

**Town of Middletown Springs**  
**Town Meeting Informational Meeting**  
**Held Virtually on Monday, February 28, 2022**  
**Start time: 6:30pm | Approved Minutes**

Moderator, Kimberly Bushnell called the meeting to order at 6:30pm. Kimberly welcomed everyone to our second virtual Town Informational Meeting. She started with some thanks - first to Meredith Morgan and Beth Miller for helping her with the technology behind the scenes. She will make some housekeeping announcements, the online pledge will play, Representative Sally Achey will speak first with an update from the state legislature. Kimberly then went through instructions for speaking and asking questions during meeting.

Kimberly played the pledge to officially start the meeting. After the pledge Kimberly took a moment to acknowledge the people of Ukraine who are currently under attack fighting for democracy in their country.

Representative Sally Achey gave an update on her work at the statehouse. Sally thanked everyone for the time to share news of what's going on at the state level. She reviewed some of the highlights.

One item of importance was the work being done on re-districting. Our district does have a proposed change in boundaries. Poultney lost enough residents to trigger the need to add people to their district from another town. The result is a proposed change in our district to reallocate half of Wells to the Poultney district, to balance that out we received the full town of Tinmouth. Currently Wells is petitioning to not be split in half, so we will have to wait and see how that all sugars out.

Broadband expansion is progressing. There is a dedicated board working on this. This will be a slow process but there is a very qualified dedicated team working hard to move this forward.

They've been working on many other bills as well, in addition to broadband they are looking at spending money for work on climate initiatives and money for increasing cell towers in the area, it's a wait and see on most of these at this point in the session. The legislature is in a unique position this year with a lot of federal dollars flowing into the state and having to figure out what's the best way to distribute those funds for the long-term health of the state.

The floor was opened for questions:

Robin Chesnut-Tangerman asked that given that she did not support the clean heat standard or the climate council, what climate measures does she support?

Sally answered: She supports money for weatherization, money to help businesses and municipalities. She discussed her reasons for opposing the clean heat standard program and what would help her to support it. She needed more details and would support a two-step process to ease the burden on businesses.

Nora Rubinstein asked Sally to discuss her vote on the reproductive rights bill and also asked if she could be more proactive communicating with constituents on her stances and on the work that is happening at legislature.

Sally responded that she did not support the vagueness of the reproductive rights bill and also felt it was not necessary to have a change in the state's constitution because our current laws already guarantee full abortion rights.

In answer to the second question, she offered to set up some public forums for people to come and talk to her in person about what's happening in the legislature.

Rosemary Moser encouraged Sally to use Front Porch Forum and other resources to reach out with updates, so folks do not need to rely solely on attending an event to get the news.

She then asked about her stance on childcare bill currently under consideration.

Sally answered that she is supportive of childcare and knows that it's an important issue. She will be looking very carefully at the programs for childcare as they come through the legislature.

There were no other questions. Kimberly thanked Sally and wished her well at her next town meetings tonight.

Kimberly introduced Terry Redfield, Selectboard chair, who wanted to address the group before we get started.

Terry spoke briefly about some items of interest this past year and thanked everyone for coming out and joining this meeting.

- There was a changing of the guard at the town clerk position after 30 years.
- Voters approved the funding of a new town office after more than 10 years of work.
- This fall we found ourselves short a person in our highway department. Terry thanked Bill Reed, Road Foreman, as well as Richie Miller, Joe Castle, and the Tarbell enterprise for stepping in to help with storms and relieve the pressure.
- He also offered thanks other public officials, from the auditors to the listers, election workers to our moderator, all are vital to our operations. He reminded people there are positions still available and in need of people to serve in them.

Lastly, he spoke of the work of the Selectboard this past year to put together a cost-conscious budget. We do not always agree on everything nor should we, but he is proud of the work this board has done and would appreciate your support.

The moderator read the warning for 2022 Town Meeting.

1. To elect Town Officers as provided by Vermont Law.

*No questions.*

2. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs accept the report prepared by the Town Auditors?

