

Town of Bristol, Vermont
Selectboard Meeting Minutes of
Monday November 23, 2020

Selectboard members present: Chair Michelle Perlee, Vice-Chair Pecker Heffernan, Ian Albinson, Joel Bouvier, and Darla Senecal.

Staff present: Board Clerk Tasha Bouvier, Town Administrator Valerie Capels, Public Works Foreman Eric Cota, Fire Chief Brett LaRose, Town Clerk Sharon Lucia, Recreation Director Meridith McFarland, Town Treasurer Jen Myers, Police Chief Bruce Nason, and Hub Director Taylor Welch.

Others present: Stacy Carter, Mikaela Frank, Heidi Giroux, Shawn Kimball (NEATv), Courtney Provoncha, Jim Quaglino, Superintendent Patrick Reen, and Krista Siringo.

I. **Call to Order.** Chair Michelle Perlee called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
1. Review agenda for addition, removal, or adjustment of any items per 1 V.S.A. §312(d)(3)(A). Valerie Capels asked that a grant application authorization request to apply for a VTrans Transportation Alternatives program for reconstruction of Basin Street be added under Other Business.

2. Overview of Zoom meeting operation and procedures: rules for participation, mute microphone, recognition by Chair, etc.

II. **Public Forum.** None.

III. Regular Business.

1. Fire Chief Brett LaRose and interview with Firefighter candidate David Fernandes for appointment to the Bristol Fire Department. Fire Chief Brett LaRose introduced David Fernandes and noted he was interviewed on November 10. Ian Albinson moved to accept David Fernandes Firefighter candidate to the Bristol Fire Department. Darla seconded. So voted.

2. Request from Superintendent Patrick Reen to provide an update on Mount Abraham Union School District matters and get Selectboard input. Patrick Reen provided a general overview of the financial landscape under state law that could result in substantial increased costs if difficult decisions are not made to reduce expenses. Doing nothing would result in millions of dollars in penalties on top of other increased expenses. He outlined scenarios of the personnel or facility cost reductions that would be required to avoid the penalties. Superintendent Reen said he has talked with hundreds of citizens and local officials and there was widespread sentiment that the schools play an important part of each community. He said right now they are discussing not closing Bristol Elementary; however, they are looking at possibly changing and using it in different ways. Superintendent Reen said he will be talking with the School Board and giving several scenarios and options the School Board meeting December 7, 2020 and they will then need to decide on what to bring to the voters in March. The community can attend the December 7 meeting.

3. Ratification of Bread Loaf Corp. contract amendment for subsurface soils investigation for the Public Works facility site analysis and feasibility study. This agenda item is to ratify the

Selectboard approval of the additional subsurface soil services contract through BLC. Joel Bouvier moved to approve the subsurface soils investigation contract for the Public Works facility site analysis and feasibility study. Ian Albinson seconded. So voted.

4. Continued review and discussion of draft Winter Road and Sidewalk Maintenance Policies. An updated draft of the proposed Winter Road and Sidewalk Maintenance Policies was reviewed. The section dealing with parking on Garfield Street was broadened to apply to all sidewalks and to be compatible with the winter parking restrictions. There was agreement the Town would accept responsibility for keeping the main intersection clear. Public Works will coordinate with Bristol CORE on the placement of four barrels to be filled with a mix of 50/50 sand and salt. The timing of snow removal on Main Street will be cross referenced with the hours of the winter parking. References to maintenance of Drake Smith and other private roads was removed and will be addressed at a later time. The Selectboard will plan to adopt a final version at the next meeting. Joel Bouvier asked that the flashing yellow no parking sign be updated to specify no parking when the snow ban lights are flashing.

