

**TOWN OF BOLTON  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
SPECIAL MEETING – BVFD Strategic Plan  
Tuesday, March 03, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.  
Town Hall & Zoom Meeting  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**

	<b>ROSTER</b>	<b>IN-PERSON</b>	<b>ZOOM</b>	<b>ABSENT</b>
<b>FIRST SELECTMAN:</b>	Rodney Fournier	X		
<b>SELECTMEN:</b>	Bryce Aaronson	X		
	Mather Clarke	X		
	David Cowles	X		
	Robert DePietro		X	
	Gwen Marrion	X		
	Tim Sadler	X		

<b>STAFF:</b>	James Rupert, Town Administrator
	Andrea Vassallo, Recording Secretary

**Members of the Public:** None.

**1.0 Call to Order:**

First Selectman Rodney Fournier called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

**2.0 Discussion w/ Manitou. Re: BVFD Strategic Plan**

Manitou Services is a consulting firm specializing in strategic long range fire service planning. Representing the firm was John Cochran to discuss with the BOS the high-level approach toward assessment methods, key evaluation areas, community concerns, and the strategic planning process.

**Manitou’s Background:**

- Independent, non-biased consulting firm since 1999.
- Extensive experience with both large cities and small communities.
- Staff includes former fire chiefs and experts with national credentials.

**Philosophy:**

- Fire protection is a locally managed service.
- Emphasis on best practices but tailored to community context.
- Holistic “fire defense system” approach—includes fire department, building codes, land use, zoning, and private sector roles.

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**Areas of Evaluation:**

1. **Staffing:** Assess volunteer force strength, recruitment, retention, and the impact of national declines in volunteerism.
2. **Facilities:** Evaluate if current facilities meet community needs from a programmatic—not architectural—perspective.
3. **Equipment:** Review apparatus (fire trucks) and all support equipment.
4. **Deployment:** Analyze fire station locations, response areas, and mutual aid agreements.

J. Cochran stated that Manitou regularly reviews national best management practices.

**Assessment Methods:**

- Interviews with town officials, fire department staff, and neighboring departments.
- Drive-throughs and mapping of the community to understand logistics and risk areas.
- Analysis of dispatch (CAD) and incident report data for response times, call types, and resource allocation.
- Will interview other neighboring towns that also share EMS services with Bolton.
- Creation of heat maps and comparative charts for call distribution and types.
- Incorporation of budget and finance considerations.

**Typical Dataset Reviews:**

1. Dispatch data w/ time stamps for fire department and emergency management services.
2. Fire department instant reporting data.

**Assessment/Evaluation Timelines:**

- **Onsite Municipal Review:** Tuesday, March 3 – Friday, March 6, 2026.
- **Strategic Master Plan:** Completed in 4-5 months (July-August 2026).

**Deliverable & Process:**

- **Drafts and Feedback:**
  - Manitou will provide preliminary findings, a draft report, and a final strategic plan.
  - The BOS and stakeholders will have opportunities to review and provide feedback at each stage.
- **Final Product:**
  - A master plan with short, intermediate, and long-term recommendations, linked to budget realities.

**Assessment/Evaluation Goals (Bolton Specific):**

J. Cochran asked the BOS what they would like to achieve out of the study. The BOS suggested the following:

- **Budget Metrics & Comparative Analysis:**

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- Request for benchmarking BVFD’s budget and staffing against similar towns in the region (not just national averages).
- Interest in understanding the cost trajectory of equipment purchases and staffing over time.
- **Volunteer Incentive Program:**
  - Request for evaluation of BVFD’s stipend/incentive program effectiveness and comparison with similar programs in Connecticut/New England.
- **Crash Data & Dangerous Intersections:**
  - Emphasis on analyzing crash data, especially at the Routes 384/6/44 interchange, to support advocacy for state safety improvements.
  - The BOS hopes findings can be used to lobby for intersection upgrades from CT Department of Transportation (CT DOT).
- **Zoning & Water Supply Regulations:**
  - Request for review of zoning regulations requiring cisterns/dry hydrants for new construction, including feasibility and insurance impacts.
  - Interest in the balance between community investment in fire defenses and insurance rate reductions.
- **Future Development Impacts:**
  - Inquiry about potential service impacts if water infrastructure expansion enables new housing or commercial development.
  - Discussion ensued between both parties regarding how demographic and building types affect fire and EMS demand.
- **Morale & Volunteer Recruitment:**
  - The BOS expressed interest in assessing current morale, physical demands, and the need for additional volunteer recruitment efforts.

**3.0 Adjourn:**

T. Sadler **MOVED to ADJOURN** the meeting at **5:57 PM**. B. Aaronson **SECONDED**.  
**MOTION CARRIED 7:0:0.**

Respectfully submitted by Andrea Vassallo, Recording Clerk

*Andrea Vassallo*

*Please see minutes of subsequent meetings for corrections to these minutes and any corrections hereto.*

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