

**TOWN OF SOUTH BETHANY  
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES  
MARCH 10, 2023  
9:00 A.M.**

**Meeting Called to Order and Pledge of Allegiance**

Mayor Saxton called the March 10, 2023, Town Council meeting to order at 9:00 a.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

**Attendance and Absences**

In attendance were Mayor Tim Saxton and Councilmembers Derek Abbott (via phone), Randy Bartholomew, Bob Biciocchi, Edie Dondero (via phone), and Tim Shaw; Town Manager Maureen Hartman, Town Finance Director Renee McDorman, Town Clerk Matt Amerling, and Chief Jason Lovins. Councilmember Dick Oliver was absent. Public attendees: 9.

**Adoption of Minutes**

Motion by Councilman Tim Shaw, second by Councilman Randy Bartholomew to adopt the February 10, 2023, Town Council Meeting minutes. Motion carried 5-0-1 abstention (Abbott).

Motion by Councilman Shaw, second by Councilman Bartholomew to adopt the February 10, 2023, Town Council Executive Session minutes. Motion carried 5-0-1 abstention (Abbott).

Motion by Councilman Shaw, second by Councilman Bob Biciocchi to adopt the February 22, 2023, Town Council Meeting Budget Workshop minutes. Motion carried 6-0.

**Public Presentation of FY 2024 Draft Budget**

Councilman Bartholomew mentioned accomplishments from FY2023, which include the completion of Town Hall renovations using the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), Sussex County and Department of Homeland Security grants; the police recruited two (2) new police officers; successfully submitted the 5-year comprehensive plan update; successful community relations events such as the bike rodeo and holiday tree lighting. Councilman Bartholomew thanked Town's Finance Director and Manager for their work on the budget. Councilman Bartholomew stated 2024 is a balanced budget, and the Town has maintained the same rental tax rate of eight percent (8%) as well as the same property tax rate of \$1.30 per \$100.00.

Councilman Bartholomew stated the total proposed FY24 revenue is \$2,930,000.00, with a revenue increase over the prior budget of 8.4%; the year-to-date revenue is \$3,067,000.00, and the Town is having a very positive year.

Regarding operating expense for FY24, in the total \$2,500,000.00 budget, the public safety is 33% of it; beach patrol is 13%; public works is 12%; code enforcement is 7%; general administration is 32%; and committees are 3%. There is \$50,000.00 in the FY24 budget to remove algae in the canals, \$40,000.00 for consultants to help rewrite the ten-year comprehensive plan, and to create a \$50,000 plan, to address our reserves for the future, for any capital needs. Councilman Bartholomew stated the capital projects budget consists of \$5,500.00 for bulkhead repairs; a new Kubota ATV for public works is \$18,800.00; \$15,000.00 for speed humps; \$88,000.00 for two (2) new police vehicles; \$10,000.00 for new Mobi-mats; and \$5,000.00 for possible repairs to the second story in the public works building; all culminating to a total of \$142,300.00. The other capital

item that will come out of other reserves is \$30,000.00 for street maintenance, which is in addition to the municipal street aid of \$55,000.00.

**Public Comment**

Ed Nazarian, 20 Peterson Drive, stated he was not in support of Ordinance 210-23, to reduce the speed limit on some South Bethany roads from 20 miles per hour to 15 miles per hour.

Cindy Van Horn, 12 S. Anchorage Drive, stated, regarding the speed reduction, the last three months, there's not much traffic going through Town. Councilman Shaw stated the whole intent of dropping the speed limit is more about public safety. Councilman Shaw stated this ordinance speed limit reduction only affects a couple of areas of Town. Councilman Biciocchi stated the Town did survey people on the affected area thoroughly, and got a lot of input from people, and the overwhelming amount of feedback said to slow the traffic down.

Carolyn Bell, 307 West 7<sup>th</sup> Street, stated she agrees with the speed limit reduction being proposed.

Liz Nowell, 241 Bayside Drive, stated she noticed on one of the beach access points off Ocean Drive that there is a drop-off and while there used to be caution tape to help prevent people from going over the drop, the tape has since blown away and should be replaced.

**Discussion and possible action to award Bid No. 23-01, Beach Exercise Class Concession**

Town Manager Maureen Hartman stated the Town received two bids for the beach exercise class concession. One was from Murray Oltman, in the amount of \$600.00, and the other from ECE Yoga, Monica Washburn, who bid \$800.00. The Town Manager recommended awarding to both bidders. Councilman Bartholomew motioned to award the bid to both ECE Yoga and Murray Oltman. Councilman Abbott seconded the motion. Motion carried 6-0.