5. Continued consideration of March Town Meeting logistics in the age of COVID-19: Vote whether to apply the Australian ballot system to all articles; Public information meeting(s); Getting information to voters; and Vote whether to waive petition requirements for voter-backed appropriation requests. Following discussion, Ian Albinson moved to do all articles as an Australian ballot system and have at least two information meetings. Peeker Heffernan seconded. So voted. Different options for the informational meetings were discussed, including one in-person meeting and one Zoom meeting, meeting on a Saturday, a hybrid, and having people submit questions in advance. One informational meeting will be the Monday prior to the March 2 Town Meeting. There other will be the Police District meeting on Monday, February 22 that can also be for broader Town Meeting matters. The Selectboard agreed a mailing with Town Meeting information, including the warning and budget, should be sent to all voters.

Ian Albinson moved to waive the requirement for signatures for any current appropriations where there will be no increase, that there be no new requests, and that this year would not count toward the three years needed to satisfy the petition requirement. Peeker Heffernan seconded. So voted.

6. Consider changing property tax due dates from Nov. 5 to Nov. 15 and Apr. 5 to Apr. 15. Ian Albinson moved to change property tax due dates to Nov. 15 and Apr. 15. Joel Bouvier seconded. So voted.

7. Coronavirus COVID-19 update: preparations, response, impacts to municipal operations, and potential actions. Town offices are closed again due to the COVID-19 cases rising. Valerie Capels said there is little new to report, however, a number of communities are beginning to discuss the idea of mutual aid agreements in case whole departments become sick. Although the Bristol's Public Works Department has had informal mutual aid arrangements with the department of neighboring towns for a long time, and they regularly help each other, there are no formal written agreements. Several communities are now exploring developing more formal continuity of operation plans and mutual aid agreements.

8. Budget workshop: Recreation Department, General Fund sections, other stuff. Recreation Director Meridith McFarland and Hub Director Taylor Welch presented their proposed budgets. Meridith noted that the custodian expense has been adjusted as last year was off by one cleaning. They are trying to print less and advertise more on Facebook, and other online platforms. Taylor said she would like to see a Capital Fund for maintenance however Jen Myers said Capital Funds are more for upgrades and the Selectboard had discussed this in the past and any maintenance would just be put into the Department's budget.

There was agreement that Public Safety/Non-District and dog pound-related expenses should be moved to Police Department and that Dog Officer payments become Police Departmental income. Ian Albinson offered to speak with the chairs for the Conservation Commission and Energy Committee and speak with them about their budgets.

9. Request for authorization to use Technology Reserve Funds to purchase new Zoning Administrator laptop computer and peripheral computer items. Valerie Capels reported that the Zoning Administrator's laptop died and needs to be replaced. Ian Albinson moved to authorize the purchase a new laptop and peripheral computer items from the Technology Reserve Fund. Joel Bouvier seconded. So voted.

10. Approval of the October 26, November 2, and November 9, 2020 meeting minutes. Joel Bouvier moved to approve October 26, November 2, and November 9, 2020 meeting minutes. Ian Albinson seconded. So voted.

11. Authorize accounts payable warrant and any liquor licenses. Accounts Payable warrant \$180,942.01.

12. Selectboard roundtable.

a. Joel Bouvier reported that he and Valerie Capels attended a meeting with Addison County Solid Waste Management District on Thursday.

b. Ian Albinson asked about the phone systems and if changes have been made to the numbers. Jen Myers said a lot of people now know the system and know to hit option 5 to reach the Clerk or Treasurer. Jen also recommended eliminating the Lister number, having one single number of 453-2410, and have the Listers' office included in the list of options. She said they could look at changing the message to say "for general inquires press option 5" then go in numerical order after that.

c. Darla Senecal said it was discussed a while ago about changing the wording on the handicap accessible sign and should just say accessible instead.

13. Town Administrator's report. Valerie Capels reported that she will not be in the office this week and will be in the office on November 30 and December 4.

IV. Other Business.

1. Correspondence, reports, correspondence received.

Ian Albinson moved to authorize the Town Administrator to submit a VTrans grant application for the Basin Street and slope project. Joel Bouvier seconded. So voted.

V. Adjourn.

At 11:22 p.m. Peeker Heffernan moved to adjourn the meeting. Joel Bouvier seconded, so voted.

Respectfully submitted,

Tasha Bouvier
Board Clerk

Valerie Capels
Town Administrator