

**TOWN OF SOUTH BETHANY
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 14, 2025
9:00 A.M.**

Meeting Called to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Dondero called the March 14, 2025, Town Council meeting to order at 9:01 a.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Attendance and Absences

In attendance were Mayor Edie Dondero and Councilmembers Randy Bartholomew, Bob Biciocchi, Chris Keefe (via Zoom), Tim Shaw, Bob Shields, and Cindy Van Horn; Town Manager Maureen Hartman, SBPD Chief Jason Lovins, Town Finance Director Renee McDorman, and Town Clerk Matt Amerling. Public attendees: 10. Virtual attendees: 17.

Adoption of Minutes

Councilman Tim Shaw motioned to approve the February 14, 2025, Town Council meeting minutes, seconded by Councilman Bob Biciocchi. Motion carried 7-0.

Councilman Randy Bartholomew motioned to approve the February 14, 2025, Town Council Executive Session minutes, seconded by Councilman Shaw. Motion carried 7-0.

Councilman Bartholomew stated the line "as well as a correction to an interest income item," in the first paragraph of the budget review could be stricken. Councilman Shaw motioned to approve the February 27, 2025, Town Council Budget Workshop minutes with the amendment, seconded by Councilman Bob Shields. Motion carried 6-0-1 abstention by Councilman Shaw.

Discussion and possible approval of BRIC grant submission from the Resiliency Committee (Dondero)

Mayor Dondero stated the funding request to FEMA for this grant will be approximately \$95,000, and there is a 25% match contribution from the Town, which would amount to \$23,750. The grant is due on April 1, 2025, with the award issued sometime this fall. Mayor Dondero stated the BRIC grant will go toward phase two of the York Road flood mitigation effort, specifically the four side streets that are most prone to flooding in the York Road corridor, including the survey work, elevation surveys, wetland surveys, if needed, soil sampling, all going toward the final design plans. Councilman Shields stated he recommends Council pass on this study. He realizes Council has given preliminary approval of the grant submission before, but, at that time, he voted to do that because he thought Council was going to address the real problems, which are the storm flooding issues down in York Road, and should result in building a berm and allowing people to raise bulkheads. Mayor Dondero stated this is one piece of an ongoing effort to address the problem in a systematic way by giving some immediate relief to those residents who cannot get in and out of their properties due to roadway flooding.

Councilman Shaw motioned to approve the BRIC grant submission, seconded by Councilwoman Cindy Van Horn. Motion carried 6-1 (with Councilman Shields voting no).

Discussion and Public Presentation of the FY 2026 draft budget (Bartholomew)

Councilman Bartholomew presented the slide show from the February 27, 2025, budget workshop meeting. The budget shows a 3.9% increase in overall operating expenses, primarily due to salary and benefit increases, including a new full-time position in Public Works. Due to new property tax

assessments, the Town's total assessed value has increased dramatically from \$42.5 million to \$1.7 billion. To balance the budget, the Budget & Finance Committee (B&F) proposes a tax rate reduction from \$1.30 per \$100 to \$0.04 per \$100, even though this would not generate any additional revenue that could be put into reserves to help fund longer-term projects. After a lengthy discussion, Council agreed that B&F should establish a dollar amount the Town needs to generate annually to create reserves to fund expenditures on the capital infrastructure projects costing approximately 14 million dollars. But Council would first need to see which of those projects is a priority. After a lengthy discussion, Council reached a consensus to move forward with proposing a \$0.051 tax rate.

Public Comment

Scott Gentilucci, 416 Rebecca Road, stated he would like to see Council approach property owners along York Road and surrounding roads to talk to them about special assessments or to establish some sort of special tax district there to protect their values by having York Road raised; and Council should maybe consider raising rental tax rates to help with revenue as it seems to him there is a disproportionate benefit to people who offer rentals particularly along the beach side, which is not shared with the rest. Councilman Shaw stated the dollars that a property owner charges someone to rent isn't set by the Town but rather it's usually a rental agency or the individual. The Town only has control over the percentage, and the 8% the Town charges must be taken into consideration with the States's new rental tax of 4.5%.

Jim Oliver, 4 Logan Street, asked for Council to raise the property tax to help fund the many capital infrastructure projects the Town will need to do.

Rick Rosso, 106 Elizabeth Way, stated Council needs to look at the reserve in two portions: the tactical reserve, which should be reviewed over 5 years, and deciding if the Town has the right amount in there; and the strategic reserve, making some goals from recommendations from the Town in terms of what is the right amount it thinks we should spend over 5 years as well as deciding if the Town has enough money.

