

**Town of Bristol, VT
Selectboard
Minutes of Meeting
Monday, January 8, 2024**

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

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Valerie Capels (Town Administrator), Eric Cota (Public Works), Brett LaRose (Fire Chief), Sharon Lucia (Town Clerk), Meridith McFarland (Recreation Director), Bruce Nason (Police Chief), Taylor Welch (Hub Teen Center)

Others Present: David Flaschenriem, Jill Marsano (VTUMS), Jim Quaglino

I. Call to Order. Darla Senecal called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm.

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

An item related to questions regarding petitions for appropriations was mentioned as a potential addition; Peeker confirmed that organizations requesting either level funding or a decrease from the previous year do not need to submit a petition, and so there was no need to add any further discussion.

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

II. Public Forum.

Nobody offered comments during the Public Forum portion of the meeting.

III. Department Head Roundtable.

Department updates were not requested, as the Board had many other issues to cover. Department heads were encouraged to send an email if anything needs to be brought to the Board's attention.

IV. Regular Business

1. Review and consideration of Energy Committee candidate David Flaschenriem to fill a vacant seat that runs to March 2024.

David Flaschenriem spoke of his interest in serving on the Energy Committee and his experience in energy efficiency and sustainability.

Valerie pointed out that Energy Committee terms are currently all for one year. Board members discussed how to implement staggered terms. It was decided to ask the Energy Committee members to identify staggered terms of one, two, and three years and who to fill which seats. The Selectboard would formalize the reappointments in March.

MOTION: Ian made a motion to appoint David Flaschenriem to the Energy Committee for a term ending in March 2024 and to work through term lengths with Committee members at that point. The motion was seconded by Peeker. All voted in favor.

2. Review upcoming meeting schedule for budget, capital budget, Town Report, and Town Meeting preparations.

Valerie outlined the upcoming schedule of meetings with overall budget review, work through the various departments, capital projects, and other budget related matters. She noted that January 22 is set aside for another UDR hearing and to have a discussion of the logistics related to adoption of the document due to the substantive changes proposed by the Board. January 29 has been scheduled as an opportunity to finalize the budget and Town Meeting warnings if not accomplished at the January 22 meeting.

3. Budget workshop: preliminary budget review for Public Works Department, Recreation Department, Police Department, and other sections if available.

Three Department budgets were reviewed, with Valerie generally making updates as agreed upon during the discussion.

Public Works Department Budget – Eric Cota

The following was noted regarding this budget:

- State allocations and therefore highway revenues are up, but total revenues are down.
- The auditors had aggregated some categories, which have now mostly been broken out again.
- Grant income is generally not included as potential revenue because they are accounted for in separate funds tied to projects as they are undertaken.
- Act 76 calls for childcare financial assistance contributions (starting July 1, 2024) to be added as a payroll tax: 0.44% of salary total; 0.33% must be covered by employers; 0.11% may either be contributed by employers or paid by employees. There was consensus among Board that taxpayers should not be picking up any cost for this, as many residents will be paying it as well through their employer.
- Health insurance premiums up approximately \$100/single and \$200/family coverage.
- Vehicle parts are up due to inflation, emissions parts in particular.
- Tires are generally in good shape, so he did not increase that budget line.
- Rubbish removal is up because they are picking up trash more frequently along the roads and the cost of disposal rising.
- Large increases are being experienced for stone needed for ditching. This is increased to keep up with State requirements
- Culvert costs are up.
- Tree work line up due to plans for planting additional, larger-caliper trees, as well as tree removal and trimming. Valerie noted a grant has been applied for which, if received, will help offset some of the additional tree work expense.
- Contracted services up – bigger projects on the horizon which will need specialized machinery.

- Stormwater drainage: Munsill Avenue and potentially Pine Street to be completed with in-house work. The Pine Street work is likely to cost about \$32K. Valerie noted that Capital Funds also available.
- Bond payments are expected to be about the same as the current year.
- Overall increase of 2.6%

There was some discussion of the use of brine in future winter seasons. Eric confirmed that salt costs would be reduced and that he is considering looking into sharing the necessary equipment with a neighboring town. He noted the brine is rougher on the equipment, causing more corrosion, which impacts the vehicles on the roads as well.

Recreation Department Budget – Meridith McFarland and Taylor Welch

The following was noted regarding this budget:

Revenues

- Revenues are up for program registrations.
- 20% of Bristol Youth Sports registration fees will go to the Rec Department. The BYS percentage is included in the \$60K registration fee line with \$2K, as an estimate. Further clarification might be necessary, for now it was agreed that BYS revenue will go to the new BYS fund, and then the 20% transferred to the Rec Department.
- Pottery and Swimming revenues are up.
- Holley Hall event revenue up.
- Year to date actuals will be updated for the next budget review session.

Expenditures

- They are proposing to change the Assistant Director to full time for Rec Department. Zac will still be available for the Hub as needed, but he will now be focusing on the BYS programs.
- Year to date actuals need updating.
- Training expense is up – this covers conferences and trainings.
- Equipment costs are higher. There was discussion about creating a new Reserve Fund for equipment replacement and repair, such as for gymnastic mats, bikes, skis, snowshoes, and skate park components. Most have been purchased through grants, but grants cannot be depended upon for replacement. This will be a question on the Town Meeting warning.
- Technology line was edited to reflect 'Technology/Software.'
- DominionTech expenses were moved from Equipment to Technology/Software.
- Holley Hall Custodial is down because it is sometimes easier to have staff maintain it for the most part.
- Swimming is up because they have brought on more instructors.

