

**Town of Bristol, VT
Selectboard
Minutes of Meeting
Monday, October 14, 2024**

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

Staff Present: Valerie Capels (Town Administrator); Eric Cota (Public Works); Brett LaRose (Fire Chief); Sharon Lucia (Town Clerk); Bruce Nason (Police Chief); Kris Perlee (Assistant Treasurer and Town Clerk); Taylor Welch-Plante (The Hub)

Others Present: Betsy Almeter, Lori Atkins, Phoebe Barush, Janet Chill, Ed Clark, Colby, Linda Cormany, Vicki Coyle, Paul Forlenza, Theresa Gile, Elizabeth Guilbeault, Missy Holland, Marin Howell, Scott Kluever, Lisa's iPad, Jill Marsano (VTUMS), NEAT, Bryan Plant II, Jim Quaglino, CS, Will Sipse, Gerry Slager, Cookie Steponaitis, Chris Sullivan, Bern Terry, Patirica Waugh, David Weaver, Mary Yates

I. Call to Order. Joel Bouvier called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

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

No changes to the agenda were necessary.

II. Executive Session re personnel matters per 1 V.S.A. §313(a)(3).

MOTION: A motion to enter Executive Session for the purpose of discussing personnel matters per 1 V.S.A. §313(a)(3) passed unanimously.

The meeting entered Executive Session at 6:01 pm and returned to Open Session at 6:31 pm.

III. Call to Order. Joel Bouvier called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm.

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

The minutes available for review were clarified; Valerie noted that she had sent some information regarding item 8 to Board members via email; the results of the Executive Session were added as item 1A.

1A. Action related to Executive Session

MOTION: Peeker made a motion to hire the candidate interviewed in Executive Session as the Community Resource Specialist for the Town of Bristol. The motion was seconded by Michelle, and passed unanimously.

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

IV. Public Forum.

Nobody requested time to address the Board.

V. Department Head Roundtable.

Kris Perlee (Assistant Clerk, Treasurer):

- Direct debit is available for tax payments, other online payment options as well for various types of payments due
- An in-house reconciliation of the books will be happening this year

Sharon Lucia (Town Clerk):

- General election is coming up – people should let Sharon know if no ballot was received
- Voters should bring their ballot with them if they vote in person
- Local election ballots are now available, they can be mailed upon request or voted in person
- Water bills out by end of week for September read

Brett LaRose (Fire Chief):

- Thanked the community for their support at the annual coin drop
- Next Saturday is annual food drive – benefits the five town food shelf
- Connex box construction is ongoing – gratitude for the many hours of volunteer time spent on this project

Bruce Nason (Police Chief):

- Offered hanks for supporting the hiring of the Community Resource position

Eric Cota (Public Works):

- Fall/winter preparation work is underway
- Lincoln Road scheduled for paving this week
- A North Street resident has requested permission to lower the sidewalk at their driveway due to low vehicle clearance. There was some discussion of the need to address the water from adjacent parcels washing out the gravel, which Board members noted should also be addressed; the Board had no objections to adjustments being made as long as Eric provided specifications to be followed.

AZ Larsen (Planning and Zoning):

- Permitting was active through the summer, but is slowing down
- Several DRB hearings have taken place
- Time spent working with the PC on housing matters will be increasing

Taylor Welch-Plante (Hub Teen Center):

- The Hub is seeing between 30 – 50 attendees per day, a result of some promotional activity as well as word of mouth; this has meant some growing pains, but things are generally going well
- Restorative practices have been effective when needed
- Several outings are coming up; Chill provides a skateboarding program
- The RFP for skate park design is nearly ready for publication

VI. Regular Business

1. Consider closing the west end of Briggs Hill Road at least for the winter, if not permanently: DPW Foreman Eric Cota.

Valerie outlined that the major slide experienced on the Road has led to its becoming open for one-way traffic; the traffic lights in place are not charging adequately on solar power and would require a generator be used to keep them working. The road in its current condition is not safe for plowing, and

so it is being suggested that it be closed for the winter. Eric provided some more details about the slide and the gradual changes being seen, and explained that he will adjust the winter plow route so that plowing will be via Lincoln Road, across Atkins Road to the other end of Briggs Hill and back. He outlined where barriers would be placed and spaces which will be used for turning plows around. Eric had confirmed that there are no school bus pickups on Briggs Hill Road. Valerie noted that her TA report contains a discussion of alternatives and the need for a broader community discussion on options for moving forward long-term, including a discussion of emergency response considerations. It was agreed that coordination with Lincoln for emergency services will be necessary.

