

**BOLTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN
REGULAR MEETING
7:00 PM, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2024
BOLTON TOWN HALL, 222 BOLTON CENTER ROAD
In-Person and Virtual (Hybrid Format)**

MINUTES

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

Board of Selectmen Members Present Via Zoom: Tim Sadler

Staff Present In-Person: Town Administrator James Rupert

Staff Present Via Zoom: Recording Secretary Linda H. McDonald

Others Present Via Zoom: Nick Lavigne (Community Voice Channel), Registrar of Voters Sandra Pierog

Others Present In-Person: Bolton Heritage Farm Commission Chair Arlene Fiano, Bolton Heritage Farm Commission Secretary Beth Harney, Robb Goehring, Rhea Klein, Cynthia Russell-Williams, Thomas Williams, Leslie Shea, Diane DeNunzio, Fire Chief Bruce Dixon, Damian Pec, James Aldrich, Trudy Mitchell

1. **Call to Order:** R. Fournier called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

2. **Public Comment:**

Damian Pec of 149 South Road read a letter he submitted to the board in opposition to the proposed parking lot on South Road. He said he understands the need for public facilities, but stated reasons why he believes this location poses serious threats to property values and the safety of residents. He submitted a petition into the record.

Sandra Pierog requested that the emergency election plans be reviewed as soon as possible and the members forward any questions and concerns to the Town Administrator before Thursday's meeting. Any revisions to the plans will have to be made and incorporated into the plans at Thursday's meeting in order to get the approved plans to the Secretary of State before 4 p.m. on Friday.

Sandra Pierog also asked the board to correct the January 16, 2024 minutes regarding the award of the Rose Farm lease. She said it is no longer referred to as Rose Farm, but now is called the fields at Heritage Farm. S. Pierog recommended correcting the language on the lease agreement as well.

Jim Aldrich of 35 Hanover Farms Road, former member of the Charter Revision Commission, said he has come before the board before on the topic of a pay and benefits package for the First Selectman. He would like to be informed when this topic will be on the board's agenda and when he will have the opportunity to meet with the subcommittee on this. He said he wants to make sure he is included on whatever plan there is for that.

Robb Goehring of 126 South Road read a letter in opposition to the entire parking lot project on South Road going ahead at all. He believes it would be a safety and security issue for anyone

with property near or bordering the public path. He expressed concern with the proposed location of the lot at a blind hill area and that it would not be safe for pedestrians crossing in this area.

Trudy Mitchell of 122 South Road read a letter to the board in opposition to the proposed parking lot on South Road. She expressed safety concerns that the area of the proposed lot always attracted loiterers and the parking lot would increase that activity and that community members with properties bordering the path in the woods will have no way to monitor activity so close to their homes. T. Mitchell voiced concern with the speed of drivers coming up South Road from Route 6, rounding the bend in the exact location where the proposed parking lot is to go.

Cynthia Russell-Williams of 127 South Road commented there has been an increase in people who drive around slowly late at night or early morning in the area, walking around and trying to open car doors. Her fear is the parking lot will make it easier for people to stop and increase the sorts of scenarios where people may be engaging in this type of behavior. She said the proposed location of the lot is an unsafe spot to park and is opposed to the project.

3. **Correspondence:** R. Fournier said the board received a letter from Richard Treat dated 1/25/24 asking for the board to schedule a public tour of the temporary town hall building.

4. **Appointments:**

- 4.a **Fire Marshal – William Call:**

J. Rupert said W. Call was instrumental in leading the charge to get the town statutorily compliant with the inspection testing program with the support of the BOS and the Fire Commission. This appointment has the support of the Town Manager, Fire Commission and members of the interview panel.

R. Morra MOVED the Board of Selectmen appoint William Call as Fire Marshal for the Town of Bolton. P. Sawyer SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 7:0:0.

- 4.b **Deputy Fire Marshal – James Quish:**

J. Rupert said J. Quish currently serves as Assistant Building Official for the town. He has many years of experience as a battalion chief, fire inspector in his life as a paid professional firefighter, and, after retirement, became a trainer for the State of Connecticut, training individuals to become building officials and fire marshals.