*Auditor, Juanita Burch-Clay spoke on behalf of the auditors to recognize the good work of the Town Treasurer – Jenny Talke Munyak, the new Town Clerk – Patty Kenyon, the Delinquent Tax Collector – Deb House. They would also like to recognize the very good progress by the Selectboard in adopting various financial policies which put our town on a good foundation.*

*Also, would like to remind the Selectboard to continue to align our work with the recommendations of the outside auditors. Feel the town is in good shape at the moment.*

3. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs appropriate **\$360,975** for the **general operation** of the town, the sum of **\$281,900** to be raised by taxes on the 2022 Grand List of the Town of Middletown Springs for the fiscal year of July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023?

*Sarah Grimm would like to give the Selectboard an opportunity to speak to the budget.*

*Terry Redfield gave a brief overview of the process. On the town side we tried to pretty much level fund everything. There are salary increases at 3%. There was some additional money in computer technology and in elections as we will have 3 elections to fund in this year's budget with the August primary and the general election in November.*

*Robin Chesnut-Tangerman spoke to the budgeting process. In the town report you see a three-year comparison, but when the board works on the budget, they go back five years to get a better sense of the fluctuations that happen from year to year.*

*Judy Robinson asked a question about the amount raised by taxes, where does the other money come from?*

*Robin answered that money comes from revenues - from state aid, current use, income from solid waste, delinquent taxes - basically there are other revenue streams that factor in.*

4. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs appropriate **\$517,350** for **the care and maintenance of highways**, the sum of **\$383,875** to be raised by taxes on the 2022 Grand List of the Town of Middletown Springs for the fiscal year of July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023?

*Sarah Grimm asked a question about the Spruce Knob Highway project and what the town is required to match on these grant projects?*

*Patty Kenyon answered that generally the match is an 80/20 match. But the fuller picture is that reporting standards for grants have changed. She then provided an explanation of the process and why the numbers can sometimes appear unbalanced due to rules for accounting for time and machine allowances.*

*Treasurer, Jenny Talke Munyak, pointed out that the amount of money we spent out of pocket, which is under total material expenses vs what we got for the grant award, that gives you a boiled down more in line picture of the 80/20 match.*

5. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs authorize the Select Board to fund the **Municipal Tax Stabilization Reserve Fund** with any surplus **up to \$5,000** from the current fiscal year General Fund budget, to be used to reduce unanticipated tax increases due to general fund cost overruns?

*Melissa Chesnut-Tangerman asked that the board explain what this item means and how it's saved us money in the past.*

*Patty Kenyon gave an overview of the fund and that we did use the money to reduce an unanticipated deficit. This money comes from using a budget surplus to a savings account that can allay any future budget cost overruns. Right now, we have \$10,000 in the fund and are hoping to add another \$5,000 this year if we have a surplus.*

*Herb Childress was ready to ask what the current balance of the fund was, but Patty just answered that question.*

6. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs authorize the Select Board to fund the **Reserve Fund for Town Municipal Facilities** with any **non-allocated** General Fund surplus from the current fiscal year?

*Patty Kenyon explained this article is similar to article 5. If we end up with a surplus at the end of the year, we either have to buy down taxes or have some place designated for it to go. Since we have so many needs for facilities projects the board set this up to save that potential pool of money, which will help us reduce out of pocket costs when are ready to move any of those projects forward.*

*Chat question – any surplus over the \$5,000 tax stabilization fund?*

*Answer: Yes, that is correct.*

*Jenny Talke Munyak pointed to page 21 in the town report. All of our reserve funds are outlined there. You can see that we applied a surplus last year to that account of just over \$24K.*

*Robin Chesnut-Tangerman wanted to make it crystal clear why we do this – by state statute, the Selectboard cannot put money aside on their own, allocations of this sort need to be voter approved. So, therefore these items are on the ballot.*

7. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs authorize the Select Board to establish and fund a **Reserve Fund for Town Library Facilities** allocating \$20,000 to said fund to be raised by taxes on the 2022 Grand List of the Town of Middletown Springs for the fiscal year of July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023.

