

BRISTOL
VERMONT



Bristol Board Capacity Building

More done in the same number of nights.

Presented to the Selectboard by the Town Administrator, September 28, 2026

Fifteen slides, four motions, no new nights.

The case in three numbers

36 vs 21

minutes a meeting on policy readings,
versus everything else the Board decides

13

domains of Town business
prepared by one position

5 of 17

agendas this year that name
a Town committee at all

None of that is a criticism of anyone. It's a description of a queue. The fix is structure, not hours.

Bristol and the three towns it measures itself against all meet twice a month. Middlebury carries nineteen boards and commissions and still meets twice a month. The committees did not buy back a night. They changed what the nights hold.

Time figures: agenda allocations, last five regular meetings (June 22 to September 14, 2026). Domains and committee count: Town Administrator analysis, September 2026.

Nothing new is needed

1

The charter defers to general law

Section 108-201: Bristol has every power granted to towns “except when changed, enlarged, or modified by these charter provisions.” Chapter 108 changes board size, ordinance reach, and three utility departments. Nothing about committees.

24 V.S.A. App. ch. 108

2

The Rules already grant the power

Section II: the Chair “shall preside at all meetings, hearings, and other proceedings, decide all points of order or procedure, and appoint members to any committee of the Board.”

Rules of Procedure, adopted March 29, 2021

3

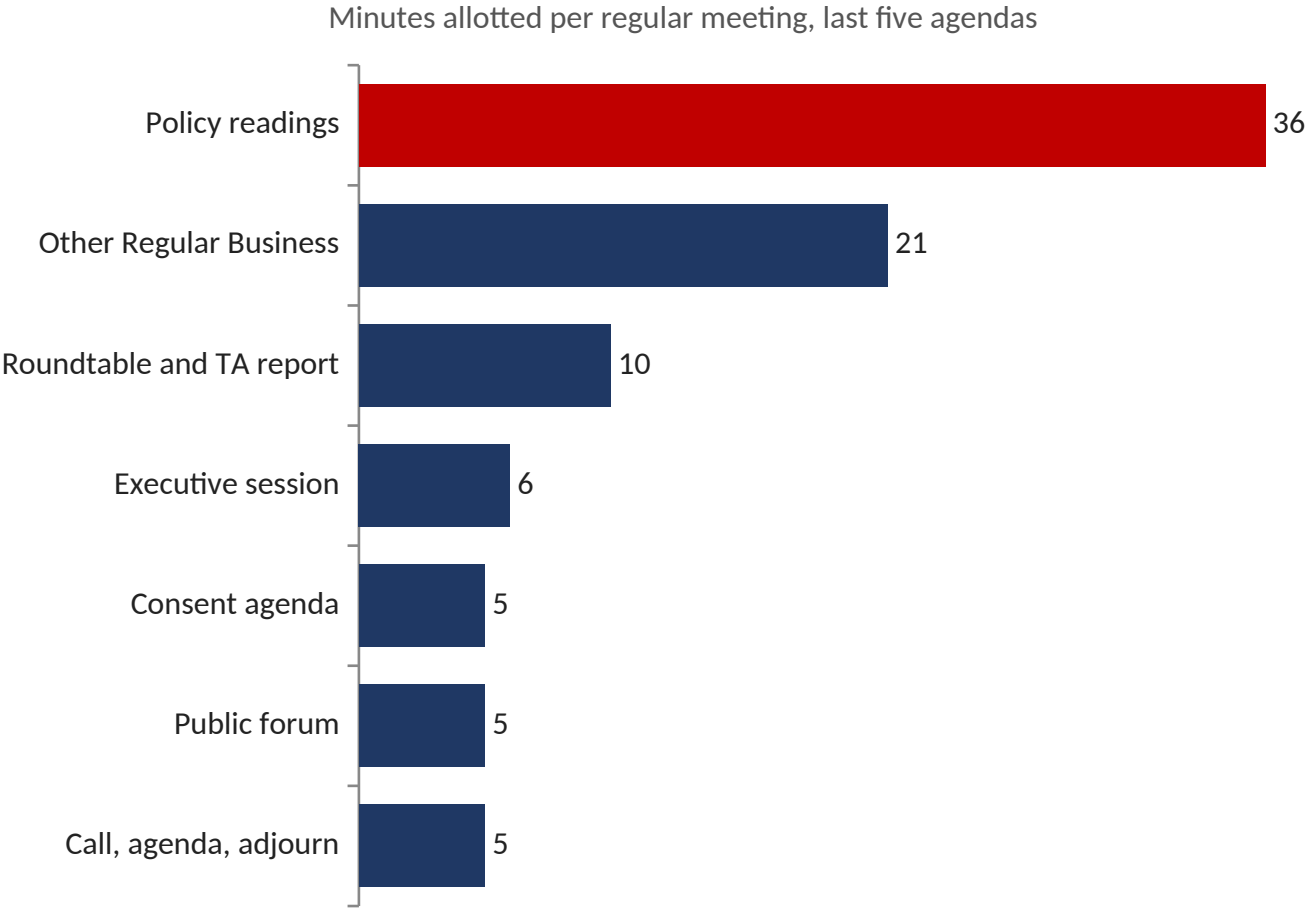
Bristol already does this, twice

The Equipment Committee seats Peeker Heffernan ex officio with the Road Foreman and the Clerk. The Revolving Loan Fund seats Michelle Perlee with the Town Administrator and the Treasurer.

2026 to 2027 officers list

Under section 108-201 the charter does not have to change, and under Rules Section II the appointment power is already granted. One motion each, at a warned meeting.

