

**Town of Bristol, VT
Selectboard
Minutes of Meeting
Monday, March 13, 2023**

Members Present: Ian Albinson, Joel Bouvier (Vice-Chair), Peeker Heffernan, Michelle Perlee, Darla Senecal (Chair)

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Mark Bouvier (Lister), Valerie Capels (Town Administrator), Anthony Delmonaco (Treasurer), Zac Farnham-Haskell (Rec Coordinator), Brett LaRose (Fire Chief), Sharon Lucia (Town Clerk), Meridith McFarland (Rec Director), Bruce Nason (Police Chief), Taylor Welch (Teen Center Director)

Others Present: Matt Bryan, Richard Butz, Olivia Glascoe, Kevin Holm-Hansen, Shawn Kimball (NEAT), Mike Mulligan, Jim Quaglino, Amy Ritchie, Noelle Rose, Carol Chamberlin (Recording Secretary)

I. Call to Order. Ian Albinson called the meeting to order at 7:05pm.

1. Review agenda for addition, removal, or adjustment of any items per 1 VSA 312(d)(3)(A).

Approval of the March 6, 2023 minutes and a liquor license renewal were added to the agenda.

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

II. Annual Selectboard organization matters:

1. Elect a Chair.

MOTION: Peeker made a motion to elect Darla as Selectboard Chair. Michelle seconded. Darla accepted the nomination. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Elect a Vice-Chair.

MOTION: Peeker made a motion to elect Joel as the Selectboard Vice Chair. Michelle seconded. Joel accepted the nomination. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Designate a regular meeting schedule, subject to occasional modification.

MOTION: Ian made a motion to set the 2nd and 4th Mondays at 7 pm as the regular meeting schedule. Michelle seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

It was agreed to consider an earlier start time for winter months, to be discussed later in the year.

4. Designate The Addison County Independent as the Newspaper of Record.

There was some discussion whether to post items such as the agenda in the newspaper, something which has not been done in the past. It was agreed that, due to the expense involved, an occasional notice regarding Selectboard meetings and where to find the agenda might be useful; otherwise, it was felt that Front Porch Forum and Facebook agenda postings are sufficient.

MOTION: Joel made a motion to designate the Addison County Independent as the Newspaper of Record. Ian seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Designate official posting locations for the Town (currently the Town Office, Lawrence Memorial Library, Bristol Beverage, and Web site).

It was pointed out that Shaw's, a previous posting location, no longer has a bulletin board. It was suggested that Martin's be added as a posting location; however, Valerie expressed concern it might be logistically difficult. Anthony offered to post there on occasion.

MOTION: Joel made a motion to post official notices at the Town Office, Lawrence Memorial Library, Bristol Beverage, the Town Website, and at Martin's Hardware. Ian seconded. There was agreement to include Martin's when possible, but not include it as an official posting location. The motion was amended to add Front Porch Forum as a posting location and Martin's when possible. The amended motion passed unanimously.

6. Authorize Treasurer's Office to process weekly payroll, with the Selectboard approving warrants twice a month.

In response to a question regarding moving to a bi-weekly payroll, Valerie indicated that there would be objections from some employees. Anthony reported that in some respects a weekly processing is easier and doesn't take much time.

MOTION: Ian made a motion to authorize the Treasurer's Office to process weekly payroll, with the Selectboard approving warrants twice a month. Joel seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Peeker left the meeting at this point.

7. Review of Selectboard Rules of Procedure.

The document was available for review, no questions were asked. Valerie reminded the members that email should be used only for organization, coordination, and document sharing purposes. No email conversation between more than two members of the Board may result in decision making, with few exceptions, and any decision made must be ratified at the following Board meeting.

8. Review Conflict of Interest Policy.

This document was also provided to Board members. Valerie emphasized that, particularly in small towns where citizens wear many hats, it may not be necessary to recuse oneself from a matter, but full disclosure of relevant information should be made so that others may weigh in on whether recusal is required. Members who recuse themselves should physically leave the room.

