Draft Minutes

Town of Brookline Selectboard Meeting

Wednesday, January 15, 2025

Present:

Selectboard (SB):	**Town Officers:**	**Public:**
Dorothy Maggio (DM) Chair	E Mark Bills (EMB) Highway Supervisor	Alyssa Schmidt (AS)*
Stanley Noga (SN) Vice-Chair	Vanessa Ballou (VB) Recording Clerk	Dan Towler (DT)*
Bruce Mello (BM)		
Michael DeSocio (MD)		
Doug Wellman (DW)		

***** Via Zoom

1. **Dorothy Maggio called the meeting to order at 6:37 PM and introduced the attendees.**
   FactTV was not able to join the Zoom call due to technical difficulties.
2. **Review/Approve Draft Minutes**
   A. Regular SB Meeting minutes from January 3, 2025
   DM motioned to approve the draft minutes from Friday, January 3, 2025 as amended; BM seconded. The motion approved unanimously.

   During the review of the minutes, there was a discussion regarding the different nomenclature used to refer to the stone arch bridge at the intersection of Hill and Kirsch Roads. The following terms are used interchangeably to refer to this structure: stone arch bridge: culvert 11, stone arch structure, arch bridge, stone arch, short bridge, infrastructure at Hill and Kirsh Roads, and 66-11 stone arch short bridge. According to a contact with the Winham Regional Commission, because the structure is less than 20 feet, it is defined as a culvert and not a bridge. For consistency and to avoid confusion, in minutes it will be designated as stone arch/culvert 11.
3. **Changes to the Agenda**
   None.
4. **Members of the Public**
   A. Scheduled members of the public
   None.
   B. Unscheduled members of the public on agenda items only
   Alyssa Schmidt (AS) asked who was the Town contact with Brian Post (BP) regarding the stone arch/culvert 11. DM explained that SN was the contact as part of his responsibilities for grant development and meets and shares information with EMB. EMB added that SN is handling all the paperwork associated with the FEMA grant and any decisions go through the SB. As the project evolves, EMB will be more involved. MD commented that SN's involvement and continuing role was invaluable and recommended that the SB change as little as possible mid-stream.

5. Reports & Updates

A. Grants - S. Noga

1) Better Back Road Grant

As previously reported, the grant application was submitted December 27, 2024. SN has had a subsequent discussion with EMB regarding a change in the design that will reduce the length of the culvert and provide for improved drainage. SN will follow up with his Better Back Road contacts about changing the plans.

2) Grants in Aid (GIA)

In response to the GIA close-out report, the Town was asked to install additional rip rap to the three culverts covered by GIA #508 and to update documentation. SN has updated the documentation about which they had questions and promised to have the additional rip rap added and provide photo documentation upon completion. Based on SN's promises and once the GIA receives the updated documentation about which they had questions, they will provide payment.

3) FEMA Updates re: Ellen Ware Road

The Town sent the engineer's estimated cost of $230,000 to FEMA in December 2024 and is waiting to hear from FEMA.

4) FEMA Updates re:Hill Road aka Stone Arch short bridge

Hammond Engineering has completed their draft engineering plan and estimated the cost of work at $360,000. SN has submitted these to FEMA and VEM (Vermont Emergency Management). SN reminded the group that the Town took a replacement approach in the FEMA filling with the understanding that the SB would do whatever was needed based on input from the residents. SN has asked VEM and FEMA if they could suggest any routes for the Town to take to facilitate the review process – including the historic review.

Brian Post (BP) is willing to meet with the SB and members of the Town at the end of January or beginning of February; the SB would like to propose a meeting on Friday, January 31. SN also explained to BP that the SB is interested in knowing if there are any structural issues with the stone arch/culvert 11 given the heavy trucks that use that section of Hill Road. BP has clarified that he does not have engineering credentials but can provide the Town with a list of engineers with expertise in stone bridges. A more detailed assessment from an engineer would cost between $1,000 to $2,500. BP estimated that, given its size, it would take four to six weeks for a complete rebuild. BP has offered to look at photos, the engineer's report, and stone arch/culvert 11 pro-bono.

As an interim measure, the Town could use steel plates to reinforce and protect the road surface of the stone arch/culvert 11. MD asking about the process after FEMA responds, commented that it would be hard for the Town residents to make a decision without knowing the cost of the various options and if and what FEMA would cover. Under a FEMA grant, FEMA pays 75% and the Town pays 25%.

The stone arch/culvert 11 is undersized. SN would like input from BP regarding other options for accommodating a larger flow. The SB discussed alternatives including installing a culvert that would direct flood water away from and around the bridge.

