended to these minutes.

**Budget:** The board began work on the FY 2021 budget. The Board requested that the Treasurer consider reverting to prior practices about reporting delinquent tax income separately from regular tax income, so that the Board can see how best to budget for coming years. We recognize that this is counter to the audit recommendations, but it is a vital planning tool.

**Board Orders:** T. Redfield moved to approve the board orders as presented; H. Childress 2<sup>nd</sup> [*all in favor, motion carried*]

**Other:** T. Redfield has asked Vaillancourt tree service to remove a few larger trees over roads; that work should be completed in the coming weeks.

The Board will present the summary of the numerical results of the facility questionnaires, and will create a summary document of comment for inclusion in the Town Report. We will also place the raw data set of all comments on the Town’s website for public access.

**Adjourn:** H. Childress moved to adjourn; T. Redfield 2<sup>nd</sup> [*all in favor, motion carried*]. Meeting adjourned 10:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
*Herb Childress, Selectboard Clerk*

Appendix: Letter to the Selectboard from the Middletown Library Board of Trustees

Select Board members:

I am writing to you on behalf of the MS Library Board of Trustees. The library board met last week. It was our first chance to discuss the outcome of the facilities financing vote as well as the public conversation that took place on FPF and at the informational meeting.

We know you are gathering information via a survey to help inform your next steps. As a board we feel it is important to add our perspective to that deliberation. I have ccd this email to the select board members I have email contacts for and hand delivered a copy to the one I don't have email for.

In August 2013, the library board sent a letter (attached) responding to the Selectboard/Building Committee request to consider being the second entity in a multi-use building. As you can see in the letter, the board at the time spent a lot of time and energy weighing our options and trying to decide what avenue would ultimately be the best for the Library. We weighed several options, one of which was to stay in our current building and make structural improvements to increase space and improve ADA access. The move to the center of town won out in the end, by a narrow margin. As you see laid out clearly in the letter, we had some core values and criteria that would guide our decision making throughout this process including to “be manageable by a limited staff, be accessible and in a convenient location, provides the Library with autonomy, *creates a positive public perception*, provides sufficient and efficient space, is *fiscally prudent* and is reasonable to maintain.” (Italics added)

The results of the recent vote and all the discussion that came before at the informational meeting and on FPF from a cross section of our community have given us reason to re-evaluate. At this time, the Board is reconsidering the wisdom of continuing to pursue inclusion in the new town building at the center of town, particularly based on our criteria of maintaining a positive public perception and fiscal prudence. It is our belief that the town building has a much greater chance of receiving town support (positive bond vote) if it is scaled back to include only the town offices, vault, meeting room, etc.

This leaves us in new, but not wholly unfamiliar, territory. Staying in our current location means addressing the ADA accessibility (the most pressing issue) as well as our need for additional space for the collection, patrons, and programming, and increased parking. If the Select board decides to pursue a smaller building at the corner that does not include the library, it is critical the Library not be left out of the larger conversation about the other town infrastructure issues. It will take significant funds to make the current building meet our current & future needs as well as to make it ADA compliant. We ask that monies to improve the Library in its current location be included in your March vote discussions.

As mentioned at the informational meeting, the Friends of the Library independently, and without consideration of the trustees' commitment to pursue the Town Building option, commissioned a study in April 2014 to assess the existing condition of our building and to make recommendations relative to our future needs (attached). The proposed redesign is one possible solution and includes a price estimate for the project. This might be a good place to begin when considering the cost of not including the library in the corner building.

We look forward to learning the results of the post-vote survey and to discussing the options available to the library with you in the near future.

Respectfully,  
MSPL Board of Trustees