



Town of Bolton  
3045 Theodore Roosevelt Highway  
Bolton, VT 05676

TOWN MEETING MINUTES  
Smilie Memorial School  
Monday, March 4, 2024  
7 p.m.

Announcements prior to calling Town Meeting 2024 to order:

- Leslie Pelch, Town Moderator welcomed all and introduced herself.
- Legislative report.

*Tom Stevens:*

- Thank you for having me here.
  - Coming out of four years of pandemic related legislation and funding. Federal money is gone and programs and needs have to be funded or let go.
  - Theresa Wood is sick. She has been working on the hotel program for unhoused. Tom is chair of the housing committee. How do we keep people housed? It is expensive. Services are not provided. 600 kids in hotel rooms. Weaning this program off of federal money is challenging. It costs \$75 million of general fund to house people in substandard housing. The general assistance program needs to be modernized. We are trying to find a way to house people so they aren't put out on the streets. Looking for ways to make solutions more permanent. Budget problem.
  - School budgets are also a major budget issue. Act 27 at the time it passed was a good thing that would make things more equitable. Extraordinary real estate growth and increases have had a negative impact. There has been a drop of the CLA. When the bill passed it was seen as a means of increasing equity with caps on tax. 5% cap no longer possible. Act H-850 was passed to help address this. We are still working to figure out financing education. Funding for education is in the Vermont constitution. Pandemic and real estate changes and student drop are having huge impact. Towns and state must work to make change.
  - Very serious session this year.
  - Please read closely to what you are seeing. There are good things happening and good programs. Need good partnerships.
  - Available if you have questions.
- *Theresa Wood:* Representative Wood was unable to attend Town Meeting. She sends her regrets.

- *Andrew Pond*: School District
  - Voting on the school budget will not happen on March 5. It will happen on April 2. Information sessions March 14 and March 28 from 6 to 7 at MMU. Hybrid.
  - Change in the way taxes were calculated. The law included a cap of 5%. MMU added \$5.5 m. for reserve fund for capital facilities. The board took that \$5.5 m. out.
  - Questions reach out.
- Good Citizen of the Year presentation by Deb Shelby to the 2024 Good Citizen of the Year, Sue Ann Sinnamon.

Call to Order:

- Moderator Leslie Pelch called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., reviewed the process for the meeting and Roberts Rules of Order. She requested that non-resident/nonregistered voters identify themselves, noting they would be allowed to speak, but could not vote.
- Moderator Pelch suggested that a majority vote be required to move to a paper ballot, no one opposed.
- Introductions, including Brian Roberge, the new Town Administrator.

**Article 1 – Shall the voters of the Town of Bolton vote a budget of \$1,601,157.00 to meet the expenses and liabilities of the town and authorize the Select Board to set a tax rate sufficient to provide the same?**

**Motion: Jerry Mullen**

**Second: Sharon Murray**

*Paula Gervia*

- Budget – areas that are higher so want to explain that

*Rich Reid*

- Roads
- Increases in the road and town garage 28% increase
- Biggest reason is increases to the paving and culvert budgets
- Worked in conjunction with the Road Commissioner and crew. Study of roads – looked at the paved roads and rated the roads Ratings numerical and color. Red is the worst. 62% of paved roads are in the red. Yellow is the second highest level of disrepair with 35% of the roads.
- Repairs should be correctly done. Paving costs approximately \$250,000 per mile.
- Stantec issued a report on the state of Bolton’s paved road with recommendations for repairs. The report estimated \$3,200,000 to do all the roads at once. The 5-year plan for repairs was \$750,000 per year.

- The Select Board is working on what can reasonably be done. \$250,000 was done this year.
- We must make repairs strategically.
- Repair yellow so they don't become red. The cost doubles if they become red.

*Tyler Ducharme:* Is there a plan so that 80% of the roads do not require repairs?

*Rich Reid:* We are trying to do it systematically.

*Sharon Murray:* Bolton Valley Access Road is a federal aid highway. Has there been any discussion with the RPC to get federal aid for that road?

*Rich Reid:* The Town of Bolton took over ownership of the Bolton Valley Access Road and is required to maintain all of the road.

