



BARRE TOWN SELECTBOARD MEETING
July 25, 2023

AGENDA

1. Call to order.....6:00 p.m.
2. Pledge of allegiance
3. Consider approving the agenda
4. Consider approving July 6 and July 11, 2023 meeting minutes
5. Announcements
6. Receive guests for non-agenda items.
7. Discuss and approve purchase of a new police vehicle
8. BADC update and Rebranding presentation
9. Presentation from the Community Forest Management Plan Committee
10. Presentation from OPH Consulting regarding the Town's Local Hazardous Mitigation Plan
11. Consider approving weekly accounts payable warrants for July 18 and July 25, 2023
12. Miscellaneous: including permits and licenses, if any
13. Round the Table
14. Executive Session
15. Adjourn

MINUTES

The duly warned meeting of July 25, 2023 was held at the Barre Town Municipal Building, Selectboard Room, in Lower Websterville at 6:00 p.m.

Selectboard Members Present: Paul White, Norma Malone, Justin Bolduc, Bob Nelson, and Mike Gilbar.

Selectboard Members Absent: None.

Staff Members Present: Town Manager Chris Violette, Assistant Town Clerk Catherine Whalen, Town Manager Assistant Leslie Babic, and Recreation Director Johnny Crossley.

Others Present: Times Argus Reporter Eric Blaisdell, Larry Rogacki, Jack Mitchell, Jim West, Aimee Green, Karl Rinker, and Art Bombardier. Those present virtually: Josh Howard, and Paul Luciano

CALL TO ORDER: Chair White called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Those present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVE THE AGENDA:

On a motion by Bob Nelson, seconded by Mike Gilbar, the Selectboard voted unanimously to approve the amended agenda as follows:

1. Move item #7 after #10
2. Item #14 Executive Session: add labor
3. Item #4: delete July 6 meeting minute approval and change to July 10

Selectboard Minutes of July 25, 2023 Continued:

4. Item #11: consider warrants for July 3

APPROVE THE MINUTES:

On a motion by Norma Malone, seconded by Mike Gilbar, the Selectboard voted to approve the July 10, 2023, and July 11, 2023 Selectboard meeting minutes with minor spelling and grammatical corrections. Bob Nelson abstained.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Property tax bills were mailed out on July 13th and are due August 15th. If your taxes are handled by a third party, make sure that, if necessary, you have forwarded the bill.
- Many Barre Town residents were impacted by the flood of 2023. If you have damage to your house or property, make sure, if you haven't already, to reach out to FEMA and apply for Individual Assistance. Information on how to register can be found at www.barretown.org.
- We are in the beginning stage of updating the Town's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. An important part of that is seeking public input. Please take a few minutes to fill out the Hazard Impacts survey which can be found on the Town website, www.barretown.org.
- The lower portion of Holden Road will be closed indefinitely. A significant portion of the bank between the road and the river is gone, resulting in the road being destabilized and itself in danger of falling into the river below. There is a significant amount of work needed just to assess what needs to be done to secure the bank and then even longer to fix it.
- The South Barre Bike Path, just beyond the Bridge St. entrance, sustained significant damage from the flood. The bank in this area is also destabilized and needs to be assessed and a determination made on what is needed to stabilize it and then fix the damage. It is expected that this portion of the path will be closed for an extended period.
- Many Town roads were damaged by the heavy rain during the recent flood. All roads, except the lower part of Holden Road, have been temporarily repaired and are open. Areas that were repaired will have full repairs completed at some point but due to FEMA requirements for inspection, they can't be permanently repaired yet. Please use caution while traveling roads impacted by the flood waters.
- Next Tuesday's Ice Cream Social will be at the Wilson Street Playground and then East Barre the following week. The Ice Cream Socials highlight a different playground every Tuesday night through August 22nd beginning at 6:30pm. Check the Town website for more details.
- Town Manager Announcement: Mr Violette announced that on Saturday, July 29 from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. the CVSWD is hosting a special free flood related hazardous waste collection for Barre Town, Washington, Orange and Williamstown residents. The collection is taking place at 129 Websterville Road. Items that will be accepted are: dangerous waste, toxic pesticides, gasoline, chemicals, acids, oils, paints, stains, electronics, etc. Tires and appliances will not be accepted.

- Chair White announced that the Town has been staffing the DPW garage for residents to drop off flood related debris as well.
- Mr. Nelson shared that if there are any Barre Town businesses that have been affected by the flood they should reach out to the Small Business Administration. More information can be found on BADC's website.

GUESTS: None.

BARRE AREA DEVELOPMENT UPDATE AND REBRANDING:

Background: Generally, it is customary that entities that receive significant funding from Barre Town periodically meet with the Selectboard. Aimee Green, Executive Director of BADC was asked to attend a meeting to give an overview of activities BADC has been undertaking. Additionally, Ms. Green will provide information on BADC's current marketing strategy, possible rebranding, the new Barre Community Fund to help flood relief, and an update on the Project Heights Development status.

