

**TOWN OF BOLTON
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2024, 7:00 P.M.
TOWN HALL & ZOOM
MINUTES**

Board of Selectmen Present In-Person: First Selectman Rodney Fournier, Deputy First Selectman Robert Morra, Gwen Marrion, Amanda Gordon, Tim Sadler, Mather Clarke

Board of Selectman Members Absent: Pamela Sawyer

Staff Present In-Person: Town Administrator James Rupert, Fire Marshal William Call

Staff Present Via Phone: Fire Chief Bruce Dixon

Staff Present Via Zoom: Recording Secretary Kacie Cannon

Others Present Via Zoom: Jim Loersch

Other Present Via Phone: Kyle Paggioli

1. Call to Order: R. Fournier called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Public Comment:

A. Gordon requested that more transparency be provided to residents during the upcoming budget process including detailed descriptions of departments, full-time employees and their roles, and justification for any increases or decreases in the budget for the 2025 and 2026 fiscal years. She added that a detailed breakdown for professional technical services is needed and recommended that the Finance Director attend all budget meetings so that any changes to the budget can be discussed and made during those meetings.

R. Morra offered condolences on behalf of the Board to the Rell family for the recent loss of Governor Jody Rell. A. Gordon also offered condolences to the Romkey family for the loss of Alison Romkey, who previously served as a member of the Board of Education.

a. Minutes: November 5, 2024 – Regular Meeting.

R. Morra MOVED to approve the November 5, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes with the following corrections:

1. Add Kyle and Tom Paggioli to the list of "Others Present In-Person."
2. Add Tom Paggioli in the Public Comment section regarding the Right-To-Farm ordinance.
3. Correct Sylvia Ounpoo's public comment to state "dog waste station."

A. Gordon SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 5:1:1 (T. Sadler Abstained, P. Sawyer Absent).

b. November 19, 2024 – Special A/P Meeting.

R. Morra MOVED to approve the November 19, 2024 Special A/P Meeting Minutes as presented. A. Gordon SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 5:1:1 (M. Clarke Abstained).

3. Consider and Act on Approving Agreement Regarding Designation of Fire Marshals.

J. Rupert stated that the purpose of the agreement between the fire marshals of the Towns of Bolton, Andover, and Columbia is to provide assistance and act in each other's place when one of them is unavailable. Fire Marshal William Call explained that they have been working together in an informal capacity and this just formalizes the arrangement and adds legal protection to the towns. He added that there is no exchange of money involved and asked the Board to review and approve the agreement.

A Gordon asked for clarification on whether the agreement allows for the fire marshals to be compensated for their time when assisting other towns. J. Rupert stated that they would be compensated for their time through payroll as appropriate for any hours worked in the other towns. A. Gordon reminded R. Fournier that he would have to sign the Agreement, rather than J. Rupert, since he is the CEO. J. Rupert added that R. Fournier will need to sign three originals for each town, one of which will be filed with the Town Clerk's Office.

R. Morra MOVED to approve the Agreement Regarding Designation of Fire Marshals with the modification that it is signed by the First-Selectman. A. Gordon SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 6:0:1 (P. Sawyer Absent).

4. Consider and Act on Right to Farm Law.

R. Fournier asked if there was interest in adopting the Right to Farm Law. G. Marrion stated that a Public Hearing needs to be held before it can be adopted by the Board. She expressed her support of the law because it honors the agricultural history of the town, provides local food and keeps farms open, and prevents nuisance lawsuits against farmers. G. Marrion recommended adding it to the website as an ordinance once it is approved.

A. Gordon stated that she also supports the law. She noted that if it does not get adopted, farms are still protected by state law, and this ordinance just provides additional support from the town. R. Morra stated that it also makes a clear statement that the town is not going to go in a different direction and create ordinances prohibiting certain types of farming, and he supports the adoption of the law as well.

J. Rupert stated that he will have the ordinance ready for BOS review in January so that a Public Hearing can be subsequently scheduled.

5. Consider and Act on Motion Entering into 36 Month Contract with 0% Interest for Excavator.

J. Rupert stated that the previous discussion on this item was not adequately reflected in the meeting minutes so he put together a motion for BOS to adopt. He added that the minutes did not reflect that the bidding process is being waived because the purchase is being made on the state bid list and that needs to be reflected in the minutes.

G. Marrion stated that she thought a new excavator was being purchased but the contract is for a used one with 150 hours on it. J. Rupert explained that a new machine is approximately \$150,000.00, and this is not the first time the town has purchased gently used equipment to save a significant amount of money. He added that the machine has been satisfactorily tested and operated by the highway foreman and it comes with a full factory warranty.

