

Middlebury Meeting Calendar

Monday, May 4
Board of Selectmen, 5 p.m.Town Hall Conf. Room
Greenway Committee, 6 p.m.Shepardson, Room 26

Tuesday, May 5
Parks & Recreation Commission, 7 p.m.Shepardson, Room 7

Wednesday, May 6
Budget Referendum, 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.Shepardson, Room 5
Land Preservation & Open Space, 7 p.m.Shepardson, Room 7
Zoning Board of Appeals, 7:30 p.m.Shepardson, Room 26

Thursday, May 7
Planning & Zoning Commission, 7 p.m.Shepardson, Room 26

Monday, May 11
Police Commission, 6 p.m.Police Headquarters

Tuesday, May 12
Library Board of Trustees, 4:30 p.m.Middlebury Library

Wednesday, May 13
Board of Finance, 7 p.m.Town Hall Conf. Room

Monday, May 18
Board of Selectmen, 5 p.m.Town Hall Conf. Room
Public Works Commission, 7 p.m.Public Works

Tuesday, May 19
Water Pollution Control Authority, 7:30 p.m.Shepardson, Room 26

Wednesday, May 20
Beautification Committee, 6:30 p.m.Shepardson, Room 26

Monday, May 25 - Memorial Day Holiday
Tuesday, May 26
Economic Development Commission, 6:30 p.m.Town Hall Conf. Room
Conversation Commission, 7 p.m.Shepardson, Room 26

Find agendas for these meetings at middlebury-ct.org

Poll workers' pay questioned

By **MARJORIE NEEDHAM**

Middlebury First Selectwoman Jennifer Mahr raised questions about Middlebury poll workers pay at the March 18, 2026, Board of Selectmen meeting. Discussion of that issue continued through the April 6 and 20 Board of Selectmen meetings and is expected to continue at the May 4 meeting.

Mahr said she noticed several things about the poll workers' pay for the Middlebury Democratic Town Committee primary. Some workers in the same job category were being paid different rates, and the registrars were paid to work on Election Day even though they receive a stipend. She said some Board of Finance members share her opinion that, if you get a stipend, you should not get hourly pay on top of that.

Mahr proposed paying people in the same categories the same pay and having the moderator, who is in charge on Election Day, receive the highest hourly pay. She noted over the past three years, the moderator pay was slowly being cut while the registrar's pay was increasing.

For the MDTC primary on March 3, Registrar Fran Barton Jr. was paid \$31 an hour for a total of \$480.50 while Moderator Carol Rollins, who worked the same number of hours, was paid \$21 an hour for a total of \$325.50. Assistant Registrar Virginia Guglielmo was paid \$18 an hour while Assistant Registrar Bryan Ferrucci was paid \$26 an hour. All the other workers were paid \$17 an hour.

Registrar Barton told Mahr the registrars have always been paid for working at the elections, and he believed the state required that. Registrar Nancy Robison said they also get paid for the day before and the day after the election, and it's been that way for 34 years.

Mahr said she understood on Election Day moderators were to be at the polls, registrars were to be in their offices for same day registration, and assistant registrars were to be the liaisons between the two. Barton said Room 5 at Shepardson was his office for election days. Robison said she was in the registrars' office or wherever she was needed on election days.

Mahr asked about money being taken away from the moderators and why one assistant registrar was getting paid more than the other. Barton said the chain of command is the registrar, assistant registrar and then the moderator, and that's why the assistant registrar is paid more. When Mahr referred to some paperwork Barton did not have, the discussion was tabled until April 6, 2026.

At the April 6 meeting, Selectman Brian Shaban said poll workers who had not been paid for the March 3 primary contacted him and he wanted to be sure they got paid. Mahr said the five poll workers who had not yet been paid were the two assistant registrars, the moderator and the two registrars of voters. She said that was because of the discrepancies in the pay rate and the registrars

being paid their stipend and additional hourly pay on Election Day.

Mahr said she and town attorney Barbara Schellenberg's research showed there is no authority for the registrars to be paid extra for Election Day. Discussion with Shaban ensued about rolling Election Day pay into their stipend now or in the future. Shaban mentioned this was past practice and people therefore expected to get paid. He suggested paying them now and making changes for the future. Schellenberg said they needed to follow state statute, noting it was done differently in the past, but what was done was not correct.

