

**Town of Bristol, VT
Selectboard
Minutes of Meeting
Monday, September 22, 2025**

Members Present: Ian Albinson, Joel Bouvier (joined at 8 pm), Peeker Heffernan (Chair), Michelle Perlee, Jessica Teets

Staff Present: Gregory Faust (Town Administrator), AZ Larsen (Zoning and Planning Administrator), Brett LaRose (Fire Chief), Sharon Lucia (Town Clerk and Town Treasurer), Kris Perlee (Assistant Town Clerk and Assistant Town Treasurer), Freeda Powers (Grant Administrator), Colby Gile (Public Works Crew)

Others Present: Madison Coombs (VHB), Martin Howell, Ron LaRose, NEAT, Steve Palmer (VTM), Jim Quaglino

I. Call to Order. Peeker Heffernan called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.

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

The matters included in the Consent Agenda were adjusted.

II. Public Forum.

Ron LaRose spoke of difficulties navigating the sidewalks in town after knee surgery and difficulty walking two abreast in some sections. He also suggested brushing instead of plowing for snow removal, and mentioned other sidewalk issues, such as pedestrian crossings and road striping.

III. Department Head Roundtable.

Sharon Lucia (Town Clerk and Treasurer):

- The VT Department of Records Management has offered to provide a staff person who can help to get Bristol's document recordings backlog cleared.
- The property at 32 West Street has closed, taxes and water bill have been paid
- Tax bills likely will be printed October 1
- 2024's draft audit should be available in three to four weeks
- Water reading is currently taking place

Kris Perlee (Assistant Town Clerk and Treasurer):

- Working to reconcile the various Reserve funds
- Completing some IT projects

Freeda Powers (Grant Administrator):

- A lot of grant activity is happening, closing what can be closed, and several applications in the works
- Historical preservation grant for Holley Hall will not be applied for, as the work is not specific to preservation of the building

AZ Larsen (Zoning and Planning Administrator):

- Permitting is slowing down
- Working with Residential Building Energy Code changes imposed through a gubernatorial proclamation
- Some DRB activity, including a closer on a situation where an NOV had been issued
- The PC has approved applying for a Municipal Planning Grant, to be used for work involved in the upcoming Town Plan update

IV. Consent Agenda.

A motion to approve the Consent Agenda, consisting of the items listed below, passed unanimously.

- Reschedule October 13 Selectboard meeting to October 6 due to Indigenous Peoples' Day
- Authorize coin drop for N.H. Munsill for October 12, 2025
- Authorize grant application to Vermont Community Foundation for \$6700 to support Teen Hub programming and operational costs
- Approval of past meeting minutes (08-25-25, 09-08-25)
- Authorize warrant in the amount of \$167,324.82

V. Regular Business

1. Local Concerns Meeting - West Street Sidewalk Scoping Project.

Madison Coombs provided a presentation of this Project, which is looking at pedestrian infrastructure. The slides she shared covered the purpose of the project, an overview of the area involved, and an outline of the scoping study. The scoping study steps include outlining the purpose and need for the improvements, the identification and evaluation of alternatives, public engagement, selection of a locally preferred alternative, and finalization of the report.

Madison then reviewed the areas of concern which exist in the current sidewalk, including variations in grade, inadequate separation from the roadway, some deterioration, misalignments, and gaps in the route, and a crosswalk with no landing on the southern end. She also noted that the current sidewalk is narrower than the current standard. Key considerations were also outlined by Madison, including parking needs, driveway widths, encroachments, the intent to minimize removal of trees, utility poles and other obstacles, and the intent to utilize existing lighted areas and determine if more are needed.

Madison outlined the schedule through the end of this year, including a presentation of the alternatives to be reviewed which will be held in December.

Board members provided input on several topics:

- Some segments of sidewalks are located on parcels rather than in the road ROW; AZ noted that there are minimal instances of this.
- Parking on the sidewalk is a frequent practice at some properties.
- The area in front of Champlain Farms presents configuration difficulties. Madison outlined possible solutions, with on the gas station property or in the Town ROW.
- The crosswalk near Maple Street, which is in part obscured by a large tree, but is difficult to move to the other side of Maple Street, as the southern edge would then be located at a driveway. It was discussed that a rapid response flashing beacon might be beneficial at this location. Madison will present alternatives for this crosswalk for the Board's consideration.

Brett pointed out that narrowing roadways helps to slow traffic. He also noted that when sidewalks are slightly higher than the surround lawn areas, the pushing back of the ground during winter plowing is minimized.

2. Consideration of reclassifying Harvey Road to from Class 4 to Class 3.

MOTION: *Ian moved to reclassify Harvey Road from Class 4 to Class 3. The motion was seconded by Michelle.*

Joel expressed concerns regarding taking on a road that is not up to standard when others have been told that they must bring their roads to standard to be considered a Town Road. Joel also noted his concerns regarding

the bridge and the Town being liable for its maintenance and any repairs needed. Peekar explained that the reclassification would provide the ability to seek State or FEMA funding if repairs are needed.

Eric indicated that he is in favor of the reclassification, explaining that the road is already maintained to the same level as a Class 3 road, but allowed that no significant changes should be made because the road already meets Class 3 standards, with any upgrades planned and undertaken when funds are available.

