



MINUTES
of the
TOWN COUNCIL OPEN MEETING
TOWN OF SOUTHBRIDGE
May 8, 2023
7:00pm

CALL TO ORDER The Southbridge Town Council met on May 8, 2023, in the Town Council Chambers of the Southbridge Town Hall. Chair Daniel called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Pledge of Allegiance: Chairman Daniel led the recital of the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Roll Call: 8 voting members present.

Member	Present	Staff	Present
John Daniel, Chair	Yes	Charles Blanchard, Interim Town Manager	Yes
David Adams, Vice-Chair	Excused	Mark Carron, Redevelopment Authority Director	Yes
Joseph Daou	Yes	Michael Brunelle, Recreation Director	Yes
Scott Lazo	Yes	Margaret Morrissey, Library Director	Yes
Michael Marketti	Yes	Peg Dean, CDBG/ED Coordinator	Yes
Michael Montigny	Yes	Paul Normandin, Fire Chief	Yes
Jasmin Rivas	Yes	Jack Jovan, Chair, Fire Building Committee	Yes
Jacquelyn Ryan	Yes	Adriana Robaina, HR Director	Yes
George Steeves	Yes	Katie Yoder, CDBG Coordinator	Yes
Others Present		Kristine Russell, Town Accountant	Yes
Jef Fasser, BSC Group VP	Yes	Others Present	
Bill Paillie, BSC Group Traffic Engineer	Yes	Kathryn Lapriore, School Committee	Yes

3. Consider and accept the Town Council Meeting Minutes, Monday, April 24, 2023.

Motion: Councilor Lazo moved, and Councilor Steeves seconded to approve the minutes of the April 24, 2023 Regular Session of the Town Council.

Additions/Corrections/Deletions: Councilor Steeves noted that Item 6 refers to Mr. McCall instead of Mr. Blanchard and in Item 30 Jack Jovan's name is misspelled.

The motion passed 7-0-1 by a show of hands vote with Councilor Steeves abstaining.

4: Subcommittee Reports

Department of Public Works: Councilor Marketti reported on the activities of this committee.

Education and Human Services: Councilor Montigny reported on the activities of this committee and items on tonight's agenda from this subcommittee.

22 General Government: Councilor: Steeves reported on the activities of this committee and items on tonight's
23 agenda from this subcommittee.

24 5. Chairman's Announcements

- 25 • Concerts at Central Parking Lot on Friday and Saturday evenings have started.
- 26 • Candidate Night for Town Council and School Committee on Thursday.
- 27 • FY2024 Town Budget Hearing Monday, May 22 at 6pm.
- 28 • Register to vote by Friday, June 2, 2023
- 29 • Check the library website to participate in their survey.

30 6. Town Manager's Announcements. Mr. Blanchard reported that:

31 Thanked those who participated in Southbridge Cleanup Day.

32 7. Presentations

- 33 a) Performance Update from Mark Carron: The downtown core is down by 3 occupants, and he
34 outlined who these are. He also reported on the status of 3 businesses on Hamilton Street, a
35 restaurant on Central Street, and conversations with religious organizations on Main Street and
36 stakeholders downtown. He provided a summary of the mural project, and talked about the Concerts
37 on Central and Concerts of the Common (which will start in late June).

38 Mr. Carron reviewed the marketing activities that have happened (discussions, social media, etc.).
39 He also explained that a bench from Edward's Block is being refinished at BayPath. The remaining
40 benches will be done as soon as possible.

41 He said there is a desire for better communication between Town Hall and business partners,
42 including a more consistent pathway to permitting.

43 Councilor Marketti asked about the status of the building at 310 Main Street that burned. Mr. Carron
44 said the parcel was purchased and outlined the status of the project.

45 Councilor Marketti then asked about the building across from the RMV. Mr. Carron said the Host
46 Community Agreement for a potential marijuana facility is still in effect and recommended that
47 Councilor Adams speak to the status of the business.

48 Councilor Marketti then asked about the old credit union building project. Mr. Carron said they are
49 currently looking for contractors and that the intent is for it to be a coffee shop.

50 Councilor Lazo said there is a lot of interest in Southbridge, and thanked Mr. Carron for his work.

- 51 b) Rail Trail Design by BSC Group: Mr. Fasser reviewed the goals, plan and process of the trail and how it
52 will be designed as it goes through Southbridge. He also discussed the funding challenges for the \$1.8
53 million bridge over Main Street. He explained that the trail will be 8-10' wide with a 1' shoulder on each
54 side. On the road, the conditions will vary, and he explained several options. The Train Depot will offer
55 parking as well as a park which will hopefully attract other businesses. He then explained the trailhead
56 kiosks and cultural/historic/environmental signage that may be along the trail.

