DRAFT

TOWN OF BRISTOL, VERMONT

Selectboard — Minutes of Meeting

Monday, August 24, 2026 • 7:03 PM

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

Staff Present: Gregory W. Faust (Town Administrator), Sharon Lucia (Town Clerk/Treasurer), Kris Perlee (Assistant Clerk/Treasurer), Meridith McFarland (Recreation Director, via Zoom)

Others Present: NEAT, Louise Kilbourn-Brynn, Martha Chesley, Carolyn Dash (Bristol Conservation Commission), Lynn Dike, Eric Forand, Theresa Gile (via Zoom), Amos Martin, Michael Miller, Ben Skolozdra (Energy Committee Chair), Andrew Smith, Josh Trudeau, Kristen Underwood (Bristol Conservation Commission, via Zoom), WCAX

I. Call to Order.

Chair Ian Albinson called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM for the Monday, August 24, 2026 Bristol Selectboard meeting.

II. Approval of Agenda.

The Chair asked whether there were any changes to the agenda and confirmed whether an executive session was anticipated. Members confirmed that no executive session was needed for this meeting, and the Board moved forward with the agenda as presented.

III. Public Forum.

The Chair opened the public forum, noting the five-minute-per-person limit for non-agenda items and inviting anyone attending by Zoom to signal in the chat. No members of the public came forward.

IV. Consent Agenda.

The Consent Agenda comprised three items: approval of the past meeting minutes for August 10, 2026; approval of the check warrant; and approval of an access permit for the Livingston property (SF 26-706). During discussion, Michelle Perlee raised a question about the Livingston parcel, noting that the materials indicated there was no culvert and that she was uncertain of the exact location and had expected a culvert there. The Chair responded that Public Works Foreman Eric Cota had looked at the site and reported no culvert, and that Planning & Zoning Administrator AZ Larsen, who was nearby packing up the farmers market, might be able to provide further detail if they came in later. Perlee read the current check warrant amount into the record at $141,546.53.

Approval of past meeting minutes (August 10, 2026).

Approval of the check warrant in the amount of $141,546.53.

Approval of an access permit for the Livingston property (SF 26-706).

MOTION: *A motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented, including the August 10, 2026 minutes, the check warrant in the amount of $141,546.53, and the Livingston access permit (SF 26-706), was made by Michelle Perlee, seconded by Peeker Heffernan, and passed unanimously.*

V. Regular Business

1. Bristol Conservation Commission — Lord's Prayer Rock and Seth Hill Management Plans, and Saunders River Access Direction.

The Chair introduced Kristen Underwood (participating by Zoom) and Carolyn Dash of the Bristol Conservation Commission (BCC) to present draft management plans the Commission has been developing for town-owned parcels. Underwood explained that the BCC has been tasked with compiling management plans for each town-owned parcel, having already completed Sycamore Park and Eagle and Memorial Parks, and that each plan follows a common format covering existing conditions, history of acquisition, ecological setting, cultural and historical resources, current uses, management issues, objectives, responsible parties, and recommended actions. She described the plans as living documents intended to be updated every five to seven years.

Seth Hill parcel. Underwood explained that the Seth Hill parcel, though owned by the Town of Bristol, is located in the Town of Lincoln, accessed via River Road past Bartlett's Falls and Downingsville Road. The Town acquired the parcel in 1905 while developing a drinking water source for the village, with water once piped roughly five and a half miles downhill to the village reservoir. The water source was replaced in the 1990s, but the Town retains the parcel, which is enrolled in the state current use program to keep taxes low and is leased to Don Gale of Twin Maple Sugar Works for maple tapping to help offset tax expense. Because the parcel is in current use, a forest management plan prepared by Vermont Family Forests is required, but the parcel has never had a broader town-owned management plan; this draft is the first.

Underwood described the principal management issue: erosion along old forest logging access roads. With Selectboard approval, Vermont Family Forests applied for a grant in 2024 and installed broad-based dips to limit erosion and reduce sediment and phosphorus reaching the streams and, ultimately, the New Haven River. In the months following, the erosion-control work made access difficult for the maple leaseholder, both to manage taps and to reach the adjacent Green Mountain National Forest lands. She noted that the Selectboard and the leaseholder reached an agreement within the past year that some work may be needed to improve access, which could run counter to maintaining the erosion-control structures, and that the plan outlines recommended actions, including continued work with Vermont Family Forests, the U.S. Forest Service, and the leaseholder to secure resources to remediate the deep water bars.