9. Designate Selectboard liaisons to Town departments.

No changes were proposed to the current liaison allocations.

MOTION: Ian made a motion to allocate the following Selectboard members to the following departments: Ian Albinson – Fire, Lawrence Library, and Police;

Joel Bouvier – Lister, Water, and Sewer;
Michelle Perlee - Planning & Zoning, Revolving Loan Fund;
Peeker Heffernan – Public Works;
Darla Senecal – Recreation, Town Office; and
Revolving Loan Fund Michelle Perlee. Joel seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

III. Public Forum.

Nobody present requested to address the Board during this portion of the meeting.

IV. Department Head Roundtable.

Meridith:

- noted upcoming events, including a March 25 Contra Dance and some spring break activities, including a clay studio and possibly swimming activities.
- spoke of theater events in Holley Hall and indicated that rentals are increasing.

Bruce – nothing new to report.

Brett:

- the weekly report to the FD has begun, highlighting administrative efforts and training announcements, to provide more consistent communication outside of the monthly staff meeting.
- an overview of Town Meeting as it relates to the FD was provided last week.
- on April 5 there is a stock fire truck demo coming from NH; this is a potential new vehicle type for Bristol to consider owning.
- asked about capital equipment plans, he would like an agenda item on April 10 to review these with the Board.
- working group that was established last year is looking to establish a training site, proposing that it be located on Town property at West Street. A related document will be shared with the Board.
- on February 27 Brett, Bruce, and Will Elwell of Bristol Rescue put on a training at Mt. Abe for administrators and staff.
- on March 11 there was a walk-through of the Firehouse Apartments to get an overview of the structure before it is closed in.
- ground has been broken on the new manufacturing building behind the fire house.
- annual fit testing has been completed for the FD respiratory equipment.
- looked into erecting a communication tower at the fire station, in order to eventually not need to remain with the expensive lease that is currently in place, but a tower does not comply with current zoning regulations.
- delivery of the new pumper has been delayed several times, but a working group is now scheduled to travel to Wisconsin for final inspection before the vehicle is shipped to NH for installation of specified equipment.
- a new diesel fuel tank has been installed at the station, which is now in compliance.
- FD will be hosting a two-day National Academy course on March 25-26

Sharon:

- elections are complete!
- all articles passed.
- the delinquent tax rate was changed from the floor at Town Meeting.

Anthony:

- working with Bruce on some Police Department grants.
- all financial reporting has been submitted.
- payroll department codes have been established to allow for better reporting logistics.
- working with Sharon to move water reading software to a different computer.
- still waiting to hear information regarding the audit; some requested documents have been provided.
 - Valerie noted she would like the auditors to be at an upcoming Board meeting to review the 2021 audit and answer any questions.

Taylor:

- washer and dryer have been installed; this was in partnership with some other groups.
- working on a grant with Meridith as a Rec/Hub partnership.

Mark – not available

V. Regular Business

1. Consider Bristol Recreation Department Coordinator Candidate: Zac Farnham-Haskell. May include deliberation in executive session regarding personnel matters.

Meridith introduced Zac as a candidate for Recreation Coordinator. Zac provided some background information and spoke of his experience with other area Rec Departments, noting that he can start on April 3. He answered questions, confirmed his interest in being involved in Conservation Commission and Parks work, and indicated his interest in initiating additional fitness activities.

MOTION: Ian made a motion to accept Meridith and Taylor's recommendation to hire Zac Farnham-Haskell as Bristol's Recreation Department Coordinator. The motion was seconded by Joel. All voted in favor.

2. Dog Ordinance Violation Public Hearing: Michael Mulligan, Lower Notch Road.

Valerie provided some background information, noting that relevant materials were posted on the Town website. She outlined complaints had been received regarding dog barking at Mike Mulligan's property dating back to last year. Mike has been issued citations by the Bristol Police Department; the dog was not registered when the first complaint was filed but does currently have a valid dog license. A certified letter had been sent notifying Mike of this hearing, but he was not able to pick it up at the Post Office. Valerie contacted him via phone and email. He indicated he intended to call in to the hearing.

