

“What’s Next Middlesex?” Planning Meeting

Thursday, July 12, 2018

6:30PM

Middlesex Town Hall

Meeting Minutes

Present: Mitch Osiecki, Michael Levine, Sandy Levine, Mark Bushnell, Mike Kline, Joanne Breidenstein, Vic Dwyer, Ursula Stanley, Mike Pelchar, Nancy Reilly, Chris McVeigh, Sorsha Anderson, Barbara Buckley, Kim Jessup, Lauri Scharf, Emily Smith, Tim Murphy, Susan Clark

Where we are now: “What’s Next Middlesex” event dates: Friday, October 26th and Saturday, October 27th at Rumney School. Delia Clark will be lead facilitator, and an agenda for the two days has been drafted. New website is up at www.WhatsNextMiddlesex.org

Reports from Committees:

Site Logistics: Ms. Breidenstein reported that there are 10 breakout rooms at Rumney, but not all of the rooms have adult size chairs. Still exploring the number of adult size chairs available for the auditorium and the break out rooms and they are considering borrowing chairs from Doty. Ms. Levine wondered if we could ask some participants from the dinner to carry chairs to the needed breakout rooms. Ms. Clark said it would be nice to have the transition from dinner to the breakout rooms be as simple as possible without the bother of transporting chairs. Ms. Breidenstein also said the kindergarten and pre-kindergarten rooms will be available for childcare and that Community Connections will provide childcare. CC is looking to find non-Middlesex resident care providers to ensure that Middlesex residents can participate in the breakout groups. Also searching for helpers from the area Foodshelves to assist with clean up after the Friday night dinner (which is this year’s Fall Harvest Dinner/FHD), so Middlesex residents can participate in the breakout groups. Ms. Clark mentioned that Aimee Toth, Rumney Principal, has been an active and welcoming participant in logistics and Rumney student participation planning.

Promotion and Publicity: Mr. Scharf reported that the WNM website is up and running and that the bulk of the work was done by Jeannette Schaffer. Ms. Breidenstein mentioned she had trouble finding the site through a google search and that there was no link to WNM on the Town website. Ms. Clark said she would follow up being sure the link is added. Mr. Scharf also reports that WNM had a booth at the opening Bandstand concert. Glen Sturgis of Capitol Copy donated the banner. Mr. Scharf said the committee talked about several aspects of summer outreach. One will be WNM planners handing out fliers. Ms. Clark supplied a number of fliers (printing also donated by Capitol Copy) and encouraged everyone to take a handful after the meeting to give to neighbors. Ms. Jessup asked if the committee would be creating a presence on social media platforms and Mr. Scharf said that was on the radar and still in the planning stages. Other outreach efforts were talked about, including creating a schedule for Front Porch Forum posts. Ms. Clark said it would be nice to have a diverse group posting at different times. There will also be a mailing in September which is being paid for by the Selectboard. Questions were asked about content of the fliers and the ability to pre-register? Ms. Clark showed a sample flier from a similar event in Haverhill, N.H. She said there would be a lot of info, so further planning will go into creating a flier with perhaps some photos that would create a nice visual. Ms. Reilly asked if the committee planned to have a presence at the August primary. The group agreed this would be a great opportunity to

have a booth outside of the Town Hall. Ms. Breidenstein asked if the mailing for the Fall Harvest Dinner would be combined with the WNM event? Yes. There was some discussion about the need to register. The break out events can accommodate any number, and the dinner will be free, but registration for the dinner is still important for planning. Ms. Levine suggested we offer to enter participants in a raffle if they register. Mr. Levine wondered if we might have to limit the number of participants? Ms. Clark said it is possible for the dinner portion. Ms. Smith said she knew some in town that avoid the FHD because they dislike the crowd. Ms. Anderson asked if the registration could be split?

