

**Town of Bristol, VT
Selectboard
Minutes of Meeting
Monday, March 11, 2024**

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

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

Others Present: Matt Bryan, James Cole, Colby Gile, Thersa Gile, Olivia Glascoe, Patricia King, Jill Marsano (VTUMS), Michael Mulligan, NEAT TV, Jim Quaglino, Sally Roth, Ben Skolozdra

I. Call to Order. Sharon Lucia 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).

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. Annual Selectboard Organization Matters.

1. Swear in new and/or re-elected Selectboard members.

Sharon Lucia swore Jessica and Joel in with their oaths of office.

2. Elect a Chair.

Joel accepted a nomination to serve as Chair and was elected unanimously.

3. Elect a Vice-Chair.

Michelle accepted a nomination to serve as Vice Chair and was elected unanimously.

4. Designate a regular meeting schedule, subject to occasional modification.

MOTION: Joel made a motion to set the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month at 7 pm as the regular Selectboard meeting times. Ian seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Designate *The Addison County Independent* as the Newspaper of Record).

MOTION: Peeker mad a motion to designate *The Addiston County Independent* as the newspaper of record. Ian seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Designate official posting locations for the Town.

It was noted that there is no longer a bulletin board available at Shaw's. Valerie explained there are limits to the number of postings allowed each month on Front Porch Forum. She uses that site to post agendas and other notices, but she recommends it not be included as an official posting site.

MOTION: Ian made a motion to designate the Town Office, Lawrence Memorial Library, Bristol Beverage, and the Town website as official posting locations. Michelle seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

7. Authorize Treasurer's Office to process weekly payroll, with the Selectboard approving warrants twice a month.

MOTION: Peeker made a motion to authorize the Treasurer's Office to process weekly payroll, with the Selectboard approving warrants twice a month. Ian seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

8. Review of Selectboard Rules of Procedure.

Valerie explained that the annual review is a chance for Board members to familiarize/reacquaint themselves with the Rules. She noted that one thing which has evolved is the use of email communications, explaining that email between all Board members is allowable for organizational items, but there should be no discussion of Board matters among a quorum of members through email. If email is necessary for an emergency decision, that decision must be ratified by the Board at their next meeting.

Board members acknowledged review of the Rules; no changes were proposed.

9. Review Conflict of Interest Policy.

Valerie explained that the typical metric for conflict is financial benefit or appearance of bias/lack of impartiality. The common practice is for a Board member to disclose any real or perceived possibility of conflict so that the Board as a whole can make a determination if there should be a recusal.

10. Designate Selectboard liaisons to Town departments.

Valerie explained that Board members should not go directly to Department heads with directives or other communications, but should communicate through the Town Administrator when information needs to be presented.

There was consensus to establish the following liaisons :

- Ian – Police Department, Fire Department, Town Office (Clerk, Treasurer, Zoning Administrator)
- Joel – Water Department, Landfill/Solid Waste District, Listers Office
- Michelle – Planning Commission, Revolving Loan Fund
- Peeker – Public Works Department, Equipment Committee
- Jessica – Recreation Department, Library

III. Public Forum.

Sally Roth offered positive comments on the running of town meeting and potential strategies for getting younger people involved.

IV. Department Head Roundtable.

Bruce Nason (Police Chief) thanked Sharon for all she does for the Department heads, especially in the absence of a Treasurer. The sentiment was echoed by others present.

Patricia King (Listers) reported they are working on completing inspections and other work so that a report can be completed by April 1. She expressed support for appointment of Doug Corkins as Lister. They are working on homestead declarations

Jill Marsano (VTUMS) reported there will be a full water read taking place this week. Service Line Inventory: 65 notices are to be left on doorknobs this week. Two thirds of properties have provided a response and soon there will be a need to go door to door to gather the information needed from the remaining properties

Brett LaRose (Fire Chief) reported the Fire Department has responded to 35 calls to date. There have been many training opportunities so far this year, with more scheduled for this month. A new candidate will be interviewed next week, then to Selectboard for appointment. Regarding the new vehicle, punch list items are being addressed in NH. Repair from wind damage is ongoing. Indoor painting is also taking place. Ian asked if there is any potential for mitigation/prevention of future wind damage. Nothing was suggested as a potential strategy. Specifications for a utility vehicle are being outlined.

Eric Cota (Public Works) reported the new front-end work on the Freightliner is complete. He expressed his thanks to all for their patience in today's snow storm cleanup. He added his thanks to Sharon for all of her support and assistance. They are currently researching prices on a pick-up broom for loader so he can bring quotes to the Board. They are having mechanical problems with the village truck. Eric is looking into it and repairing it as needed.

Sharon Lucia (Town Clerk) provided an update on election voting from last week. She reported the new Treasurer started today and they will be training on NEMRC next week. She provided information on the upcoming school budget vote logistics, which will be a hand counted vote.