*Sharon Murray:* Federal aid status should still apply because FEMA doesn't pay for emergency repairs because of federal aid.

*Steve Diglio:* I appreciate the town trying to get a handle on these roads. Seams and cracks are opening up. Those need to get sealed right away or the recent work will be undone, and the Access Road will go back to being a yellow or red road.

*Andrew Pond:* When I was going through the report some numbers popped out. It will take \$3.2 m to address the backlog in 3-5 years. It would take \$2.4 to fix things over 10 years and there would still be a backlog. Part of our goal is to get the paving budget to the point where we are gaining.

*Rich Reid:* Regarding gravel roads: All the gravel roads need material, to be brought up and crowned. We've been very lucky to get material from Sue. We are working with other towns to get affordable sources of materials for our roads. The State has not helped us with this.

*Rich Reid:* Regarding culverts: The town is full of undersized culverts. Storms highlight this. Culvert replacement plan was supposed to happen this year, but floods changed that. Weather emergencies divert crew and materials from the plan.

*Rich Reid:* A positive aspect: I am new to town and have only been on the Notch Rd 35 years. It is better now because repairs are being done differently, in the right manner. That means that the slides are not as large as they were.

*Mica Cassara:* Are you talking about driveway culverts?

*Rich Reid:* No. These are the culverts under the road.

*Katerina Lisaius:* Does the culvert budget include cleaning out?

*Rich Reid:* The fire department and road crew sometimes work together to clean culverts.

*Jacob Johnson:* The culvert budget is mainly for replacement. Cleaning comes out of other budget lines. We do work with the fire dept.

*Joss Besse:* \$200,000 in budget for paving; \$300,000 in reserve fund. How much do you plan on spending on paving?

*Paula Gervia:* We will need to check to see how much is left in the reserve fund.

*Rich Reid:* It will depend on which section is being done this year.

*Paula Gervia:* It also depends on whether we get the Municipal Paving Grant.

*Lindsay DesLauriers:* Is the next segment determined or under discussion? What are the criteria?

*Rich Reid:* It is still under discussion. It depends on grants and whether the budget passes.

*Phil Harrington:* The reclaim work on the Access Rd is great. Good job. V-Trans paid \$350,000 for a similar paving project. I wish when we do full depth reclaim that we could get more width. Bike grants may be available for improving the shoulders.

*John Devine:* Has anybody approached Sue about the possibility of keeping the gravel pit open just for the town of Bolton?

*Rich Reid:* Not that I know of.

*Ralph DesLauriers:* Is part of the criteria a traffic count of the road? Traffic counts can't happen during the winter when the Access Road gets 2,000 per day. Duxbury Rd could use work, but their traffic count would be about 200.

*Andrew Pond:* One of the budget drivers is the town office. Amy Grover had been commenting on the fact that the work that had been added since she became town clerk was too much. The added work includes lots of paperwork and reports to the state. The Select Board had explored

the possibility of changing the town government to a town administrator model. When she retired, no one showed an interest in the position of Town Clerk and Treasurer. The Select Board therefore looked at other options and ended up with a part-time Town Clerk and Treasurer and a full-time town administrator. The town administrator will be responsible for communications, website, human resources, Select Board support, FEMA, grants, and liaising. The Town Clerk was working far more than 40 hours a week. We had to replace her with two people.

*Sharon Murray:* I support the decision. Was there an opportunity for public input before you made it? Did you discuss whether to appoint the clerk/treasurer?

*Paula Gervia:* No.

*John Devine* – I would like to thank Carol Devlin.

*Brian Farrell* – Where does Brian live?

*Brian Roberge* – Right down on Rt. 2. Looking for some place to live.

*Josh Coffee* – Kudos to Amy. You described Amy's concerns about the workload. The change seems to be reactive. Why wasn't done earlier?

*Andrew Pond:* The Select Board had to act sooner than expected because Amy's retirement was moved up considerably.

*Mica Cassara:* How did you figure out the 3-year averages in the budget? They didn't work out.

*Paula Gervia:* We need to look at them. There seems to be a formatting/formula issue?