A. Gordon asked how much was allocated for the excavator. J. Rupert stated that \$25,000.00 has been allocated, which is enough to cover the lease for this fiscal year. G. Marrion asked if the town would be paying

\$25,000.00 per year. J. Rupert replied that the town would not pay that annually but would pay \$3,200.00 per month and would allocate that amount in the capital budget for next year. He added that a \$1.00 purchase payment is due at the end of the lease. G. Marrion asked M. Clarke if a \$30,000.00 discount accurately reflects 150 hours of use, and he replied that it does. J. Rupert noted that it also comes with an extra bucket worth \$1,000.00.

B. Morra MOVED that the Board of Selectmen authorize the Town Administrator to enter into a 36-month lease purchase agreement at 0% interest with Takeuchi Financial for the lease purchase of an excavator. The excavator is a Takeuchi TB290CR with approximately 150 hours of use and will be purchased with an additional bucket. The lease has a total value of \$120,200.00 with a \$1.00 purchase option at the end of the lease. The Board is also waiving the normal bidding process because this is being purchased off of the State Bid list and as a used machine represents a good value. T. Sadler SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 6:0:1.

6. Consider and Act on Approving 2025 Meeting Dates.

G. Marrion pointed out that the November 3, 2025 meeting takes place on a Monday and asked if the change is due to Election Day. R. Fournier confirmed that it is.

R. Morra MOVED to approve the 2025 Meeting Dates. T. Sadler SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 6:0:1.

7. Consider and Act on A/P and Any Budget Transfers.

R. Fournier stated that only one budget transfer has been presented today for \$3,000.00 from Supplies to Postage to cover the costs of mailing out the tax refund checks.

R. Morra MOVED to approve the budget transfer as presented. A. Gordon SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 6:0:1.

A. Gordon MOVED to approve the Accounts Payable as presented in the amount of \$304,387.79. R. Morra SECONDED.

Discussion:

A. Gordon asked why three different vehicles received windshield replacements. J. Rupert stated that they have been pitted and have been in poor condition for awhile due to the heavy use of the vehicles. He added that it was cheaper to have them all done at once.

A. Gordon asked about the charge on Page 13 from a company called Taxer for tax collection costs. J. Rupert stated that he will find out what the charge is for. A. Gordon asked if J. Rupert could provide reports on what the intern is working on since it is a paid position. She also asked about the three months of payments for the annex and asked if the invoices were behind or if they have not been providing invoices. J. Rupert stated that they have been sending the invoices to the wrong e-mail address.

T. Sadler asked if East Hampton Auto Parts delivers parts. J. Rupert confirmed that they do and they deliver faster than Manchester, even though Manchester is closer.

G. Marrion asked what kind of maintenance was recently done by Beaver Solutions for the charge on Page 2. J. Rupert replied that he has not received a report but noted that the technician cleans, adjusts, and straightens

the wire for the beaver device. He stated that the charge is an annual recurring charge, and the device has been very effective in clearing beavers out of the area.

G. Marrion asked if the charge on Page 14 for Tighe and Bond, Inc. was only for the design of the demo for the Notch Road project. J. Rupert explained that there have been two bills so far. He stated that the other bill was for approximately \$16,000.00 for testing and compiling the report, and that the current bill is for compiling the report and putting together 300 pages of bid specifications. He added that a pre-bid walkthrough is taking place tomorrow at Notch Road, and the company will be billing hourly from this point forward.

MOTION CARRIED 6:0:1.

R. Fournier stated that the tax refunds to residents need to be approved. R. Morra noted that the total amount of refunds is \$615,317.35. R. Fournier stated that the refunds need signatures from at least four BOS members.

R. Morra MOVED to approve the tax refunds for a combined total of \$615,317.35. A. Gordon SECONDED.

Discussion:

G. Marrion asked for the percentage of refunds residents selected versus those applying their refunds as tax credits for next year. A. Gordon stated that based on the total amount of refunds, the ratio is approximately 60 percent to 40 percent.

Motion Carried 6:0:1.

8. Set Date for Finance & Administration Subcommittee Meeting Re: First Selectman's Pay and Town Administrator's Review Schedule. (T. Sadler, G. Marrion, M. Clarke, R. Fournier, J. Rupert)

R. Fournier stated that a meeting and public hearing need to be scheduled for this item. J. Rupert explained that a review form is sent out, the data is compiled by one person and sent to the group for review and discussion, and then a recommendation is made to the BOS prior to the public hearing. A. Gordon offered to create a Google review form so that the data gets compiled automatically and stated that she will send it to the Board by Sunday. The Finance & Administration Subcommittee scheduled the meeting for 90 minutes on January 17, 2025 at 8:30 a.m.

