

**TOWN OF SOUTH BETHANY  
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES  
FEBRUARY 9, 2024  
9:00 A.M.**

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

Mayor Saxton called the February 9, 2024, Town Council meeting to order at 9:05 a.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

**Attendance and Absences**

In attendance were Mayor Tim Saxton and Councilmembers Randy Bartholomew, Bob Biciocchi, Edie Dondero, Chris Keefe (virtual), Tim Shaw, and Bob Shields; Town Manager Maureen Hartman, SBPD Chief Jason Lovins, and Town Clerk Matt Amerling. Public attendees: 3. Virtual attendees: 5.

**Adoption of Minutes**

Councilwoman Edie Dondero requested on page two to strike one sentence and re-word another sentence under the Floodplain Ordinance discussion. Motion by Councilman Tim Shaw, seconded by Councilman Bob Shields to adopt the January 10, 2024, Town Council Meeting Workshop minutes with proposed changes. Motion carried 7-0.

Councilman Tim Shaw motioned to approve the January 25, 2024, Council meeting minutes, seconded by Councilman Bartholomew. Motion carried 7-0.

Councilwoman Dondero requested the adjournment time be switched from a.m. to p.m. Councilman Bartholomew motioned to approve the January 25, 2024, Executive Session minutes with the proposed change, seconded by Councilman Shaw. Motion carried 7-0.

**Public Comment**

There were no comments.

**Discussion and possible action on adoption of 2024 Sussex County Tax Assessments for the Town of South Bethany 2025 Fiscal Year (May 1, 2024, to April 30, 2025) (Bartholomew)**

Councilman Bartholomew stated the Town Charter requires that we annually notify the public that we will be using the assessments established by the Sussex County Board of Assessments for the purpose of evaluating property tax assessments for properties located within the corporate limits of the Town. As in previous years, the Town of South Bethany elects to use the assessment and any supplementary assessment listing established annually by the Sussex County Board of Assessment for FY2025 property taxation purposes. Requested Sussex County assessments will be based on assessments as of March 1, 2024.

Councilman Bartholomew motioned to adopt the 2024 Sussex County tax assessments for the Town of South Bethany's 2025 fiscal year, seconded by Councilman Bob Biciocchi. Motion carried 7-0.

**Discussion and possible action to adopt Police Department pay scale (Saxton/Bartholomew)**

Mayor Saxton stated that the Town must offer competitive pay to retain and hire Police Officers, but he met with Town Manager Hartman and Police Chief Lovins and requested them to create a long-term pay scale which will prevent this from coming up again. Mayor Saxton stated these are

significant pay increases and he thinks he speaks for Council when he says this can't happen again because it is not sustainable for the Town to have two significantly big pay increases consecutively for the police department.

Councilman Shaw motioned to adopt the Police Department pay scale, seconded by Councilman Bob Shields. Motion carried 7-0.

**Discussion and possible action to approve the submission of the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant and include a 25% cost-share expense in the amount of \$50,000.00 in the FY2025 budget. (Dondero/Hartman)**

Councilwoman Dondero stated the Resiliency Committee has been working on addressing some of the flooding-related issues in town that arose from the resiliency plan which was done for us and completed last year. A Hazard Mitigation Grant, offered through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), was submitted, and awarded last year for a study of York Road to alleviate or minimize flooding issues. The Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant is also offered through FEMA, and Councilwoman Dondero and Town Manager Hartman have had communications with FEMA and the engineer who wrote the Town's resiliency plan, and they tried to identify a project which would meet the BRIC grant application guidelines. Councilwoman Dondero and Town Manager Hartman decided to submit a plan for flood mitigation for the Cat Hill neighborhood. Councilwoman Dondero further stated she and Town Manager Hartman put together a \$195,000 total request to the BRIC program which consists of \$190,000 for a flood mitigation plan, based on an actual bid that was provided to us by an engineering firm, and an additional \$5,000 for management costs. The \$5,000 is 100% federally funded. The BRIC program is a 75/25 match, meaning that FEMA picks up 75%, which is \$142,500, and the Town cost-share is 25%, which amounts to \$47,500. If awarded, this grant will provide the Town with the funds to conduct a flood mitigation plan. From this plan, the Town can obtain an actual implementable plan with real designed solutions as to what the Town can do infrastructure-wise to address those issues. Councilwoman Dondero stated if the grant is awarded, and the Town goes forward with the plan, the firm that will complete the plan will come in and meet with Council and the Resiliency Committee and present plan options they believe are appropriate to address some of the issues. Council will then decide as to which option they think are the most appropriate and the most implementable. Councilwoman Chris Keefe asked for the dates of when Councilwoman Dondero's plan of York Road to be submitted and when the Cat Hill assessment will need to be submitted. Councilwoman Dondero stated the York Road grant closes in August 2025, so the Town should have a plan for that by December 31, 2024; and the BRIC grant end date is July 2026.

Councilman Shaw motioned to approve the submission of the BRIC grant and include the 25% cost-share expense, seconded by Councilman Shields. Motion carried 7-0.

**Leadership Reports**

Mayor's Report – Report submitted.

Town Manager Report – Report submitted. Town Manager Hartman stated that Chief Lovins was awarded the \$25,000 grant from the Department of Homeland Security for new cameras and security system in the police department building.

Police Chief Report – Report submitted.

Treasurer Report – Report submitted.

**Committee and Commission Reports**

Budget and Finance Committee – Report submitted and, as far as the budget for fiscal year 2025, we're in really good shape process-wise; also, the B&F did hold a meeting this past Wednesday (February 7) at 9:00 a.m. Mayor Saxton requested for the February 23 budget workshop meeting presentation to have a year-end estimate.

Canal Water Quality Committee – Report submitted. Councilman Shaw stated he is getting some of the Canal Water Quality Committee (CWQ) members to make some suggestions about ways the CWQ might use volunteerism in Town to try and help maintain the canals. Council emphasized that, per the CWQ report, CWQ members were not going onto people's properties but merely taking an inventory of existing conditions from a canoe or kayak within the canals. Mayor Saxton stressed the importance of the CWQ going to Town Manager Hartman when applying for grants.

Charter and Code Committee – No report submitted. Councilman Biciocchi stated they did set a meeting for February 22, 2024, at 2 p.m. Mayor Saxton requested the three sections of Chapter 42 in the Code to be amended this current fiscal year.

Community Relations Committee – No report submitted, but there will be a blood drive at Town Hall on Friday, April 19 (details forthcoming).


Planning Commission – No report submitted. Mayor Saxton reported he received a "Town of South Bethany Preliminary Study Assessment" submitted by the chairman of the Planning Commission. Mayor Saxton reviewed the report and provided comments back to the Planning Commission chairman, as the report did not meet the needs/request of the Town Council. However, the report did contain a few good suggestions that the Town Council could work on as projects before summer. Mayor Saxton provided the chairman the options of either submitting the ideas/suggestions in the Preliminary Study Assessment by the Planning Commission or determine whether the Planning Commission wants to do the study as requested by Town Council.

Resiliency Committee – No report submitted, but the committee has received a proposal from an engineering firm on the York Road project, and the committee has questions they're going to bounce back to them for some more detail on certain things; and the committee has been working on the BRIC grant application.

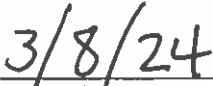
**Adjournment**

Motion by Councilman Shaw, second by Councilwoman Dondero, to adjourn the February 9, 2024, Town Council Regular Meeting at 10:11 a.m. Motion carried 7-0.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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Council Secretary

  
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Town Clerk

  
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Date of Approval