Matt Bryan and Olivia Glascoe provided information regarding the complaints they have filed, explaining that they have been at their Lower Notch Road residence since 2021 and the nuisance dog barking has been a problem since they first moved there. They indicated that incessant barking begins early in the morning and often continues until late in the evening. They also own the blueberry farm in the

neighborhood, which is meant to provide a quiet, peaceful experience, but that is hampered by the barking. At times there is more than one dog barking. Matt and Olivia expressed concern for the animals' well-being in addition to their frustration with the constant barking. They explained that Mike indicated that he began using bark collars, but they do not notice any difference in the frequency of the barking. They also expressed full confidence that the dog barking is at Mike's house, as they can see him through the tree line.

Bruce noted that the Police Department has made three visits to the property to speak to Mike about the barking.

Kevin Holm-Hanson, another neighboring resident, noted that it is not uncommon to hear Mike's dog barking, which can be irritating when trying to work outside. He confirmed that there is not another dog in the area which could be the cause of the barking. Kevin did not recall exactly when the problem arose, but said it has definitely been happening for the past couple of years. He also expressed concern for the dog, stating that barking sounded as if coming from an unhappy animal. He, Matt, and Olivia confirmed that they cannot hear the dog when it is inside Mike's house.

Valerie confirmed that in a conversation with Mike he acknowledged there is another dog there regularly. Questions arose regarding the licensing of that dog, which it was believed is licensed in another town. Sharon explained that the dog registration may be transferred to Bristol.

Valerie indicated Mike had been trying to call in to the meeting but did not have the correct number. Joel used his cell phone to call Mike, who was available via phone during the rest of this hearing.

Mike offered apologies to his neighbors and offered to take full responsibility for the problem. He acknowledged that he has two dogs at his place; the second one is currently registered in Essex, but he intends to register it in Bristol going forward. He explained he has attempted to rectify the situation, using bark collars regularly and installing a dog door so that the dogs have access to both the house and yard while he is away at work during the day. The dog door has been in place for six years, and Mike confirmed the dogs understand how to use it.

Board members discussed options and decided to allow a two-week period for the barking to be resolved. They outlined options that Mike may take to eliminate the problem, including keeping the dogs inside, taking them to a dog day care or having somebody come and care for them while he is away, or engaging a trainer to help with behavior issues. There was consensus that the matter should be reviewed again after the two-week period has ended and Valerie was directed to send Mike a letter reflecting the Selectboard's discussion.

3. Appointment and/or reappointment of Town officers or representatives, including new Conservation Commission candidate Noelle Rose and new ACRPC Delegate candidate Richard Butz. May include deliberation in executive session to discuss appointments.

Richard Butz introduced himself and provided some background information regarding his interest in the Regional Planning Commission's work. In response to questions regarding expansion of natural gas

lines, Richard confirmed that he does not believe in increasing the use of this technology, but explained that his vote would reflect the wishes of the majority of residents should the issue arise again.

MOTION: Ian made a motion to appoint Richard Butz to serve as Bristol's representative to ACRPC. The motion was seconded by Michelle. All voted in favor.

Noelle introduced herself and spoke of her interest in conservation matters.

MOTION: A motion to appoint Noelle Rose to the Conservation Commission was made by Ian. The motion was seconded by Michelle. All voted in favor.

4. Town Meeting Redux.

It was agreed that a clearer explanation needs to be presented when discussing the use of undesignated funds from the previous year's fund balance. Although this will be clarified when an audit is complete, the logistics involved creates confusion among taxpayers.

Joel said he was asked whether the Town receives the income from the penalty/interest assessed on delinquent taxes. Sharon clarified that the 4% charge is a one-time penalty, and there was sentiment expressed that without a penalty in place, there would be little motivation for some residents to pay their taxes on time.