Where the evening goes

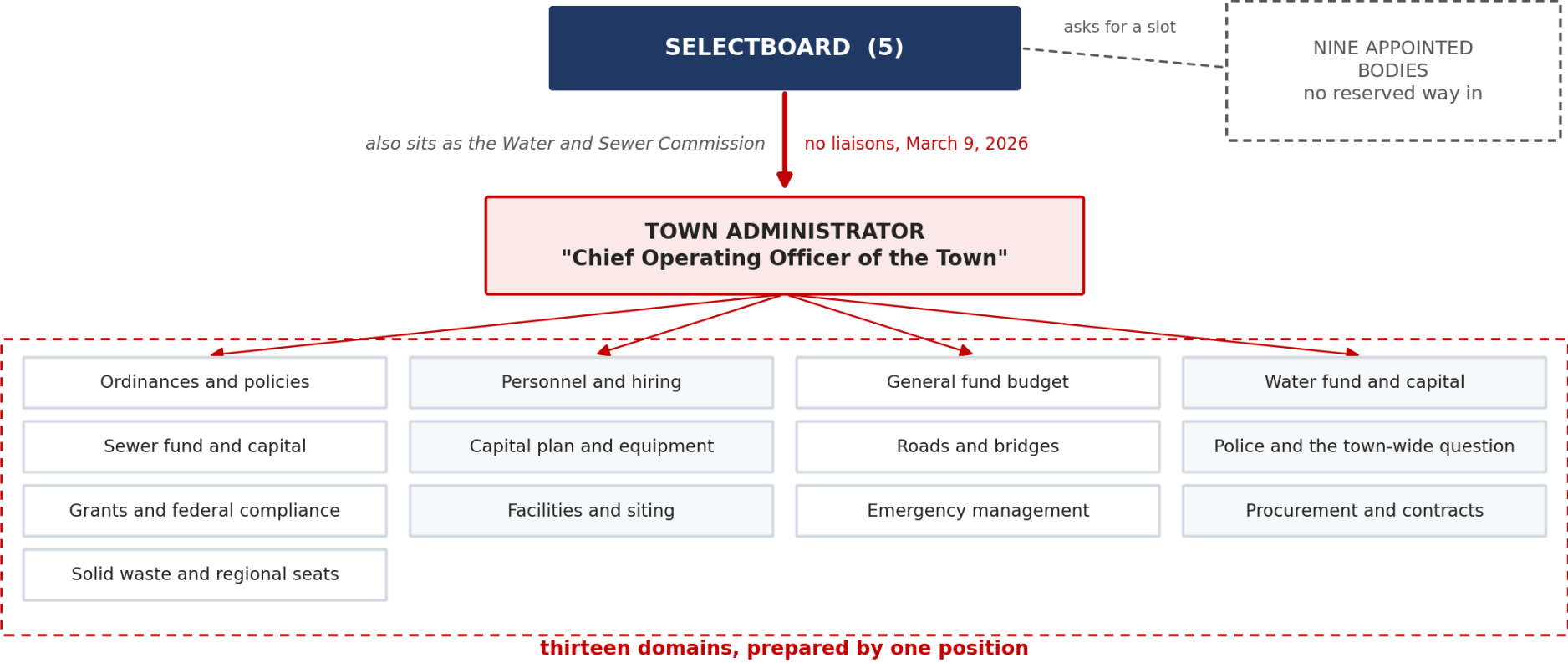


24 V.S.A. 1972 sets out ordinance adoption in one sentence, and it contains no readings. The three-meeting cycle is Bristol's own practice. Kept on purpose, it's a transparency choice worth about fourteen hours of elected