

**Town of Bristol, VT  
Selectboard  
Minutes of Meeting  
Monday, January 15, 2024**

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

**Members Absent:** None

**Staff Present:** Valerie Capels (Town Administrator), Brett LaRose (Fire Chief), Sharon Lucia (Town Clerk), Bruce Nason (Police Chief)

**Others Present:** Maren Howell (Addison Independent), Porter Knight, Jill Marsano (VTUMS), Steve Palmer (VTM Engineering), 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).**

A discussion of storm damage was added to the Other Business portion of the meeting. An executive session was added to discuss personnel matters.

**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. Regular Business**

**1. Budget workshop: Fire Department and other sections if available.**

Fire Department Budget – Brett LaRose

The following was noted regarding this budget:

Operating

- Firefighters are compensated at the state minimum wage for their services – fighting fires, training, station upkeep. That rate is up slightly this year.
- No changes in annual dues amounts, which cover memberships and some trainings.
- Other trainings are up some this year.
- Electricity – lights are on timers. They are still working out best management of heat pumps.
- Supplies is a catch-all and covers unexpected expenses.
- Dispatch costs – they will be better able to estimate with the new cost structure in place.
- Some items up simply due to general inflation.
- Mowing includes snowplow damage repair.
- Communication tower lease charge has been lowered.
- Radios and pagers – firefighters need expensive equipment. Purchases are usually made toward the end of the fiscal year when they are more certain that funds are available.
- Actuals for bond payments do not yet include all current fiscal year payments.
- Personal Protective Equipment – costs have risen, but they have done careful maintenance and will likely need fewer purchases this year.
- Apparatus/vehicle maintenance – actuals not current, as in some insurance payments are not yet applied. Related insurance revenue is in the general budget. It was suggested to break the payments out by Department for better correlation to expenses.

- Total expenditures up 3%

#### Capital Equipment

- Donations received were added to the spreadsheet.
- Brett explained potential truck purchase and why it is included here rather than in Capital Vehicle (Apparatus) Budget. It would replace use of personal vehicles by firefighters to move equipment, perform non-fire-related house visits, etc. A recent generous donation allows for opportunities, this would be a beneficial one. A truck may also be part of plan to not replace heavy rescue vehicle in coming years; it would serve as personnel transport replacement. Heavy rescue vehicles are currently running over \$1M in cost.
- Brett and the Board were notified during this meeting that the grant applied for installation of a communications antennae was not awarded. He will seek other grant opportunities to help cover the cost. He is concerned with zoning considerations. Peeker suggested testing other locations. A tower/generator would provide for fewer interruptions and less frequent need to switch dispatch services due to power outages.

#### Apparatus Capital Budget

- Adjustments to balances, contributions, and running totals were made during the meeting, beginning with FY24.
- Brett outlined potential upcoming purchases, noting he has made no decisions and is looking at how long vehicles might be kept going without substantial repair work needed.
- That the annual \$125K contribution may need to be bumped up earlier than planned was discussed, as costs have risen significantly. The current plan includes increase to \$150K in FY34.

## **2. Capital projects updates: Pine Street waterline replacement, Bristol West water line replacement design phase, water service line inventory, Basin Street improvement project, Briggs Hill Road, Lincoln Road riverbank repair, Eagle Park fishing platform, sidewalk improvements, draft Capital Improvement Plan, etc.**

Valerie provided an overview of projects recently completed, in progress, and upcoming.

#### Water District

- Step II Design – Pine Street – completed and came in under budget.
- Pine Street Construction – complete and also under budget.
  - Both currently included in Operating Budget because loan proceeds from the State have not yet been received.
- Bristol West Step II Design – ongoing and budgeted at \$279K; expenditures to date \$23K.
- Water Line Inventory – ongoing and loan approval (\$91K) in place. The loan is expected to be forgiven when project is complete; expenditures to date \$36K.

#### Town

- Lincoln Road Riverbank Restoration – With the construction bid and engineering, the project total is now more than \$600K. One grant is secured, another is pending; the local match likely to come in over \$390K. Masterson agreed to hold the bid amount. The project must be done to prevent undermining of the road. It is expected be completed in spring/summer 2024.