57 Mr. Paillie provided some technical information about items such as the trail bed, shoulder, and nearby
58 vegetation. He showed the planned updates to the Morris Street bridge which will be over the existing
59 structure (which will remain).

60 Mr. Paillie then reviewed the approach to soil management, and the status of the lease with MassDOT.

61 Mr. Fasser reviewed the estimated costs and project schedule. The cost is estimated to be \$4,085,000
62 which includes a \$300,000 contingency and includes handling contaminated soil. They hope to have
63 the project done in late 2024.

64 Councilor Steeves asked what would happen with the ballast, and Mr. Fasser said they plan to use it as
65 a base for a new surface and outlined how this would be done.

66 Councilor Marketti expressed his wish to have the Morris Street bridge removed. Mr. Fasser said they
67 are presenting a conservative approach, but they need to work with MassDOT and review the soil
68 conditions before the decision to remove the old structure is made.

69 Councilor Rivas asked about ADA Accessibility at access points as well as language and visual
70 accessibility on the kiosks and signs. Mr. Fasser said the grant requires universal accessibility and
71 reviewed the accessibility plans.

72 Councilor Lazo said he shares the concern about the Morris Street bridge and is looking forward to the
73 project.

74 Councilor Ryan said she is excited about the activity in the Hamilton/Crane Street area and is also
75 looking forward to the project.

76 Councilor Steeves asked about switching areas, and Mr. Paille said there could be opportunities around
77 these areas for education or material handling.

78 Councilor Steeves then asked about the path near the rotary, and Mr. Fasser outlined the plan for this.

79 Councilor Rivas asked for more detail about the plan for bike lanes, especially on messaging, which Mr.
80 Paille provided.

81 Councilor Steeves asked what the outreach plan is. Mr. Fasser said this is not their responsibility, but
82 Mr. Paille made some recommendations about when and how this is typically done.

83 8. Citizen's Forum

84 Maureen Doyle, Lebanon Hill: Encouraged residents to attend/watch the candidates forum and explained
85 the structure of the event.

86 Kevin Buxton, Everett Street: Talked about the Beautify Southbridge Day and his experience of
87 participating the event. He expressed concern about the dumping problem increasing because of the
88 change in the trash pickup program. He then asked when the street sweeper would become active and
89 explained why this is important. He spoke about some problems with sidewalks and suggested that
90 residents need to take care of these areas in order to avoid higher taxes. He pointed out that when roads
91 are repaired, speeding situations occur and advised that residents think about this and asked that the Town
92 consider how to address speeding.

93 Kathryn Lapriore: Detailed a meeting she and another committee member had with Dr. Villar and shared
94 her disappointment with the Receiver's cooperation. She said he made upsetting comments about the
95 Town Council, which she shared.

96 9. Vote to approve the Town Manager's appointment of David LaRochelle to the Recreation Committee 97 for a three-year term effective immediately through June 30, 2026 pending completion of state 98 ethics. A motion was made by Councilor Lazo and seconded by Councilor Daou to vote this item.

99 Mr. Brunelle explained how Mr. LaRochelle came to be a candidate, his involvement in the department,
100 and qualifications.

101 Councilor Marketti asked what the Committee works on, and Mr. Brunelle shared the activities of the
102 committee.

103 ***The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.***

104 10. Vote to approve the Town Manager's appointment of Andrew St. George to the Recreation 105 Committee for a three-year term effective immediately through June 30, 2026 pending completion of 106 state ethics. A motion was made by Councilor Ryan and seconded by Councilor Daou to vote this item.

107 Mr. Brunelle explained how Mr. St. George came to be a candidate and outlined his qualifications.

108 Councilor Rivas asked if any students had reached out to be part of the committee, and Mr. Brunelle said
109 no but he will look into this for future openings.