Skatepark/Teen Center

- Taylor requested a part-time (20 hours/week) assistant to fill the role Zac had now that he will not be as available. Some of this expense might be offset by the additional BYS programming revenue. Jackie's position is funded through a grant and is primarily focused on food-related and other activities.
- Supplies and food lines reflect actual spending, but are often offset by grant awards. Grant revenue is not reflected in the budget. Awards often lead to a year end fund balance. It was suggested that perhaps this balance can be designated for new Equipment Fund.
- Heating costs are down due to a fuel change and change in heating protocol.
- Water costs need to be figured out. A double billing situation was recently discovered related to the Teen Center and Recreation Club meter on West Street.
- Pottery studio costs up, but so is participation.

Total Rec Department expenditures up 10.9%

Police Department Budget – Bruce Nason

The following was noted regarding this budget:

Revenue

- The COPS Grant position is not filled and the grant will run out after FY2025.
- The Community Resource Specialist position will assist, but not take over Dog Officer duties.

Expenditures

- Salaries are based on contract terms. Bruce said he would like to see future increases because the Town still provides lower wages than nearby Departments
- Hiring of fourth officer should reduce the part-time expense amount.
- The full health care potential impact is budgeted for.
- Computer line item was changed to 'Computer/Software,' noting that a capital fund for computers already exists.
- Equipment line changed to 'Equipment Maintenance.' Some Equipment amounts are for purchases of equipment with longer life spans and should likely use the Reserve fund instead. The Equipment Reserve current balance is sufficient.
- Gas up a little.
- Property and liability insurance are up.
- Total expenditures up 4.6%

There was some discussion of the new building and related bond payment implications. Current rent expenses are \$3,112/month, or about \$37K/year.

4. Review of preliminary draft Town Meeting and Police District warnings.

It was noted that this year's meeting will follow the same protocol as last year regarding online attendance through Zoom, where people may participate in the discussion, but will not be able to vote.

Both warnings were reviewed. Budget amounts will be added when those are finalized. The dates for the Police Department informational meetings were added (February 26, March 4). Valerie noted that Article 3 in the Town Warning will be approval of the land use regulations, if they are ready for approval in time to be included in the warning. Board members will look into what nearby towns offer as Selectboard member compensation. An Article will be added for creation of a Recreation Equipment Reserve Fund, as well as an Article asking for approval of Australian Ballot for civic organization appropriations.

There was some discussion regarding whether to place a general question related to expansion of the Police Department on either this Warning or on the November election ballot. Bruce pointed out that a large amount of information needs to be put together first, and that public education regarding multiple aspects of the decision is necessary. It was agreed to not move forward with even a general question for the ballot, but that a poll might be useful in November. Valerie noted that the merger documents appear to call for a floor vote at a Town Meeting for any Police Department expansion question, and voters would need to approve changing such a vote to Australian Ballot.

5. Review and approval of the December 18 and December 26, 2023 meeting minutes.

Approval of minutes was postponed to the next meeting.

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

The warrant was for the amount of \$69,761.00.

MOTION: Ian made a motion to approve a Tobacco License renewal for Maplefield's. The motion was seconded by Joel. All voted in favor.

7. Selectboard roundtable.

Joel asked for an update on how the financial work with NEMRC is going. Sharon noted that she is waiting for a response from her contact there.

Joel inquired about subcommittee minutes. Ian explained that all meetings are recorded, and minutes are regularly posted to the website.

Peeker indicated that he had inquired of the Department of Public Safety regarding short-term rentals (STRs), and was told that they don't do inspections or enforcement. He explained the

State will follow up on complaints related to building conditions by contacting the local Health Officer, but that no follow up protocol is in place for nuisance/noise complaints.

Peeker noted that new OSHA regulations are available, some of which may be pertinent to the Fire Department.

Regarding the student intern interested in the Public Works Department, Joel suggested that all insurance and safety measures be looked into regarding high school student participation in Public Works Department work.

Ian noted that work is progressing on the Town Report and that he has added some beneficial information from local civic organizations.

Ian reported he has arranged to have the bus shelter moved into position next to Walgreens. The \$400 cost will come from ARPA funds. The necessary Act 250 amendment for the bus shelter has been approved. There is the potential for another shelter in the Firehouse Apartments location. This will also require an Act 250 amendment.

Darla thanked the rest of the Board for working through the last meeting with her remote attendance for a portion of the meeting.

8. Town Administrator's Report.

Valerie provided an update on Firehouse Drive lighting, noting that Craig Jennings has helped determine that there is a conduit in place which contains no wiring. The currently proposed solution is to install new conduit in order to run wire and make the necessary connections. Valerie will be meeting with Craig and Eric to investigate further and decide the best action to take.

V. Other Business.

1. Correspondence/reports received were reviewed. Valerie noted the announcement that Katie Male-Riordan has been hired as the new Library Director.

VI. Executive Session

MOTION: Michelle made a motion to enter executive session for the purpose of discussing real estate negotiations per 1 V.S.A. §313(a)(2). The motion was seconded by Peeker. All voted in favor.

The Selectboard met in executive session from 9:44pm to 10:00pm. Upon returning to open session, the following action was taken:

MOTION: Peeker made a motion to accept the Purchase and Sale Agreement with Tom and Pam Lathrop for the 4.7 acre property at the corner of Hewitt Road and Route 116, to authorize the Town Administrator to sign the document, and authorize the Town Clerk to cut the \$1,000 deposit check. The motion was seconded by Ian. All voted in favor.

VII. Adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 10:05pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Chamberlin, Recording Secretary

Valerie Capels, Town Administrator