

**Town of Bristol, VT
Selectboard
Minutes of Meeting
Monday, December 4, 2023**

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

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Valerie Capels (Town Administrator), Bruce Nason (Police Chief)

Others Present: Porter Knight, Jim Quaglino, Sally Roth, Jessica Teets.

I. Call to Order. Darla Senecal called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

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

Consideration of an Errors and Omissions Report, a Personnel Policy clarification regarding December 24, and authorization of a grant application for the Police Department were added under the Other Business portion of the meeting.

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

II. Public Forum.

Jim Quaglino offered some comments regarding his thinking that an Equity Committee isn't necessary, given Bristol's small population and his seeing a potential for such a committee creating issues that don't exist.

III. Regular Business

1. Water Commission: Review and approve corrections to the FY2024 Water District budget.

Valerie had provided a summary of this budget information and noted that the approved budget in June contained some errors. Subsequent corrections have reduced the projected revenue figure by about \$6K, which Valerie proposed be reflected in a reduction of the Capital Fund by the same amount. She noted, however, that the overall budget is still higher than the prior year, including the new projected revenue amount. It was also confirmed that the 3% billing rate increase is included and is correct. Valerie explained that the funds to be used for the Lawson Lane agreements will come from the Capital Fund, and so there will be no impact to this budget.

Questions arose regarding the Capital Equipment Fund line, and whether this was to be used for meter purchases or for rebuilding and maintaining pump systems. It was decided that Jill Marsano should be consulted to clarify this line, and its relation to the Capital Improvements Fund line. Valerie will also determine the actual expenditure(s) included in the \$4989 in the Capital Equipment line.

Further discussion of this matter will take place at the next Selectboard meeting.

2. Consider the creation of a new Equity Committee and appointment and/or advertisement for members to be on it: Porter Knight.

Porter explained that the proposal for creating an equity committee resulted from the first round of work completed under the Vermont Community Foundation grant award and that it is intended the committee would help move the work forward begun under that grant. The group is now in its second grant cycle award, and the work of the new committee would be under that umbrella. Porter had

outlined in a letter that committee would “explore ways to ensure and bolster Bristol’s position as a welcoming and inclusive community, will advise the town on Equity issues, make recommendations for action to the SB, assist residents and businesses in understanding equity and reducing harm from discriminatory practices, and develop practices to put the town’s Declaration of Inclusion into action at all levels within government and the community.”

There was some discussion regarding whether there is enough interest from community members to serve on such a committee, and what strategies might be utilized to ensure that people representing marginalized community members would be appointed. The discussion acknowledged that people serving on such groups are generally those who are more privileged. It was confirmed that, although the school district is also working on similar issues, the funding for this committee’s work is from this municipal grant, and so it would need to be a Town committee. Porter also pointed out that the work of this committee and its member composition would enable follow through on the Selectboard’s adoption of a resolution to increase inclusion. Jessica Teets noted that one specific task the committee might take on is ensuring that the Town’s employment ads are written in a manner to reach a broader audience.

The possibility of creating an ad hoc rather than an official municipal group was raised, but it was realized that there would be accountability and representation issues associated with that approach.

Further discussion of potential advertising strategies took place, as well as some suggestions for what the composition of the committee should be in regard to town officials. Darla offered to serve as a Selectboard member, and Valerie suggested that somebody from the Rec District could likely provide town employee representation.

It was decided that, before going any further with details, an ad should be composed and posted appropriately that will serve to gauge interest in the committee, and learn of anybody potentially interested in joining. Valerie will work with Porter to draft this text and have it noticed.

3. Consider quote from NorwichEV for installation of two Level 2 EV chargers for the Vermont EV Chargers grant application and authorize Richard Butz to submit the application.

Richard explained that the Energy Committee has been seeking funding for charger installation, and that this program is very suitable, with 95% of costs covered. He provided some financial information, indicating that the cost to the Town for the installation would be approximately \$860, with a projected \$500 annual cost once the equipment is in use. The cost covered by the grant and other subsidy would be just over \$45K. The chargers are estimated to provide 40-50 miles of travel per hour of charging.

There was some discussion about whether the project should be put out to bid to get other quotes. Richard explained a quote is required as part of the application process and Norwich was the only company that responded; others were too busy. Valerie noted that now that Norwich’s quote has been made public, putting it out to bid would not be fair competition. The procurement policy does allow for the Selectboard to sole-source in the best interest of the Town.