Food: Mr. Osiecki: Reported that the FHD portion is a well-oiled machine so the Friday night dinner needed less planning. The committee is working on the Saturday mid-morning snack and lunch. Ms. Clark reminded that there is also a mid-afternoon snack. He reported the committee brainstormed having either the 8th graders or 6th graders work (prep and serve) Saturday food as a way to fundraise for school activities (DC trip, or graduation). Ms. Stanley said it is likely the Girl Scout troop would be willing to work on this, but would not be able to confirm until their September meeting. Ms. Stanley and Mr. Osiecki to stay in touch. There was discussion about the usual FHD dinner sponsors potentially expanding their support to the Saturday event. Ms. Clark noted that Honi Bean Barrett has taken the lead on sponsorships. Mr. Osiecki to follow up with Ms. Barrett. Mr. Osiecki then invited any members with ideas to contact either himself, Ms. Barrett or Liz Scharf with any ideas.

Creative Engagement - outreach: Discussion of how to talk to people about the events, particularly those that are harder to reach. Mr. Dwyer said he has experienced some push back from residents when trying to talk about the event. He mentioned the book *Two Vermonts* and the concept of uphillers and downhillers. There was hope that as the event got closer, it would seem more concrete and that would generate its own interest. One of the participants mentioned potentially engaging the local hunters so the event could feature local dishes, like venison or bear burgers. Ms. Smith said it can be good to emphasize the small groups so folks know it is not just a mass meeting, but a chance for real conversation to take place and that the dinner was not a requirement to participate in the small groups. Mr. Scharf asked how other members felt their conversations were going, their “elevator speeches” concerning the event. Mr. Dwyer offered it is helpful to listen to or find out what isn’t necessarily working for them in Middlesex, that often opens up avenues for more discussion. Mr. Levine said people are busy and the time commitment seems daunting. There was some discussion about only needing to commit to the actual event. Coming to the event, and even coming up with an idea that goes forward, doesn’t commit anyone to seeing the idea through to completion. Ms. Levine suggested focusing on the idea of the community gathering. Ms. Anderson said she put less focus on resulting actions that may come out of the forum and more on the act of coming together in a mindful way, to learn about each other and be better neighbors. Ms. Reilly offered some leading questions like: What keeps you in Middlesex? What would keep you in Middlesex? Mr. Levine asked Nancy to provide a list of those questions to the publicity committee as they might be great to include on the WNM website. Mr. Levine invited everyone to send him the names of key Middlesexers and their address (or just the road) so he could compile the names into a spreadsheet and come up with next steps for one-to-one engagement.

Creative Engagement - Arts: Susan Warren is the contact, but Mr. Bushnell reported. He said the owner of the Hive (Ryan Geary) is willing to host a show/kick-off event of artists and craftspeople who live, work, or create in Middlesex, to occur 2 to 3 weeks before WNM. The show would be Middlesex themed art, by Middlesex residents or art inspired by Middlesex. The Hive will donate all of the wall space in the Hive and in

the lobby. The group is exploring including space in the Red Hen, Town Hall, Mud Studio, Nutty Steph's, and perhaps the train station recently acquired by Nick Hecht. Mr. Osiecki suggested follow up with Mr. Hecht to see if the space would be ready in time for the event. Ms. Reilly suggested expanding into artists' homes and creating a Middlesex art map. Ms. Jessup suggested thinking even more broadly - what outdoor items - sculptures, car engines, her husband's boat building hobby. These homes could become part of the art-map or some items might be moved temporarily to the downtown area as "roadside attraction." Mr. Pelchar mentioned the Camp Meade Sunday events would continue through the Fall and the outdoor items would be a great addition.

Youth Involvement: Ms. Clark reported the 3rd and 4th grade teachers were open to working the event into the curriculum. Students would potentially interview older Middlesexers to collect stories and Mr. Hedler would assist with the technology and help create an audio or video presentation for the event. Ms. Reilly suggested looking at the Storycorps format and Ms. Smith added the Vermont Folklife Center might also be a good resource. Ms. Jessup suggested something lower key for the students not interested in interviewing, creating a display with ideas and thoughts about what the town means to them or things they would like to see in the town.

Ms. Anderson will look into recruiting some older Middlesex students to be part of the break out groups and potentially receive credit at U32 for either participating or creating a report. She will touch base with Chris Blackburn, Chris Williams and Wendy Farber to help identify students and explore possibilities with U32.