*Kristal Hier president of the Library Board of Trustees explained the needs at the library and that they had been working to address those needs with the first town office project that was voted down. Other projects were then addressed in different ways and the library was not. The Selectboard added this article to begin the saving process for this project in the future.*

*Sarah Grimm asked Kristal to talk about the space issues and asked is the plan to expand the current building or move?*

*Kristal answered that they are working currently on the idea of expanding and if that will adequately address their needs.*

*Elizabeth Cooper asked how does this works? Does the money get added to the budget if it's approved?*

*Jenny Talke Munyak answered that the amount is not in the budget. If passed, it would get added to the budget numbers you see in the town report. This goes for any appropriation that the town will vote on.*

8. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs authorize the Select Board to expend **\$25,600** to contract with the **Rutland County Sheriff's Department**, to provide law enforcement coverage for the Town?

*Sarah Grimm asked the Selectboard to speak to their vision of what they see the sheriff services being in town.*

*Robin Chesnut-Tangerman explained the current situation with the sheriff's department. We share essentially one full time deputy between four towns. System currently seems to be working.*

*Judy Robinson asked the question -we've had this for two of three years, you say this is working well, how are things better than before we had this?*

*Neil Russell answered that he had his doubts about how effective this is. To get back to Sarah's question about what we've asked the sheriff to do, we've primarily asked them to focus on speeding in the village and policing the four corners. It's the best we can afford to get some kind of coverage.*

*Patty Kenyon explained that we vote on this every year because the vote has been so close each year. So, the board has decided that giving the power to the people to decide this item is the best way to address what is a tough call.*

*Heather Grier reiterated the reasoning behind adding this as a separate item.*

*Herb Childress asked to what extent does the selectboard have a say in what the sheriff does in town?*

*Heather Grier answered that we do have a say. In her meetings with the sheriff and other town reps she talked about the four corners and speed coming in and out of town. That was the primary focus for our town. They do go out on the back roads on occasion and check on houses if people are going to be out of town. If there's a call for us, they do come here.*

*Neil Russell explained the process for 911 emergency. The call gets put out and everyone gets dispatched, unless someone is closer, then one can call the other off.*

*Terry Redfield noted that this is sort of an all or nothing scenario. If we don't have the sheriff, we essentially have nothing. The state police are not always able to be here unless there's a real emergency.*

9. Shall the Town of Middletown Springs deem necessary and appropriate **\$81,885** for the **Middletown Springs Volunteer Fire Department** determining that the program serves the residents of the town with fire protection and emergency response services?

*Sarah Grimm asked someone from the fire department to talk about the state of the planning for the new building project.*

*Joe Castle, Fire Chief answered that this article is strictly for the operations of the fire department. As far as the new building they are working with an architect and have drawn some money from the reserve fund to do that work. That project is still very much a work in progress.*

*Debra House stated she has done a lot of research on local volunteer fire departments and their budget needs and asks. Wells and Tinmouth ask the voters for between \$25 and \$30 thousand a year. She wonders why our budget is so much more than others and that we don't do a significant amount of fundraising work that it seems other towns do. Why is that? We need to question why our budgets are so high?*

*Joe Castle stated that this is the first increase they've asked for in the last five years. Regarding fundraising, they do have multiple fundraisers a year, they see very poor turn out. He can't speak to what other towns ask for because he doesn't have comparative information.*

*Debra reiterated her confusion on how we are so out of the ballpark on the ask? If Tinmouth is getting \$25K and Wells is getting \$30K why do we need \$88K? How many active firefighters do we have? Do we really need a new fire station? And urges that we should be taking a serious look at this as a town.*

*Robin Chesnut-Tangerman spoke to his research on some of these same questions over the years. One of the major differences is that Middletown Springs has an association instead of being part of the town, does that factor in?*