110 ***The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.***

111 **11. Vote to approve the Town Manager's appointment of Janet Jenkins to the Board of Library Trustees**
112 **for the remainder of a vacated term effective immediately through June 30, 2024 pending**
113 **completion of state ethics.** *A motion was made by Councilor Lazo and seconded by Councilor Steeves*
114 *to vote this item.*

115 Ms. Morrissey expressed her enthusiastic support for Mr. Jenkin's appointment.

116 ***The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.***

117 **12. Vote to approve the Town Manager's appointment of Tomasz Owca to the Economic Development**
118 **Commission for a three-year term effective immediately through June 30, 2026 pending completion**
119 **of state ethics.** *A motion was made by Councilor Lazo and seconded by Councilor Ryan to vote this item.*

120 Ms. Dean said this will fill the 7th seat and enthusiastically endorsed Mr. Owca's appointment. Mr. Owca
121 shared his experience and qualifications for the role.

122 ***The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.***

123 **13. Vote to approve the Town Manager's appointment of Jacob Webb of Stafford Springs as a fulltime**
124 **firefighter for the Town of Southbridge effective immediately upon completion of all medical and**
125 **physical testing including passing state Physical Assessment Test (PAT), background checks and**
126 **state ethics training.** *A motion was made by Councilor Ryan and seconded by Councilor Daou to vote*
127 *this item.*

128 Chief Normandin shared the history of recent hires, outlined Mr. Webb's credentials, and expressed his
129 support for Mr. Webb's appointment.

130 Councilor Steeves asked if Mr. Jacob would need additional training, and Chief Normandin said Mr. Webb
131 would need to attend the Full Time Fire Academy 10-week training.

132 Councilor Lazo expressed his gratitude that someone from the Call Department moved to the Full Time
133 Department and supported Mr. Webb's appointment.

134 Mr. Webb thanked the Council for the opportunity.

135 ***The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.***

136 **14. Vote to accept the Warrant for the Town Election on Tuesday June 13, 2023.** *A motion was made by*
137 *Councilor Ryan and seconded by Councilor Steeves to vote this item.* ***The motion passed unanimously***
138 ***by a show of hands vote.***

139 The Council took a short recess at this time (8:28pm) and returned to open session at 8:35pm

140 **15. Vote to accept donations made to the Town of Southbridge for the New Fire Station Project, such**
141 **funds to be deposited into the project account and may be spent for the purposes of the project, as**
142 **determined by the Fire Station Building Committee.** *A motion was made by Councilor Ryan and*
143 *seconded by Councilor Steeves to vote this item.*

144 Councilor Marketti asked how much was being collected, and Councilor Steeves said nothing has been
145 collected yet – this action was to allow the town to accept any donations.

146 Councilor Lazo asked for Mr. Jovan to comment on recognitions for donors. Mr. Jovan said they have not
147 determined this yet but are considering what to do.

148 Councilor Rivas asked who would manage the account, and Mr. Jovan said the Treasurer would do this.

149 ***The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.***

152 **16. Vote to accept the revised job description for the DPW Deputy Director.** *A motion was made by*
153 *Councilor Daou and seconded by Councilor Steeves to vote this item.*

154 Councilor Marketti said there was conversation in subcommittee about the role and qualifications of this
155 position and shared his questions.

156 Councilor Steeves said the DPW Director is in favor of hiring another engineer, and the job description
157 indicates that civil engineering background is *preferred* but not required.

158 Councilor Lazo explained that being able to have a civil engineering background would be very hard to find,
159 but still desirable and outlined how the salary is structured to support both types of candidates.

160 Councilor Rivas asked how the job will be advertised to raise the likelihood of finding a civil engineer. Mr.
161 Blanchard explained how the job would be advertised and supported the approach for this job.

162 There was a discussion of the job, its qualifications, and salary plan.

163 ***The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.***

164 **17. Vote to approve classifying the revised position to Grade A-7 on Schedule 1 I Administrative Salary**
165 **Schedule for Positions not Covered By Collective Bargaining Agree.** *A motion was made by*
166 *Councilor Ryan and seconded by Councilor Daou to vote this item.*

167 Councilor Marketti explained the purpose of this motion.

168 Councilor Ryan asked if the rate is comparable to other neighboring communities. Ms. Robaina explained
169 the rationale of this reclassification.

170 ***The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.***

171 **18. Vote to approve Change Order #6 with JAM for \$8,754.67 for handball court surfacing and authorize**
172 **the Town Manager to sign any related paperwork.** *A motion was made by Councilor Ryan and*
173 *seconded by Councilor Lazo to vote this item.*

174 Councilor Marketti said the plan on the website appears to include the materials in this request and asked if
175 this is additional. Ms. Dean responded that this was not included and explained why it is being handled this
176 way.

