

**BOLTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN
REGULAR MEETING
7:00 PM, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2023
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, Robert Morra, Amanda Gordon, Mather Clarke, Gwen Marrion, Tim Sadler

Board of Selectmen Members Present Via Zoom: Pamela Sawyer

Staff Present In-Person: Town Administrator James Rupert

Staff Present Via Zoom: Recording Secretary Linda H. McDonald

Others Present Via Zoom: Nick Lavigne (Community Voice Channel) and three others

Others Present In-Person: Jim Loersch, James Aldrich, Jim Adams, Barbara Amodio, Max Anderson, Barry Stearns, Adam Teller, Bryce Aaronson, Ellen King, Rhea Klein

- 1. Call to Order:** R. Fournier called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

R. Fournier MOVED to open the agenda to add item 6.f: Election of a Deputy First Selectman. M. Clarke SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 7:0:0.

- 2. Public Comment:**

Barbara Amodio of Volpe Road expressed her gratitude for all the people who ran for boards this year and all the people who were elected. She said she does not always agree with all the decisions but does not doubt the shared commitment to the betterment of Bolton. She thanked Town Administrator Jim Rupert for consistently acknowledging and respecting concerns that Bike Walk Bolton presents. B. Amodio highlighted two active volunteer groups in town; the Hop River Trail Alliance and Bike Walk Bolton. Representing Bike Walk Bolton, she said a major concern expressed by residents is traffic, particularly the speed of traffic. Bike Walk Bolton is advocating for narrowing driving lanes to help lower speeds and save lives. She said the town should request CONNDOT to implement the recommended narrow lane design in all state projects in Bolton. B. Amodio added it might be a good idea for the town to create an ad hoc committee to look into possible solutions for road safety throughout the community.

Jim Adams of 48 Stonehedge Lane referenced the letter sent to the board from Bike Walk Bolton in which the group asked that the town work to reduce the lane widths on Route 44 from 17' in sections down to 11', which is the current standard in Connecticut. He said the group believes this will improve safety for everybody. J. Adams said the group is asking the town to embrace Connecticut's recent push for Vision Zero, where a council is asked to develop a statewide policy to eliminate all transportation related fatalities and severe injuries to pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, drivers and passengers. The group also requested that CONNDOT come back and re-stripe the lanes at the wider locations on Route 44 that were recently painted. He said this request is not a reduction in the amount of asphalt on the road, only moving the lines so people are more careful

about how they drive on the roadway and the group is not asking for bike lanes. This change would increase the shoulder width. He summarized that it is about reducing lane widths so cars will slow down and be more attentive and creating a better shoulder. J. Adams noted there was a mix-up in the videos linked to the letter the group previously sent. He said the board should disregard the video about "road diets" because that refers to eliminating lanes, which is not what the group is proposing.

Max Anderson of 40 Stonehedge Lane said he wants to show support for his fellow Bike Walk Bolton members and hopes the board will consider what the group has presented.

Barry Stearns of 21 Cook Drive commented he has appreciation for the board members stepping up to keep the board going. He said he is here to talk about the intersection of Notch Road and Route 6 and 44. He said two years ago the State DOT had a plan to re-adjust that intersection to eliminate a lot of the problems there but said the state had no money to do it at that time. B. Stearns said the state has a lot of money now for infrastructure from the federal government. He asked the prior board to try to find out what is going on with this project, but never heard anything back. He said he would like to see the plan implemented before someone is killed. Regarding the topic of increasing the First Selectman's salary, B. Stearns believes, having read the new Town Charter, it does not increase the responsibilities and duties of the First Selectman as stated in some of the letter supporting a pay increase. He said he hopes the board gets some good information about whether that is something the town needs to do. He noted the town has a Town Administrator who is paid to do many of those things so he is not in favor of a pay increase at this time. B. Stearns pointed out that, in the letter regarding giving the Town Administrator the authorization to perform various firearms permitting, the town attorney incorrectly identified the Town Administrator as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the town, whereas the Town Charter states the First Selectman is the town's CEO.

Rhea Klein of 4 Bayberry Road wished the members a very successful term and thanked them for their service. She asked the board to reconsider acting on the agenda item for the possible increase in the First Selectman's pay tonight. She said she feels it is premature to vote on changes to the salary until there is a formal proposal and a rationale of data so that it is clear and transparent to the community. She said citizens are very concerned about the budget.

Jim Loersch of Brookfield Road commented he has been in town since the '50's. He said he would like to encourage the board to build a new town hall where the old elementary school is. He noted this would free up space at the current town hall for voting and meetings.

