

**TOWN OF BOLTON
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SPECIAL MEETING – BUDGET WORKSHOP - #4
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2025 IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING A/P MEETING
TOWN HALL & ZOOM
MINUTES**

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

Board of Selectmen Present Via Zoom: First Selectman Rodney Fournier (6:23 p.m.)

Staff Present In-Person: Town Administrator James Rupert, Finance Committee Chair and Assistant Registrar Ross Lally, Registrar Sandra Pierog, Deputy Registrar Mary Terhune, Recreation Director Stephanie Crane

Staff Present Via Zoom: Recording Secretary Kacie Cannon

Others Present Via Zoom: Jim Loersch, Amanda Balboni

1. Call to Order: R. Morra called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m.

2. Public Comment

No members of the public wished to speak.

3. Elections/ROV

Assistant Registrar Ross Lally highlighted budget efficiencies, including reduced staffing needs due to regulatory changes by the Secretary of State. He added that the budget includes small raises for the registrar, moderator, and staff. Although there are no primaries this year, R. Lally proposed retaining the primary funds in the budget in case there is a referendum or recount.

R. Lally reported that the department is fully staffed and highlighted the various trainings they undergo both in person and online. R. Morra asked if the poll workers have to be re-trained when they return each year. Registrar Sandra Pierog explained that they are retrained every year and undergo at least two hours of training before each election. J. Rupert added that it is a daunting process for the Registrar of Voters and the Human Resource Department to onboard poll workers each year. R. Lally agreed and noted the importance of retaining poll workers. He added that elections also impact the Town employees responsible for setup and cleanup.

A. Gordon asked if wage comparisons with other towns were done. S. Pierog explained that some towns pay \$50.00 per day for a 16-hour day and others pay \$30.00 per hour. She added that the registrars, who are required to hold two office hours per week in addition to their election duties, are some of the lowest paid among the towns. S. Pierog outlined the significant workload that is required before, during, and after elections and detailed numerous decisions and discussions involved in preparing for elections. She added that election workers are required to arrive at 5:00 a.m. on election day and must report the election results by midnight. S. Pierog explained that failure to report the results by midnight

results in a personal fine of \$1,000.00 that cannot be reimbursed by the Town as it is considered a personal liability. R. Lally spoke on additional considerations that must be made in conducting elections such as ensuring ADA accessibility and ensuring everyone has the opportunity to vote.

A. Gordon clarified that each Registrar only receives \$10,000.00 per year when municipal elections, primaries, and recounts are included. When those items are not included; however, the Registrars only receive approximately \$6,500.00 per year, which is significantly lower than other towns. R. Lally agreed and noted that the Registrars only receive \$17.00 per hour despite their tremendous workload.

P. Sawyer asked for clarification on the Town's two districts and asked if there are also two municipals. S. Pierog stated that the municipals are one district, and the two districts are used for anything other than a municipal action. The Board discussed election setup costs, maintenance contracts and storage space for tabulation machines, personal election liability, and moderator salaries.

A. Gordon asked about the data entry position listed under Payroll. S. Pierog stated that a data entry clerk was hired after the Department failed to meet an election deadline. She explained that the clerk works from the time the polls close until the election results are certified. S. Pierog added that having a clerk helps to alleviate errors as it allows the registrars to review the data prior to entry rather than performing both duties simultaneously and allows them to assist the poll workers with any issues.

A. Gordon noted that a quick internet search shows that Milford and Hartford have given substantive raises to their registrars and deputies. She stated that Milford implemented a 60% raise, bringing the salary to \$47,500.00 per year, and Hartford increased their salary to \$56,000.00. A. Gordon noted that the positions are classified as part-time.

4. Finance Committee

Finance Chair Ross Lally stated that the budget remains the same as last year, except for an additional \$300.00 to pay the clerk for board meetings.

5. Recreation

Recreation Director Stephanie Crane provided an updated budget handout and noted that the total is slightly lower than it was on the original submission. She added that she is requesting \$14,348.00 from the Town for salary and minimum wage increases and the increased cost of supplies. S. Crane reported that she is working on adding programs to increase revenue since some programs did not meet expectations and created additional supply costs.

S. Crane highlighted the following accomplishments and cost-saving initiatives:

- Saved \$124 in mailing costs by e-mailing sponsor packet
- New adult pickleball program generated \$1,310.00 in revenue 2023-2024
- The basketball program grew from 120 participants in 2020 to 165 in 2024
- Reduced summer camp bus costs by having parents drop kids off at the lake each week

- Added a Mad Science afterschool program which generates \$400.00-\$500.00 annually
- Began offering Indian Notch Park pavilion rentals in spring and fall in addition to summer

A. Gordon asked about programs with low enrollment. S. Crane explained that participation in afterschool programs, kids' night, and professional development classes have declined since COVID. She added that she is focusing on offering more toddler programs and adult fitness activities and continues to survey residents for feedback on recreational programs.

The Board discussed the lake revenue from entrance fees and kayak rentals. M. Clarke suggested raising the entrance fee for non-residents by \$1.00 to generate an additional \$5,000.00 in annual revenue. T. Sadler proposed adding paddleboard rentals. S. Crane agreed and noted that paddleboards are very affordable. She added that the kayaks were provided through a grant from Eastern Highland Health District. J. Rupert added that Eastern Highland Health District did not want the Town charging for the rentals; however, after explaining the importance of ensuring individuals take proper care of the rentals, they were more accepting of the rental fee. He noted that the Town may want to consider increasing the fee at some point.

G. Marrion stated that a resident has requested that the Town stop renting kayaks due to safety concerns. S. Crane noted that renters are required to wear life jackets and sign "hold harmless" liability waivers and will take the safety concerns under consideration, particularly as it relates to wind conditions. The Board discussed a fatal kayak accident that occurred last year as a result of kayaking in cold weather without life jackets.

G. Marrion asked for an explanation on the savings account that was noted in the budget package. S. Crane explained that the department has a Recreation Round Fund that consists of all of the revenue received. She added that the Department has had to dip into the savings due to a budget deficit of \$2,000.00 last year. G. Marrion asked why the funds cannot be used to cover the annual budget expenses. S. Crane replied that it would eventually be depleted, and the department would have to make cuts and request additional funding from the Town. She added that the department is trying to break even for the year between revenue and expenses. R. Morra noted that it is possible the budget funds could be returned to the Town if the season is successful. G. Marrion asked if the savings account earns interest. J. Rupert confirmed that the fund earns interest as it is part of a larger Town account.

6. Adjournment

P. Sawyer MOVED TO ADJOURN the meeting at 7:04 p.m. A. Gordon SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 7:0:0.

Respectfully submitted by Kacie Cannon

Kacie Cannon

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