time a year. Inherited by accident, it's the largest block on the calendar.

About 14 hours a year

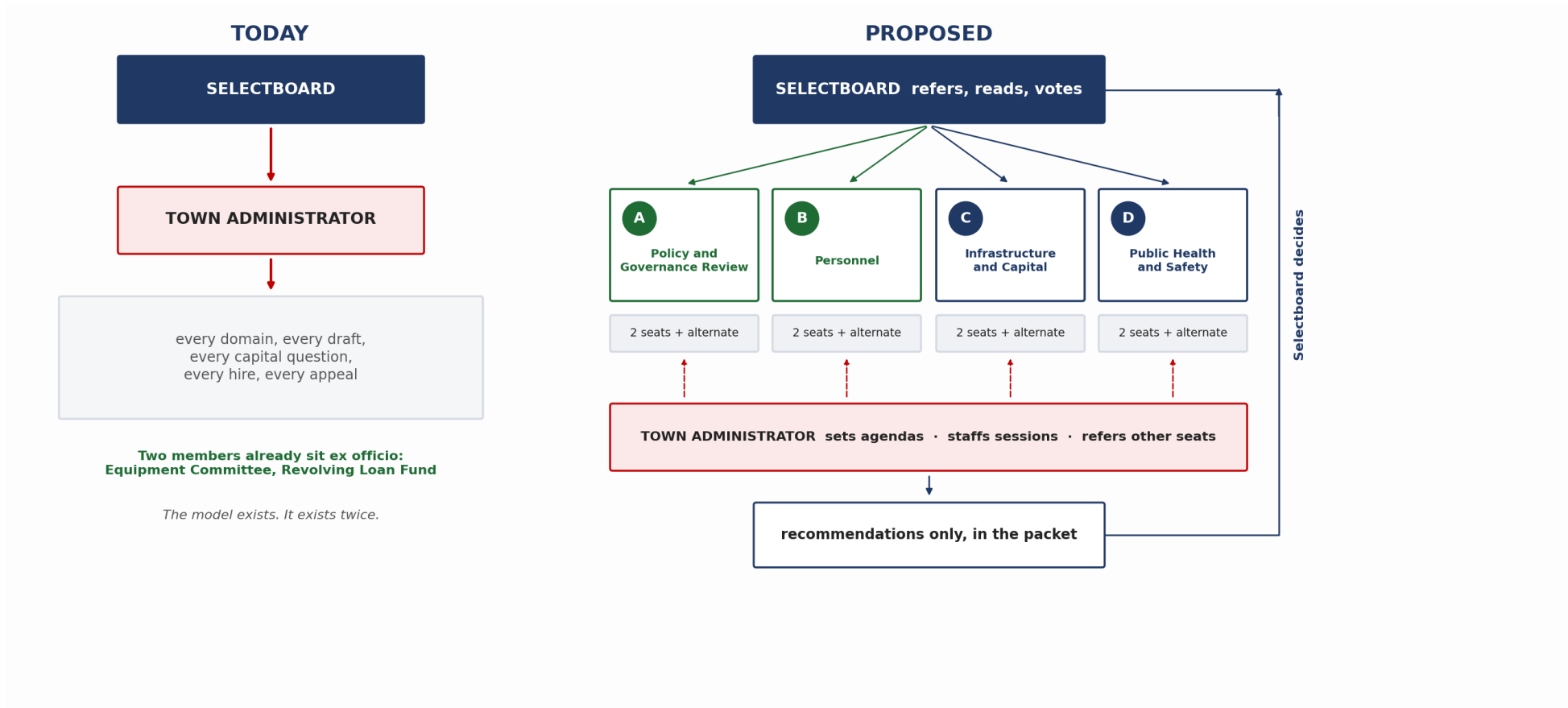
of elected time goes to the reading cycle. Moving the redlining out of the room recovers most of it. The Board keeps the reading and the vote.