V. Regular Business

1. Dog Ordinance Violation Public Hearing: Michael Mulligan, Lower Notch Road.

Notes collated regarding the matter and the letter sent to Michael Mulligan had been provided in advance for Board member review. Valerie summarized that a hearing had been held about a year ago regarding excessive dog barking and that it had recently been reported by neighbors that, while the situation had improved for several months following the March 2023 hearing, the barking has returned to an excessive level. Valerie indicated that no action had been requested of the Police Department, as the matter had become a Selectboard issue following the 2023 hearing. In response to a question from Ian regarding the current situation, Matt Bryan indicated that the dogs were barking night and day for a couple of months beginning in November 2023, but that since he and Olivia Glascoe had filed a new complaint in February, there has been some degree of improvement in the situation.

Joel asked Michael Mulligan what actions he had taken to improve things after the March 2023 hearing, and what has changed recently to precipitate the new onset of the dogs continuous barking. Michael explained that the dogs are in the house at night, but free to go between the house and the fenced yard during the day when he is at work. He indicated that on occasion he has a friend walk them during the day. Michael also explained that he had been using collars for a while, but has not been using them recently. He could not recall exactly when he stopped using the collars, but said it was possible that he had not been using them since early November. He expressed that the dogs are not barking when he is at home, and that he was not aware that the excessive barking had begun again until he received the letter that Valerie sent notifying him of the February 12, 2024 hearing.

Matt and Olivia explained they hear the dogs start barking at 6:00 or 6:30 am, they assume that's when Michael leaves for the day, and that it doesn't stop at all during the day. They also at times over weekends hear the dogs bark through the night, impacting their sleep; again, they assume this is when Michael is away for the weekend. They noted the barking also impacts their business, as visits to the farm are disrupted by the incessant barking.

Michael suggested that he leave them contained in the house when he goes to work, and also raised the possibility of installing a camera so that he can be aware of the dogs' barking. He indicated a willingness to receive phone calls when barking commences, as well. It was suggested that if Matt or Olivia contact Michael directly, whether through text or e-mail so there is a record available. Board members noted that the collars appear to have been effective, as there was much less of a problem for the months that they were in use.

Board members outlined the steps which Michael needs to take, establishing a two-week period for these steps to be followed before further review of the situation, including further feedback from Matt and Olivia. The following must be adhered to: Bark collars on when the dogs are outside, dogs to be inside during the day unless Micheal is home or a dog walker is present. The installation of a camera is optional. Valerie will send a letter outlining these parameters and that there will be a review of the situation in two weeks.

Peeker explained that these situations are handled on a case-by-case basis.

2. Appointment and/or reappointment of Town officers or representatives.

Valerie had provided a list of current appointments, including responses from current appointees regarding their interest in being reappointed. The following was noted as Board members reviewed the list:

- Doug Corkins would like to be appointed as a Lister;
- The Board of Civil Authority is comprised of the Selectboard and the Justices of the Peace (JP);
- JPs are elected in November, not appointed.
- All Equipment Committee members are appointed for one-year terms;
- Some clarifications are needed regarding the Revolving Loan Committee and its membership.
- Appointments for Maple Broadband run from May to May, information needs to be provided in April;
- The Emergency Management Coordinator position is vacant; it would be good to fill it at some point; and
- The ARPA Committee and Emerald Ash Borer Committees are no longer active.

It was agreed to continue with the practice of placing a notice of vacant committee positions on Front Porch Forum (FPF).

MOTION: Ian made a motion to appoint those who have confirmed they would like to remain in their respective positions, including Doug Corkins as a Lister until the next election; Chanin Hill and Fred Baser to the Planning Commission; Carol Wells to the Design Review Commission; Alan Clark and Ken Johnson to the Equipment Committee; Valerie Capels as Emergency Management Director (EMD); Peter Coffey as

Deputy EMD; Dave Sharpe and Joel Bouvier as Fence Viewers; John Swebston as Tree Warden; and reappointing the Town Clerk, Fire Chief, and Deputy Chief to three year terms. The motion was seconded by Peeker. All voted in favor.

Jessica confirmed that she will remain on the Bike/Ped Committee.

Ben Skolozdra indicated his interest in serving on the Maple Broadband committee, possibly as an alternate. Jessica also indicated a willingness to be part of this group, but will reach out to others as well. Sharon will provide further information about this.

3. Town Meeting redux.

Reflecting on Town Meeting, the following points were noted or discussed:

- Joel explained that he made a misstatement about when the Tax Collector was elected and apologized to Dave Sharp for his error.
- Ian thanked Sean and NEAT TV for their coverage.
- Generally, it was agreed that the meeting went well and the turnout was fairly decent.
- There has been some discussion on Front Porch Forum regarding suggestions for improving the level of participation, such as:
 - An earlier start time or meeting on a Saturday has been suggested;
 - Jessica suggested forming a committee to look into possible strategies;
 - It was confirmed that no voting on Zoom is possible;
 - There will never be a 'perfect' meeting time;
 - While Australian ballot allows more people to vote, Town Meeting provides the opportunity for discussion and amendments to articles.
 - Jessica may bring feedback from people she speaks with, or interested residents can discuss the matter among themselves and bring suggestions to the Board as a group.
- Infographics might be helpful for important budget changes.
- The proposed Australian ballot for providing funds to civic organizations was voted down.
 - More people would be able to vote, the organizations would be able to get a sense of the level of support in Town;
 - Floor voting provides an opportunity for discussion and to learn more about the organizations and their work.