Anthony provided some further tax collection information, and he and Sharon indicated that there is likely an unoccupied home that will be going through the tax sale process this year.

There was a brief discussion regarding potential new structures for Town Meeting/March voting. Ian pointed out the low attendance this year and raised the possibility of moving completely to Australian ballot. There were indications that the low attendance was due to no controversial issues/contested elections being voted on at the Meeting. Sharon pointed out that the length of the paper ballot would be cumbersome, and Ian suggested that it might be possible to merge some items, such as appropriations to local organizations. There was speculation as to whether a different time/day might garner more attendance; Anthony pointed out that the size of the hall limits the number of potential attendees.

It was agreed that more input from the community would be helpful during development of the budget, rather than solely at the point of the budget vote.

5. Selectboard calendar and goals for the coming year.

Valerie explained this is an opportunity to look ahead at the Selectboard's meeting schedule and identify any conflicts, goals, and priorities. Joel commented that he would like to see fully in-person meetings at least occasionally during the coming year. It was agreed this would be beneficial.

Valerie reported that she met with Kevin Hanson regarding Planning Commission implementation of Town Plan goals, and that adding a meeting with the PC to discuss this would be beneficial.

There was discussion about adding the potential for expansion of the Police District to include the Town as well as the Village as a topic for further discussion in June. Pulling together and updating relevant information would be a first step, so that questions may be answered adequately if there is movement toward holding a vote on the expansion.

It was also agreed that further discussion of a new Police Department building and coordination of that with potential expansion should be added.

5.1 Approval of Minutes – March 6, 2023.

Ian and Michelle provided adjustments to the draft minutes.

MOTION: Ian made a motion to approve the minutes of March 6, 2023 as amended. Michelle seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

6. Authorize accounts payable warrant and any liquor or tobacco licenses.

The warrant was for the amount of \$45,908.79. A liquor license application had been received from Hogback Mountain Brewing.

MOTION: Michelle made a motion to approve the application for renewal of a First Class and Outside Consumption license for Hogback Mountain Brewing. The motion was seconded by Joel. All voted in favor.

7. Selectboard Roundtable.

Michelle thanked the voters for attending Town Meeting and casting Australian Ballot votes.

Ian mentioned an article regarding Hinesburg's discovery of PFAS in their drinking water related to the closed town dump. It was noted that the Bristol dump was closed according to regulations. Valerie is looking into how PFAS levels are being monitored.

Ian noted he had attended a meeting where Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP) funding opportunities that may be available to the Town and Library were presented. These monies would be for energy audits.

Joel asked about email protocols in relation to Valerie's querying the Board members regarding staff professional development training. Valerie indicated that the particular email to which Joel was referring had only two responses, but if a decision had been reached, it would have been ratified at the next meeting.

Joel noted he had sent an email to Valerie regarding a Job Corps person coming to look at the trees at the cemetery on Hardscrabble Road.

Joel asked if the proposal was ready to be published for bids on the Pine Street water project. Valerie indicated they are waiting for final authorization of the bid package from the State, and they realize the competitive bid window was closing.

Joel said he was asked several times at Town Meeting whether the Town Office might be open on Fridays. He would like to discuss this matter further at some point, including the possibility of opening for half of the day.

8. Town Administrator's Report.

Valerie had nothing to add to her written report.

She clarified for Board members that her decision to require professional development training for Department heads was made after lack of response to her query by more Board members.

VI. Other Business.

1. Correspondence/reports received were reviewed.

Valerie noted that some items of interest were listed in her Town Administrator's written report.

VII. Executive Session.

MOTION: Michelle made motion to enter Executive Session pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(2) (Real Estate) and/or 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3) (Personnel). Ian seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting entered Executive Session at 9:40 pm and returned to open session at 10:14 pm. No action was taken.

VIII. Adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 10:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Chamberlin, Recording Secretary