Today



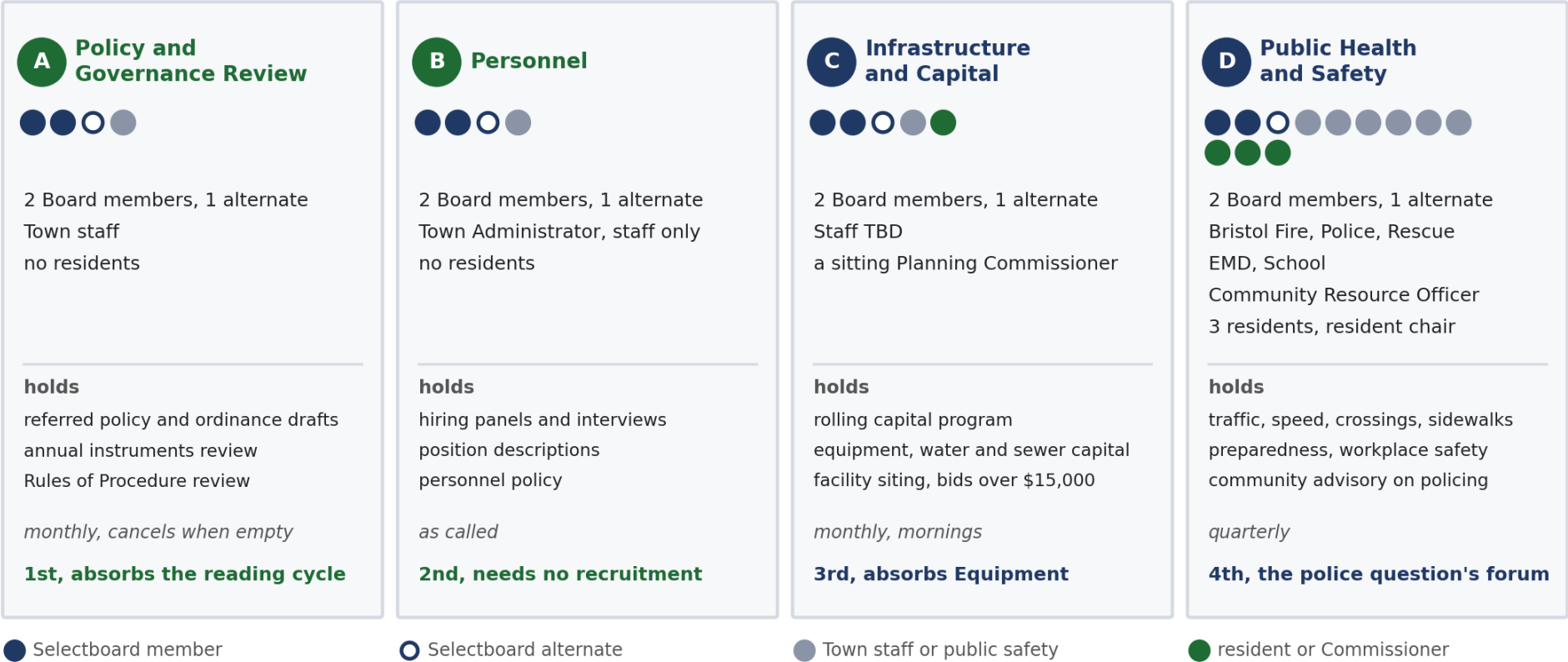
Every domain converges on one position. The Board decided this on March 9, 2026, when it chose not to seat department liaisons, and the job description approved October 28, 2024 says the same thing in stronger terms. The nine appointed bodies sit off to the side with no reserved way in.