Will Sipsey expressed concern regarding the ability of GMP to access power lines if necessary while the Road is closed. Peeker explained the line configuration, and indicated that access to the lines will not be blocked by the proposed closure.

Several people spoke, generally agreeing with the need to close the Road for the winter. Some concerns and ideas were raised, however, including:

- A better long-term option may be closing Lincoln/River Road, as it is likely to get washed out repeatedly
- A need for speed/traffic control on Colby and Atkins Roads
- Impacts to the condition of Atkins Road due to increased use
- The loss of a main thoroughfare for Lincoln residents to access Bristol
- Impacts for emergency service vehicles
- Lincoln residents depend on/support Bristol businesses

Patricia Waugh noted that she will let Lincoln's road crew know of Eric's planned plowing route, and indicated that Lincoln will look into what they can do to assist with the matter going forward. It was suggested that any related grant applications be submitted jointly by the two towns, which may increase the likelihood of an award.

Eric noted that with Lincoln Road open, the traffic on Colby and Atkins should lessen. He also reiterated that Briggs Hill is unsafe for any use of plow trucks this winter.

It was confirmed that as of now there is no timeline in place for reopening the Road.

Valerie spoke again about holding broader community discussions once there is more engineering information to consider, with the ability to consider multiple options and potentially brainstorm additional possibilities for solutions. She noted that over \$125K has already been expended by Bristol in preliminary engineering work related to the issue.

Ian mentioned that a scoping study was completed in 2021 that addressed both Lincoln and Briggs Hill Roads, and that the report generated may be useful.

MOTION: Peeker made a motion to close Briggs Hill Road no later than November 1, for at least the winter season. The motion was seconded by Ian, and passed unanimously.

2. Consider whether to purchase a one-year lease for a weather station on Upper Notch Road to help the Public Works Department evaluate weather conditions there.

Eric explained that this would serve as a test installation, and that the equipment provides both temperature readings and visual information so that he can monitor the road from town, saving time and fuel. The cost of the one-year lease is \$3K.

Eric will verify that the system's satellite connection will be adequate in the proposed location. He explained that he and one other crew member will have access to the system via their cell phones, and confirmed that there are funds available in the DPW budget to cover this cost.

MOTION: Michelle made a motion to approve leasing the weather station for one year for placement on Upper Notch Road as proposed by Eric, after it is confirmed that there will be adequate satellite/cellular service available in that location. The motion was seconded by Jessica, and passed unanimously.

3. Consider approval of access permit application #2024-04DA for Stan Livingston, Devino Lane, per the DPW Foreman's recommendations.

Eric explained that this application is for both access and permission to work in the ROW; the location was clarified for Board members. Gerry Slager, an adjacent landowner, was present, and submitted a letter to the Board. He explained that the letter indicates he is not opposed to a house being built on the parcel, but he has concerns with the potential for the annual spring flooding which affects his property to be exacerbated by the development. He noted that he has spoken with Stan, who has offered assurance that any additional runoff will be addressed; Jerry asked that this be confirmed by the Town.

It was noted that Eric's suggested conditions for issuance of the permit include that a culvert may be required to be added to the site if it is determined that the water running into neighboring properties has not been addressed adequately. Jerry provided some photos of his property when spring flooding was taking place; Eric indicated that he did not realize the flooding could be so extreme, and expressed that a dry well on the Livingston property might better address the situation. It was suggested that the Board might impose a condition requiring that the site be engineered before the driveway is constructed.