It was emphasized that if the road is reclassified as proposed, there is potential for financial assistance to be provided if there is future erosion or flood damage, and that there is already some undermining of the bridge. It was also noted that there is no cost associated with the reclassification process.

Ian clarified that his motion was for reclassification only, with no improvements proposed to the road or bridge at this point.

VOTE: *The motion passed, with Joel opposed.*

3. Bristol West Waterline Project Bid Status update.

Steve Palmer presented a depiction of the area covered by this Phase 2 project. He then outlined that there are some remaining design phase items to be completed, but that the project is almost at the start of the bid phase. Steve has also prepared an amendment to the Master Agreement signed in 2023, and explained the reasons for the additional time that will be required for project management and the other work that will be required of him going forward. He also outlined the hours that will be required of Jill outside of her regular services, and noted that he is working with state officials to allow the inclusion of this extra time to be included in any consideration of award offers. Steve will bring this amendment to an upcoming meeting for approval.

Steve reviewed the timing of the proposed schedule, noting that he is hoping to have bids due in time for a mid-December bid opening and that the plan is to complete the project in two years. His intent is to have work begin in mid-April of 2026. Steve confirmed that it will be allowed to purchase materials at the onset of the project and store them until used, in order to avoid needing to absorb cost increases. The School Street area work will be approached as an amendment to the contract that is awarded, rather than going through all the logistics that would be necessary to rework the project and go through many of the steps that have already been completed for state approval, etc.

In response to a question regarding water pressure at certain locations and the related size of pipe needed, Steve explained that the replacement will essentially be almost a doubling of the effective diameter of the supply lines, as the existing build up in those lines has seriously narrowed their capacity.

4. Water Commission: Adopt updated water rates and Approve latest Bristol Water Use Ordinance Policy revision.

Ian explained that the budget for the upcoming year has been approved, but that a billing rate has not yet been set. He reviewed the past rate information, and there was a discussion of the Woodland rate, which was noted to be based upon a confusing calculation for the stabilization rate agreed to in 2018, although it appears that the usage changes, and therefore the total amount charged is flexible.

Ian then reviewed the proposed rates included in Appendix B. Bulk water purchase charges were discussed, and it was agreed to look into what other towns charge for this service, as these have not been updated. Ian explained that the other new rates proposed are in part based upon statutory requirements, and otherwise based upon the cost of running the system, including in part upcoming water line work expenses.

MOTION: *Ian moved to approve the water rates included in Appendix B as drafted. The motion was seconded by Jessica, and passed unanimously.*

Ian then explained that all the agreed upon edits had been incorporated into the Water Ordinance, but that the document still needs to have a legal review completed.

MOTION: *Michelle moved to approve the Water Ordinance, subject to attorney review. The motion was seconded by Ian, and passed unanimously.*

5. Town Projects Status Update.

Ian presented a project status document he had drafted, and highlighted information regarding relevant dates, funding sources, and so forth.

- Bristol West Water Line – fully funded, a bond anticipation note still needs to be finalized
- Holley Hall Energy Efficiency Upgrades – will continue to seek grant funding
- Lawrence Memorial Library Energy Efficiency Upgrades – fully funded
- Airport Drive Sidewalk – ready to begin design phase, there are concerns that costs might increase, and there is a potential to consider asphalt rather than concrete for this project
- Mountain Street Scoping Study – fully funded
- West Street Sidewalk Scoping Study – fully funded
- Basin Street Improvement – some decisions are needed; Ian outlined that there is a funding gap of \$675K and that there are critical issues to be addressed. There is the potential to pause this project due to increased costs and complexity.
- Skatepark – funding gap of \$300K, and Taylor, who has been spearheading the project, is leaving. This project was intended to be funding through fundraising. It was suggested that the project be put on hold, and to not accept the grant which was awarded for this project.

Ian then summarized the overall timeline for the project work he had outlined, and asked that the Board members review this information in preparation for future decisions to be made.

6. Discussion on establishing an Emergency Management Reserve Fund.

Greg explained that he is in the process of developing an Emergency Management System, and indicated that there is currently no way to quickly respond financially to emergency needs

7. Selectboard Roundtable.

Joel reported that he is working to obtain a copy of the Brandon Police Department's budget, as that Department is similar in size to Bristol's.

Jessica offered a reminder of the ACRPC's hosting a meeting for Selectboard members from the RPC member towns on October 16; she and Ian will be attending, and others are welcome.

Jessica also reminded the group of the correspondence which had been received asking when there would be further consideration of a Livestock Ordinance.

Jessica asked if the various Town committees held yearly elections and had a process in place to provide for a regular change in leadership. Ian explained that only the PC and DRB hold elections. Jessica indicated her preference for encouraging these practices.

Ian mentioned the email received from Starksboro regarding their school; he suggested that more research into the matter is needed before holding a related discussion.

In noted that he has been working on the project reports he presented earlier in the meeting, and that he continues to work on the Library and Holley Hall energy projects, the Airport Drive sidewalk, customer service line replacements which will needed during the upcoming Bristol West line replacement, and upcoming annual water system costs.

5. Town Administrator's Update.

Greg indicated that budget work will begin in October.

VI. Other Business.

1. Correspondence/reports received were reviewed.

VII. Adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 10:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Chamberlin, Recording Secretary