4. Selectboard calendar and goals for the coming year.

Valerie had provided draft calendar and possible goals for review by the Board, including items likely to be on upcoming agendas. One thing to be added is public hearings for adoption of the Unified Development Regulations. As it is intended to provide an opportunity for voting on this matter as a separate ballot item, it was discussed that the timing should be set to coordinate with the state primary election to be held in August. A deadline of July 1, 2024 was set for completion of the hearing process, with a decision to hold an initial hearing in late April. The Public Works discussion tentatively scheduled for April will be moved to a later date to accommodate this.

A list of pending future projects and activities was included in Valerie's report. Joel suggested that one topic from the list be included on each upcoming meeting's agenda.

5. Consider request from the Bristol Fire Department to use Technology Reserve Funds to purchase four tablets for total of \$2,036.

Brett provided information about the planned purchase of four new tablets, noting that the three tablets currently in use were acquired ten years ago through a grant. He explained the Department has essentially become a paperless operation and the tablets are critical for information storage and retrieval, equipment tracking, and other functionality. James Cole of the Department explained the specifications he had included for the two models to be purchased, noting that one model will be suitable for use on scene in the trucks, with wireless access available if the Department decides to pay for the associated cell service. The second model offers more power and storage capacity and will be used in the station for equipment tracking and other purposes. The models also allow for referencing building plans in the field. Valerie suggested rounding the amount to be approved to \$2,100 to cover any shipping or other incidental costs.

MOTION: Ian made a motion to approve the expenditure of up to \$2,100 from the Technology Reserve Fund for the purchase of four tablets for the Fire Department as outlined. The motion was seconded by Peeker. All voted in favor.

6. Consider invitation for Selectboard members to participate in the MAUSD 03/26/2024 School Board meeting to participate in interviewing interested candidates to fill two vacancies on the School Board until the next election.

Valerie explained that it is no longer a Selectboard function to appoint School Board members, but that the District appreciates Selectboard input.

Joel offered to attend the meeting on behalf of the Selectboard.

7. Review and approval of the January 29, February 1, February 12, February 26, and March 4, 2024 meeting minutes.

Approval of minutes was postponed until the next Board meeting.

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

The warrant was for the amount of \$102,095.24.

MOTION: Ian made a motion to approve liquor license renewals for Shaw's, Tandem, Champlain Farms, and Bristol Country Store; and to approve tobacco and tobacco substitute license renewals for Champlain Farms and Bristol Country Store. The motion was seconded by Peeker. All voted in favor.

9. Selectboard roundtable.

Ian reported that he is still working with Randy Sargent to have a crane put the shelter in place at the Pomerleau building.

Ian is working with Richard Butz of the Energy Committee to outline possible locations for the Level 2 and Level 3 vehicle charging stations for which grants have been awarded/applied for. He noted that they are also looking into private site possibilities, and the associated cost/upkeep logistics.

Jessica indicated that the Bike/Ped Committee would like to meet with Freeda the Grant Administrator to learn about grant cycles (is this correct wording or do they want to meet for Grants related to bike/ped opportunities) and upcoming opportunities.

Joel provided some pictures of area Level 2 and Level 3 charger installations to demonstrate how these would appear if placed at the park.

Joel thanked residents for coming to Town Meeting and expressed his appreciation for their support in his reelection to continue serving the Town.

Joel noted that Ken Weston had submitted the idea of purchasing development rights for the property behind Johnson's to the ARPA Committee, but never received any feedback. Those present who were on the committee indicated that this proposal did not sound familiar, but noted they will look into it.

10. Town Administrator's report.

Valerie provided the following updates:

- She and Freeda (Grants Manager) and Katie (Library Director) are working on a large application to meet tomorrow's deadline for a library capital projects grant.
- She, Freeda, and Eric (Public Works) are working on gathering the documentation necessary for receiving FEMA funding for July flood response projects.
- The engineers working on the Basin Street projects have presented preliminary findings and will be reporting to the Selectboard after they meet with neighboring property owners.
- A meeting is scheduled with all Addison County Emergency Management Directors to discuss preparations for the April 8 eclipse.

VI. Other Business.

1. Correspondence/reports received were reviewed.

Valerie highlighted several items which were included in the meeting packet.

VIII. Adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 9:17 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Chamberlin, Recording Secretary

Valerie Capels, Town Administrator