

MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY FUND

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date: February 17, 2021 at 11 am via Zoom

Invitees: Theresa Mann, Brigid Browning, Liz Scharf, Amy Brady and Liz Scharf

Agenda:

- Welcome
- Approve meeting minutes
- Work of setting up structure of the Fund
- Next Steps

Notes:

Meeting participants picked up where they left off on February 1, when they were discussing the creation of MCF. Liz mentioned Dave's recent Front Page Forum post citing how there were few funds left in the food shelf bank account at this time for grants. She also raised how Dave was continuing to send out thank you notes to donors using the Middlesex Food Shelf EIN (really the church's EIN), the number given to donors so they could take tax deductions, and how this committee would need to take that over that role once we received our EIN.

Brigid reported that she'd not yet submitted paperwork for the EIN but would shortly. She anticipated the group would put in place a fundraising plan after bylaws and application processes were developed. Brigid then asked Liz to speak to the current need of the community and her thoughts on how fast the group should be moving on putting the Fund together.

Liz discussed current programs available to community members and how additional resources would be available shortly due to upcoming congressional action. Later in the meeting, Liz highlighted the importance of how MCF's fund distribution should not duplicate those efforts already available to those in need, as MCF monies would be discretionary. She explained how there are currently programs in place for people needing help paying their heating bills for example. Amy shared her hope that we at the Fund would not be perceived as case managers in any way. Liz spoke of how she foresaw the Fund as being utilized by the town's older population mostly, and with regard to funding for utilities, she saw it as being a resource for those who may have used up their benefit elsewhere. She also suggested that Fund materials include information on services available to community members needing support. The following organizations were discussed: family centers, Capstone, food shelves, utility companies (WEC has grant program), Dept. of Economic Services (DES), the Salvation Army, Reach Out, 3Squares, WIC.

With regard to getting the EIN and state registration moving forward, Theresa reported that she had acquired a PO box for the Fund, that she had spent \$146 dollars getting the box, and that she would consider that her donation to the Fund. The group thanked Theresa for her generous donation. (MCF's new address is Middlesex Community Fund, PO Box 825 Montpelier, VT 05601).

The group discussed the application process for basic needs and agreed that they would ask applicants for: name, address, email, phone, amount \$ requested, purpose of request, how the funds will be used (include possible examples), "Have you reached out to Washington El. Co-op or Capstone, if you intend to use these funds for heating expenses?", household size, and number of children under 18. The committee agreed they wanted to make the process as easy as possible. Liz mentioned the Mad River Community Fund and the Calais Community Fund as models for us to work from. Amy volunteered to look into those groups and their applications processes. Folks agreed rather than cash grants to individuals, they would provide gift cards to grocery stores, or submit payment directly to vendors on an applicant's behalf. They also agreed grants would only be available to people who live or work in Middlesex.

Before ending the call, Brigid raised the SS-4 form. The group agreed to move forward with the name Middlesex Community Fund on all applications. Brigid mentioned she'd spoken with GoDaddy and that the domain middlesexcommunityfund.org was free, and that along with the email info@middlesexcommunityfund.org, the cost would be \$441. She felt the Central Vermont Women's Giving Circle would help pay for that and a business card website for the Fund. She mentioned that perhaps a call to the Town Clerk letting her know we have a website and email address might alleviate any negative feelings she might have about possibly getting calls about the fund. Liz mentioned that we should put in our announcement about the Fund that we are separate from the Town of Middlesex.

Folks quickly reviewed to do lists before ending the call. Theresa agreed to set up the next Zoom call. (The group agreed to meet at least once every two weeks until the Fund was fully operational.) Amy would look into those local funds. Brigid would work on the registration forms, the GoDaddy registration, and draft bylaws and applications. At 11: 40 the call ended.