Russ Beland, 108 Elizabeth Way, stated it's his understanding the County is going to reassess property values every five years, so we're not going to be in this situation and towns are going to get a bump every five years when those property values kick up, so he doesn't view this as a year to get too creative and to solve too many long-term problems. His preference would be to let the dust settle and figure out, maybe next year, how we solve the longer-term problems.

Rich Cocuzza, 117 Henlopen Drive, stated, regarding the Town budget, he knows the Town is not growing so the Town should be able to run on smaller staff like it did years ago.

Lorraine Orloff, 1 Logan Street, stated she is in favor of the Town creating a light pollution ordinance to cut down on the brightness of exterior lights on homes, especially as there are specific homes which have such bright lights, it's blinding.

Maria and David Vershel, 16 Sea Side Drive, Randall Larrimore, 15 Sea Side Drive, and Benjamin Green, 14 Sea Side Drive, stated they are in support of a light pollution ordinance.

Simon Moore, 309 W. 6th Street, stated he thinks the Town really needs to take the opportunity to start putting money aside for major long term capital needs, and he would like to strongly encourage Council to consider even a higher rate but be a little bit careful when using the term higher rate. He thinks the four cents per 100 which balances the budget is a 97% reduction in the tax rate and he thinks there's an opportunity to not reduce that so much but rather go higher than five cents. He also suggests the Town designates the approximate four – or five plus – cents that is required to balance the budget and take those additional funds and specifically put those aside in a reserve fund.

Discussion and possible action to award Bid No. 25-01, Beach Exercise Concession (Hartman)

Mayor Dondero stated she feels like Council should award the person who submitted the higher bid, and, within a town this size, she really doesn't think it's necessary to have two different yoga classes going on the beach seven days a week throughout the summer season; therefore, she thinks the bid should only go to ECE Yoga. Council expressed interest in raising the minimum bid amount for future bid listings.

Councilman Bartholomew motioned to award Bid 25-01 to ECE Yoga, seconded by Councilman Biciocchi. Motion carried 7-0.

Second Reading of Ordinance 216-25, Noise Ordinance (Shaw)

Councilman Shaw read off the second draft of the ordinance, with the beginning time of the ordinance changed from 10 p.m. to 11 p.m.

Motion to approve Ordinance 216-25

Councilman Biciocchi motioned to adopt Ordinance 216-25, seconded by Councilman Shields. Motion carried 7-0.

Discussion and possible appointment of Gerald Injaian to the Resiliency Committee (Dondero)

Councilman Biciocchi motioned to appoint Gerald Injaian to the Resiliency Committee, seconded by Councilman Shields. Motion carried 7-0.

Discussion of possible amendment to Town Code regarding exterior lighting (Shields)

After a lengthy discussion, Council decided for the Town Charter & Code Committee to move forward with researching other towns' ordinances and drafting an ordinance to cut down on excessive light pollution via house exterior lights.

Leadership Reports

Mayor's Report – Report submitted. There will be an emergency preparedness workshop offered for the public to attend on Friday, March 28, 2025, at the Sea Colony Recreation Center, starting at 9 a.m.

Town Manager Report – Report submitted.

Police Chief Report – Report submitted. Chase Morris is graduating from the Academy and will start Monday as the Town's newest officer.

Treasurer Report – Report submitted.

Committee and Commission Reports

Budget and Finance Committee – Report submitted.

Canal Water Quality Committee – No report submitted

Charter and Code Committee – Report submitted.

Community Relations Committee – Report submitted.

Planning Commission – Report submitted. Councilman Shields stated he is working with Chief Lovins on having another bike rodeo event, which is expected to be held this summer.

Resiliency Committee – Report submitted.

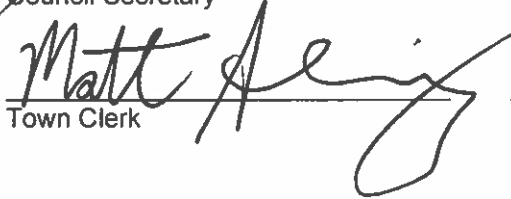
Adjournment

Motion by Councilman Shaw, seconded by Councilman Biciocchi, to adjourn the March 14, 2025, Town Council Regular Meeting at 11:16 a.m. Motion carried 7-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Council Secretary



Town Clerk

4/11/25
Date of Approval