

**TOWN OF SOUTH BETHANY  
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES  
APRIL 11, 2025  
9:00 A.M.**

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

Mayor Dondero called the April 11, 2025 Town Council meeting to order at 9:02 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, 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: 9. Virtual attendees: 13.

**Adoption of Minutes**

Councilman Randy Bartholomew stated he had one change on page two, at the end of the first paragraph, changing \$.05 to \$.051. Councilman Tim Shaw motioned to approve the March 14, 2025, Town Council meeting minutes with the amendment, seconded by Councilman Bob Biciocchi. Motion carried 7-0.

Councilman Shaw motioned to approve the March 27, 2025, Town Council Budget Workshop minutes, seconded by Councilman Bob Shields. Motion carried 7-0.

**Public Comment**

Gerry Injaian, 406 Bristol Road, stated he is requesting Council move forward with flood mitigation proposals in York Beach.

Deb Piper, 152 Bayshore Drive, stated it would be helpful to have some guidelines and parameters regarding recreational vehicles (RVs) on a person's property. Also, there is a longstanding concern about boats due to people having the boats parked along the property lines of their neighbors, giving the appearance of a wall of boats. Lastly, it might be a good idea at some point to look at property maintenance because there is at least one person who has had a boat under their portico for at least 36 years, as well as discarded packaging boxes piled up.

Larry Budd, 200 Carlisle Drive, stated he is hoping the Town will put up draft ordinances on the Town website once they are to be reviewed by Council. Mayor Dondero stated the Town will post them on the website. Mr. Budd further stated, with regard to the RVs or boats in driveways, he does not agree with a lot of oversight from the Town on property use.

Simon Moore, 309 W. 6<sup>th</sup> Street, stated nobody wants to pay additional taxes, but he thinks it's important to recognize that revenue has not changed for a long time, costs have gone up and we'd all agree that it's still a relatively low property tax burden compared to many other communities. He thinks the 5.1 cents as proposed can get a little bit complicated and he commends the Town Council for maintaining a strong fiscal position. Not only will this provide a balanced budget and cover this year's operating costs, but it's also putting some money away for known replacements. He is in support of the 5.1 cents and thinks anything lower than that digs the Town in a financial hole and would be a big mistake.

Tim Saxton, 24 Peterson Drive, stated this is still a 55% tax increase and it's not a 95% tax reduction. Mr. Saxton stated for the last 15 years the Council has used the asset replacement and

maintenance (ARM) consistently to pay for capital equipment. He doesn't object to Council saying they don't want to use it all, but Council can be creative by maybe only using half and then do it a bit again next year. Council doesn't need to use the whole \$160,000 and "pay as you go". If the Town goes with the \$0.041 that came out of the Budget & Finance Committee (B&F), it covers the true operating costs and funds everything. Council can make a compromise if they feel they don't want to use all the ARM money, but they do have options, and it's not limited to \$0.051 or nothing.

Mark Giler, 332 York Road, asked, regarding empty lots which were assessed last year and now have a structure on them, will those properties be reassessed now that they have a structure on them? Councilman Randy Bartholomew stated yes, those lots get reassessed when the property goes to closing.

#### **Discussion and possible action to approve the FY 2026 draft budget (Bartholomew)**

Councilman Bartholomew stated the budgeted transfer tax revenue for this current year will be missed by about \$50,000. That trend is down from where we thought it would be and that's why, in the fiscal year 2026 (FY26) budget, we're not anticipating an increase in that number. The Town is going to be short on revenue by about \$50,000, and we will have about \$120,000 of expense savings. The net of that is a surplus of about \$70,000, and once the audit's done, the Town can determine how much of that number rolls into the reserves, and then it's up to the Budget & Finance Committee (B&F) to make a recommendation to Council as to how to allocate any of those reserves. Councilman Bartholomew also wanted to clarify the additional information received since the last meeting. The proposed FY26 budget included two FEMA-administered Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grants totaling \$214,000 for York Road and Cat Hill flood mitigation projects. That grant program has now been eliminated and all funds rescinded, so the Town will not be receiving that \$214,000 grant income nor will it incur the associated \$285,000 in expenses. Both the grant revenue and expenses have been removed from the budget. However, the Town will retain the \$71,000 expense which was to represent the Town's 25% cost share of the two mitigation projects, in order to maintain the balanced budget. Council will need to approve the expenditure of those funds for a resiliency project, most likely the second phase of the York Road project. Councilman Bartholomew stated he is now bringing forward a budget modified so the total revenue expense on a balanced budget would be \$3,507,350, rather than the previously drafted \$3,721,100.

Councilman Bob Shields stated he thinks with the evaporation of these BRIC grants, it requires the Town to rethink the strategic plan and really get serious about it, because the Town now has to pay for it all. If Council does get a strategic plan figured out, deciding what the Town wants to do on these resiliency items and in by order of priority, then, if a project comes up, the Town takes it out of the infrastructure reserve. The Council's objective every year should be to replenish that infrastructure reserve, adjust the tax base and maybe do some kind of special tax assessment to at least keep the 2.5 million we got in the infrastructure reserve right now. He thinks the plan should be to withdraw the \$71,250 right now from the budget, reducing the tax rate by that amount, and that would be a more sensible way to move ahead.

Mayor Dondero stated the \$71,250 is already in the budget and what is being proposed is redirecting it from one place to another, not adding it in. Council authorized the Resiliency Committee to submit a grant request for \$95,000 to do a York Road Phase 2 mitigation plan this year but that grant program was canceled. It doesn't mean the project needs to fall off Council's radar screen, and retaining the \$71,250 goes a long way towards paying for that flood mitigation project which still needs to occur. If Council takes the \$71,250 out of the budget, it guarantees Council will most likely do absolutely nothing regarding the York Road flooding problem this year and she can't support that decision.

