



**BARRE TOWN SELECTBOARD MEETING
January 30, 2024**

AGENDA

1. Call to order.....5:00 p.m.
2. Pledge of allegiance
3. Consider approving the agenda
4. Consider approving January 16, 2024 meeting minutes
5. Announcements
6. Receive guests for non-agenda items.
7. Consider rescinding EMS per-capita rates set on December 19, 2023 – Discuss the Town of Berlin’s EMS per-capita rate and consider setting new rates
8. Additional discussion regarding FY25 Paving Contract
9. Consider approving the 2023 Highway Mileage Certificate
10. Consider approving the 2024 permitted truck routes
11. Award contract for two Portable Message Boards
12. Consider approving weekly accounts payable warrants for January 23 and January 30, 2024
13. Miscellaneous: including licenses and permits if any
14. Round the Table
15. Executive Session: contracts, labor and others (possible action)
16. Adjourn

MINUTES

The duly warned meeting of January 30, 2024 was held at the Barre Town Municipal Building, Selectboard Room, in Lower Websterville at 5:00 p.m.

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

Selectboard Members Absent: None.

Staff Members Present: Town Manager Chris Violette and Town Clerk Tina Lunt.

Others Present: Times Argus Reporter Eric Blaisdell.

CALL TO ORDER: Chair White called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

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

APPROVE THE AGENDA:

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

1. Add personnel under item #16. Executive Session
2. Add item #13.5 discussion of appointing town report working group

APPROVE THE MINUTES:

On a motion by Norma Malone, seconded by Justin Bolduc, the Selectboard voted unanimously to approve the January 16, 2024 Selectboard meeting minutes with minor spelling and grammatical corrections and one noted change to amended agenda.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- The Barre Town Budget Committee meetings began tonight, or if you’re watching this later, on

January 30th. The committee will begin reviewing proposed FY 2024-2025 budgets soon and their

meetings are on Tuesday nights beginning at 6:00 p.m. This is a two-month process culminating in a budget that will be voted on May 14th. These meetings are held at the municipal building and are open to the public to attend in person or remotely. Posted agendas will provide remote links and information.

- To accommodate the Budget Committee, Selectboard meetings, beginning January 30th, will begin at 5:00 p.m. This schedule will run through the end of March.
- The next quarterly installment of property taxes and the second semi-annual sewer payment are due February 15th.
- The Presidential Primary Election, Barre Unified Union School District Annual Election, and Central Vermont Career Center School District Annual Election will be held on Tuesday, March 5, 2024. The Town Clerk's Office has begun mailing out Presidential Primary ballots to those residents who have requested an early/absentee ballot. Please note if you requested a Barre Unified Union School District and/or Central Vermont Career Center School District ballot be mailed to you that these ballots will be mailed separately. It is crucial that voters return the ballots in the correct return envelopes that were sent to them. Please do not combine the Presidential Primary and school district ballots in one return envelope. Absentee ballot requests can be made through <https://mvp.vermont.gov/> or by calling the Clerk's Office at (802) 479-9391. Additionally, early/absentee ballot requests can be emailed to Tina Lunt at tlunt@barretown.org. When emailed requests, please be sure to state which party ballot (Democrat or Republican) you would like the Clerk's Office to send you for the Presidential Primary election. This is the one election that voters must declare a specific party ballot. For more information regarding the upcoming March 5 elections, visit the Town Clerk's page at barretown.org or contact Town Clerk, Tina Lunt at (802) 479-9391 or tlunt@barretown.org.

GUESTS: None.

EMS PER-CAPITA RATES:

Background: During the December 19, 2023 Selectboard meeting, the Board set per-capita rates for the coming year for the Towns served by Barre Town EMS. At the same time, the Board elected to adjust Berlin's per-capita for the remainder of this fiscal year and the next two (if Berlin elected to exercise their option(s) based on a provision within the contract) At the time, EMS Director David Danforth presented a spreadsheet that provided information showing significant increases in both Workers Compensation and Health Insurance over the last two years as well as rent increases at the Berlin Fire Station. Combined, these increases are well over the threshold to adjust previously noted contract rates. During the December 19 meeting, the Board voted to adjust the per-capita rate beginning January 1, 2024 which would encompass the last six months of the current fiscal year. After further consideration, Town Manager Chris Violette believes the consensus now is that raising the per-capita in the middle of the contract year at this point is not best practice. The purpose of this agenda item is to rescind the vote from the December 19, 2023 meeting, and make a new motion to set the FY25 per-capita rate based on cost increases incurred by the Town of Barre for insurance and rent.