R. Morra MOVED the Board of Selectmen appoint James Quish as Deputy Fire Marshal for the Town of Bolton. P. Sawyer SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 7:0:0.

P. Sawyer MOVED to move the approval of the minutes to the last part of the meeting. R. Morra SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 7:0:0.

Fire Chief Bruce Dixon said J. Rupert has been the Fire Marshal for the town for the past 14 years. With the Charter change, as Town Administrator he is no longer able to continue in that role. On behalf of the Fire Commission and Bolton Fire Department, he presented a plaque to Fire Marshal James Rupert “in appreciation for his leadership, administrative support, and collaboration which contributed to the positive development of the Bolton Fire Marshal’s office

while watching over the protection and safety of the citizens of Bolton during his fourteen years of service.”

5. Approval of Minutes:

The following amendments were made:

1/2/24 minutes: 7.a “R. Morra MOVED that the Board of Selectmen approve the \$19,850 to Landie Construction for completion of the drainage work as part of the Connectivity Trail and waiving the bid process for such. ~~G. Marrion~~ **P. Sawyer** SECONDED.”

1/16/24 minutes: “4. **Consider and Act on Rose Heritage Farm Lease Winning Bid:**

J. Rupert said two bids were received for the two-year lease of the hay ground at **Rose Heritage** Farm; Leonard Giglio (Rockland Farm LLC) in the amount of \$5,126 per year and Kyle Paggioli in the amount of \$3,635 per year.

G. Marrion MOVED to award the bid for the **Rose Heritage** Farmland two-year lease of the hay ground from 1/31/2024 – 12/31/2025 to Leonard Giglio (Rockland Farm LLC) in the amount of \$5,126 per year. P. Sawyer SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 7:0:0.”

A. Gordon MOVED the Board of Selectmen approve the January 2, 2024 regular meeting minutes, January 16, 2024 special meeting minutes, January 16, 2024 budget workshop minutes, January 23, 2024 special meeting minutes, January 23, 2024 special meeting minutes, January 30, 2024 special meeting and budget workshop minutes, February 1, 2024 special meeting minutes as amended.

R. Morra SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 6:0:0.

6. Ongoing Business:

6.a BHF Updated Business Plan and Master Plan Update:

Bolton Heritage Farm Commission Chair Arlene Fiano and Secretary Beth Harley updated the board with the progress made at Bolton Heritage Farm since the original Business Plan was approved by the Board of Selectmen in 2020. The Bolton Heritage Farm Commission (BHFC) was awarded a survey and planning grant from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to create a Master Site Development Plan for the farm which was approved by the BOS in 2022. An architect firm has submitted a proposal for consulting services related to the review and coordination of Town infrastructure projects with direct bearing on this plan, including the LOTCIP funded project for Town Connectivity/Accessibility and a STEAP funded project, if approved, for a community septic system.

P. Sawyer thanked the commission members for their volunteer work with the farm.

T. Sadler left the meeting at 7:44 p.m.

7. New Business:

7.a Consider and Act on the Grant for the Parking Lot on South Road:

G. Marrion said the members have not seen a design or estimate for the parking lot from the Town’s engineering firm. She said the concerns the residents have expressed through letters and in-person at the meeting tonight fall into a few categories. One is safety on the road, which she believes is a legitimate concern and in order for her to understand how dangerous that stretch is, she would have to have some professional information given to the board.

J. Rupert said the engineer's report would be distributed to the members tomorrow morning.

The other concerns are based on proximity of the parking lot to their homes. G. Marrion said the board has to think how that weighs against opening up 153 acres of publicly owned property to the rest of the residents of Bolton and surrounding towns who might want to come and use this asset. She noted this is a walking/hiking trail only with low impact.