Jim Aldrich of Hanover Farms Road said he was one of the members who served on the Charter Revision Commission and thanked G. Marrion for her service as Chair of that group. He said one loose end the commission never closed out was the pay for the First Selectman. He said the majority of the commission members wanted the selectmen to set the pay for the new leader. J. Aldrich said he is here to seek the board's support to get this job done. He said he has been working to address this issue since the approval of the Charter. He said there are several good reasons to increase the pay for the First Selectman. The First Selectman position is easily a 20 to 25 hours a week job with numerous and varied responsibilities. The First Selectman is the lead administrator and Chief Executive Officer for the town. J. Aldrich spoke to the pay increase, healthcare, and retirement benefits he is recommending for the First Selectman. He said the goal of the recommendations is to reflect the challenges of leading the town in time of local limited news

coverage, growing apathy among the populus for public service, and the many economic challenges facing the community. He said he is asking the board to take up this issue and set forth a plan to move it forward.

Bryce Aaronson of 149 Brandy Street commented he does not think if the communications for the First Selectman's salary increase or the presentations were given to just elected officials and then were shared on social media are particularly transparent or equitable access for those that do not care to participate in social media or are not elected officials.

Ellie King of Brandy Street said she wants to voice her support for what the Bike Walk Bolton members said about lane narrowing.

3. Correspondence:

3.a Bike Walk Bolton:

J. Rupert reported he had a conversation and meeting with CTDOT and he will follow up with correspondence to DOT. He said DOT understands they have not followed their own policies and new leadership says they are going to follow their policies.

4. Approval of Minutes:

4.a Regular Meeting Minutes -November 8, 2023:

R. Morra MOVED to approve the November 8, 2023 regular meeting minutes as presented. P. Sawyer SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 2:0:5 with R. Fournier, T. Sadler, A. Gordon, M. Clarke, and G. Marrion abstaining.

4.b Special A/P Meeting Minutes–November 21, 2023:

P. Sawyer MOVED to approve the November 21, 2023 special meeting minutes as presented. R. Morra SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 7:0:0.

5. Ongoing Business:

5.a Consider and Possibly Act on First Selectman's Salary:

P. Sawyer MOVED to place the issue of the First Selectman's salary before the townspeople as a public hearing. A. Gordon SECONDED.

R. Morra agreed the board needs to get feedback from the community and to give them a sense of why this is being discussed. He suggested, prior to the public hearing, to have the Finance and Administrative Subcommittee put together some of the proposals that are out there for discussion.

A. Gordon proposed that the board could hear from the First Selectmen at the public hearing and suggested the board members consider tracking and documenting what they, believing it is important to the future of Bolton.

G. Marrion said she believes it is important that the board needs something to go on, to find out what is the support from the public and on the board.

R. Morra said data received by the prior board should be shared with this board to look over.

T. Sadler said it would be important to have a proposed increase to put forward for the public hearing.

R. Morra said the Finance and Administration subcommittee could meet and put together a proposal to bring before the full board.

MOTION CARRIED 7:0:0.

P. Sawyer recommended once there is established a Finance and Administrative Subcommittee, that committee be assigned a task to review proposals for the First Selectman's salary, whether it is to be increased or remain the same and report back to the board at a meeting to be decided by the board.

6. New Business

6.a Consider and Act on Budget Workshop Meeting Dates for 2024:

P. Sawyer MOVED to accept as presented in the packet the 2024 Board of Selectmen budget workshop meeting dates as proposed. G. Marrion SECONDED.

P. Sawyer MOVED to make the corrections discussed as an amendment to her original motion and the meeting time being set as 6:30 p.m. G. Marrion SECONDED the amended motion.

Approved Budget Workshop Meeting Dates for 2024:

- Tuesday, January 16
- Tuesday, January 23
- Tuesday, January 30
- Thursday, February 1
- Thursday, February 8
- Tuesday, February 20
- Wednesday, February 21
- Thursday, February 22 (if needed)
- Friday, February 23 (if needed)

MOTION CARRIED 7:0:0.

6.b Consider and Act on BOS members for the following Committees:

6.b.1 Finance Committee:

P. Sawyer MOVED to appoint Robert Morra as the First Selectman's designee on the Finance Committee and to appoint Amanda Gordon to the Finance Committee as the two members to represent the Board of Selectmen. T. Sadler SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 7:0:0.

6.b.2 BOS Finance and Administration Subcommittee:

R. Fournier appointed M. Clarke, T. Sadler, and G. Marrion to the BOS Finance and Administration Subcommittee.

6.b.3 BOS Facilities and Public Safety Subcommittee:

R. Fournier appointed Tim Sadler, P. Sawyer, and G. Marrion to the BOS Facilities and Public Safety Subcommittee.

6.b.4 BOS Human Resources/Personnel Subcommittee:

R. Fournier appointed A. Gordon, M. Clarke, and R. Morra to the BOS Human Resources/Personnel Subcommittee.

6.c Consider and Act on 1st Organizational Finance Committee Meeting Date (possibly December 19, 2023, immediately following A/P meeting) and two other Dates before January 31, 2024:

A. Gordon MOVED to set the Finance Committee organizational meeting for December 21, 2023 at 7:15 p.m. which would have been the next regular meeting date for the Board of Finance. P. Sawyer SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 7:0:0.