Proposed



Four subcommittees. Two Selectboard seats each, plus one Selectboard alternate who sits only when a member can't, so sessions aren't cancelled. Every other seat is filled by Town Administrator referral only. Each takes only what the Board refers to it, meets on a schedule that cancels when nothing is pending, and sends one written recommendation back in the packet. Every member recommends only. Nothing supplants the Selectboard's elected authority.

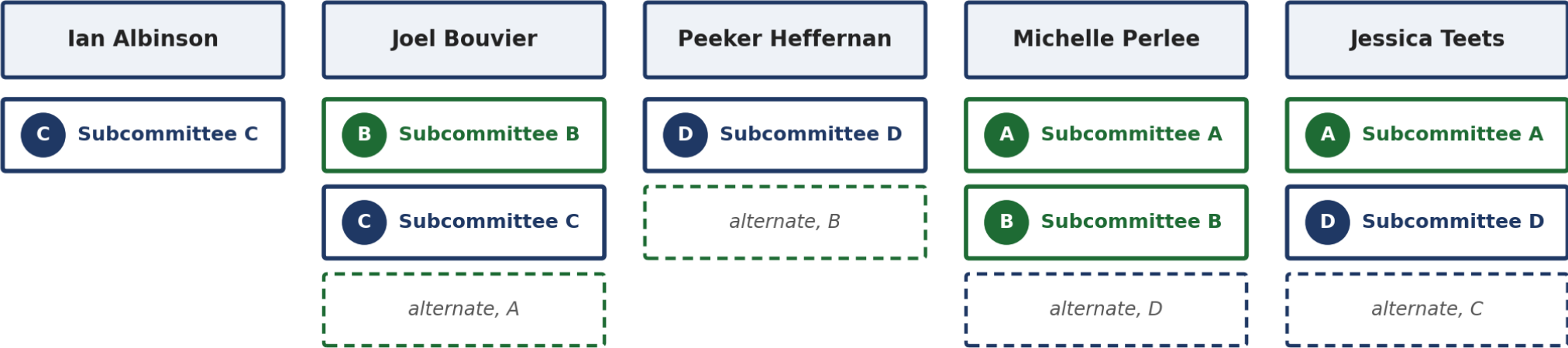
Who sits where



The Chair appoints the two Selectboard seats and the alternate. Every other seat: Town Administrator referral only, then Board appointment.

Policy and Governance Review goes first because that's where the fourteen hours live. Personnel follows because it needs no recruitment. Infrastructure and Capital comes next and absorbs the Equipment Committee rather than sitting beside it. Public Health and Safety rounds it out, and it's the only forum Bristol has for the police question.

