

**TOWN OF SOUTH BETHANY  
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES  
JANUARY 9, 2026  
9:00 A.M.**

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

Mayor Dondero called the January 9, 2026, 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 (via Zoom), Mark Giler, Chris Keefe (via Zoom), Bob Shields and Cindy Van Horn; Town Manager Maureen Hartman, Town Solicitor Elio Battista (via Zoom), Chief Jason Lovins, Town Finance Director Renee McDorman and Town Clerk Matt Amerling. Public attendees: 8. Virtual attendees: 10.

**Adoption of Minutes**

Councilman Randy Bartholomew, regarding the November 14, 2025, Town Council meeting minutes, requested the word "significant" be added to the headline of the Budget & Finance item up for discussion on page two as well as the second-to-last sentence of the paragraph. Councilman Bartholomew motioned to approve the November 14, 2025, Town Council meeting minutes with amendments, seconded by Councilman Bob Shields. Motion carried 7-0.

Councilwoman Cindy Van Horn motioned to approve the December 12, 2025, Town Council meeting minutes, seconded by Councilman Shields. Motion carried 7-0.

**Public Comment**

Joan Marini, 300 W. 8<sup>th</sup> Street, stated, in regard to item 5 of today's agenda, she would like to request Council relax the requirement that Council members can attend via Zoom no more than three times per year and maybe increase it to five times per year.

Peter Monaghan, 205 Bayshore Drive, raised concerns about the trend of larger houses being built on the ocean side of Route 1, leading to a shortage of parking spaces for residents, particularly on busy weekends and during the summer months.

**Discussion and possible vote on awarding Bid 25-02 regarding a contract for trash, recycling, and yard waste collection**

Council reviewed and discussed the three service options of the bid: fully automated (Option A), a hybrid (Option B), and maintaining the current service level (Option C). Councilman Bartholomew noted that the fully automated option was unexpectedly more expensive than maintaining the current service. Council agreed that most of the public they heard from wanted to keep the pick-up details the same, so that would be option C. Councilman Bob Biciocchi, Councilman Shields, and Councilman Mark Giler advocated for Option C while Councilwoman Chris Keefe supported Option A. Councilman Bartholomew asked, with regard to the automated service, if the trash trucks would be able to pick up trash on both sides of the street by going down a street in only one pass or would the trucks have to go down a road twice – once for each side. Republic Services and Casella Waste representatives explained that their automated trucks could service streets with bins on both sides,

either using an automated arm on the one side or a cart tipper on the opposite side. Council appeared to favor Option C, but Mayor Dondero pointed out that per Town Code Chapter 6, Section 6-1.B, they needed to follow the requirement to award the contract to the lowest bidder, which was not Republic Services for option C. Town Solicitor Elio Battista explained that when choosing the bidder, while all bidders were responsive, Council must also consider responsibility, including factors like trustworthiness and capacity to complete the work. Mr. Battista stated if the two bidders were both responsive and responsible, the Town would have to adhere to the Town Code and default to choosing the lowest bidder. Councilman Shields proposed a motion to vote for the highest bidder, Republic, for option C, based on positive feedback regarding key personnel, extensive knowledge of the Town, and prior experience, but Mayor Dondero argued this could put the Town at risk of litigation and emphasized the importance of following the Code requiring the lowest responsible bidder. Mr. Battista confirmed that in the absence of negative feedback about a bidder, they should award the contract to the lowest bidder.

Councilman Bartholomew motioned to choose option C of Bid 25-02 and award the bid to Casella Waste Systems Inc., seconded by Councilwoman Keefe. Motion failed 3-4 (with Councilman Biciocchi, Councilman Giler, Councilman Shields, and Councilwoman Van Horn voting no).

Councilman Shields motioned to choose option C of Bid 25-02 and award the bid to Republic Services based on proven past performance over a 5-year contract, and the key personnel that they're offering, and the intimate knowledge of the Town, seconded by Councilman Biciocchi. Motion carried 4-3 (with Councilman Bartholomew, Councilwoman Keefe, and Mayor Dondero voting no).

Councilman Giler asked if Council could consult with Solicitor Battista in private as an executive session meeting before moving forward. Mr. Battista stated under State Code, the Town can call an Executive Session meeting in the middle of a public meeting if it meets one of the requirements.

**Motion to go into Executive Session to discuss possible litigation. 29 DEL C. §10004(b)(4)**

Under advisement from the Solicitor and as permitted under Delaware State Code 29 Del. C § 10004(e)(2), Mayor Dondero motioned to enter Executive Session at 9:59 a.m., seconded by Councilman Giler. Motion carried 6-1 (with Councilman Biciocchi voting no).