177 ***The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.***

178 **19. Vote to approve extending JAM's contract to June 16, 2023 to allow for asphalt to cure prior to**
179 **surfacing handball court and authorize the Town Manager to sign any related paperwork.** *A motion*
180 *was made by Councilor Ryan and seconded by Councilor Rivas to vote this item.*

181 Ms. Dean explained that this is to extend the contract to allow the asphalt in the previous motion to cure.

182 ***The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.***

183 **20. Vote to approve the use of remaining grant funds for Change Order #7 for up to \$9,000 to pour**
184 **concrete for surface mounted site furnishings and authorize the Town Manager to sign any related**
185 **paperwork.** *A motion was made by Councilor Ryan and seconded by Councilor Lazo to vote this item.*

186 *Councilor Ryan moved to amend the motion to read "Approve the use of the remaining grant funds*
187 ***and authorize the Town Manager to sign any related paperwork."* Councilor Lazo seconded.**

188 Ms. Dean explained the reason for adjusting the motion.

189 Councilor Marketti expressed concern about giving the Council's authority to approve expenditures.

190 There was a discussion of the amendment, the project, the PARC grant, and allowing Ms. Dean to spend
191 these funds.

192 ***The motion to amend passed 7-1 by a show of hands vote with Councilor Marketti opposing.***

193 Councilor Marketti said the proposal on the website shows concrete pads under all the furnishings, and
194 asked why concrete is being added when it already appears in the proposal.

195 Ms. Dean explained that the furnishings ended up not being in the base bids, and the Town will purchase
196 these separately.

197 There was another short discussion of the furnishings and concrete.

198 ***The amended motion passed 7-1 by a show of hands vote with Councilor Marketti opposing.***

199 **21. Vote to approve applying for the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental**
200 **Affairs (EEA) Planning Assistance Grant to support the creation of a Southbridge Housing**
201 **Production Plan for up to \$20,000 and transfer 25% of the grant funding from Town Council**
202 **reserves. A motion was made by Councilor Ryan and seconded by Councilor Daou to vote this item.**

203 Councilor Marketti asked for clarification on this request. Ms. Yoder explained that the funding is for a
204 Housing Production Plan and explained the purpose of such a plan.

205 Councilor Marketti asked what “as of right” means in Appendix B of the document provided. Ms. Yoder said
206 this relates to 40B and explains how 40B works.

207 Councilor Marketti highlighted a section of the document that appears to contradict a town bylaw regarding
208 accessory apartments. He then asked what a Smart Growth/Starter Home District means. Ms. Yoder
209 explained is is not yet familiar with the Southbridge bylaws to comment about the accessory apartments,
210 but said that this is language is from the State.

211 Ms. Dean explained that the request is for a local affordable housing assessment and that once that is
212 done, the Town can look at the State “agenda” and determine how to proceed.

213 There was a discussion of what the study would look like, how it would be done, what to do with it, how the
214 State could influence housing decisions, etc.

215 Ms. Yoder confirmed that having a Housing Production Plan would help the Town avoid losing input or
216 control over 40B development.

217 There was a discussion of the Housing Production Plan, 40B development, affordable housing, and
218 accessory units.

219 ***The motion passed 5-3 by a show of hands vote with Councilors Daou, Lazo, and Montigny***
220 ***opposing.***

221 **22. Vote to approve a transfer request for \$2,842.00 from #09400000-574000-0145 Insurance-Deductible**
222 **to #09400000-57400 Insurance-Property & Liability to cover the cost of Fire Dept and DPW**
223 **equipment and DPW replacement vehicles added to the insurance policy. A motion was made by**
224 **Councilor Daou and seconded by Councilor Steeves to vote this item.**

225 Councilor Marketti asked if these items have already been purchased. Ms. Russell explained why this
226 request is being made. There was a discussion of the request.

227 ***The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.***

228 **23. Vote to accept a donation of \$500.00 from the Lions Club to the Recreation Department in support**
229 **of Pickleball programming. A motion was made by Councilor Lazo and seconded by Councilor Ryan to**
230 **vote this item.**

231 Mr. Brunelle explained the increase in pickleball popularity in Town and explained that they are adding
232 courts. These funds will be used to paint new courts on the old rink.