Why two seats, never three

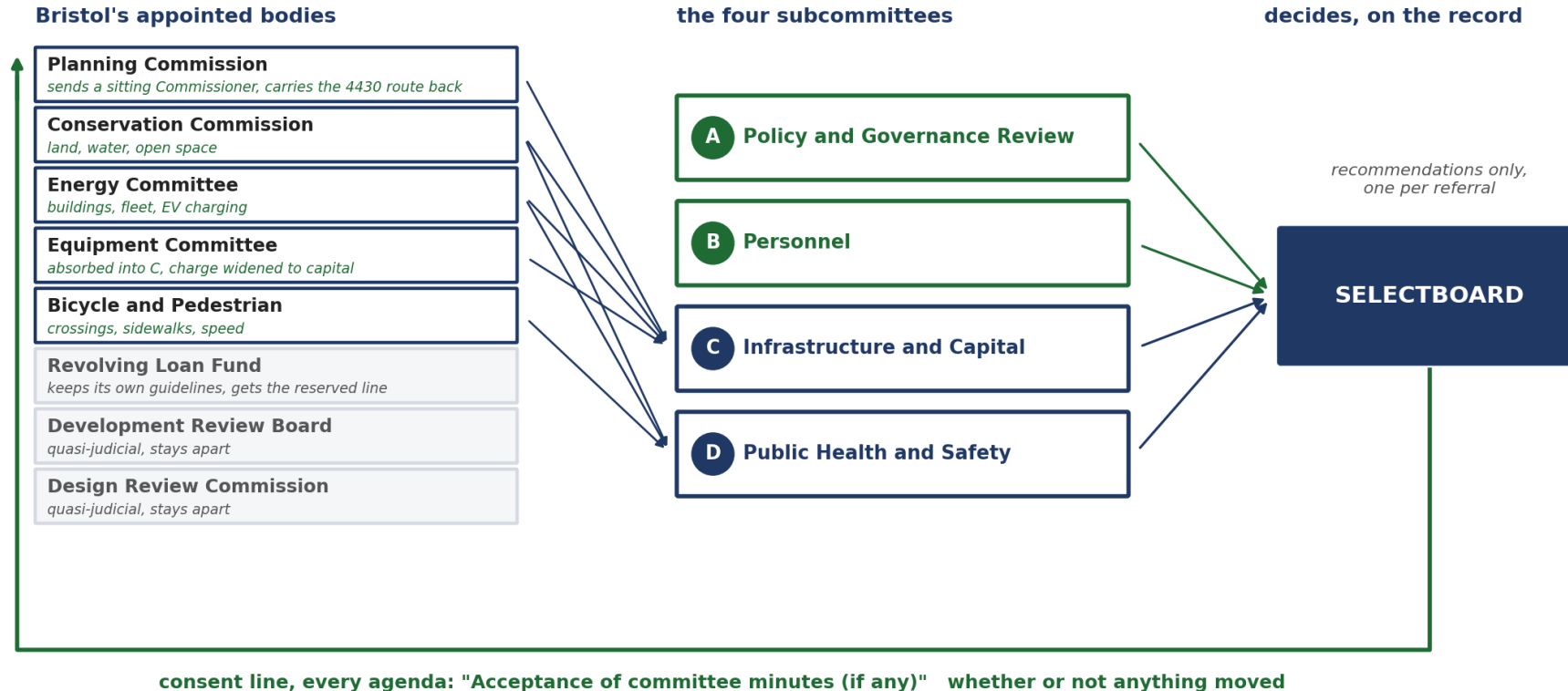


QUORUM LINE three members in a room on Town business is a Selectboard meeting, 1 V.S.A. 310(5)(A)

Board of five, quorum of three. Eight seats and four alternates. An alternate sits only in place of an absent member, so the largest gathering of members anywhere in the structure is still two. Lineup as proposed by the Chair, September 24, 2026.