Councilwoman Chris Keefe stated she thinks Councilman Shields brings up good points and the Town doesn't need to have a 55% tax increase. Everybody wants the capital projects done as well as paying for Town staff and the police department, but \$0.041 will accomplish those goals. It may

not have a surplus, so the Town is going to have a series of special assessments, and we're going to have to know exactly what we want to use the money for. Mayor Dondero stated she disagrees with Councilwoman Keefe and every expense in this proposed budget is accounted for.

Councilman Bartholomew motioned to approve the operating budget that has revenue and expenses, a balanced budget of \$3,507,350, incorporating the tax rate of \$0.051 per \$100, as well as eliminating the grants and reallocating the \$71,250 as discussed, seconded by Councilman Tim Shaw. Motion carried 5-2 (with Councilwoman Keefe and Councilman Shields voting no). Councilman Shields requested making a second motion. Town Manager Maureen Hartman stated the first motion presented had already been approved and adopted by a majority of Council. Councilman Shields motioned to reduce the operating budget by \$72,000 and reduce the tax rate concurrently, bringing down the tax rate to \$0.041 per \$100, seconded by Councilwoman Keefe. Motion failed 2-5 (with Mayor Dondero, Councilman Bartholomew, Councilman Biciocchi, Councilman Shaw, and Councilwoman Van Horn voting no).

**Discussion and possible vote on Resolution 1-25, to set the FY 2026 property tax rate and rental tax rate**

Councilman Shaw motioned to approve Resolution 1-25, seconded by Councilman Biciocchi. Motion carried 7-0.

**Discussion and possible vote on Resolution 2-25, to revise South Bethany's schedule of fees**

Councilman Shaw motioned to approve Resolution 2-25, seconded by Councilman Shields. Motion carried 7-0.

**Discussion and possible vote on Resolution 3-25, adopting an operating and capital budget and reserve allocations for the fiscal year 2026**

Councilman Bartholomew motioned to approve Resolution 3-25, seconded by Councilman Shaw. Motion carried 7-0.

**Discussion and possible action to approve additional story boards that will be fully funded by the Historical Society for placement in Cat Hill (Resident Catherine Peck)**

Catherine Peck, of the South Bethany Historical Society, requested Council's permission to have two (2) new story boards posted in Cat Hill, hopefully along Canal Drive. Ms. Peck stated she will work with Town Code Enforcement Officer Joe Hinks on the best placement for the storyboards, which will be fully funded by Historical Society. Councilman Shields motioned to approve the additional story boards for placement in Cat Hill, seconded by Councilman Shaw. Motion carried 7-0.

**Discussion and possible action on moving forward with an ordinance amendment to allow food truck usage in Town limits during special events (Keefe)**

Councilwoman Keefe motioned to send this draft proposal to the Charter and Code Committee for review and drafting an ordinance regarding amending an ordinance for allowing food trucks during special events and only at Town Hall, seconded by Councilman Shaw. Motion carried 7-0.

**Discussion and possible action on moving forward with creating a Code amendment regarding limiting time for recreational vehicle (RV) parking as well as the number of boats stored on properties (Van Horn)**

Council came to a consensus for the Charter and Code Committee to begin researching and drafting an ordinance regarding limiting time for RV parking as well as the number of boats and jet skis stored on properties.

**First Reading of Ordinance 217-25, regarding the disposition of property that is found or turned into the South Bethany Police Department**

Mayor Dondero read the highlights of the draft Ordinance 217-25, with Councilman Bartholomew highlighting the need for a second sign-off from the Town Manager or their designee on all property disposition. Councilman Shaw exited the meeting.

**Discussion and possible action on moving Town committee appointments from the annual organizational meeting in May to the beginning of the year (Dondero)**

After a lengthy discussion, Councilman Biciocchi motioned to move the annual committee member appointments from the Council organizational meeting in May to the August Council meeting, seconded by Councilwoman Van Horn. Motion carried 6-0.

**Leadership Reports**

Mayor's Report – Report submitted.  
Town Manager Report – Report submitted.  
Police Chief Report – Report submitted. Mayor Dondero reminded the Chief of Council's previous request that the police department reports get a little more specific regarding a breakdown of the traffic violations, particularly as we enter the summer season.  
Treasurer Report – Report submitted.

**Committee and Commission Reports**

Budget and Finance Committee – No report submitted.  
Canal Water Quality Committee – Report submitted.  
Charter and Code Committee – Report submitted.  
Community Relations Committee – Report submitted.  
Planning Commission – No report submitted.  
Resiliency Committee – Report submitted. Mayor Dondero stated the Town received the official notice that FEMA has eliminated the BRIC grant program, which the Town was in the process of applying for regarding phase 2 of the York Road flood mitigation. The Town was awarded a BRIC grant last calendar year for Cat Hill flood mitigation, and in canceling the BRIC program, FEMA has "clawed back" awards from fiscal year 2020 onward, which means in addition to not being able to move forward with the new grant, we are not receiving the funds for the Cat Hill grant as well; so that has a significant impact on the ability of the committee to move forward with projects. There are no other sources of funding that we are aware of at this time, but we'll continue to monitor for any prospective future grants.  
Community Planning Advisory Group – Report submitted.

**Adjournment**

Motion by Councilman Biciocchi, seconded by Councilman Shields, to adjourn the April 11, 2025, Town Council Regular Meeting at 10:55 a.m. Motion carried 6-0.

Respectfully submitted,

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Council Secretary

*Matt Feig*  
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Town Clerk

*5/9/25*  
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Date of Approval