6.d Consider and Act on Giving the Town Administrator the Authorization to Perform Various Firearms Permitting and Administrative Functions:

P. Sawyer MOVED the Board of Selectmen give the Town Administrator the authorization to perform various firearms permitting and administrative functions when there is a straight-forward application before him. In the case of the background check coming back with unusual information, it would then revert to the First Selectman to make the evaluation and approval. R. Morra SECONDED.

R. Morra commented that the majority of the function is rather mundane and very straightforward and agreed, in the issue where the application is a bit more complicated, it should go back to the First Selectman as the decisionmaker.

Amanda Gordon noted the comment from the town attorney in his letter that the Town Administrator is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the town is clearly false and the CEO is the First Selectman. A. Gordon asked what the connection is between the CEO and the ability to make these permitting decisions.

P. Sawyer responded the board has the power and ability to make the decision on this issue, regardless of what is says in the letter.

G. Marrion said the statute speaks to the ability of either the CEO of the town, which according to the Charter is the First Selectman, or the police chief to perform the permitting. She believes the legislature has spoken on this issue and suggested the Resident State Trooper could be the secondary choice instead of the Town Administrator.

P. Sawyer said the First Selectman, as CEO, is also the head of public safety in the town. What is put before whoever is going to be the signatory is a very clear document on the background check already spelled out and verified by the state police.

A. Gordon stated, for the record, she has a concern that the town attorney, who should know our charter, got this wrong.

Further discussion followed with many questions and concerns from the board members regarding the ability of the board to delegate this function.

After hearing the concerns from board members A. Gordon and G. Marrion, P. Sawyer WITHDREW her motion and asked the motion be tabled for one month and come back with more information. R. Morra SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 7:0:0.

- 6.e Action on Town Administrator's Contract and Wage Increase:**
R. Morra MOVED that the Board of Selectmen approve a \$3,000 wage increase for the Town Administrator retroactive to July 1, 2023. P. Sawyer SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 6:0:1 with A. Gordon abstaining.
- R. Morra MOVED the Bolton Board of Selectmen authorize First Selectman Rodney Fournier to execute a two-year extension of the existing contract with the Town Administrator with a salary re-opener for the second year. P. Sawyer SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 7:0:0.
- 6.f Election of a Deputy First Selectman:**
P. Sawyer MOVED that the Board of Selectmen approve Robert Morra as Deputy First Selectman. M. Clarke SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 7:0:0.
- 7. Reports and Updates:**
- 7.a Properties and Facilities Administrator Report:** J. Rupert reported the town has still not yet accepted the final conditions of the town hall annex from the contractor. There are still minor details to be repaired. He said Landie Construction will begin to connect the water and septic. The town has awarded a bid to build a ramp to the building as soon as the building permit is approved. J. Rupert reported that the underground piping and catch basins are in on the Connectivity Trail and the rest of the trail work will begin shortly. He noted continual rains have delayed construction.
- 7.b FY 24 Budget Report:** J. Rupert reported things are on track with the exception of the waste collection budget. He said the town has expended a good portion of the budget and he is concerned this budget could be under-budgeted and is watching it closely. J. Rupert reported the tax collection report shows the Tax Collector is doing very well with collections. No action is needed on this agenda item.
- 7.c A/P Report:**
P. Sawyer MOVED that the Board of Selectmen accept the A/P report as presented. A. Gordon SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 7:0:0.
- 7.d Budget Transfers:** P. Sawyer MOVED that the Board of Selectmen approve a \$125 budget transfer from Seniors/Social Services to Public Health. M. Clarke SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 7:0:0.
- 8. First Selectman's Report:**
R. Fournier reported he and J. Rupert are meeting with the registrars next week to try to get the voting locations under control for the Presidential election, primaries and early voting next year. He said he attended a Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) meeting. He shared that the Fire Department did a great job last Saturday with the Santa breakfast and the State Troopers stuff-a-cruiser event was a success. He said the tree lighting at night was very good. R. Fournier thanked the town workers and the Recreation Department for their help and the help of the students on the lighted path behind the library.
- 9. Administrative Officer's Report**
- 10.a Monthly Report:**

J. Rupert reported the three-board meeting was successful. The town took delivery of the new fire truck and he noted, with some change orders the cost is a little over \$18,000 over budget and the board will have to figure out where that money is coming from. He said the town got the final paperwork in to the Department of Public Health (DPH) for the community septic system and the town is generating a map of the farmable area at Heritage Farm. The town will be going out to bid for farming that space because tractors should not be running over the septic field and that area will have to be excluded from farming in the future. He said progress continues to be made on the Heritage Farm Trail. He reported he needs the boards action to apply for a \$10,500 grant application from the Secretary of State. Consensus of the board was to place this item on the December 19, 2023 A/P special meeting agenda.

- 9.b Other:** J. Rupert reported he is working on an RFP for professional design services for the Notch Municipal Building. He said the audit process is wrapped up.

G. Marrion recommended the board hold a strategic planning session. The consensus of the members was to place this item on the December 19, 2023 A/P special meeting agenda.

- 10. Adjournment:** R. Morra MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 8:52 p.m. P. Sawyer SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 7:0:0.

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.