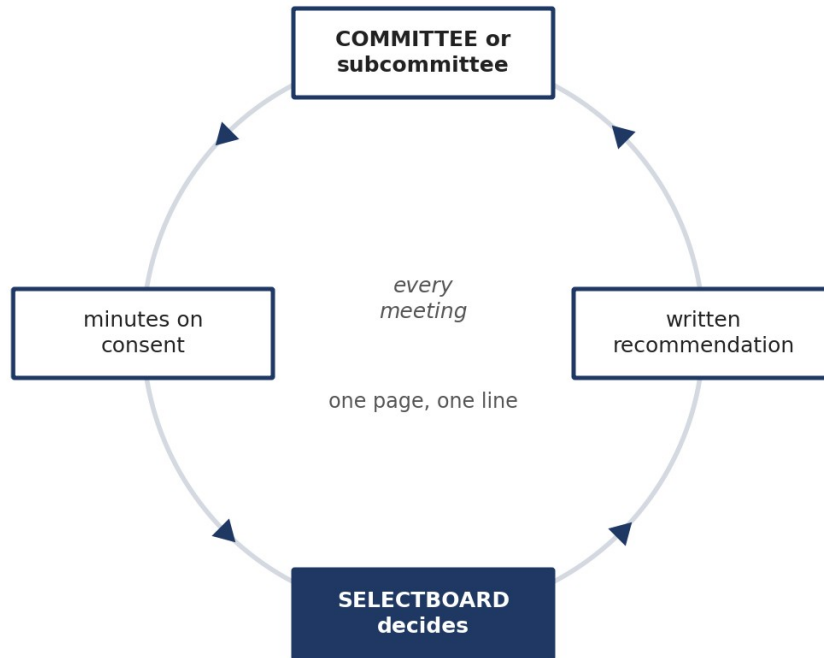
The Board is five. A quorum is three. Under 1 V.S.A. 310, three members in a room on Town business is a Selectboard meeting, whatever it's called on the agenda. Middlebury seats three on its personnel body because its board is seven. Copied into Bristol, every session would become a warned Board meeting. Two seats, as a ceiling, on anything the Board creates.

Town committees plug in



Bristol's nine appointed bodies don't get replaced. They get a door. Planning sends a Commissioner to Capital and carries the 24 V.S.A. 4430 capital route back. Energy and Conservation feed Capital and Safety. Bicycle and Pedestrian feeds Safety. The loan fund keeps its own guidelines and gets a reserved line on the agenda. Every body's record comes to the Board on consent, whether or not anything moved.

The loop closes



The department side already runs this way: the Weekly Selectboard Brief carries department cross-talk every week.

- 1 Reserved consent line**
"Acceptance of Subcommittee Minutes (if any)" on every agenda. Costs nothing on an empty night.
Middlebury, item 3b
- 2 Annual sit-down**
Each body meets the Board once a year to review its mission and give an overview of its work.
Hinesburg, policy section v(a)
- 3 Annual report, July 31**
Each body reports on the fiscal year that ended June 30, filed with the Town Administrator by July 31.
Hinesburg, policy section v(b), set to Bristol's fiscal year
- 4 Cadence in every charge**
"The Selectboard will be informed of the recommendations within one Selectboard meeting cycle."
Bristol, Revolving Loan Fund Guidelines

Information sharing is the second half of the argument. Four borrowed pieces, all cheap. Middlebury reserves a consent line, "Acceptance of Subcommittee Minutes (if any)," on every agenda. Hinesburg has each body meet the Selectboard once a year and file an annual report. Bristol sets that report at July 31, one month after its fiscal year ends. Bristol's own Revolving Loan Fund Guidelines already say the Board is informed "within one Selectboard meeting cycle." Write that sentence into every charge. The weekly briefs already carry the department side.

What each subcommittee takes up first

A Policy and Governance Review

- Personnel Policy revision
- Conflict of Interest Policy revision
- Rules of Procedure review
- Which filed items are actually ordinances

B Personnel

- The next open position
- Position descriptions, each on its own motion
- Hiring panels, so no interview is carried alone

C Infrastructure and Capital

- FY2027 to FY2036 capital plan
- Facility siting: DPW, Recreation, Police
- Equipment cycle, water and sewer capital
- Bid recommendations over \$15,000