Further Discussion: Mr. Pelchar asked for more clarification on the event itself and what the purpose is. There was some discussion about the events in general and how they can generate action items that the town incorporates. More discussion too about the value of coming together to listen each other being a worthwhile act in and of itself. Ms. Clark explained that this "tune-up" has been on the mind of the Middlesex Solutions Committee for many years, but when the planning commission now in the process of updating the Town Plan, they decided this was a great time to make this happen. Other concerns were also a growing sense of diversion between different areas of Middlesex and the large amount of change happening at the elementary school. Mr. Pelchar said it sounds like a good time to get out of the backseat and be one of the voices in shaping the future of Middlesex.

Next, followed a discussion of upcoming events. It was decided each committee would send a written update to Susan by August 15th and the next meeting would be September 5th at 6:30 at the Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted by Sorsha Anderson

Follow-up items:

Committees

- Site logistics:
 - borrow enough chairs to accommodate auditorium and all break out rooms, or potentially ask some participants to move chairs from the auditorium to the lower grade break out rooms (and Diana C's room)
 - Securing clean up and childcare from non-Middlesex residents
- Promotion and Publicity:
 - Susan Clark to provide link from Town Website to WNM website

- Committee will create WNM presence on social media
- Will website and mailing registration have a clear option to split the dinner from the discussion?
- Potential to enter registered guests into a raffle (must be present to win)
- Nancy Reilly to supply committee with leading questions, i.e., Why did you choose Middlesex? What keeps you in Middlesex? What would keep you in Middlesex?, etc
- Food:
 - Saturday mid-morning and mid-afternoon snack plus lunch
 - Girls Scouts may participate in snack preparation - Ursula Stanley and Mitch Osiecki to keep in touch
 - Funding questions for Fall Harvest Dinner - Bring Honi Bean Barrett into the loop about FHD supporters potentially expanding support into the Saturday event
- Creative Engagement:
 - Idea to approach local hunters about bear burgers, venison, local cuisine
 - Everyone to email Michael Levine at levine@together.net with the name and address (or just street name) of key contacts throughout Middlesex. Michael will compile a spreadsheet and come up with next steps for one-to-one outreach
- Art:
 - New ideas for Art night kick-off event: create a Middlesex 'artist map' of residents who may like to display items from their homes, residents with outdoor projects/creations of any kind could be included on the map, or items moved to an outdoor downtown location for the Art show event (Ben Jessup's boats as roadside attraction?)
- Youth involvement:
 - Sorsha to follow up with Chris Blackburn, Chris Williams and Wendy Farber regarding Middlesex teens and potential for some type of U32 project credit. Potential to work the entire Fall semester on the event. Goal to have at least one teen in each breakout group. Potentially co-moderators if interest.
 - 3/4 graders project to interview Middlesexers. Susan and Aimee Toth and Chip Hedler - Storycore? Vermont Folk Life? 3/4 graders not interested in interviewing may be able to create something more whimsical - a display of brainstormed ideas, comments or desires for Middlesex.

Upcoming WNM dates/events:

For all events, booth and banner held at Ursula Stanley's home at 34 Bear Swamp Road, 802-224-1334. Contact Susan Clark if more fliers are needed. To volunteer for an empty slot, please email Susan Clark.

Camp Meade:

7/15 - Chris and Sorsha 5-7pm

7/22

7/29

8/5

8/12

8/19 - Emily Smith

Bandstand Concerts:

7/18 - Joanne Breidenstein and Mike Levine

7/25 - Chris and Sorsha

8/1

8/8 - Lauri Scharf

8/15

Primary election

8/14 - at Town Hall: Kim Jessup AM, Nancy Reilly PM

Rumney ice cream social and ribbon cutting for new playground

8/23: Joanne

8/15 - written committee updates to Susan Clark

Site Logistics - Joanne

Publicity - Lauri

Food - Honi

Creative Engagement - Arts - Susan Warren,

Outreach - Michael Levine

Youth Involvement - Teens - Sorsha, Younger students - Susan

Fundraising - Susan

Next meeting: Wednesday, September 5th at 6:30PM, Town Hall