After much discussion and references to the Moderators Handbook and the 2021 pay plan, it was clear Mahr and Schellenberg believe state statute does not allow the registrars to get paid extra for Election Day. Barton believes they should get paid extra, particularly since there are five elections this year. Shaban said future stipends should probably be increased to cover the registrars' extra hours.

Mahr made a motion to not pay the registrars for the MDTC primary, pay the moderator \$21 an hour and pay the two assistant registrars at the same rate – \$26 an hour. Shaban seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mahr then made a motion to approve the proposed pay plan for the registrars. There was no second. Shaban made a motion to table the discussion so Selectman J. Paul Vance Jr., who was absent, could provide input on the matter. Mahr seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Barton then said the proposed pay plan was missing some titles. Mahr asked him to provide them.

At the April 20 Board of Selectmen meeting, Barton provided the missing titles. When Mahr asked if the list he provided would match the last payment list, he said "for the most part" and then explained there are differences in what is needed for federal, state or local elections, and he moves poll workers around from job to job. The pay plan was not approved because the job categories and it didn't match.

Mahr and Barton continued to disagree on additional compensation for the registrars. She said the registrars have also put in for extra pay for training and going to high school meetings, both of which are included in their job descriptions and should be covered by their stipends.

Mahr said two problems need to be resolved, an equal pay scale for election workers other than the registrars and the registrars as paid elected officials not qualifying as temporary poll workers. With no resolution in sight, Mahr motioned to table the discussion. Shaban seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. It likely will be on the agenda for the May 4 Board of Selectmen meeting at 5 p.m. in the Town Hall Conference Room.

Observe electrical cord safety

By **BRIAN PROULX**

Electrical safety is one of the most overlooked aspects of home fire prevention, yet it plays a critical role in keeping families safe. While the Connecticut Fire Safety Code applies more directly to workplaces, apartment buildings, and structures with three or more dwelling units, local fire officials routinely emphasize electrical safety in one- and two-family homes because that is where most preventable fires occur. When a residential fire does happen, investigators work to determine the fire cause and origin, and if a defective product or unsafe trend is identified, consumer protection agencies or local news outlets may be notified to help warn the public. Electrical cords, adapters, and power strips are common contributors to these investigations, often because they are misused or underrated for the loads placed on them.

Many homeowners rely on devices such as zip cords, multi-tap adapters, and outlet expanders without realizing their limitations. Zip-type cords, sometimes called "multi-tap" or "two-wire" extension cords, often have several outlets on the end or plug directly into a wall receptacle to turn two outlets into six or more. These cords are inexpensive and widely available, but they are not designed to carry significant electrical loads. Most are made with inexpensive components that adversely impact the



amount of current they can carry. As for zip cords, they are usually short, and fire investigators often find these cords daisy-chained together, unintentionally creating a dangerous overload condition.

The challenge is that modern homes rarely have enough outlets for the number of devices we use daily. Between phone chargers, televisions, speakers, streaming devices, and entertainment systems, it's easy to run out of available sockets. Many homeowners turn to inexpensive electrical adapters or bargain-bin power strips to solve the problem, but these products may not meet nationally recognized safety standards. Consumers should always look for certification marks from UL (Underwriters Laboratories) or ETL (Intertek). These marks indicate that the product has undergone rigorous testing and meets nationally recognized safety standards. If a cord or adapter lacks these marks, it is wise to reconsider the purchase.

Grounding is another critical aspect of electrical safety. The round prong on a three-wire plug provides a safe path for electricity if a short occurs. In older homes with two-prong outlets, people sometimes cut off the grounding prong or use a three-to-two prong adapter without attaching the required grounding tab to the outlet screw. Both practices eliminate the safety benefits of grounding and increase the risk of shock or fire.

Power strips and surge protectors are also frequently misunderstood. A power strip simply provides additional outlets and does not regulate voltage or protect against overloads. Surge protectors, on the other hand, contain internal components designed to absorb or divert excess energy. Many have internal trip functionality to protect your electronics. Because surge protectors cost more, many consumers choose cheaper power strips, but that savings can come at the expense of safety. Fire investigators often find melted plastic or internal failures inside overloaded power strips because they utilized components that were not tested by a nationally recognized test laboratory.

Improper cord usage has caused several high-profile fires, including a nationally recognized tragedy in January 2015 in Annapolis, Maryland. An extension cord powering decorative holiday lights overheated and ig-

nited a dry Christmas tree. The fire spread rapidly, destroying the home and claiming six lives. Investigators determined that the extension cord was not rated for the sustained load placed on it. This incident became a national reminder that extension cords are not designed for long-term or high-load use.