R. Morra commented that the parking area, not the trail, is the issue to the neighbors in the area. He said the board has to consider the impact to the residents, having the cars there. R. Morra said this needs to be looked at a lot closer and really consider what the residents have to say. He said this may not be the location for the parking lot

P. Sawyer suggested, since the proposed lot is in close proximity to a stream, that the town contact the Army Corp of Engineers before the board proceeds any further. She expressed concern with having the parking on the east side of the road for safety issues.

G. Marrion noted the window of opportunity is closing on applying for this grant through the Recreational Trails Program, due March 11th. The board still has to look at the engineer's report, the proposal has to go before the Planning and Zoning Commission for approval, and she has to get support letters.

Discussion followed on the history and intent of the trail and how it is currently being used and by whom.

G. Marrion MOVED the Board of Selectmen table consideration and action on the grant for the parking lot on South Road to the special BOS meeting on Tuesday, February 13, 2024. P. Sawyer SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 6:0:0.

G. Marrion requested the Town Administrator ask the Planning and Zoning Commission to put this on their February 14th agenda for an 8-24 referral.

7.b Consider and Act on NRMC Temporary Building Public Tour Date of Facility:

P. Sawyer MOVED the Board of Selectmen table consideration and action on setting a date for a public tour of the NRMC temporary building until the BOS March regular meeting. A. Gordon SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 6:0:0.

7.c Consider and Act on Bid Waiver for Novus:

J. Rupert explained one of the issues the town continually has with the auditor is that the town ordinance does not specifically say that the town can purchase things off the state bid list. The remedy is to actually change the town ordinance. He said, although Novus is a service the town is purchasing off the state bid list and the Capital Region Council of Governments purchasing council, the BOE has had a conversation with the town's auditor who intends to cite the BOE and the town for selecting Novus off the state bid list without going out to bid. The auditor recommended the BOE and the BOS retroactively consider a bid waiver for Novus. The BOE has already taken that action.

R. Morra MOVED the Board of Selectmen retrospectively approve the bid waiver for Novus. P. Sawyer SECONDED.

R. Morra amended his motion as follows:

R. Morra MOVED the Board of Selectmen retrospectively approve the bid waiver for Novus due to a recommendation from the auditor to properly meet the Town's existing regulation that the bid process the Town uses does not particularly conform to that process, therefore, by making this motion it merely corrects it. P. Sawyer SECONDED the amended motion.

R. Morra amended the prior amendment to add "The reason the Town is applying for the waiver is because the Town took Novus off the State bid list." P. Sawyer SECONDED this amendment. MOTION to approve the motion with amendments CARRIED 6:0:0.

Discussion followed on the process to amend the town ordinance.

7.d Report from G. Marrion regarding Meeting with R. Parlee and DEEP about Reporting ATV's on the Trails:

G. Marrion reported she attended a meeting on January 10th with Rod Parlee and two DEEP conservation officers on the issue of how to report illegal vehicular traffic on State trails. The answer provided was to call 860-424-3333 to report illegal vehicular activity on the trails. The officers also said, if you can without aggravating the situation, take a photo of the perpetrator. The state conservation officers only cover state lands, not town properties or privately owned property.

J. Rupert noted that if a trail is paved, it is a DOT trail and the state police have authority and dirt trails are DEEP trails and DEEP has authority.

7.e Recommendation from the Finance and Administration Subcommittee and Possible Action on Employee Wages and Benefits:

J. Rupert informed the board members of the recommendations from the Finance and Administration Subcommittee on employee wages and benefits as follows:

- Permit the Highway Foreman use of the town vehicle to go back and forth to work with some limited personal use so he could do errands on his way to and from work. This would have a sunset clause with this employee so the BOS could consider it at a future date.
- Wage increase for the Recreation Director with a recommendation of \$3,000 in this current fiscal year, retroactive to July 1, 2023 and another \$3,000 next year based on meeting goals and objectives that were set forth in her annual evaluation.
- A \$2,000 wage increase for this current fiscal year for the Executive Administrative Assistant in the Selectmen's Office based on increased responsibilities.
- A \$1 per hour wage increase for the Administrative Assistant in the Selectmen's Office with a confidentiality clause to her contract.
- Pay increases of \$1 per hour starting this fiscal year for Senior/Social Services drivers and other staff in the department and the town will start to pay for required driver physicals.