Concerns were expressed about the proposed location on West Street along the south side of the Town Green. There was some discussion of the suitability of other location possibilities.

Richard also noted that it is likely that further proposals from the Energy Committee will include establishing a park and ride with Level 3 charging available.

MOTION: Ian made a motion to apply for EV Chargers grant, using the available bid information. The motion was seconded by Michelle. All voted in favor.

Richard also reported that the application for funding the assessment of town buildings has been approved, and that Holley Hall, the Library, and Howden Hall will be included in the project, determining where weatherization and potential changes to heating/cooling systems might be beneficial. He indicated that the assessment will result in a full report with cost estimates included.

Valerie noted that a contingency to allow for potential change of location or other cost factors should be included in the budget being developed. She also noted that a park and ride with a charging station would be very beneficial, but it is not likely that long-term charging locations would need Level 3 chargers.

4. Review of preliminary budget information, process, goals, and schedule.

Valerie reported that a preliminary budget spreadsheet was still a work in progress. She noted that appropriation requests are coming in for higher amounts than provided last year, and that health insurance costs will be up about 12.8%. Valerie also explained that there will likely be some inaccuracies to work through due to the absence of a Town Treasurer.

The upcoming Selectboard meeting schedule was reviewed, with consideration of the time needed for budget preparation. It was decided to hold regular meetings as scheduled on 12/11, 12/18, 1/8, and 1/22, and to hold budget-specific meetings on 1/15 and 1/29. Additionally, it was agreed to temporarily begin meetings at 6:00pm starting on 12/11, and to tentatively only hear from Department Heads for budget discussions. It will be evaluated in January if any additional meetings are necessary.

Board members requested that information regarding the projected fund balance from June 2023 be made available.

5. Review and potential approval of revised Bristol Revolving Loan application materials.

This item was postponed until an upcoming Selectboard meeting.

6. Review and approval of the November 13, 2023 and June 27, 2022 meeting minutes.

MOTION: Michelle made a motion to approve the minutes of November 13, 2023 with the changes provided incorporated. The motion was seconded by Joel. All voted in favor.

Approval of the June 27, 2022 minutes was postponed.

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

The warrant was for the amount of \$48,616.33.

No liquor licenses needed to be considered for approval.

8. Selectboard Roundtable.

No topics were raised during the Roundtable.

9. Town Administrator's Report.

Valerie had nothing to add to her written report.

IV. Other Business.

1. Correspondence/reports received were reviewed.

Valerie noted that Bristol's Downtown Designation renewal will be due by April 1, 2024.

2. Consideration of an Errors and Omissions Report from the Listers.

MOTION: Joel made a motion to approve the Errors and Omissions Report as presented. The motion was seconded by Peeker. All voted in favor.

3. Consider approving a Homeland Security grant application for the Police Department.

Bruce explained that, if awarded, these funds will be used to replace outdated vehicle radios. The estimated cost is approximately \$40K, with no match required.

MOTION: Michelle made a motion to approve the VT Department of Public Safety, Homeland Security grant request for Police Department radio replacement. The motion was seconded by Peeker. All voted in favor.

4. Consider request for use of Christmas Eve holiday paid time on Friday, December 22.

Valerie noted that Bristol's personnel policy provides for an additional four hours holiday on Dec. 24; however, this year it falls on a Sunday. Board members agreed that, because the December 24/Christmas Eve holiday falls on a Sunday, no leave time will be granted for Christmas Eve in 2023.

V. Executive Session re personnel matters per 1 V.S.A. §313(a)(3), real estate negotiations per 1 V.S.A. §313(a)(2), and potential contract negotiations per 1 V.S.A. §313(a)(1)(A).

MOTION: Michelle made a motion to enter Executive Session for the purpose of discussing personnel matters per 1 V.S.A. §313(a)(3), real estate negotiations per 1 V.S.A. §313(a)(2), and potential contract negotiations per 1 V.S.A. §313(a)(1)(A). The motion was seconded by Joel. All voted in favor.

The Selectboard met in executive session from 8:52pm to 9:15pm. Upon returning to open session the following action was taken:

MOTION: Michelle made a motion to offer bonuses to Sharon, Kris, and Gail as discussed to acknowledge the additional duties and work loads they have taken on in the absence of a Town Treasurer. Joel seconded. All voted in favor.

VI. Adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 9:17pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Chamberlin, Recording Secretary

Valerie Capels, Town Administrator