Town Manager Chris Violette stated he has had a conversation with Berlin, and they have confirmed they can commit to the FY25 price increase, noting Berlin is unable to commit to the FY26 price increase at this time.

On a motion by Chair White, seconded by Mike Gilbar, the Selectboard voted unanimously to rescind the vote taken on December 19, 2023, setting the FY25 per-capita rates for the Towns of Orange, Washington, Topsham, and Brookfield, as well as the per-capita rates for the balance of FY24, and all of FY25 & 26 for the Town of Berlin.

Mr. Bolduc noted although he understands this increase was not best practice, it was overdue.

On a motion by Chair White, seconded by Bob Nelson, the Selectboard voted unanimously to set the FY25 ambulance service per-capita rates for the Towns of Orange, Topsham, Washington, and Brookfield at \$65.00 and Berlin's per-capita for FY25 at \$61.28, and FY26 at \$65.43.

FY25 PAVING CONTRACT:

Background: During the January 16th meeting, Town Manager Chris Violette provided the Board with the FY25 paving bid results. The bids were much higher than the Town had hoped, and they were well above the amount allocated within the 5-Year Paving Plan. ECI Construction was the low bidder at \$1,398,197.85, which is \$306,812.85 over the amount allocated within the Paving Plan. Discussion during that meeting centered around options, including negotiation with ECI, making changes to the plan and rebidding, not paving at all this coming year, or some combination of all. Concerns expressed related to potential negative impacts to the plan, to residents not being happy if a year of paving was skipped. No decision was made during this meeting.

Town Manager Chris Violette shared that he believes the most responsible option is to delay the 5-Year Paving Plan. Town Engineer Josh Martineau recommends awarding the contract as is or delaying the 5-Year Paving Plan.

Discussion began as Mrs. Malone shared concerns around the legality of delaying the paving. She noted the warning and ballot language will need to be changed if the Town decides not to move forward with paving. She stated she is not in favor of this option.

Mr. Gilbar inquired about Mr. Martineau's memo that was included in the Board packet. He asked the Manager if Mr. Martineau was changing the methodology of the 5-Year Paving Plan. Mr. Violette stated Mr. Martineau's expertise is in paving and Mr. Martineau has been looking for an opportunity to improve this for the Town. He has not had the time to review this in detail with everything else on his plate. If the Town decided not to pave, this would give him the opportunity to revamp the 5-Year Paving Plan and come up with a better plan moving forward. This will not be an easy undertaking and Mr. Martineau will need time for this work to be completed. Mr. Gilbar noted he is not in favor of putting off paving for a year, but if Mr. Martineau could come up with a new 5-Year Paving Plan he would be in favor of this.

A packet of information was shared with Board members. This packet, developed by the Town Engineer, breaks down different options and paving plans.

Chair White asked if the Town were to tackle the highest priority roads (staying within budget) would the Town Engineer have enough time to allow him the opportunity to improve the 5-Year Paving Plan? Mr. Violette could not speak for certain, noting if it was significantly reduced this may be possible. Chair White noted that if no paving is completed he did not feel that this would set well with the voters. Furthermore, Chair White questioned if paving should go back out to bid if only changes are made to the paving plan. The Manager suggested this would be the best option.

Mr. Gilbar suggested setting up a Paving Reserve Fund and investing the money in a longer-term CD which would have enough interest to cover the inflation. This would be beneficial as the voters would see the Town is reserving these funds specifically for road maintenance.

The conversation continued as Mrs. Malone suggested looking into the paving surplus for FY23. She believes there may be additional funds that are coming in under budget that could offset the over budgeted amount. She asked the Manager if an analysis could be done to look at this option.

Overall consensus is to remove Sterling Hill from the list of roads to be paved. Board members agree that not paving at all is not an option. Mr. Violette shared that the bid documents allow 30 days for a decision to be made. The Selectboard will need to make a decision at their next meeting.