*Paula Gervia:* Are there any general questions? Some items have gone up for costs. The election line item went up because there are three, now four, elections this year.

*Ron Lafreniere:* Sand and gravel are going up. Where is it coming from?

*Jacob Johnson:* Due to Varin's pit closing. We are looking at options, including Hinesburg Sand & Gravel.

*Ron Lafreniere:* Why was an emergency response line item added?

*Paula Gervia:* Because of the increased weather events we added a line item to cover emergency-related expenses such as cover compensation for fire fighters who miss work to help during the crisis, to pay for rooms for evacuated residents, etc.

*Megan Fitzpatrick:* Speaking of emergency response, during the July storm when roads and power were out, there was little communication about conditions. Is there any plan for townwide communication?

*Paula Gervia:* When the first flood happened, Amy Grover and I were in the town office and tried to post during the day on social media and website. I'm not sure if that happened during the second flood.

*Sharon Murray:* Some residents were evacuated twice this year. Vermont Alert may be an option for improving town communications.

*Leslie Pelch:* Any other questions or comments on the budget?

*Jerry Mullen:* Why did training go from \$4,000-\$9,000. Call the question.

*Leslie Pelch:* Ended discussion and vote.

*Al Cohen:* 2<sup>nd</sup>

*Steve Barner:* Point of Order – Vote is on whether to end discussion

*Leslie Plech:* Ayes – End the discussion; Nays – Keep talking

*Leslie Pelch:* Ayes have it. End discussion. Vote on the Article. Reread the article.

The moderator called for a vote on Article 1. The majority were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

**Article 2 - Shall the voters of the Town of Bolton vote to pay real and personal property taxes to the Town Treasurer in four (4) installments with due dates of September 15, 2024; November 15, 2024; February 15, 2025; and May 15, 2025?**

**Motion: Zach Maia**

**Second: Joanne Rosenblum**

Moderator Pelch asked if there was any further discussion. There was none. The moderator called for a vote on Article 2. The majority were in favor. Article 2 passed unanimously.

**Article 3: To transact any other non-binding business.**

Moderator Pelch noted that this was the opportunity to bring up any non-binding business, and that binding votes were not allowed.

*Vicky Congdon:* Concern: There's a lot more traffic in town and people are driving really, really fast. She has safety concerns.

*Sharon Murray:* Recognize Amy Grover as our town clerk for so many years and for Andrew for so many years on the school board. [There was a strong round of applause in appreciation for their service to the town.]

*Rob Mullen:* The Conservation Commission has a conservation fund with a ¼ cent tax on people's property tax. If you have a property valued at \$100,000 you pay \$2.50; \$1,000,000 you pay \$25. The Conservation Commission raises a lot of outside funds for smaller projects. The Conservation Fund is only used for big ticket items (e.g., bridging, acquisition of Wheeler Field). The town gets a lot out of the fund for a small amount per person.

There are two surveys out in the lobby: a Conservation Commission survey about Wheeler Field and a Planning Commission survey about the town plan update.

Moderator Pelch: Tomorrow, Tuesday, March 5<sup>th</sup>, 7 a.m. – 7 p.m. we will be voting on Articles 4 and 5; the election of town officers and ¼ cent to the Conservation Fund.

Moderator Pelch: Are there any questions about Article 4, the election positions?  
Read the article.

Moderator Pelch: Are there any questions about Article 5, the ¼ cent to support the conservation fund.  
Read the article.

**Moderator Pelch: I would entertain a motion to adjourn the meeting.**

**Motion: Joss Besse**

**Second: Virginia Haviland**

All were in favor and the motion to close the meeting passed unanimously.

Moderator Leslie Pelch adjourned the meeting at 7:54 p.m.

Attest: Carol Devlin

Assistant Town Clerk & Treasurer

These minutes are unofficial until approved.

These minutes were approved on March 12, 2024, by:

Paula Gervia, Select Board Chair, Justice of the Peace, and BCA Vice Chair

Richard Reid, Select Board Member and Justice of the Peace

Brenda McKeown, Justice of the Peace and BCA Chair