233 Chair Daniel thanked the Lion’s Club for their community involvement and donation.

234 ***The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.***

236 **24. Vote to approve a Library transfer request for \$2,500.00 from #001610-511000 Salaries & Wages**
237 **Perm and for \$3,500.00 from #001610-511700 Salaries & Wages Part-Time, totaling \$6,000 to be**
238 **transferred into #001610-521100 Natural Gas to cover unanticipated increase utility charges. A**
239 *motion was made by Councilor Lazo and seconded by Councilor Steeves to vote this item.*

240 Ms. Morrissey explained the reason for this transfer.

241 ***The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.***

242 **26. Amendments to Southbridge Zoning By-Law Section 5 Dimensional Regulations and vote to adopt**
243 **said By-Law amendment.** Second Reading: The amendment was read by Councilor Adams via the
244 recording of the April 24, 2023 meeting.

245 **26. Amendments to Southbridge Zoning By-Law Section 9-1 Flood Plain Overlay District and vote to**
246 **adopt said By-Law amendment.** Second Reading: The amendment was ready by Councilor Montigny via
247 the recording of the April 24, 2023 meeting.

248 **27. Amendments to Southbridge Zoning By-Law Section 10 Definitions and vote to adopt said By-Law**
249 **amendment.** Second Reading: The amendment was ready by Councilor Rivas via the recording of the
250 April 24, 2023 meeting.

251 **28. Councilors Forum**

252 Councilor Steeves:

- 253 • Reminded residents of the Candidate's Forum on Thursday.
- 254 • Spoke about the first concert and encouraged people to attend future concerts.

255 Councilor Ryan:

- 256 • Will be participating in the Candidate's Forum on Thursday.
- 257 • Enjoyed the carnival last weekend and thanked those involved.
- 258 • Is happy there are opportunities, like the carnival, concerts, and rail trail for people to get outside
- 259 • Encouraged people to attend the Budget Hearing on Monday, May 22 at 6:00pm.

260 Councilor Rivas:

- 261 • Thanked the Southbridge Police Association for the carnival.
- 262 • Enjoyed the Concert, especially the different types of people who attended.
- 263 • Visited Hamilton Street with Councilor Ryan and spoke about the input they received from businesses
264 and residents in that area.
- 265 • Is encouraged to hear that the Thrive Act is being looked into.
- 266 • Reported that Senator Fattman's aide contacted her and will be following up about whether the Senator
267 will support the Thrive Act. Encouraged people to share their experiences with the schools with the
268 Councilors.
- 269 • She participated in a voter registration event at the high school and found the students to be very
270 engaged.

271 Councilor Lazo: Said the carnival was outstanding, and thanked Mr. Boulanger and Mr. Chenier for bringing the
272 idea to the Police Association. He shared his positive experience of the carnival.

- 273 • Beautify Southbridge was amazing, and expressed his gratitude to the middle and high school students
274 who went above and beyond, and to the Health Department for organizing the event.
- 275 • Praised the School Committee for trying to work with the Receiver and expressed support for the Thrive
276 Act. He expressed his disappointment with the Receiver's comments to Ms. Lapriore and said he does
277 not agree with these comments.
- 278 • He encouraged residents to vote on the Receivership at the June election.
- 279 • He spoke about the people running for Town Council and School Committee and encouraged residents
280 to vote.

281 Councilor Montigny:

- 282 • Enjoyed the carnival and praised its success.
283 • Expressed his appreciation to the students who participated in Beautify Southbridge and shared his
284 feelings about the event.
285 • Expressed his offense and outrage at the Receiver’s comments about the Town Council and the budget.
286 He shared his views of Dr. Villar’s motives and results, and because of these comments he asked for Dr.
287 Villar’s resignation.

288 Councilor Marketti:

- 289 • Said that he was in DC last week and was able to meet with Senator Warren. He summarized his
290 meeting with her and said that Senator Warren will have her staff look into funding for the town.
291 • He shared a story of visiting the National Gallery of Art where he ran into Senator Lindsey Graham.
292 • He has been getting a lot of calls about the condition of roads in town.

293 **DISCUSSION OF NEXT MEETINGS**

- 294 • Monday, May 22, 2023

295 **ADJOURNMENT**

296 **Motion:** *Councilor Lazo moved to adjourn the meeting of the Southbridge Town Council.*
297 *Councilor Ryan seconded, and **the motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.***
298 *The meeting was adjourned at 10:30pm.*

299 Respectfully submitted by,

300
301 Susan Peghiny

302 Recording Clerk