**Discussion and possible action on creating a pool of funds for bonuses to be awarded to Town Hall staff**

Councilman Bartholomew motioned to authorize a pool of funds from FY23 of up to \$7,500.00 to be paid as bonuses to Town Hall employees prior to April 30, 2023, of which the allocation to the employees will be determined by the Town Manager with a final approval by the Mayor. Councilman Shaw seconded the motion. Motion carried 6-0.

**Discussion and possible action on reducing the number of seasonal parking passes beginning Jan. 1, 2024**

Councilman Biciocchi is recommending that the Council review the Town Code regarding the purchase up to four (4) parking permits per residence. Councilman Biciocchi stated in recent years, the Town has reduced the number of parking spaces east of Coastal Highway and going towards the ocean side with bike racks to promote alternate ways instead of driving to the beach. Councilman Biciocchi indicated that some residents give or sell their passes to non-residents from out of town, their friends, etc. He is recommending a limit of two residential parking permits rather than four. Councilman Shaw is in support of dropping the maximum number to two. Councilman Abbott stated he's not sure a legislative fix makes sense here, and while he doesn't like the idea of people getting passes and selling them, he feels Council may be able to find a "half-measure" such as buying two (2) passes at the regular price, and the other two (2) come at a much more significant price. Councilwoman Dondero stated she supports the reduction to two (2) because there are people who are either giving them away or selling them to non-residents. Councilman Bartholomew stated he supports the reduction because he thinks by offering four (4) permits, it sets up this false expectation the buyer will have a parking space. Town Manager Hartman stated each parking permit sold states on the back that permits do not guarantee a parking spot.

Motion by Councilman Biciocchi, second by Councilman Shaw to refer this ordinance change request to the Town Charter & Code Committee. Motion carried 5-1, with Councilman Abbott voting no.

**Discussion and possible action to approve funding from South Bethany as part of a multi-municipal update to a 2012 Sea Grant study entitled “The Contribution of the Coastal Economy to the State of Delaware”**

Councilman Shaw motioned to approve funding of \$2,878.00 from South Bethany to update the 2012 Sea Grant study entitled “The Contribution of the Coastal Economy to the State of Delaware.” Councilman Biciocchi seconded the motion. Motion carried 6-0.

**Second reading for Ordinance 210-23 to Amend Chapter 134 to update the language with regards to the speed limit for specific roads within the Town limits of South Bethany; and to update the language with regards to a date change for vehicle entrance on Black Gum Drive and Kent Avenue. (Dondero)**

Mayor Saxton noted Councilwoman Dondero reviewed the Second Reading during the meeting. Motion by Councilman Shaw, second by Councilman Abbott to adopt Ordinance 210-23, to update language with regards to the speed limit for specific roads within the Town limits of South Bethany, and to update the language with regards to a date change for vehicle entrance on Black Gum Drive and Kent Avenue. Motion carried 6-0.

**Leadership Reports**

Mayor’s Report – report submitted.  
Town Manager Report – report submitted. Town Manager Hartman expressed her and the staff’s gratitude to the Bethany Beach Volunteer Fire Company for their cooperation and allowing the Town to use its facilities while Town Hall is under renovations.  
Police Chief Report – report submitted.  
Treasurer Report – report submitted.

**Committee and Commission Reports**

Budget and Finance Committee – report submitted.  
Canal Water Quality Committee – report submitted. Councilman Abbott proposed having the Mayor and/or a Council member to contact someone higher up in DNREC or on the state senate level to try to get an answer about using land to dispose of harvested algae from the Town’s canals.  
Charter and Code Committee – no report submitted.  
Community Relations Committee – report submitted. Councilwoman Dondero stated the CRC meeting scheduled for March 9 had to be cancelled but will be meeting again as soon as possible.  
Planning Commission – no report submitted.  
Bicycle & Pedestrian Safety Ad Hoc Committee – no report submitted. Councilman Biciocchi stated the committee met on March 8 and he will be submitting a report at the next meeting.

**Adjournment**

Motion by Councilman Shaw, second by Councilman Biciocchi to adjourn the March 10, 2023, Town Council Regular Meeting at 10:15 a.m. Motion carried 6-0.

Respectfully submitted,

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Council Secretary

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Town Clerk

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Date of Approval