*Debra says no, and she will let it go there.*

*Joe weighed in that they are not asking for the full operation of the fire department. The full budget is over \$100 thousand dollars. Our town asks our volunteers to risk their lives for free and our department provides better equipment than most other surrounding towns. In terms of volunteers, we never fail to get at least three or four people responding to calls, which other towns are not as lucky with. Joe invited folks to come in to the fire department on a Tuesday night to ask questions and get more information.*

*Beth Miller weighed in with an observation that funding \$80,000 over 400 properties, that's roughly \$200 per property, that seems very reasonable to her.*

*Juanita Burch-Clay in the chat added that it keeps our insurance costs down.*

*Melissa Chesnut-Tangerman in the chat added that not to mention the dedication of the volunteers.*

*Kimberly had a request in the chat to lump everything going forward, her intention was to go through article 11 and then lump together.*

*Kimberly asked the Selectboard to weigh in. Patty Kenyon spoke that she would go through 10 and 11 then bundle.*

10. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs deem necessary and appropriate **\$1,500** for the support and general operation of the **Pleasant View Cemetery Association** determining that it provides preservation and maintenance of the cemetery?

*Juanita Burch-Clay, Auditor, spoke to this article saying that there is a trust fund that she believes should be tapped into to help care for the cemetery.*

*Terry Redfield as the president of the Pleasant View Cemetery Association, pointed to the financials for the Cemetery Association and that they do not have a lot of money to draw from in their finances.*

*Nita explained that she was not talking about the investments of the Pleasant View Cemetery Association, but instead about the Copeland Cemetery Fund which is an entirely different sum of money that could be tapped to help support the Association. That money has not been used in the past few years. She feels that the Pleasant View Cemetery Association should be getting the \$1500 from the Copeland Cemetery Fund. For the past two years the Copeland Cemetery Fund hasn't put a report in the town report. Hopefully this will change as we move forward with new trustees.*

*Patty Kenyon tried to clarify some of the confusion. There is a Copeland Cemetery Fund, the town elects one trustee to manage that fund, the PV Cemetery association has two trustees that oversee the fund. So, without an annual report from the Copeland Fund there's no real way to know where the fund stands or what is available.*

*John Weatherhogg from the chat stated that as the town elected Trustee for the Copeland Cemetery Fund it is his goal to get the trustees together soon to determine how the funds have been invested and to take action on disbursing these funds.*

11. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs deem necessary and appropriate **\$7,940** for the support of **Poultney Rescue Squad** determining that the program serves the residents of the town with emergency life support and transport services?

*No questions.*

*Kimberly Bushnell, we'll now bundle articles 12 through 37. Would anyone like to weigh in on Articles 12 through 37?*

*Hilary Solomon thanked the voters for their ongoing support of the Poultney Mettowee Watershed District – Article 23. She looks forward to visiting the selectboard soon with updated information on new initiatives.*

*No other questions on the remainder of the articles.*

*Kimberly moved us on to Article 38.*

12. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs deem necessary and appropriate **\$1,500** for the support of the **Rutland Area Visiting Nurse Association & Hospice** determining that the program serves the residents of the town with home and community health services?
13. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs deem necessary and appropriate **\$50** for the support of the **Vermont Green-Up Day** determining that the program serves the residents of the town by provisioning and organizing Green Up Day?
14. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs deem necessary and appropriate **\$867** for the support of **Community Care Network/Rutland Mental Health Services** determining that the program serves the residents of the town with counseling, substance abuse and emergency services?

15. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs deem necessary and appropriate **\$750** for the support of the **Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging** determining that the program serves the residents of the town with meal support, case management, information and other assistance?
16. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs deem necessary and appropriate **\$200** for the support of the **Bennington/Rutland Opportunity Center (BROC)** determining that the program serves the residents of the town with assistance to persons living in poverty?
17. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs deem necessary and appropriate **\$100** for the **Vermont Center for Independent Living** determining that the program serves the residents of the town with services including Meals on Wheels and home handicap access?
18. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs deem necessary and appropriate **\$100** for the support of **Vermont Rural Fire Protection Task Force** determining that the program serves the residents of the town with road and fire protection grant programs including the Better Back Roads grants and dry-hydrant grants?
19. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs deem necessary and appropriate **\$375** for the support of the **Rutland Regional Ambulance Service** determining that the program serves the residents of the town with emergency life support and transport services?
20. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs deem necessary and appropriate **\$200** for the support of the **NewStory Center** (formerly Rutland County Women's Network & Shelter) determining that the program serves the residents of the town with a crisis hot line, domestic violence and rape-survivor assistance?
21. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs deem necessary and appropriate **\$125** for the support of **Rutland County Humane Society** determining that the program serves the residents of the town with care for neglected, abused and surrendered animals?
22. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs deem necessary and appropriate **\$200** for the support of **RSVP and The Volunteer Center** determining that the program serves the residents of the town with volunteering opportunities and services such as bone building classes?
23. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs deem necessary and appropriate **\$500** for the support of the **Poultney-Mettowee Natural Resources Conservation District** determining that the program serves the residents of the town with assistance to preserve natural resources?
24. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs deem necessary and appropriate **\$400** for the support of the **NeighborWorks of Western Vermont** determining that the program serves the residents of the town with home-buyer education and energy efficiency services?
25. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs deem necessary and appropriate **\$500** for the support of **ARC (Advocacy-Resources-Community)** determining that it provides service to residents with developmental disabilities?



26. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs deem necessary and appropriate **\$400** for the support of **Rutland County Parent/Child Center** determining that it provides child care and recreational services to residents with younger children?
27. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs deem necessary and appropriate **\$300** for the support of the **Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired** determining that it provides service to residents with vision loss?
28. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs deem necessary and appropriate **\$250** for the support of the **American Red Cross of New Hampshire and Vermont** determining that it provides emergency services to residents of the town?
29. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs deem necessary and appropriate **\$200** for the support of **Mentor Connector** determining that it enhances self-esteem and in-depth training?
30. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs deem necessary and appropriate **\$400** for the support of **Child First Advocacy Center** determining that the program serves the residents of the town in the discovery, intervention, treatment and prevention of child sexual abuse, severe physical abuse and children affected by violence?
31. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs deem necessary and appropriate **\$745** for the support of the **Regional Marketing Initiative**, a collaboration of the Chamber & Economic Development of the Rutland Region and municipalities around Rutland County, the goal of which is to grow the economy in our region, and determining that the program serves the residents of the town in a regionally funded marketing effort to support the town's and region's economy?
32. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs deem necessary and appropriate **\$150** for the support of **Front Porch Forum** determining that it provides communication services to the town's and region's residents?
33. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs deem necessary and appropriate **\$250** for the support of **Big Heavy World** determining that it provides support for Vermont's musicians and music education?
34. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs deem necessary and appropriate **\$250** for the support of **Vermont Family Network** determining that it provides support for Vermont families of children with special needs?
35. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs deem necessary and appropriate **\$350** for the support of **Habitat for Humanity Rutland County** determining that it provides support for our community by creating affordable and decent family housing?
36. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs deem necessary and appropriate **\$250** for the support of **Rutland County Restorative Justice Center** determining that it provides support for community members in responding to the needs of crime victims, the community, and those who violated the law?

37. Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs deem necessary and appropriate **\$500** for the support of **Vermont Farmers Food Center** determining that it provides support for community access and availability of locally produced food in the Rutland Region through education, expanding markets, and aggregation and distribution of locally produced and value-added agricultural products?

38. To transact any other business proper to be before said meeting.

*Nita Burch-Clay in the chat – regarding the Copeland Cemetery Fund, see the recommendations in the Auditors Report on page 16 of the Town Report.*

Meeting recessed at approximately 8:15pm until 7am tomorrow when the polls will open.

Thanks all around to those who made this second virtual town meeting possible.

Respectfully submitted,

Patty Kenyon  
Town Clerk | Selectboard Clerk

Minutes approved by the Town Moderator - Kimberly Bushnell on 3/27/2022

Attest: Patty Kenyon - Town Clerk - March 28, 2022