D Public Health and Safety

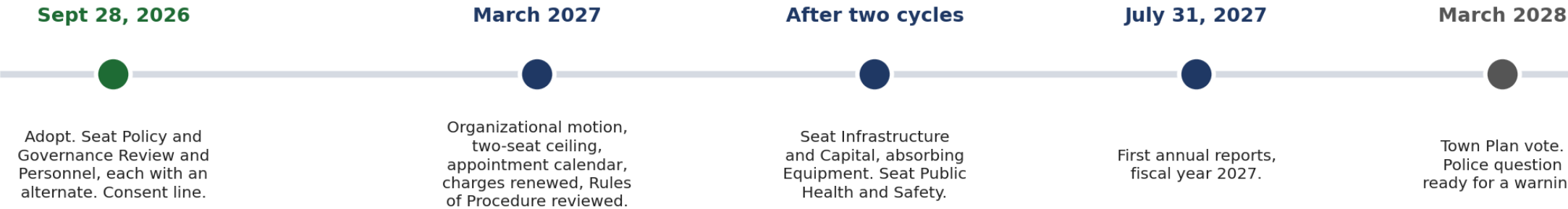
- The town-wide police question
- Hardscrabble Road speed and traffic study
- Park hours and overnight use
- VOSHA workplace safety program

Nobody is seated with an empty docket.

Policy Review and Personnel open this fall. Capital and Safety open after Policy Review has run twice.

What it costs, and when

Cost: four motions, one agenda line, and the warning and record-keeping for each subcommittee. No new nights.



Two subcommittees this fall. The standing rules in the March 2027 organizational motion. The other two after the first has run twice. First annual reports July 31, 2027. Cost: four motions, one agenda line, and the warning and record-keeping for each subcommittee, which land on the Town Administrator.

Guardrails

- 1 Referral only**

A subcommittee takes up only items referred by the Board or the Town Administrator. Nothing has to clear one to reach the floor.
- 2 One docket, one packet**

The Town Administrator sets each subcommittee's agenda, staffs every session, and carries its recommendation in the Board packet.
- 3 No subcommittee speaks for the Town**

No direct instruction to a department, no statement to the public or an outside party. Departments keep one reporting line.
- 4 Both views reach the floor**

When a subcommittee and the Town Administrator differ, both recommendations travel to the Board. The Board decides.
- 5 Every charge expires in March**

Renewed at the organizational meeting or it lapses. The Board never inherits a committee nobody remembers creating.

Stress test

- Does any one reach a Board quorum? No, two seats each. The alternate only fills in.
- Does any authority move? No, recommendation only.
- Does one become a gate? No, referral only.
- Charter change needed? No, 108-201.
- New policy needed? No, Rules Section II.
- New compliance work? Yes. Each is warned and minuted. That is staff work, not Board work.

The four motions

Agenda item 5c. Proposed for adoption tonight.

1

Two seats and an alternate

Two Selectboard seats is the ceiling for any body the Selectboard creates. Each subcommittee has one Selectboard alternate, who sits only in place of an absent member. A vacancy returns to the Board.

2

Seat Policy and Governance Review

Two members and one alternate, staffed by the Town Administrator, under Charge A. Referred with it: the Personnel and Conflict of Interest drafts, the Rules of Procedure review, and which filed instruments are ordinances.

3

Seat Personnel

Two members and one alternate, under Charge B. Meets when called. The Town Administrator staffs it and is not a member.

4

Close the loop

A standing consent line accepting committee minutes, an appointment calendar, and an annual report due July 31.

Recommendations only. No authority moves. No new nights.

Proposed appointments

The Chair appoints under Rules of Procedure Section II.B. Lineup as the Chair proposed it September 24.

A

Policy and Governance Review

Michelle Perlee and Jessica Teets. Alternate: Joel Bouvier. Appointed tonight.

B

Personnel

Michelle Perlee and Joel Bouvier. Alternate: Peeker Heffernan. Appointed tonight.

C

Infrastructure and Capital

Joel Bouvier and Ian Albinson. Alternate: Jessica Teets. Intent for the record, not created tonight.

D

Public Health and Safety

Jessica Teets and Peeker Heffernan. Alternate: Michelle Perlee. Intent only, not created yet.

One member out doesn't cancel a session. Never more than two in the room.