5) Local Hazard Mitigation Plan - BRIC Grant w/WRC back at VEM for a second review.
The plan has been approved. It is 91 pages long. DM will put SB review and approval on the next meeting agenda.
6) FEMA / VEM buyout application information re: Ames Farm
The buyout application was not for the Ames Farm.
7) Department of Public Safety (DPS) Financial Report Form
The Town received the DPS Report Form for sign-off to get the remaining 10% ($4,423.51) of the 4720DR-VT grant. The Town should receive the final payment within 2 to 3 weeks.
8) Offer to AS and DT
SN extended an invitation to AS and DT to call him anytime they had a question. He would be happy to meet with them.

B. Building Commissioner - B. Mello
1) Brief discussion of BMH Projects schedule for 2025
BM updated the SB on the status of the BMH Committee which currently consists of three people and is without a Chair; the goals for the BMH; potential sources of funding; and projects planned for 2025. The current Committee's interests are focused on planning and running Town social and fund-raising events. He described his role as leading, not running the show; and described the goal and benefit of making the BMH annex accessible throughout the year to increasing connectivity within the Town and enable 100 percent inclusion of the Town residents – including modifications to make the building accessible to all. BM identified the following potential sources for funding: Vermont Art Council, Windham Foundation, and Vermont Historic Preservation. He is planning on contacting Vermont Historic Preservation to clarify the requirements for historic preservation. DM noted that there is a resident who may be able to help with grant writing; also, the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) has a free webinar on February 4, 2025 at 10:00 AM covering grant basics. In 2025, the annex is scheduled for carpentry repairs (for which an RFP and contracting are required) and painting (for which a contract has been signed).
2) Daycare 3-year lease - In Executive Session at the end of the meeting.
Will be addressed during Executive Session.
3) Action : The 3-year lease with Suzy's Little Peanuts Following the executive session.
Will be addressed during Executive Session.

C. Highway Supervisor – E. Mark Bills
1) Update on status of any road projects
EMB is working on general road maintenance, regular tree work, and making plans for projects to bring to the SB at a future date. DM noted that once the Town's Hazard Mitigation Plan is approved, it will become the blueprint for Town projects. DM will send EMB a copy.
2) Action - Safety and weight limit determination on the 66-11 stone arch short bridge
Regarding a weight limit for the stone arch/culvert 11, EMB stated that a special stone engineer is needed to provide a weight limit. SN had also emailed his contacts at VTrans (Vermont Agency of Transportation) who confirmed that the Town will need to get a special engineer.

3) Rip Rap needed at culvert inlet/outlet for grant reimbursement.
Discussed earlier.

4) Certificate of Highway Mileage - Year ending February 10, 2025
Guy Tanza, the Town Clerk has certified and signed off on the certificate. DM read the mileage reported in the AOT Mileage Certificate for the year ending February 10, 2025.

Type	Mileage
Class 1	0.000
Class 2	4.950
Class 3	11.91
Highway	0.000
Total	16.860
Class 4	1.47

DM made a motion to accept the Certificate of Highway Mileage as presented by the Town Clerk to the SB; BM seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The SB signed the certificate.

D. Finance/Budget – M. DeSocio

1) Review Budget 2025-26 for town report – Action
MD reviewed the budget to be included in the Town Report and presented at the March 2025 Town Meeting.

2) Auditors Report Update on progress
MD reported that the Auditors are not yet done with the 2024-25 fiscal year financials.

3) Review of Actual vs. Budgeted costs 6 months into the current 2024-25 budget
MD presented the actual expenses against the budgeted expenses based on available financial information for the Highway Fund. Expenses are lower than expected for the time period, but some of this likely reflects a delay in receipt of expected expenses.

E. Selectboard Chair - D. Maggio

1) Town Report
As indicated in the agenda, the following items were discussed.

a. Review and vote on the Warning Articles # 1 through # 14
The SB reviewed the articles and made revisions as needed.
DM made a motion to approve the warnings for the 2025 Brookline Town Meeting as amended; BM seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Article 4
DM made a motion to approve Article 4 to read "Shall the voters authorize general fund expenditures for operating expenses of $225,524 of which $175,727 shall be raised by taxes and $49,797 by non-tax revenues". BM seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Article 5
DM made a motion to approve Article 5 to read "Shall the voters authorize highway fund expenditures of $364,300 of which $312,100 shall be raised by taxes and $52,200 by non-tax revenues". SN seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Article 9
DM made a motion to approve Article 9 to read "Shall the voters authorize applying $46,500 in surplus funds against the tax burden to reduce the rate of

general fund expenditures as shown in Article 4?" SN seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Article 10