Aimee Green, Executive Director of BADC was present. A summary of Ms. Green's presentation included the following:

- Business Development – Rebuilding Barre
 - Rebuild, promote, sustain, and implement continued economic development in the Barre Community through local, State and Federal agencies and organizations that will be assisting and impacting economic and housing development in the Barre area.
- Barre Community Relief Fund
 - New 501(c)3 organization to fundraise and grant monies for the numerous businesses, homeowners, and individuals in Barre.
 - \$1MM goal to fundraise
 - \$160,00 has been raised in the first week
 - 100% of the tax-deductible funds raised will be directly allocated to those most in need
 - A Barre Community Relief Fund Board (BCRF) will be created to administer relief funds through grants to small businesses, homeowners, and individuals across the Barre area.
- Strategic Planning
 - Strategic Planning Committee launched and is reviewing proposals over next 2 months. Committee will make recommendation to full board in August/September on candidates to launch full scale strategic plan to include Barre Town, City of Barre and WIP Committees.
- Housing Crisis
 - Prospect Heights Development, Inc. (PHDI) reviewing qualifying factors for a re-application to Northern Borders Regional for 2024 in addition to other earmarks and grants for Prospect Street project.

COMMUNITY FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN:

Background: Last year, the Selectboard formed a Community Forest Management Plan Committee. The Charge for this Committee was:

- 1) To review the current plan, determine if any conditions of the grants from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board and the Federal Community Forest & Open Space Program still apply
- 2) To ensure that the future plan is consistent with the conservation restrictions and public access
- 3) To collect information from individuals and organizations that have an interest in the Town Forest
- 4) To solicit input from the public, obtain a professional forester's written recommendation
- 5) To recommend revisions to the Selectboard.

The Committee wrapped up their regular meeting on May 22nd after conducting a total of 19 meetings. They have spent the period since their final meeting working on final edits and preparing the recommended changes for Selectboard review.

Those present: Forest Committee Chair Larry Rogacki, Forest Committee Vice Chair Jim West, Committee member Josh Howard, and Recreation Director Johnny Crossley.

Mr. Rogacki began by thanking the individuals involved in the Community Forest Management Plan Committee work. He noted Forester Robert Nelson is currently in Canada at the wildfire front but will be finishing his portion for final review. Additionally, Mr. Rogacki stated a survey was created which was shared on Front Porch Forum, the Town website, and Department Facebook pages. He reflected on the responses that were received from 125 individuals.

Mr. Rogacki shared that during the Committee's work they were able to utilize other Town Forest Plans to help guide them, and a lot of what they accomplished was to help improve the layout of the plan. Improvements include labeling, mapping, and consistency within the document. Mr. Rogacki shared that one of the biggest accomplishments was the mapping of the Town Forest.

Discussion continued as Mr. West identified some of the major changes within the Plan such as the forest being used for commercial purposes. Additionally, the Committee has limited sugaring unless it is for educational purposes.

The Committee has recommended that a Forest Management Board be created. Mr. Rogacki said this would allow for advocates for the Town Forest. Mr. West shared his support for the creation of this Board explaining that conservation and recreation of the forest would benefit from a Forest Management Board rather than only the Recreation Board. Secondly, he stated he believes there is an appearance of a conflict of interest with the Recreation Board, having oversight of the Town Forest.

The Plan will be completed in a few weeks and then there will need to be a public hearing.

LOCAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN KICK-OFF MEETING:

Background: A few weeks ago, the Town contracted with OPH Consulting to update their Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) and help submit it and get it approved by Vermont Emergency Management (VEM) and ultimately the Federal Management Agency (FEMA). The Town's plan expired in May, and the Town had just started the process to have the plan updated and submitted when the flood of 2023 hit. OPH Principal, Paul Luciano, has informed Town Manager Chris Violette that FEMA looks at the status of a Town's LHMP 30 days from the date of the declared Major Natural Disaster which happened on July 14.

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Mr. Luciano has offered to fast track the Town's plan with the hopes of having it submitted prior to the 30-day period, in hopes of being eligible for full funding. A kick-off meeting is a required step in the process.

OPH Consulting Principal Paul Luciano was present. Mr. Luciano stated they are fast tracking the LHMP review to present for state approval. A community survey has been launched, and 36 responses have been received, noting this is a great response for a town. He has reached out to alert vulnerable populations to make them aware of the survey. The survey is available on the Town website, Front Porch Forum, and Department Facebook pages. The survey will be available for the next two weeks.

Town Manager Chris Violette shared that Town Manager Assistant Leslie Babic will be the liaison between Mr. Luciano and the Town.

Mr. Luciano confirmed that if the paperwork is in the queue, the Town will be eligible for funding. A public hearing will be required prior to adoption.

PURCHASE OF FY'24 POLICE CRUISER:

Background: The Town lost a police cruiser in the flood last week while it was at Yipes getting striping. The flooded car has been reported to the insurance company and is waiting to hear if it will be declared totaled or whether it is fixable. In the meantime, there is a vehicle to purchase in the FY24 budget. The State of Vermont currently does not have a contract for purchasing police vehicles, they may have one by September but that is uncertain. Additionally, how long it will be to get a vehicle is another unknown.