Michelle Perlee asked two questions: first, under the plan's Section E management roles, whether the Recreation Department can actually direct Public Works, or whether that authority properly rests with the Selectboard and Town Administrator; and second, whether the water bars are effective and whether they impede water flow and damage the roadway. Peeker Heffernan explained that a water bar is intended to catch and redirect water running down the road rather than to let water cross it. Jessica Teets questioned whether Vermont Family Forests, having created the access problem through its solution, is the right partner to fix it, and whether the work should be reconsidered or rebid, cautioning against paying an entity to fix a problem it caused. Heffernan noted that the work had gone out to bid, that Vermont Family Forests received the grant, and that he and Matt Atkins had been asked to bid, and he characterized the completed work as more of a “closeout” than a functional road, though he had not personally inspected it. Joel Bouvier recalled that the Forest Service parcel had also become difficult to reach. The Chair explained that the state considered the completed work too extreme, that a state remedy might be possible but uncertain in cost and scheduling, and that the Board had last discussed a possible in-house solution to cut down the height of the bars, which had not yet been carried out. Kris Perlee and others confirmed the grant had been closed out and the funds used, administered through the Town with regional assistance. Underwood offered to revise the plan’s actions language to read “work with appropriate entities to pursue remediation of the broad-based dips” to address the concern about relying on Vermont Family Forests.

In response to a question from Jessica Teets about the parcel’s size, participants indicated it is approximately 113 acres and noted it is technically associated with the water department, having been purchased by the former village for its water source. Carolyn Dash observed that the property is large but wet and steep, that ideas such as mountain biking had been floated but not pursued, and that the value of a management plan is having a documented reference for future decisions. She noted the Conservation Commission was not aware the parcel existed until roughly eight years ago.

Lord’s Prayer Rock. Underwood presented the draft plan for the Lord’s Prayer Rock parcel, a one-acre property at 125 East Street alongside the New Haven River, sandwiched between the river and Route 116/17, with steep banks to the river. She described it as a wildlife corridor between South Mountain and Hogback Mountain and noted the Town acquired the land in 1941 and became owner upon the village-town merger in 1995. The rock inscription dates to approximately 1891, when the adjacent road was dirt and traveled by horse and buggy; the paved road now carries faster vehicles. Uses include a small picnic area and gravel pull-out, angler access, and use by kayakers as an observation point during river races. Issues include trash, after-hours use, and safety alongside the main route. Flooding affected the property in 1938 and 1998.

Jessica Teets, who lives nearby, questioned the size of the parking pull-out relative to usable green space, observing that the oversized pull-out makes the site feel like a place to pull over rather than a park. Michelle Perlee and Joel Bouvier explained the area historically served as a turnaround and snow-storage location for village trucks. Board members and staff discussed current uses, including people taking lunch breaks, using the picnic table, and camping overnight; the Chair noted people were camping there at present and that the Town has never actively promoted the site as a park. Recreation Director Meridith McFarland, participating by Zoom, reported that the Town rarely receives camping requests for Lord’s Prayer Rock, that campers usually pack up quickly, and that Boy Scouts occasionally request and receive approval to camp at Eagle and Sycamore Parks in exchange for stewardship activities. Members observed that some parks (Sycamore) carry dawn-to-dusk signage while others do not, and reached general agreement that consistent signage regarding park hours and no overnight camping should be posted across all Town parks, to be reflected as an action item in the plan.

The Chair opened the item to public comment. Louise Brynn raised road-safety concerns as her primary interest and asked whether the Board would take action. Members discussed existing signage, including a reflective marker painted by Public Works and a “low shoulder” sign. Peeker Heffernan recounted meeting a cement mixer beside the rock while hauling gravel to Lincoln and finding sufficient room to pass, arguing that road width is adequate for vehicles and that the concern is chiefly for pedestrians and cyclists. Joel Bouvier reiterated a preference to move the reduced-speed blinking sign earlier, to where the limit changes from 30 to 40, and floated widening the road to the north with a retaining wall similar to Memorial Park, shifting the white line roughly two feet without moving the rock. Kris Perlee argued the rock functions as traffic calming and asked what data supported a finding that the site is unsafe, noting no reported accidents; Michelle Perlee added that Police Chief Bruce Nason had not received an accident report there since 2017. Brynn contended that accidents go unreported to avoid insurance increases and proposed cutting the rock at road level with a wire saw and relocating it about ten feet, or cutting the tip to improve visibility. Lynn Dike said she preferred not to move the rock but could accept cutting the tip. Amos Martin, who travels the road with a large truck, favored additional signage such as “narrow road ahead” as the cheapest and easiest solution and emphasized driver responsibility. Josh Trudeau supported keeping the rock as one of the Town’s few attractions and suggested investing in it. Theresa Gile, participating by Zoom, characterized the rock as a historical landmark that should not be touched and cited the limited accident history.