Mr. Nelson and Mr. Bolduc requested to have Mr. Bolduc's amendments to the bid presented to ECI to see what this would cost the Town. Additionally, the Board would like to know what Pike will be using for the asphalt adjustment.

2023 HIGHWAY MILEAGE CERTIFICATE:

Background: Annually, towns must file a Highway Mileage Certificate with the State of Vermont. The mileage reported is used to update maps and calculate State Aid for Town Highways. There are no changes to report for Barre Town's highway mileage.

On a motion by Bob Nelson, seconded by Norma Malone, the Selectboard voted unanimously to approve Barre Town's year ending February 10, 2024, Certificate of Highway Mileage.

2024 PERMITTED TRUCK ROUTES:

Background: Roads in Town that are truck routes have been designated as such and are considered “Legal Limit Same as State Highways” (LASH) roads and carry the State weight limit of 66,000 pounds. If not designated as a LASH road, the legal weight is 24,000 pounds. In the past, Barre Town has designated parts or all of six roads as LASH roads and overweight permits are not needed for them. Roads in Town that are

not LASH roads need to have an overweight permit issued when a truck weighs over 24,000 pounds. Permission is granted via a Uniform Municipal Excess Weight Permit which lists the LASH roads and numerous other roads that the permit will cover. Additional roads can be added to the permit on a case-by-case basis.

On a motion by Norma Malone, seconded by Justin Bolduc, the Selectboard voted unanimously to approve the list of roads that are covered by uniform Municipal Excess Weight Permit (as shown on the permit form) for 2024-2025.

Chair White suggested the following amendments be made to the permit form:

- The date needs to be changed to 2024
- Permits are not required box: add a caveat understanding they are not exceeding state limits

PORTABLE MESSAGE BOARD AWARD:

Background: Bids for two portable message boards, approved for purchase with ARPA funds, were sent to 2 perspective bidders on December 20, 2023, and posted on the State bid website. Bids from two companies were received and opened on January 18, 2024. The low bidder was American Signal Company from Atlanta, Georgia in the amount of \$35,400. The other bid was from Worksafe Traffic Control Industries of Berlin, Vermont in the amount of \$42,995. Previous action by the Selectboard allocated \$56,000 for the purchase of two such message boards. Town Engineer Josh Martineau notes that although American Signal Company is the low bidder, their bid does not meet specs. They quoted full-sized message boards instead of the ones specified. Worksafe is a local company, their bid is higher but has met the Town’s bid specs and is better suited for the Town’s needs. Town Engineer Josh Martineau recommends awarding the contract to Worksafe.

On a motion by Bob Nelson, seconded by Mike Gilbar, the Selectboard voted unanimously to award the purchase of two Ver-mac PCMS320 portable message boards to Worksafe Traffic Control Industries of Berlin, VT in the amount of \$42,995 recognizing that awarding the contract to Worksafe is in the best interest of the Town of Barre.

On a motion by Bob Nelson, seconded by Norma Malone, the Selectboard recessed the meeting at 5:56 p.m.

The Selectboard reconvened the meeting at 8:05 p.m.

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE:

On a motion by Norma Malone, seconded by Bob Nelson, the Selectboard voted unanimously to approve the accounts payable warrants for the week of January 23, 2024 and January 30, 2024.

- Chair White inquired about the new computer and additional air card for the Police Station. Mr. Violette noted the additional air card is not for the Police Clerk
- Mrs. Malone inquired about the Green Mountain Power (GMP) bills. She asked how this item is budgeted. She wondered if anyone had been in touch with GMP to find out what their methodology is regarding their billing process. Mr. Violette said an assessment was completed on the actual usage to budget for this item. Mr. Violette noted the billing system is very complex and a phone call to GMP is most likely the next step. Mr. Nelson suggested having a GMP representative come in to explain the methodology.
- Mrs. Malone inquired about the Main Street Bridge Heat Tape charge. She asked if the Town will be paying this customer charge. Mr. Violette confirmed they will.
- Mrs. Malone inquired about the Wilson fleet bus garage, noting the huge increase in usage. Mr. Violette suspects there was a meter account specifically for the buses and the Town charged the

school for this meter. Once the buses went away this account must have been shut off. The new pole and meter were installed, and this account has reappeared. He believes this meter is picking up the power for the cold storage. He is not sure where it was before. The Town may not have been being billed at all. Mr. Violette stated the Town does not have all the answers on this item as of now. Mr. Gilbar suggested contacting GMP to help identify the accounts.