There was some further discussion of what the most appropriate solution might be; Jill explained the water line configuration in that area, and offered to send a depiction of the line locations to Valerie. It was noted that any solution involving diverting water to another location or underground would require that the soils are able to absorb the runoff. It was agreed that Eric should have a further discussion with Stan and provide more information before the Board makes a decision on this matter.

4. Public Hearing -- Proposed Amendments to Bristol's Unified Development Bylaws.

Joel opened the Public Hearing, and asked if any of those present had questions or concerns regarding the proposed Bylaw amendments. It was explained that this is the final Public Hearing, but that two

informational meetings are scheduled to be held prior to the vote taking place on November 4. Valerie noted that all related documents are available on the Town website.

After offering some clarifications prompted by a question posed by Porter Knight, the Public Hearing was closed.

MOTION: Ian made a motion to accept the updated Unified Development Bylaws for adoption. The motion was seconded by Michelle, and passed **with Ian abstaining?**

5. ARPA funding update and guidance on final allocations: Assistant Treasurer Kris Perlee.

Kris had provided a memo, explaining the logistics of allocating and obligating ARPA funds, noting that an agreement for each allocation needs to be in place by the end of 2024, with funds to be spent by the end of 2026. He explained that the remaining funds may be obligated towards existing expenses, such as payroll amounts already incurred, but they may not be used to offset debt. It was discussed that allocating a portion - \$530K recommended by Kris – to payroll would free up funds in the budget for use in other budget areas or for creating a reserve fund at the end of the year, as the positive balance created by this allocation would become unassigned funds.

Kris explained that this solution will need to be run by the auditors before finalizing. Ian noted that some form of documentation/agreement with the organizations to whom funds have been provided may also be required by the ARPA program, and suggested that this be confirmed with VLCT. It was agreed that this matter will be considered by the Board in two weeks once these clarifications and confirmations have been provided.

Porter Knight, as the lead of the ARPA Committee, offered that this strategy does not indicate that the Board is not following through on the Committee's recommendations, as it leaves open the possibility of funding additional projects which were suggested by that group.

6. ARPA funding requests: Lawrence Memorial Library for outdoor classroom; Peace Garden renovation; Recreation Department position from part-time to full-time.

Scott Kluever, Library Trustee, reviewed the outdoor classroom proposal for the Board, explaining that the goal is to utilize outdoor space to both increase capacity and offer a wider variety of programming. He provided an explanation of the current property configuration and some drawings of the proposed plans, which include two new storage sheds (replacing an older shed), some shade sails, and a gazebo. He outlined the material costs of \$40,450 and explained that volunteers would provide the labor. Valerie spoke of adding a contingency and also potentially adding bollards to the plans due to the increased number of vehicles and people at the Library. Scott explained that portable bollards are included in the proposal, as well as other signage to warn that children may be present.

MOTION: Ian made a motion to allocated \$50K of ARPA funds for the Library's outdoor classroom proposal as outlined. The motion was seconded by Jessica.

Ian explained that the Library is a separate entity, and it was agreed to allocate the funds now and address any resolution/contract needs after the related ARPA logistics are clarified by Kris.

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously.

Phoebe Barush provided some background regarding Bristol's Peace Garden and explained that a large restoration project is in the planning stages, mostly to replace the timbers which are breaking down and creating a safety hazard. The estimated cost of the project is \$20K, and donations are being sought from local groups and businesses; grant applications may also be completed as suitable. The group undertaking the project is requesting \$1500 from the Town's ARPA funds. Linda Cormany was also present to support this request.

Porter offered support for this project, noting that the ARPA Committee would likely have found the restoration work appealing. Board members also spoke of supporting the project, and asked that Phoebe and Linda come back to the Board with a larger request if needed after learning results from other requests which are in progress. Ian mentioned that adding water availability at the site might be a beneficial expansion of the project.

Taylor explained that the Recreation Department request for ARPA funds is to provide for a Hub employee who runs the Elder Eagle program to have her time increased to 32 hours a week. She outlined that currently this employee is often working about 27 hours a week, which make her responsible for covering the VMERS costs associated with her employment level. The full cost of covering this time increase through 2026 would be \$25K. Taylor provided some information regarding the success of the program and plans for expansion, with an intention to increase fees in order to cover the expanded employee hours needed to continue running a successful program for seniors.