Peeker Heffernan clarified for members of the public that the purpose of the evening’s discussion was to review the Conservation Commission’s draft plans, not to resolve the safety questions at the site. Members thanked the public for their input.

Saunders River Access. Underwood presented on the Saunders River Access parcel, acquired in 2013 and expanded in 2020 with a portion of the Paul Fuller lands, totaling roughly 54 acres. She described it as a flood-resiliency and conservation parcel that allows the river to flood during high water. The parcel does not yet have a town-owned management plan, but the Vermont River Conservancy has prepared an easement stewardship plan, and the Conservancy attended the BCC’s June meeting to discuss updating that plan to reflect the 2020 Fuller acquisition. Underwood reported that the Commission would like to propose a slight name change, from Saunders River Access to Saunders Conservation Area, to better reflect the parcel’s primary purpose of flood resilience and conservation rather than active river-access recreation, noting that several other Town parks already provide river access. She posed two questions to the Board: whether it would like the Commission to prepare a full management plan for the parcel, and whether it would consider the proposed name change, which the Commission recognized would require Selectboard approval.

Joel Bouvier said he had no problem with the name change but asked whether it would limit future uses, mentioning a possible dog park; Peeker Heffernan noted the parcel could become a second water source. Town Administrator Greg Faust observed that the name change is intended to support a behavior change by signaling that visitors are in a conservation area. Carolyn Dash added that the “river access” name is somewhat misleading because the parcel is difficult to reach and boats cannot readily be launched there, and recounted the project’s history as a conservation-reserve success story that leveraged approximately eleven additional dollars per dollar spent in grants and in-kind labor, with planted buffers now stabilizing the riverbank after roughly ten years. Underwood explained that a full town management plan would add value by documenting that history and specifying local management roles, since the Vermont River Conservancy stewardship plan focuses on managing the conservation easement rather than park management, and confirmed the stewardship plan could be included as an appendix. Members and the Commission discussed prioritizing Saunders and the Town Green, and touched on additional parcels for future plans (Shackett picnic area, Coffin Trail, the factory parcel, and Memorial Park), as well as management of invasive knotweed. By consensus, the Board approved the proposed name change from Saunders River Access to Saunders Conservation Area, and directed the Conservation Commission to prepare a full management plan for the parcel, incorporating the Vermont River Conservancy stewardship plan as an appendix.

Members thanked the Commission for its work.

2. Town Green Level 2 EV Charger: Grant Acceptance and Contract Award.

The Chair presented a proposal to install a Level 2 electric vehicle charging station on the Town Green, funded through the ChargeVermont / Green Mountain Power EVSE grant. He explained the project as proposed carries no capital cost to the Town, with the total cost of $22,962 covered by the grant plus a Green Mountain Power incentive that increased over time. He requested that any approval include a not-to-exceed amount of $500 for potential change orders. The proposed location is at the corner of North and Park Streets on the Town Green, using the first two of the Green's 76 parking spaces and replacing an existing bollard, close to an existing power pole and meter. The recommended equipment is an Autel MaxiCharger, a single pedestal unit serving two spaces, networked through a subscription (Lynkwell) cloud plan of roughly $350 per year that handles credit-card payment. He distinguished this Level 2 station from the separate Level 3 (DC fast) charger project, which is paused, and explained the rationale for the Town Green location, including proximity to downtown, consistency with the Town Plan and Energy Committee priorities, and minimal visual impact; the alternate Walgreens site would cost roughly $4,000 more and sits on private land.

Peeker Heffernan raised concerns about the Town's policy on structures on the park and about how the Town would police misuse, such as a fully charged vehicle occupying a space. Kris Perlee explained that overstay fees are the standard control. Members discussed the overnight parking ban and winter parking permits. Joel Bouvier raised the alternative of siting the charger at Walgreens so the property owner would handle maintenance; Jessica Teets and others noted the difficulty of spending Town funds on private property and the value of Town ownership. Members discussed cost recovery, with the Chair explaining the Town would set a user fee intended to cover the cloud-plan cost and electricity and to avoid losing money, and that the Town retains the ability to adjust fees as electricity prices change.

The Chair delivered a presentation noting approximately 21,000 EVs registered in Vermont, an estimated 90 to 130 in Bristol, downtown business support reflected in a Bristol CORE survey of roughly 18 businesses, and the project history dating to 2015. Recreation Director Meridith McFarland raised a concern that the location could interfere with food-truck setup during events such as the Fourth of July, and members discussed adjusting vendor placement. AZ Larsen had advised the Chair that the Level 2 unit qualifies as an accessory use, exempt from Development Review Board review, consistent with the prior Level 2 charger at the firehouse apartments. Several members and members of the public expressed support and asked that the unit be painted green to blend with the Green; the Chair agreed to paint it. Ben Skolozdra, Chair of the Energy Committee, spoke in support, noting the project's long history with the Committee and its alignment with the Town's enhanced energy plan. The Chair confirmed the grant remains active and that the full funding share, including the increased incentive, is confirmed.