- Eagle Park fishing platform – FEMA has approved up to \$176K. It is likely to come in under budget at around \$120K; the match from Town will be around \$8K, which Valerie suggested come from Conservation Reserve Fund.
- Basin Street improvement project – The total estimate is over \$730K. Grant funds so far are about \$526K, with a local match of \$270K. Based on the current estimates, that leaves about \$452K remaining for construction. The project expenses will be spread over 2 -3 years.
- The Hewitt Road property purchase for the future Public Works facility needs to be built into the Capital Plan. Valerie said \$152K over 10 years at 6% interest comes to about \$24K per year and recommended it come from Capital Building Fund.
- Other upcoming projects
  - Briggs Hill
  - Sidewalks
  - Police Station relocation
  - Public Works facility relocation

Steve Palmer summarized the completion of the Pine Street water line project, noting that the final cost was over \$100K under budget, the project was completed ahead of schedule, and that much positive feedback was received from the public. He thanked Jill and Cyrus for their efforts related to the project, and thanked Valerie as well, observing that the project was a complete success. Valerie indicated that she will be following up with the State financing, including the 50% loan forgiveness attached to the loan funds. Board members thanked all those involved for a job well done.

Jill reported that the Pine Street project has not resulted in a significant reduction in pump run times, but that three recent major repairs have successfully slowed those pump times. She explained that upcoming work on older lines should lead to a more significant improvement. Three leaks on the customers side on Pine Street should be addressed this summer, for which funding sources may need to be determined. None of that work will need to be coordinated with Pine Street paving.

Steve provided an update on the Bristol West project, noting that all eight streets involved have been surveyed and almost all the existing main lines have been located. He explained that it will be attempted, as much as possible, to not work in areas of asphalt due to the currently high costs associated with paving.

Steve will provide further recommendations when more information has been gathered. He noted the goal is to be ready to hold a bond vote in November 2024, with loan funding likely not approved until 2025 and work to commence in 2026 and probably take two summers to complete. Joel pointed out that Munsill Avenue drainage work is expected to take place in 2024 and coordination with Eric should take place.

Jill provided an update on Service Line Inventory progress, reporting that the main lines have been mapped, the town side connections almost all identified, and the approximately 700 customer side lines are about 50% complete. She explained that customers have some confusion regarding the process, and that visiting properties is often required. Another mailing is planned, and social media postings have recently gone out, with the intent to complete as much of the remaining work as possible by the end of

March. Steve followed up with a brief explanation of the process to follow up with properties for which it has been determined that replacements are necessary.

Valerie provided a quick overview of the draft Capital Improvement Plan, noting that she had not yet had an opportunity to meet with all Department Heads to work through the draft. She made some adjustments to provide a more realistic bottom line.

Valerie provided an update on the Sidewalk Replacement Plan and outlined the inventory work completed last year by Middlebury students working with the Addison County Regional Planning Commission. The Bicycle Pedestrian Committee will be reviewing it to come up with an updated replacement plan. The current (2017) plan and the new inventory data both point to Garfield Street sidewalks should be next for replacement. She intends to get an RFP out in February. A grant application was submitted for a new sidewalk on Airport Drive. She would like to apply to the VTrans Bike Ped Program for a scoping study of sidewalk realignment and extension on the south side of West Street. She reported that the property next to the Creeme stand is very receptive to sidewalk installation on their property.

Valerie outlined some of the projects expected to be funded through Capital Buildings Fund including more Holley Hall work, the Hewitt Road property purchase, Public Works facility site analysis, replacement of the Library front porch, and other building improvements. She said the fund still in good shape after the above accounted for.

Areas of the plan that are still a work in progress are updating current and projected debt payments, and the Police, water, wastewater sections.