- Mr. Bolduc inquired about the VHB warrants that were previously approved. He noted the numbers on the invoice do not equal. Town Manager Chris Violette will need to review this. The contract was approved for \$158,211 the billing amount is over the approved amount. Board members would like some answers regarding this invoice.
- Mr. Bolduc inquired about the Wind River Bill and the total amount due.

MISCELLANEOUS:

- Town Manager Chris Violette announced the baseball field light project started yesterday. All five poles are set and standing, noting the original poles are much larger in diameter. Mr. Violette said the fabricated mounts did not fit, but they were able to find workarounds and the project has continued.
- The Manager reported that Rec Board member Amanda Gray submitted her resignation. Mr. Violette asked if the Board wanted to advertise or use the list of candidates from the most recent applicants. Board consensus is to appoint a member from the most recent applicants.

TOWN REPORT WORKING GROUP:

Discussion began as Chair White stated the intent of eliminating the auditors was to create a Town Report Working Group to help with some of the duties of publishing the Town report. These duties will include monitoring the progress of the town report, editing, and helping pick a cover photo. The auditors, along with Town staff would work together to help finalize this publication.

Mrs. Malone shared a couple individuals (Jeff Blow and Charlie Woodham) have worked on this report for many years. She suggested designating these folks to take care of the details and then the Board can figure out how to move forward. The Manager will reach out to these two individuals to make sure they are still interested in helping.

ROUND TABLE:

Paul White:

- Chair White asked the Manager if he or the Finance Director have had any communication from the new auditors. The Manager noted they have not.

Justin Bolduc:

- Mr. Bolduc asked if they could get verification that the salt spreader was calibrated and what method was used. Additionally, can they get confirmation that the application guide is still being followed. Furthermore, Mr. Bolduc would like confirmation that the pavement thermometers were purchased.
- Mr. Bolduc inquired about the 5 parcels on Quarry Hill 5. He noted that he has had another individual approach him about these parcels. Mr. Bolduc suggested putting a price on this land to see if there is interest. Currently, this land is individual lots, he suggests pricing it as one lot.

Mike Gilbar:

- Mr. Gilbar inquired about VHB and asked if the Board could get a financial progress report from them which would show each one of the projects.

Norma Malone:

- Mrs. Malone noted she saw in Saturday's Times Argus that ANR announced funding related to the 3-acre permit rule. She asked if the Town was aware. Mr. Violette stated the Town has applied for one, and Valley View Circle is in the works. The Selectboard has not given direction to move forward with other locations at this time.
- Mrs. Malone asked the Manager for an update on Camp Street. Mr. Violette shared that Town Engineer Josh Martineau has submitted the options to the State to see which one they will go with.

Today the Town learned from the Federal Government that this may not be considered an emergency repair. Mr. Violette said this was very disappointing news, and much different than what they were told by the State all along. The Town plans to push back on this news.

- Mrs. Malone asked if EMS Billing will provide a final report. Mr. Violette said they will be providing this, and the Town will handle the follow-ups.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

On a motion by Norma Malone, seconded by Bob Nelson, the Selectboard voted unanimously to find the need to go into executive session citing premature public general knowledge would clearly place the Selectboard at a substantial disadvantage.

On a motion by Norma Malone, seconded by Bob Nelson, the Selectboard voted unanimously to go into executive session at 8:49 p.m. for contracts, labor (and other) personnel related matters with possible action.

On a motion by Bob Nelson, seconded by Mike Gilbar, the Selectboard voted unanimously to exit executive session at 9:44 p.m.

ADJOURN:

On a motion by Bob Nelson, seconded by Mike Gilbar, the Selectboard voted unanimously to adjourn at 9:44 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 _____, 2024.

ATTEST: _____, Barre Town Clerk.