

**Town of Bristol, VT
Selectboard
Minutes of Meeting
Monday, January 29, 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), Brett LaRose (Fire Chief), Sharon Lucia (Town Clerk), Meridith McFarland (Recreation Director), Bruce Nason (Police Chief)

Others Present: Dennis Hysko, NEAT TV, Jim Quaglino

I. Call to Order. Darla Senecal called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm.

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

No adjustments were made to the agenda.

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

II. Public Forum.

Dennis Hysko offered comments regarding a neighbor's horses on more than one occasion escaping onto his property and asked that the Board consider establishing a related ordinance. Bruce noted the Police Department responded to three calls last year about the escaped horses. Bristol does not have an ordinance that addresses livestock or animals other than dogs. Michelle read a state statute that said the owner shall not be fined more than \$10 and the owner would be liable for any damages through a civil action.

III. Regular Business

1. Budget workshop: review of capital funds and undesignated fund balances; review and approve the General Fund and Police Department budgets.

Board members reviewed several aspects of the General Budget including:

- The Rec Department liability insurance has been updated, and now includes coverage on the van.
 - A new revenue line has been created for reimbursement of these expenses to the Town (excluding the van coverage, which is not through VLCT).
 - This line will also include insurance and worker's compensation payments made for the Library.
- The new Teen Hub part-time position amount was adjusted during the meeting to reflect payroll costs as well as salary.
- Meridith explained that Bristol Rec will receive 20% of Bristol Youth registration fees, but she is not comfortable increasing the budgeted amount without a year's worth of numbers to work with.
- Most bond payments in the debt schedule have been clarified, but there are still some discrepancies in amount related to the USDA stormwater bond and the USDA West Street water system bond.

- Ian noted that minutes from January 13, 2020 reflect the \$18,894 amount to be included, although payments have been just under \$12K for the past few years.
- Ian will look into this further, but it was agreed to keep the \$18K amount in the budget.
- Sharon indicated that the Town may need to begin unemployment insurance payments to the State on July 1; this needs further clarification.
 - It appears that it is possible to register as 'reimbursable,' which would not require payments, otherwise the amount would be about \$12K.
- Some personnel matters were left for further review in executive session.

The Police Department budget was reviewed. The Grand List number had not yet been updated; Sharon calculated it during the meeting to be \$1,392,453 – this will be verified with the Listers.

MOTION: Peeker made a motion to approve the Police Department budget as presented, totaling \$676,628, with the understanding that the Grand List amount included will be updated and verified. The motion was seconded by Ian. All voted in favor.

Valerie noted that the auditors have completed their review of the FY2022 budget and that there remains an unassigned fund balance of \$390,326. The auditors clarified that this number includes fund balances from prior years. It was discussed that past practice has been to retain 5% of anticipated expenses (\$144,326) from such a balance as a buffer in the coming year's budget, and that with anticipated rising costs it was considered prudent to retain a slightly higher amount at this point.

The Capital Budget was reviewed, with it being noted which funds appeared to be in good shape going forward, and which funds would benefit from additional funding in order to cover anticipated expenses over the next several years. It was agreed to raise the amount budgeted for the Capital Roads fund from \$45K to \$70K.

The unassigned fund balance of \$390,326 was discussed, and it was agreed to hold \$190,326 in reserve for potential FY25 expenses. The following allocations were agreed upon for inclusion as an Article for the Town Meeting warning, totaling \$200,000:

- \$10K to Cemetery Reserve
- \$10K to Sidewalk Reserve
- \$30K to Paving Reserve
- \$100K to Roads Reserve
- \$10K to Technology Reserve
- \$40K to Building Reserve

The upcoming Fire Department vehicle needs were discussed, and it was agreed that the related Reserve funds can be added to over the next few years in order to provide sufficient funds for planned FY2029 expenditures. Purchase of Fire Department tablets will make use of the Technology Reserve fund.

2. Review and approve Town Meeting and Police District warnings.

The Town Meeting Warning was reviewed, with the items below noted as needing attention:

- Sharon explained that she will adjust the first item to accurately list the town officers to be elected.
- The warnings will have accurate numbers added following the executive session at the end of this meeting.
- It was discussed and agreed that the vote to move to Australian ballot for appropriations will be a floor vote at this year's Meeting.
- It was agreed to include the Reserve Fund distributions from the FY2022 fund balance, as agreed upon at this meeting, as one Article rather than creating a separate Article for each Fund.
- It was agreed to keep the Library appropriation Article ahead of the other appropriation questions.
- The language of the Hewitt Road purchase Article was edited and then agreed upon.
- It was agreed that more time is needed for public education before presenting a question related to expansion of the Police District.

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

The warrant was for the amount of \$102,168.53.

MOTION: Peeker made a motion to approve the Wells Mountain Liquor License Application. The motion was seconded by Joel. All voted in favor.

4. Selectboard roundtable.

Joel noted that the owner of Jackman's has offered a 2,800 ft² space if needed for housing the Police Department.

Joel noted that he had spoken with Eric Carter at Carter Insurance, who explained that it is likely that homeowners' insurance will cover repairs related to headstone damage suffered during recent windstorms.

Peeker noted that he attended a meeting held by Bernie Sanders, who explained that there is motion for moving the responsibility of addressing mental health crises situations to municipalities; his staff will be stopping in Addison County towns to explain more about this.

Ian indicated that he is still waiting on a few reports for the Town Report, which is currently at 155 pages.

Ian noted that the Howden Hall sign installation work is progressing, and that the sign came out nicely.

5. Town Administrator's report.

Valerie had nothing to add to her written report.

IV. Other Business.

1. Correspondence/reports received were reviewed.

Valerie explained to the Board that statewide eclipse planning is underway for the April 8 event.

She also reported that the Vermont Family Forests grant was awarded, and that work is progressing on finalizing the related plans.

V. Executive Session

MOTION: Michelle made a motion to enter executive session for the purpose of discussing personnel matters per 1 V.S.A. §313(a)(3). The motion was seconded by Peeker. All voted in favor.

The Selectboard met in executive from 8:57pm to 9:50pm. Upon returning to open session, the following action was taken:

MOTION: Peeker made a motion to approve a total general fund budget of \$3,430,371, with the amount supported by taxes \$3,004,623, an increase of 6%. The motion was seconded by Ian. All voted in favor.

VI. Adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 9:55pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Chamberlin, Recording Secretary

Valerie Capels, Town Administrator