MOTION: *A motion to approve the Town Green site for a 2-port Level 2 EV charging station and authorize staff to execute the Green Mountain Power EVSE grant agreement and the Cummings Electric installation contract (quote #Q26-1203), fully funded by the grant and GMP incentive at no capital cost to the Town, with a contingency not to exceed $500 for change orders, and to bring pricing and parking impact back to the Board for review after one year of operation, was made by Michelle Perlee, seconded by Peeker Heffernan, and passed 4–1, with Joel Bouvier voting nay.*

Following the vote, Joel Bouvier reiterated his preference for the Walgreens alternative, while the Chair and Peeker Heffernan noted the Board's preference to keep the installation on Town property.

3. Revolving Loan Fund Committee — Recommendation on Bristol Automotive Loan Request (Informational).

The Chair presented this item as informational, explaining that the Revolving Loan Fund Committee had considered a loan request from Bristol Automotive and that the application was denied by the Committee, so the Selectboard had no recommendation to act upon. Michelle Perlee provided the Committee's minutes. Joel Bouvier expressed concern about identifying the business publicly. The Chair explained that the item needed to come before the Board as information and that the applicant's name is public information, while specific financial details are not. Peeker Heffernan noted that loan terms and financial specifics are customarily discussed in executive session. In a related exchange, Town Administrator Greg Faust asked about vacancies on the Committee; Michelle Perlee indicated there are two open seats and that one applicant needs to meet with the Selectboard for appointment, and the Board agreed to schedule that. No action was taken.

4. Selectboard Roundtable.

Joel Bouvier

reported that he and Town Administrator Greg Faust had conducted a sidewalk tour following Jessica Teets's earlier request, measuring roughly 10,000 linear feet of sidewalk and grading segments on a scale of one to five. He identified sections in poor condition, including Mountain Street toward its end, the stretch from Fitch Avenue north, the area from the top of Spring Street along Mountain Street, and the north side of Garfield. Faust reported that Public Works had located problem spots for Eric Cota to address and that the team would prioritize the work and develop a plan to begin repairs, potentially targeting spring. Bouvier also described exploring a grant opportunity related to a problem intersection, indicating he intended to seek a letter of support and possible cost contribution from an affected business before committing.

Peeker Heffernan

raised the proliferation of unpermitted signs on Town property, noting the Town has a sign policy prohibiting signs on Town property and poles, and asked whether the Board would authorize removing them. Members discussed the farmers market signs and signs near the traffic light and in the gardens, as well as signs placed within the state right-of-way. The Board reached consensus to remove unpermitted signs from Town property, while leaving the farmers market signs in place until the market concludes at the end of September. Members noted that the Town's own signs on private property are placed with the landowners' permission.

Jessica Teets

raised two items. First, she reported that a tree had fallen at the ledges near the water reservoir, taking out a section of fence and creating an unsafe condition, and asked that people be alerted. Second, she raised the effectiveness of the Town's committee structure, noting many committees have open seats and that the Board receives little information about committee work except when a committee brings a specific item forward. She asked whether committees could report on a schedule, such as quarterly, similar to Town departments. The Chair explained that committee minutes are emailed to him and posted to the Town website by Sharon Lucia, and that committees could also report out to the Board. Ben Skolozdra, Chair of the Energy Committee, agreed the structure and onboarding are unclear and noted the Committee is down two members. Town Administrator Greg Faust said he intends to take over committee coordination, targeting roughly October 1 to bring committee chairs together, align their work with the Town Plan, and establish a more regular flow of information; members expressed support.

Chair Ian Albinson and Town Administrator Greg Faust each reported nothing further.

5. Town Administrator's Report.

The Town Administrator's substantive updates were provided during the roundtable discussion, including the sidewalk assessment and the plan to coordinate Town committees beginning around October 1. No additional report was presented.

VI. Other Business.

1. Correspondence, Reports, and Communications Received.

The Chair reported that the Town has received numerous inquiries and related correspondence regarding Lord's Prayer Rock, available on the Town website and in Basecamp, including three media inquiries that he fielded. He invited members to review the correspondence. No action was taken.

VII. Executive Session.

No executive session was held or anticipated for this meeting.

VIII. Adjourn.

MOTION: *A motion to adjourn the August 24, 2026 Selectboard meeting was made by Ian Albinson, seconded by Jessica Teets, and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:59 PM.*

Respectfully submitted,
Ian Albinson, Selectboard Chair