**Reconvene the Town Council meeting and possible action on matters discussed in Executive Session**

Councilman Bartholomew motioned to exit Executive Session and reconvene the Town Council meeting at 10:21 a.m., seconded by Councilman Giler. Motion carried 7-0.

Councilman Shields motioned to rescind his prior motion and vote to choose option C of Bid 25-02 and award the bid to Republic Services, seconded by Councilman Giler. Motion carried 7-0.

Councilman Bartholomew motioned to choose option C of Bid 25-02 and award the bid to Casella Waste Systems Inc., seconded by Councilman Biciocchi. Motion carried 7-0.

**Second reading of Ordinance 221-25 to amend Chapter 17 regarding Participation in Meetings by Remote Electronic Access for Council, Committee, and Commission Members (Dondero)**

Mayor Dondero read the significant changes to Town Code, Chapter 17, highlighting that these changes would apply only to the Council. She said the only additional change is on page four,

under item 17-4(B), striking the words "or Chairperson," since this ordinance only applies to Council and not committees.

### **Roll Call Vote on Adoption of Ordinance 221-25**

Councilwoman Van Horn motioned to adopt Ordinance 221-25 with the proposed amendment, seconded by Councilman Shields. Motion carried 7-0.

### **Discussion and possible vote to approve the purchase of a Kubota Zero Turn mower for the Public Works department in the amount of \$14,545.39 (Bartholomew)**

Councilman Bartholomew motioned to approve the purchase of a Kubota Zero Turn mower for the Public Works department in the amount of \$14,545.39, seconded by Councilman Shields. Motion carried 7-0.

### **Discussion of Preliminary FY27 Committee Budgets and FY27 Capital Budget**

Council reviewed committee budgets for FY27, focusing on proposed spending and programmatic content rather than final approvals. The Canal Water Quality Committee's (CWQ) \$7,500 pilot project for treating phosphate sediment was removed from the budget due to uncertainty around the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) approvals. The Community Relations Committee (CRC) discussed plans for a spring event and potential new exercise equipment for the fitness park. The Bike and Pedestrian Safety Committee (B&PSC) proposed new stop signs and digital speed display units, though Council expressed concerns about the need for data supporting the effectiveness of flashing lights and requested the committee obtain revised pricing for two digital speed signs that do not include data recording and advanced features. The Resiliency Committee (RC) discussed putting a placeholder of \$750,000 in the capital budget for an RFP for York Road Phase 2 work. The Council workshop meeting on February 27, 2026, is devoted exclusively to the budget, so Council will be looking at the draft budget packet in its entirety at said meeting.

### **Leadership Reports**

Mayor's Report – Report submitted. Mayor Dondero gave thanks to the Community Relations Committee and Public Works Department for putting up the wonderful holiday decorations. Council will be adding an additional workshop meeting in February, to be held February 20, 2026, at 9 a.m. Mayor Dondero also stated a new DNREC requirement for towns receiving beach replenishment funding, which is to create a shoreline public access plan by July 1, 2026, though this won't be critical until 2027, at the earliest.

Town Manager Report – Report submitted. Councilman Giler left the meeting at 11:11 a.m.

Police Chief Report – Report submitted.

Treasurer Report – Report submitted.

### **Committee and Commission Reports**

Bicycle & Pedestrian Safety Committee – Report submitted.

Budget and Finance Committee – Report submitted. The next meeting will be Monday, January 12, 2026, at 9 a.m.

Canal Water Quality Committee – Report submitted.

Charter and Code Committee – No report submitted.

Community Planning Advisory Group – Report submitted.

Community Relations Committee – Report submitted.

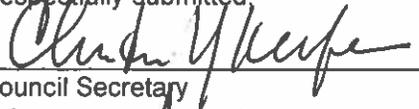
Planning Commission – Report submitted.

Resiliency Committee – Report submitted.

**Adjournment**

Motion by Councilman Bartholomew, seconded by Councilwoman Van Horn, to adjourn the January 9, 2026, Town Council Regular Meeting at 11:13 a.m. Motion carried 6-0.

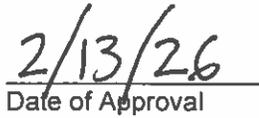
Respectfully submitted,

  
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Council Secretary

  
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Town Clerk

  
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Date of Approval