Homeowners can significantly reduce their risk by taking a few minutes to inspect their electrical setup. Walk through your home and look for zip cords, multi-tap adapters, and power strips that may be overloaded or lack UL or ETL markings. Check for signs of melting, discoloration, or damage, and replace any questionable devices with properly rated, certified products. Choose cords with thicker wire gauges and grounding plugs whenever possible, and avoid using outlet adapters that increase the number of available sockets without providing proper protection.

Electrical cords may seem simple, but they are responsible for thousands of preventable fires every year. By choosing certified products, avoiding overloads, and using cords as they were intended, homeowners can dramatically reduce their risk. A few minutes of inspection today can prevent a devastating fire tomorrow.

Fire Marshal Brian Proulx is a Middlebury Volunteer Fire Department member.

Golden Technologies

Protect Yourself

By **JUSTIN GOLDEN**

Theoretical physicist Albert Einstein said, "Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving." In our current online environment, you must continually observe what is occurring there and proceed guardedly. Keep your cell phone secure and don't fall for cryptocurrency schemes.

Many of us control our universe via our smartphones, so when we lose them or they are stolen everything seemingly ends until we are reunited with or replace them. Brooke Steinberg recently wrote in "The New York Post" that pickpockets stealing your iPhone will upset your day as well as you having to spend hundreds of dollars on a replacement.

The "Find my" feature requires the phone to be connected to WiFi or a cellular network and the first thing the bad actors do is put it on airplane mode to prevent the device from being able to connect to

a network. Criminals can turn airplane mode on without a password or facial recognition. All they need to do is access the control center, which they can get to from the lock screen by swiping down from the upper right part of the screen.

Anyone can do this on any iPhone without entering a password, but there is a simple way to change these settings to make sure a pickpocket won't be able to turn your iPhone on airplane mode while it's locked.

In the settings app, scroll down to Face ID and Passcodes, select it and enter your passcode. Once you're in, scroll to the section that says, "Allow Access When Locked."

"Control Center" will be turned on by default, so simply toggle it off to change the settings. Once that setting is turned off, you'll still be able to swipe down and access the control center – but you'll have to use a passcode or facial recognition. If a stranger tries to swipe down

from the upper right corner, they won't be able to get in and the iPhone will lock them out. There will be no way for them to turn on airplane mode and disconnect the phone from a nearby network. This will increase your ability to track and find your missing phone.

Kurt the Cyber Guy, the award-winning technical journalist, writes about receiving numerous emails from readers who have encountered new scams. Many involve cryptocurrency. These messages feel urgent, emotional or exciting, and the person reaching out appears confident and persuasive.

Why cryptocurrency? It appeals to scammers as the transactions are quick and usually can't be reversed when completed. Scripts they use vary based upon the scam they are launching. Investment opportunity, romance, government impersonation and technical support emergency are some

they focus on.

Their approach will vary depending on the scenario they are creating. Their messages are friendly and business like, urgent, immediate and use phony results to convince you to pay, give, donate, purchase or share sensitive data.

Kurt urges people to slow down when money is involved. Do not send cryptocurrency to someone you don't know. Verify investment opportunities independently. Use strong antivirus software on your devices. Reduce your personal information scammers can find online. Be cautious with online relationships. Never trust screenshots or profit dashboards.

Continue to be careful and cautious online.

Golden Technology Services, Inc. provides cybersecurity awareness education and testing. Contact them at justin.golden@gts-cloud.com.

In Brief

USPS Food Drive

Donate to your local food pantry simply by setting a bag of healthy non-perishable food near your mailbox on Saturday, May 9. As part of the Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive, your letter carrier will pick it up and see that it is delivered. Food collected in Middlebury will go to the Middlebury Food Bank. Social Services Director Joanne Cappelletti said the need for food has increased dramatically, and the food bank shelves are emptying as fast as they are filled.

Air pollution

A public meeting on cumulative air pollution concerns in Middlebury will be held Thursday, May 14, at 7 p.m. in the Shepardson Auditorium. Middlebury resident Ray Pietrorazio, who has for years represented the town on matters of air pollution, will present a 20-minute overview of his concerns regarding the combined effect of multiple pollution sources affecting the community, including highway traffic, power generation, aviation activity, and proposed logistics development.