J. Rupert noted the prior BOS had asked him to put a little money in this year's administrative budget in case the BOS needed to make some of these wage adjustments. In response to a question from A. Gordon, J. Rupert said there is no salary range on any town employee job description. Discussion followed on the process and data used by the subcommittee for their recommendations.

R. Morra MOVED the Board of Selectmen adopt the employee wages and benefits recommendations of the Finance and Administration Subcommittee. P. Sawyer SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 5:0:1 with A Gordon abstaining.

8. Reports and Updates:

8.a Veterans Commission Report:

R. Morra explained the Veterans Commission had requested that the BOS look at increasing the veterans tax assessment exemption which, currently, is on personal property or real estate for residents who are veterans from a combat era. He said the state has a certain level and the town, in the past, added to it. R. Morra was present at the commission's meeting and they requested to meet with the Finance and Administration Subcommittee with their request and proposal, possibly in March, followed by a public forum.

R. Morra reported the BOS was invited to participate in the Memorial Day Parade.

8.b Properties and Facilities Administrator Report: J. Rupert reported things are being moved into the town hall annex building and are waiting for fiber optic cables to come in. He said the town officially accepted the building from Willscot Construction.

J. Rupert he has prepared the bid for demolition for Notch Road municipal center and sent it out to two architects who both advised, based on the need of the town, changing the RFP to a design bid services RFP. They feel it would save the town money and, probably, time. He and the Building and Grounds Supervisor are revising the bid.

J. Rupert reported the town has the completed schematic for Heritage Farm trail and thinks it would be great for the BOS Facilities and Public Safety Committee to look at that before another public informational meeting is set up. G. Marrion suggested it would be more informative for the committee to walk the trail with the schematic in hand.

8.c FY 24 Budget Report: J. Rupert reported the only item of concern is in the Waste Collection budget. He noted the town was aware of the increase in the tipping fees before last year's budget was developed, but the town is disposing of more trash than the town estimated, based on previous history. The Waste Collection category may be underfunded by \$50,000 - \$75,000, so funds may have to be moved into that line item.

The board reviewed the monthly tax collection report for the period ending December 31, 2023. J. Rupert noted tax collections are very good and noted the Tax Collector does an extraordinary job.

R. Fournier said he received a notice from the Connecticut DOT, notifying the town of their tentative Vendor-in-Place paving program scheduled for the 2024 construction season. The route in Bolton scheduled for resurfacing is Lake Street.

8.d Budget Transfers: No transfers.

9. First Selectman's Report:

R. Fournier reported he has been busy with the budget and meetings. He will be attending a consortium for the towns of Mansfield, Tolland, Coventry, Bolton, and Mansfield promoting businesses as well as the recreational opportunities that exist in all four towns.

10. Administrative Officer's Report:

10.a Monthly Report:

Highlights from J. Rupert's report include:

- Participated in migrant webinar with the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) and they are highly recommending each town put together a small task force and plan for the eventuality, asking "What would Bolton do if a busload of migrants showed up in Bolton?" The town would have to manage that issue for 24-48 hours, at which time the town would get assistance from DEMHS. He said the town is in the process to plan a meeting to address this issue.
- Participated in CCM Legislative Committee meeting. A task force has been formed to work toward the elimination of the automobile tax.
- He met with the Capital Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) to discuss the use of Regional Performance Incentive Grant funds to develop and pioneer a building inspector mentoring program with Marlborough and CRCOG.

10.b Other:

The consensus of the board was to schedule the next A/P meeting for Tuesday, February 13, 2024 at 6:30 p.m.

11. Adjournment: adjourned the meeting at 9:19 p.m. R. Morra SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 6:0:0.

Respectfully submitted by Linda H. McDonald

Linda H. McDonald

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