A. Gordon asked if more research could be done to provide a comprehensive comparison on the metrics, models, and responsibilities similar towns use for the review process. J. Rupert offered to have the intern compile the information for the subcommittee to review and discuss at the meeting. He added that he will be unable to attend the meeting until 10:00 a.m. but that will give the subcommittee ample time for review, discussion, and an executive session prior to his arrival.

A. Gordon asked if input on the Town Administrator's performance has been solicited from his direct reports. B. Morra stated that the department heads are usually asked to submit comments to the subcommittee point person. A. Gordon suggested offering a Google form for them to complete anonymously. The Board discussed whether or not the feedback should be anonymous and determined that, since it only goes to one point person, there is no need to make it anonymous. R. Fournier offered to serve as the point person.

G. Morra recommended providing specific questions to direct reports to answer rather than just asking for feedback. A. Gordon agreed and suggested using specific questions from the report, particularly Question Nos.

1, 2, 3, 8, 9, and the last two questions. She offered to create the feedback form with a reply deadline of January 13, 2025.

9. Other

J. Rupert asked the Board to consider adding an action to discuss a regional FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant application for portable radios for the fire department.

R. Fournier MOVED to add the Regional AFG Portable Radio Grant of \$16,532.00 to the discussion. R. Morra SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 6:0:1.

Fire Chief Bruce Dixon explained that the fire department had previously applied for a FEMA grant in 2018 but was turned down. He stated that a subsequent application was also turned down. B. Dixon noted that the current radios the fire department uses are unreliable. He added that he attempted to work with the County Coordinator to apply for a county-wide regional grant but the attempt was unsuccessful due to the involvement of 17 different fire chiefs. Instead, B. Dixon has partnered with the Tolland and Somers Fire Departments to apply for a regional grant that provides new portable radios with 700-800 radio frequencies. The grant is \$169,000.00 and requires a 10% match from each town, which would amount to \$16,532.00 for the Town of Bolton.

J. Rupert stated that the BOS has put money aside in the capital budget for the radios and there is more than enough to cover the match. He added that approximately \$50,000.00 has been set aside for radios. R. Fournier asked if the radios could be connected to other department radios such as the schools and parks department, etc. B. Dixon stated that the system could be expanded in the future to include other departments if the town purchases mobile radios, which are not part of the grant. He stated that several departments currently have frequencies on the fire department radio system for communication of emergency situations and added that the schools currently rent their radios from a separate vendor.

B. Dixon stated that the grant would provide one radio for every seated position in the trucks. He stated that FEMA does not allow mobile radios in the trucks, and the base station radio in the firehouse cannot be changed with the grant funds. B. Dixon stated those improvements would be done as future capital projects. He also noted that the grant process will take several months which will provide time to save additional funds in the capital budget for future improvements.

R. Morra MOVED to approve the submission of the regional application for the FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Portable Radio Grant. M. Clarke SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 6:0:1.

10. Town Administrators Report.

J. Rupert provided a written report highlighting several items in progress. He stated that a walkthrough is taking place tomorrow for the Lori Road project and all of the dates for the bid process and deadlines are on the website. G. Marrion asked if the bids are for the demolition and remediation and whether the contract would be signed by December 31st. J. Rupert replied yes to both questions. G. Marrion asked if the cost will be covered by the budget. J. Rupert stated that he does not believe it covers the entire project but he will be looking for leftover funds in the budget that can be reallocated for the project. He added that the work may need to be done in steps as funds allow such as doing the demo and abatement and waiting for additional funds to make any aesthetic improvements.

A. Gordon asked if a contact list has been provided to local businesses. J. Rupert replied that it has and that the former intern, Josh, has been visiting businesses to help them get their businesses listed on the Connecticut Countryside website.

A. Gordon asked if the Cropley's have always donated the wreath listed on J. Rupert's report. J. Rupert stated that this is the first time. A. Gordon replied that she will reach out to thank them.

11. Adjournment:

A. Gordon MOVED to Adjourn the Meeting at 8:14 p.m. R. Morra SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 6:0:1.

Respectfully submitted by Kacie Cannon

Kacie Cannon

Please see the minutes of subsequent meetings for the approval of these minutes and any corrections hereto.