**3. Consider a new proposal for Pine Street improvements, including widening the paved road, stormwater drainage, striping, etc. and allocation of ARPA funding for implementation.**

Valerie explained that Steve Palmer and his colleague worked with Eric and Peeker to explore ways to include drainage and pedestrian improvements on Pine Street prior to the street being paved later this year. A concept plan was provided at the meeting showing a widened road surface mostly on the south side and striped for a pedestrian lane, new drainage structures, and some regrading to direct stormwater to an area off the north side of Pine Street. The following points were made:

Road widening/striping

- General agreement that widening the road will cause traffic to travel at higher rates of speed.
- Agreement that the road is used frequently by pedestrians, school children, bicycles, and dog walkers; safety is critical.
- Potentially the current moderate speeds on the road are due to the poor condition of the road surface.
- Question whether pedestrian striping would be on one or both sides of the road; if only on one side, people will not necessarily walk facing traffic.
- People are likely to use vehicle travel lanes for walking even if roadway is striped, as they do now.
- Sidewalk installation and maintenance is prohibitively expensive.
- Flashing speed signs are helpful.

- Stop signs along the way help to keep speeds down.
- A center line slows drivers, as it provides a perception of a narrower travel lane.

#### Stormwater/Paving

- Steve indicated that an asphalt overlay will not last long, as the base condition is poor.
- Grinding will provide a good base and the slope/direction of runoff can be adjusted during the process.
- Current quotes for stormwater work include \$34.5K for materials and \$100 (is this a correct figure, that does not make sense) for site work. This is for a specific area of concern in the Taylor Street/Jackman Drive area.
- Paving has been estimated at about \$20K for an overlay application only.

Drainage and paving will be discussed further when Eric is available. It was agreed to postpone decisions on these issues until more information is available. Valerie pointed out that ARPA funds could be considered for some of the work and decisions will need to be made before the Pine Street paving work begins. Board members agreed that no ARPA funds should be used unless steps are taken to improve pedestrian access.

Joel suggested striping the road in its current condition and observing how people behave, both vehicles and pedestrians.

#### **4. Consider selection of consultant team for the Bristol Accessible Recreation Town Parks project and allocation of ARPA funds for it.**

Valerie indicated that six very good proposals had been received but have not yet been thoroughly reviewed. The highest bid of the six is for \$53K. Whichever team is chosen, the work undertaken will result in shovel ready plans for three different parks. Joel requested that ongoing maintenance costs be included in the final plans. It was agreed to wait until a consultant is selected before allocating ARPA funds for the project.

#### **5. Review status of ARPA funding and other potential allocations.**

Ian noted that so far \$815K has been spent or allocated and provided an updated list of pending ARPA projects. Several items need further exploration, including continuing support for the Farmers' Market and creation of an outdoor meeting space at the Library. Valerie recommended that any unspent balance go into the Road Capital Fund, as there are many projects to be completed, some of which she outlined earlier in the meeting. Porter encouraged the Board to look into the projects that need more details provided and continue their consideration of suggested allocations before assigning remaining funds to Capital Budget categories.

#### **6. Selectboard roundtable.**

Michelle requested contact information for the person at VTrans to pursue having the lights on the bridges repaired, as they currently are on erratically.

Joel asked that the Lincoln Road access to Route 116 be looked at again, as he has seen similar situations addressed locally with a resulting slope at the intersection.

Joel asked about the rail removal at Eagle Park. Valerie reported that concerns had been raised regarding risks and liability for a platform with no rails, even if signs are put saying it is closed. Dock Doctors is looking into a proposal where the rails would be removed and placed at the entrance to the platform, effectively blocking it, rather than dragging the rails to the posts at the path entrance.

Joel asked if Eric will be running a chipper in the spring to handle all the downed trees in the village. Peeker said he has not heard yet of any plans for this.

Darla thanked the Road Crew, Police Department, and Fire Department for all their work during the recent storms.

#### **IV. Other Business.**

**1. Correspondence/reports received** were reviewed.

#### **2. Storm Damages**

It was noted that cemeteries suffered damage to both the grounds and some headstones from downed trees and limbs during the recent storms. Ian indicated that the Cemetery Commission will likely meet and discuss how to address repairs. Valerie noted that insurance cannot cover any damage at Greenwood Cemetery and is not likely to cover any damage at other cemeteries. Claims should be filed for damages at Town buildings such as the Fire Station and the Holley Hall roof. The Selectboard agreed approval is not required to proceed with those repairs.

#### **V. Executive Session**

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

The Selectboard met in executive session from 9:03pm to 9:40pm. Upon returning to open session, no action was taken.

#### **VI. Adjourn.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:40pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Chamberlin, Recording Secretary

Valerie Capels, Town Administrator