Pietrorazio has described the issue as a regulatory gap, noting that pollution sources are typically reviewed individually while residents experience combined exposure. The presentation will be followed by a public question-and-answer session. Residents concerned about Middlebury's air quality are encouraged to attend.

Succulent sale

Help the Make a Home Foundation and give mom a succulent for Mother's Day. Make a Home is selling elegant tea-

cups and vintage china, each thoughtfully arranged with live succulents, a one-of-a-kind gift she'll treasure. Every purchase directly supports their mission to help furnish homes for local homeless veterans – turning compassion in-to comfort and dignity.

Plants at \$15 to \$45 each will be on sale through May 8 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Make a Home Thrift Shop is at 199 Park Road Ext., in Middlebury, CT (second entrance, drive around to the back, and follow the pink signs. Look for the green awning.) Learn more at www.makeahome.org or 203-527-5100.

Quilts that Care

Quilts that Care meets specified Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays at Quilts that Care headquarters at 130 Scott Road in Waterbury. Call the number listed below for dates and times. The group will meet Wednesdays, May 6 and 20, from 12:30 to 2 p.m. at the Litchfield Community Center on Route 202 in Litchfield. For more information, call Deb at 860-782-1043. Quilts that Care Inc., a nonprofit organization, makes and donates quilts to cancer patients at 20 Connecticut facilities.

Artist Day

Flanders Nature Center & Land Trust will host Artist Day Saturday, May 9, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the scenic grounds of the Van Vleck Sanctuary at 5 Church Hill Road in Woodbury. Artists, craftspeople and photographers are invited to explore the landscape and create work en plein air. Please pre-register at [\[ter.org/program-events\]\(http://ter.org/program-events\) or by calling 203-263-3711.](http://flandersnaturecen-</p>
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Coyote program

The Middlebury Land Trust will host Master Wildlife Conservationist Ginny Apple as she presents "The Natural History of Coyotes" Thursday, May 21, at 6:30 p.m. in the Shepardson Community Center Auditorium. Learn more about coyotes' behavior, habitat, reproduction and the important role they play in our ecosystem.

MDTC

The Middlebury Democratic Town Committee will meet Tuesday, May 12, at 7:30 p.m. in Room 5 at Shepardson Community Center.

SMART Meeting

SMART will meet Thursday, May 20, at 6 p.m. in Southbury Town Hall, Room 201. For more information, email mpmrimiano@smartinc.org or visit smartinc.org.

PRWC events

The Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition (PRWC) has the following May events scheduled: May 2 – Streamside Stewardship Day, Lake Stibbs, Southbury, 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.; May 3 – Streamside Stewardship Day, Lake Stibbs, Southbury, 1 – 4 p.m.; May 9 – Sustainable Southbury Energy Fair and Green Expo, Pomperaug Elementary School, 11 a.m. – 3 p.m.; May 13 – Stream Sampling Volunteer Event, Local Streams, 8:30 – 11:30 a.m.; May 16 – "A Toast to the Watershed" Annual Benefit, Winvian Farm, Morris, 1:30 – 4:30 p.m.; and May 20 – Stream Temperature Monitoring Volunteer Event, Local Streams, 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. For details or to

participate, visit www.pomperaug.org/events or contact Watershed Programs Manager Olivia DiPalermo at outreach@pomperaug.org or 203-263-0076.

Parent Connection

The Parent Connection, a support group for those whose loved ones are using or abusing substances, meets Tuesday nights from 7 to 9 p.m. in Father Fanning Hall at St. John of the Cross Church at 1263 West Street in Middlebury. Enter on the lower level on the Westover side of the parking lot.

Shred and recycle

The Tribury Rotary is hosting document shredding and electronic device recycling on various dates in May and June. On Sunday, May 31, the event will be from 9 a.m. to noon at the Southbury Senior Center. Fees for paper are \$5 for one bag and \$10 for a banker's box. Electronic items are \$20 per item. The Woodbury – Southbury – Middlebury Rotary will donate all proceeds to community service activities in the three communities it serves. Visit www.triburyrotaryclub.org. June dates will be posted in the June issue of this paper.

Free meal

For this month's free meal, Master's Table Community Meals is partnering with Huntington Congregational Church in Shelton, and the meal will be there. The free dinner for pickup or dine in will be Sunday, May 17, 2026, from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. or until the food runs out at 19 Church St. in Shelton. For more information, call 203-732-7792 or visit masterstable-meals.org.