Chief Dodge has explored other purchase options and has found that many Vermont Police Departments purchase vehicles from outfitters that stock police cruisers. There is an option to purchase the vehicles as is or have them outfit to specific needs.

The Town has budgeted \$41,000 for a car and \$2,000 for a light bar in the FY'24 budget. The Town can purchase a cruiser from McGovern Municipal HQ outfitted for a quoted price of \$59,580.35.

The Manager shared he has withdrawn his recommendation to get a new police vehicle as originally planned. The Chief and Mr. Violette are working on an alternate idea. He stated they believe purchasing a vehicle from a wholesale dealer and then outfitting it ourselves as necessary would be more cost effective and more timely than purchasing from the state. The status of the insurance claim for the cruiser lost in the flood is still unknown at this time.

A future discussion will take place regarding the police cruiser.

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE:

On a motion by Norma Malone, seconded by Justin Bolduc, the Selectboard voted unanimously to approve the accounts payable warrants for the week of July 3, July 18 and July 25, 2023 for FY'23 and FY'24.

MISCELLANEOUS:

Town Manager Chris Violette updated the Board on the following items:

- The new ambulance has arrived. EMS Interim Director Carl Matteson will be taking it to be registered at the DMV in Bennington due to Montpelier being flooded.

Selectboard Minutes of July 25, 2023 Continued:

- The Town is in need of a Geotechnical engineer. Town Engineer Josh Martineau and Mr. Violette have been searching for one and have begun early work with VHB.
- Mr. Violette shared that flood recovery is stable. The Public Works Department is still in recovery mode.
- Paving is scheduled for August. The Rt. 110 bridge is delayed 2-3 weeks to completion.

ROUND TABLE:

Mike Gilbar:

- Mr. Gilbar gave thanks to the debris collection volunteers and “bulk trash club”
- Mr. Gilbar inquired about the bulk trash date. This is typically the 3rd weekend of September. Questions were raised whether the Town needed more debris removal and if the date should be moved. Board consensus is to stay with the 3rd week of September for consistency purposes.
- The emergency shelter set up at BTMES was not able to accommodate volunteers due to the showers not working and a plumbing leak to the kitchen. A generator was installed for the purpose of having the school as a qualifying Red Cross shelter. J. Gould Plumbing has been called to make repairs. It was suggested that Emergency Management exercises be run to be sure that the facility can be readily utilized as a Red Cross shelter in any future emergencies.
- Questions were raised about whether background checks should be issued for each person seeking emergency shelter facilities at the school. It was determined that emergencies are first priority and school can be suspended in the event of a future crisis.
- Mr. Gilbar asked if trash removal reimbursement from FEMA will be a problem? He stated the messaging has been confusing.

Norma Malone:

- Mrs. Malone expressed her gratitude to the staff at the Town, especially DPW and the Town Engineer for their efforts after the storm.

Bob Nelson:

- Mr. Nelson echoed gratitude for the Town workers and the Manager’s updates on various platforms.
- Mr. Nelson suggested creating a Procurement Plan for disaster relief and recovery when items need to be purchased after a disaster.
- Mr. Nelson inquired about his damaged wood pellets due to the flooding. They are marked as “clean”, and not having any contamination by a qualified company. He requested permission to have these delivered to the Town lawn waste site. The Board granted Mr. Nelson’s request.
- Mr. Nelson shared that Gina Galfetti reported significant flooding on Grandview and Ledge Drive since a large culvert had been installed by Mr. Lague. The Public Works Dept. has been to the site for assessment.

Paul White:

- Chair White shared that the VT Department of Health had a car seat class scheduled at a location that is now flood damaged. He has reserved the municipal building for the class Aug. 2-5.
- Chair White noted the information on debris removal had been confusing when the state of Vermont said residents could leave it on the road. Barre Town is not contracting any company to do bulk pick up for residents.
- VLCT sent notice extending the deadline for the 2023 Municipal Compensation and benefits Survey to August 7.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

On a motion by Justin Bolduc, seconded by Mike Gilbar, the Selectboard voted unanimously to find the need to go into executive session citing premature general knowledge would clearly place the Selectboard at a substantial disadvantage.

On a motion by Justin Bolduc, seconded by Norma Malone, the Selectboard voted unanimously to go into executive session at 8:44 p.m.

On a motion by Justin Bolduc, seconded by Mike Gilbar, the Selectboard voted unanimously to exit executive session at 9:35 p.m.

ADJOURN:

On a motion by Justin Bolduc seconded by Mike Gilbar, the Selectboard voted unanimously to adjourn at 9:35 p.m.

APPROVED MINUTES

Barre Town Selectboard

Paul White, Chair

Justin Bolduc, Vice Chair

Norma Malone

Mike Gilbar

Bob Nelson

Filed in the Barre Town Clerk's Office on this _____ day of _____, 2023.

ATTEST: _____, Barre Town Clerk.