

**BOLTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SPECIAL MEETING – A/P
6:00 PM, TUESDAY, JULY 30, 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, Gwen Marrion, Tim Sadler, Amanda Gordon, Pamela Sawyer
Board of Selectmen Absent: Mather Clarke

Staff Present Via Zoom: Recording Secretary Linda H. McDonald
Staff Present In-Person: Town Administrator James Rupert

Others Present Via Zoom: James Loersch
Others Present In-Person: Ross Lally

1. **Call to Order:** R. Fournier called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

2. **Consider and Act on A/P Report:**

P. Sawyer MOVED that the Board of Selectmen accept the A/P report as presented. R. Morra SECONDED. P. Sawyer amended her motion and MOVED that the Board of Selectmen accept the 2023/2024 fiscal year A/P report as presented. R. Morra SECONDED.

A. Gordon asked about the gas bills for June and July. J. Rupert responded the bills are for hot water use. She asked about the Halloran & Sage line item for legal services for John Laraia V. Laura Thweatt. J. Rupert said that has to do with the continuing issues at 65 Shoddy Mill Road. A. Gordon asked about the QDS printing and binding expenses for the Tax Collector. J. Rupert explained QDS prints the tax bills, put in envelopes and then they come back to the town for postage and mailing. She asked about the catch basin cleaning expense. J. Rupert said that is for annual cleaning of the catch basins all over town. MOTION CARRIED 6:0:0.

P. Sawyer MOVED that the Board of Selectmen accept the 2024/2025 fiscal year A/P report as presented. R. Morra SECONDED.

G. Marrion asked if the OpenGov expense for Land Use software, permitting, licensing and code enforcement was only for the use of the online system for people to apply for their permits. J. Rupert explained that it is also an electronic database for document storage through cloud storage previously retained on paper. He said it is utilized for other purposes in other departments. G. Marrion asked if there would be a point when the town could review the cost of this and see if there is something different out there that might be a better service. J. Rupert said this is the best system on the market that the town is aware of. He said there are less costly programs but do not bring the same level of usability or value.

A. Gordon asked how CRCOG (Capitol Region Council of Governments) and COST (Council of Small Towns) membership fees are calculated and why the town is part of both. J. Rupert responded that each organization has a different mission and focuses. He explained CRCOG is the organization that

the town is the most active with and benefit the most from. He said the town has purchasing power as part of the 39-town buying consortium as well as access to grants. He noted a lot of their interests lean toward larger municipalities than Bolton and get more attention. J. Rupert said the advantage of COST is that they are more focused on the smaller communities, especially legislative work and keeping the towns updated about changes in policy or laws during the legislative session that may be of interest. MOTION CARRIED 6:0:0.

3. Consider and Act on Budget Transfers: There were no budget transfers presented.

4. Consider and Possibly Act on Bid Waiver and Contract Award for the BCS Greenhouse Project:

P. Sawyer MOVED that the Board of Selectmen waive the bid contract process for the Bolton Center School rehabilitation project. R. Morra SECONDED. A. Gordon said the reason for waiving the bid requirement is for expediency sake so the project can get done before the start of the school year. R. Morra added a number of companies were contacted and, because it is such a small job, did not respond. G. Marrion said she does not have a problem with waiving the bid process or the price, but the contract is pathetic and needs to be significantly modified before the contract is signed. MOTION CARRIED 6:0:0.

P. Sawyer MOVED that the Town of Bolton appropriate officials sign a contract that has been modified from the one presented today that meets the standard as approved by the First Selectman, Town Administrator, and any other legal eyes they wish to look at it. R. Morra SECONDED. G. Marrion said the contract should be reviewed by the town attorney because the contract is so inappropriate for the type of work being done. J. Rupert said the town will work with the chosen contractor and get something executed that is appropriate in short order. MOTION CARRIED 6:0:0.

5. Report from Selectman's Committee regarding the Tax Issues and Grand List with Discussion to follow:

R. Lally, Chair of the Tax Issue subcommittee, reported the subcommittee had input from the town attorney who said the town does not have to officially reset the mill rate. He said Tax Collector Lori Bushnell came up with an approach she recommended to the subcommittee for reimbursing surplus funds to all affected taxpayers. Speaking for himself, R. Lally said he is in favor of approving an approach, but not ready to approve an amount because of the analyses he and A. Gordon both did separately. They used different approaches and different tools and came up with the fact that they are still over one half million dollars off in what is in Vision and what is in QDS. They also found some discrepancies in previous assessment values between those two systems.

R. Morra commented he has concern as well. He suggested having a more knowledgeable third party, specifically the Tax Assessor for the Town of South Windsor, Mary Huda, to look into the issue and process. He said she has familiarity with the systems and had worked for Bolton for a number of years.

A. Gordon explained the subcommittee looked at three different solutions and eliminated two. The solution on the table is that the town would not reset the mill rate, people would get a return of the surplus funding, and the Tax Collector would send out a letter to taxpayers giving them the option of taking it as a credit on next year's bill or getting a check in the mail. She said the subcommittee is not willing, at this time, to tell the board what the mill rate would have been because they are still working out the new grand list. A. Gordon explained the subcommittee is

trying to figure out what the new assessments are after the revaluation. She said the reason the original assessment values are important is that this will help determine the amount of refund people get back.

R. Morra added the subcommittee wants to produce a policy recommendation so that this does not happen again.

R. Lally recommended to the board that someone needs to sit on this process and sees that it get done, someone who knows the systems, is able to document what happened and the steps that are being taken. He noted the auditor has requested this information. The scope of what this person would do has to be agreed upon.

A. Gordon said she appreciated the time the Tax Collector, Assessor and Chief Financial Officer put into this issue, but expressed concern that there has been a lack of communication among them. She said the town needs to build more communication and cross collaboration between these pivotal staff and they need to check their work before sending it out.

R. Lally added there needs to be a defined process that someone can be held accountable to.

J. Rupert asked for clarity that the refunds would be based on real estate and personal property. The subcommittee members responded that was correct.

Discussion followed on the subcommittee preparing a recommendation for discussion at the next regular BOS meeting.

P. Sawyer asked R. Lally about the concern over the data that was erased and that possibly there was a way to retrieve it. R. Lally explained the town's IT vendor tried two separate tools and were not able to retrieve the file.

T. Sadler asked how property owners who pay their taxes through their mortgage lender would be reimbursed. A. Gordon said the check would go back to the property owner, not the bank. Otherwise, it would be a credit on their next year's bill.

G. Marrion recommended, if M. Huda was hired, there be a point person she would report to and give general oversight on the progress of the process. R. Lally noted there should be a scope defined for this person as part of the agreement.

R. Fournier suggested the policy manual from the subcommittee include a document retention policy so files are not erased. R. Lally noted the Connecticut State Library has a document retention policy. The subcommittee committed to having a policy for document retention in their report.

6. Adjournment: R. Morra MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 6:48 p.m. P. Sawyer 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.