

**BOLTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN
RETREAT
9:00 AM, SATURDAY, APRIL 13, 2024
BOLTON SENIOR CENTER, 104 NOTCH ROAD
In-Person Only**

MINUTES

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

Staff Present: Town Administrator James Rupert, Recording Secretary Linda H. McDonald

Others Present: John Elsesser, Facilitator and Jim Loersch

Facilitator John Elsesser laid the groundwork for the meeting. He talked about setting goals and establishing priorities. He noted some big issues/trends facing the town; i.e., student enrollment trends, grand list growth, state aid, and unfunded state mandates. He recommended that the Selectmen identify all drainage issues in town and suggested the BOS meet with the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) for an update on the goals of the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) and asked if there is an implementation committee for the POCD. The topic of creating attainable housing in town was also discussed.

Referring to the POCD, J. Elsesser reviewed population trends, the land use and zone maps and suggested the town have less zones with broader uses. He noted the state sometimes has unspent funds in the transportation budget at the end of the fiscal year and recommended the town contact district engineers to possibly get free road improvements, such as left hand turns on state roads in town.

School enrollment was discussed. J. Elsesser noted overall town population in the past 22 years decreased by 166 (3.4%) but student population has dropped 28.6% (down 280 students), with the cost per student increasing dramatically. He strongly believes the current direction of the school system is not sustainable and needs significant work and communicated this will impact everything else the town wants to do.

The Selectmen then participated in a brainstorming workshop, listing items/projects in several categories they considered of importance to the future of the town. The items were ranked by priority. The top priority items are as follows:

1. Community Facility Needs:

- New Town Hall/Community space – consider size, accessibility and location

2. Infrastructure Needs:

- Getting water up Route 44 – water tower – private vs public
- Attainable Housing – options for seniors, condominiums, apartments, home ownership
- Getting the Department of Transportation to prioritize the Rt 6 & 44 intersection

3. Public Safety:

- Address structure of the fire department regarding staffing/volunteers
- Having State Troopers or consider regionalization

4. Schools:

- Collaboration between the Board of Education and Administration

5. Community Communications:

- Have consortium (multi-board) meetings/presentations, possibly quarterly

6. Parks and Natural Resources:

- Leverage the parks – how to increase use at Indian Notch (rent space to store kayaks, create secondary parking)

(After the brainstorming session ended, A. Gordon asked to add Heritage Farms as a priority project to this list.)

7. Economic Development:

- Generating new revenue by attracting new businesses
- Simplification of the zoning regulations
- Director of Community Development needs more time to recruit businesses

8. Governance:

- Ability to apply for more grants

P. Sawyer suggested the BOS send positive messages to the residents involved in helping the town in the form of proclamations or letters of appreciation.

A. Gordon suggested the BOS meet with state and federal officials to let them know the town priorities.

The retreat concluded at 12:58 p.m.

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.