DM made a motion to approve Article 10 whereby the Town voters authorize applying $35,000 of highway funds from the 2021 flood expenses to be applied to reduce the highway fund shown in Article 5. BM seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Review and vote on the Municipal Budget for 2025-2026
   See Article 4 above.
c. Review and vote on the Highway Budget
   See Article 5 above.
d. Review Town Officers to be Elected
   Discussed.
e. Review Town Officers to be Appointed
f. Discussed.
g. Review Delinquent Taxpayer info for town report
h. Town's Treasurer to Work with Robert Fisher Esq
   DM made a motion to have the SB concur with the SB Chair action to give the Treasurer permission to contact and work with Robert Fisher, Esq. on delinquent property tax sales in Brookline; SN seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
i. Review Vital Records to be included in town report
   Tabled. These need to be provided by the Town Clerk.
j. Review Regulations Governing Dog Ownership page w/new licensing rate.
   DM reminded the SB that at the previous meeting the SB approved an additional $5.00 for dog licensing. As of January 1, 2025, the State raised the rabies fee from $1.00 to $3.00 so the Town will get only an additional $2.00 from the increase.
k. Review an additional page regarding Spay/Neuter Program and Rabies vaccine clinics. DM would also like to include this additional page concerning the Vermont program.
l. Review Vacancies List / Reappointments
   The SB reviewed the list.
m. Discuss procedure to get town report documents to Mrs. Hickey via Stan Noga before sending to David Jones for formatting. Documents should be sent to SN first – by Wednesday, January 22nd.

F. Any other discussion as requested by a selectboard member not requiring a vote.
   SB members mentioned following up on the cabinets that the listers have requested and finalizing financials for the town report.

6. Unfinished Business

A. Town Meeting - Access to multi-purpose room for town meeting.
   DM asked BM to install locks on the three classroom doors on the upstairs floor near the front door so that residents can come through the front door to access the Town Meeting.
B. Town Meeting - Room Set up and Potluck
   Tabled to next meeting.

7. New Business

A. Shall the SB permit the use of records restoration funds to update the Riverside Cemetery maps, deeds and indexes?

DM made a motion to allow using some of the record restoration fund to update the Riverside Cemetery maps, deeds, and indexes subject to approval by the SB. SN seconded. The Town Clerk has already digitized the maps and deeds on the Town's computer and the listers have access. The motion passed unanimously.

8. Warrants

A. Payroll Warrant

DM made a motion to approve payroll warrant 25-28 dated January 15, 2025 for $4,413.19; SN seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

B. Accounts Payable Warrant

DM made a motion to accept the accounts payable warrant 25-29 dated January 16, 2025 in the amount of $20,876.73; BM seconded the motion. This included the second $12,500 payment installment for plowing as well as costs of materials and trucking fees. The motion was approved unanimously.

9. Communications

A. Regular Mail

B. Email

1) The Moore Free Library sent a thank you note for the Town's appropriation.
2) SN sent email suggesting the SB look at companies that can provide temporary staffing support for Town management.
3) DM's email listing additional policies that the Town may want to have, including the following:
   - for the BMH: borrowing chairs and/or tables, donation-based use of the meeting room, kitchen use, and holding community activities
   - for the Town: using private vehicles for town business, annual employee reviews, selecting preferred vendors, advertising requests for bids in the newspaper, displaying flags on town property, determining the award of a stipend, reviewing appointments, social appropriations, non-resident property owners on committee appointments, and hourly raise increases for Town employees.

10. Set Agenda

A. Regular SB Meeting on February 5, 2025

1) Final Town Report sign-off
2) Sign Local Hazard Mitigation Plan
3) General fund 6-month review
4) TBD

B. Set Agenda for special meeting if necessary – Date/Time TBD

11. Executive Session

DM cited 1 V.S.A. § 313 and made a motion to approve entering into an executive session finding that the premature general public knowledge would clearly place the public body involved at a substantial disadvantage. BM seconded; motion approved unanimously.

DM made a motion for the SB to enter into an executive session so that the SB can discuss the negotiating of terms in the three-year lease of the school building to Suzy Countermarch doing business as (dba) Suzy's Little Peanuts, BM seconded. The motion approved unanimously.

The SB entered into the executive session at 9:13 PM, the Zoom recording was turned off, and EMB and VB were excused from the meeting. The SB exited the executive session at 9:57 PM. No actions, motions, or votes took place during the executive session.

After exiting the executive session, DM made a motion to accept the proposed terms of the three-year lease of the school building to Suzy Countermarch dba Suzy's Little Peanuts daycare as amended to be sent out for review. BM seconded. The motion approved unanimously.

12. Adjourn the Meeting

DM moved to adjourn the meeting, and the meeting was **adjourned at 10:00 PM**.

Respectfully submitted, Vanessa Ballou, Recording Clerk