Board members expressed concern regarding covering salaries with ARPA funds, as those will only provide a short-term solution for positions that may need to be supported going forward. Taylor spoke of the population that is served by this position, and that as these needs become more well-known there may be a larger number of suitable grants available. Porter also noted that the ARPA Committee was uncomfortable with funding positions, except for the Grant Writing position, which they felt would be self-sustaining. Joel noted that placing this in the Department's budget provides a better way for voters to weigh in on the position.

Board members and Porter spoke of support for the program being something worth investing in, but expressed hesitation regarding the use of ARPA funds for this purpose. Ian mentioned supporting the Grant Writing position for another year, as a way to help the Rec Department find grants to fund the position.

Taylor explained that the employee will potentially not stay in the position if the hours are diminished in order to avoid the VMERS expense, noted that there have been efforts to address this situation as it relates to this position for several years, and asked that something be done for an interim time frame.

Ian indicated that knowing where the Recreation Department budget currently stands would be helpful when deciding on this proposal, and Jessica noted that it would also be beneficial to understand what the plan will be going forward regarding funding the position.

Other options were mentioned which would allow for resolution of the VMERS issue but not require that the Town pay health benefits; Taylor indicated that this would be a viable option.

It was agreed to consider this proposal in two weeks once the additional information requested has been made available.

7. Water Commission: Review and provide feedback on letter to customers regarding the approved water rate and structure update: Kris Perlee.

Kris presented the letter for review; it was agreed that the focus on equity and the need to complete improvements to the system was the proper messaging. It was suggested that a table at the bottom of page 2, providing examples, would be helpful. Kris will send out a revised draft for review; he explained that the plan is to include this letter with the upcoming water bill mailing.

8. Water Commission: Tentative – Consider water distribution line and water line connections permit application for the T&M Bouvier residential subdivision at 68 Pine Street.

Joel recused himself from this discussion/decision as a Board member, instead participating as the applicant.

Plans were available for review; Joel explained that the line is completed up to the first curb stop and that the additional curb stops are all planned to be located inside the utility ROW. He also confirmed that the easement language proposed for Town access is a replication of what was approved for the recent Jay Drive line installation. Jill confirmed that the materials and design plans are all in place correctly, and that it is appropriate for the Town to take over the first portion of the line.

MOTION: Jessica made a motion to accept Jill's recommendation and to approve the water distribution line and water line connections as applied for by the T&M Bouvier subdivision at 68 Pine Street, with the conditions outlined by Jill incorporated. The motion was seconded by Peeker, and passed unanimously.

9. Review and possible approval of Town Administrator job description updates.

It was agreed to schedule an additional Board meeting for Monday, October 21 at 6 pm in order to discuss both the Town Administrator and Planning and Zoning Administrator job descriptions.

10. Review and possible approval of Planning & Zoning Administrator job description updates.

Postponed until October 21.

11. Review of meeting minutes.

MOTION: Michelle made a motion to approve the minutes of September 9, 2024 with the changes she had provided to Valerie. The motion was seconded by Jessica, and passed unanimously.

Approval of the minutes of August 12 and September 23, 2024 was postponed so that Board members had time for review.

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

The warrant was for the amount of \$885,334.93

No liquor or tobacco licenses were reviewed.

13. Selectboard roundtable.

Ian reported that he is continuing to work on the project management software, and that he will be meeting with Library personnel to discuss grant application information.

Joel suggested that some additional signage for pedestrian safety be installed at the traffic lights.

Joel asked for the sunflowers at Maple and West to be tended to as they create a visual barrier.

Joel asked why the Library is no longer flying the US flag; Jessica indicated that she would look into this, suggesting that the current work on the stairway may be the reason.

14. Town Administrator's report.

Valerie had nothing to add to her written report.

VII. Other Business.

1. Correspondence/reports received were reviewed.

VIII. Adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 9:52 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Chamberlin, Recording Secretary