

**SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
Town of Bethany
November 21, 2023**

The meeting was called to order at 7:06 p.m. by First Selectwoman Paula Cofrancesco. There were approximately 30 people in attendance. Everyone stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Paula Cofrancesco called for nominations from the floor for a moderator. A motion was made by Donna Shea, seconded by Susan Bradford, to nominate Robert Brinton Jr. There were no further nominations. Unanimous approval by a voice vote.

The moderator introduced the first resolution.

Item (1) RESOLVED, that the Town of Bethany will accept the STEAP matching grant in the amount of \$500,000, with a municipal match of \$103,715.09 for a total capital project cost of \$603,715.09 to build a second floor on the Public Works Garage to bring the resting quarters up to code, allowing for a warming/cooling center, and to pave the recycling area. The municipal match is to be appropriated from the General Fund.

A motion was made by Mary Parcella, seconded by Cynthia Megyola, to discuss the resolution.

Sharon Huxley, Board of Finance chair – This is a STEAP matching grant. The town will contribute 20% and the state will reimburse the remaining 80%.

Donald Shea, Public Works/Facilities Manager – This Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) grant is to add a second floor to the public works building. It will be a rest area for public works as well as a cooling/warming center for the town. The town crew currently uses the attic with pull-down stairs for a rest area. The recycling center also needs paving, and the town got a price of \$250,000 from Tilcon to do the job. Doing this as part of the grant will save a capital project next year.

Mary Parcella – How many towns have a resting area for plowing? Internet search showed no others in the state. Why does a town the size of Bethany need this?

Donald Shea – We can't expect workers to plow 12+ hours in a row without a rest period. We have 8 men on the crew, 8 trucks and 8 plow routes. There isn't a second shift of workers.

Mary Parcella – Will there be beds in the rest area?

Donald Shea – No, there will be chairs and recliners, but no beds.

Mary Parcella – I don't see the need since this would be used infrequently. The recycling center doesn't need paving.

Marsha Sawdon – Bethany got a STEAP grant last year. Is it unusual to get two years in a row? Will there be an elevator to get to the second floor?

Donald Shea – There will not be an elevator. There will be a cooling/warming room on both floors. It is unusual to be awarded a STEAP grant two years in a row.

Marsha Sawdon – Will there be showers here?

Donald Shea – We have two showers now and will add more upstairs.

Marsha Sawdon – I agree that the recycling center pavement looks ok. There are no potholes.

Donald Shea – It hasn't been paved in 25 years. The crew does maintain it with millings.

Jeff Sawdon – Why can't we apply the \$250,000 for roads?

Donald Shea – Grant funds can only be used for specific purposes. We would not have received another grant for roads this year since we already got one last year.

Marsha Sawdon – Are we guaranteed to get his STEAP grant?

Donald Shea – Yes if it is approved tonight.

Cynthia Megyola – A heating and cooling center for the public would not work well on the second floor. What other buildings have generators?

Donald Shea – Public Works is a one-story building with 2 showers, small kitchen, dining, and office area. The town hall has a generator, but no showers. We are also looking into a generator for Lakeview Lodge, but no funding yet. We applied for a grant for the Lodge, but we didn't get it this year.

Amy Rushlow – What would the capacity be for this new area?

Donald Shea – The addition is 800 square feet so it would probably accommodate 40 to 50 people.

Brenda Caldwell – Do you have a conceptual drawing? Why can't they use the old firehouse building renovated for constables instead?

Donald Shea – No, we don't have funds yet for architectural plans until it is approved. We need it at public works since that is where all the trucks and equipment are located.

Marie Pulito – I don't want to see money wasted. Can't public works use the fire department building? I don't see the need for it.

Carol Goldberg – We are in desperate need of a shelter in town. How will this work in an emergency? Can the residents really share the space with public works? What plan is there to use for an emergency?

Donald Shea – This is a cooling and warming center, not an emergency shelter. Mostly for use by public works staff to rest between shifts.

Lori Patrick – We are adding 800 square feet for the second floor. What else would be in the new space? How much are the construction costs?

Donald Shea – It will cost \$350,000 to do the addition and \$250,000 to pave the recycling center.

Lori Patrick – All of recycling will be paved? Is a generator included? It will be used for warming and cooling center, not to stay there?

Donald Shea – Yes.

Kathryn Sylvester – How many times did we plow last year? How much use will this get?

Donald Shea – I don't have a specific number for last year.

Mary Parcella – It is not an emergency shelter.

Caroline Leary – This is not limited to plowing, but could be used for events such as sanding, salting, hurricanes, and tornados. Not just for when they are plowing snow.

Cynthia Megyola – What are the terms of the grant? When did we apply?

Donald Shea – Grant must be used for the specific items of this addition and paving. We applied in August and only had a limited time to turn in shovel-ready projects.

Cynthia Megyola – What is the deadline to accept the grant?

Vincent Marino, Town Attorney – The town needs to authorize grant acceptance. Grant was announced July 7, application deadline was August 18, and award notice was September 29. Town has four years to utilize grant funds.

Cynthia Megyola – Can we table this item until we have drawings?

Brenda Caldwell – I want to see a drawing before approval. What is the deadline before it goes away?

Kathryn Sylvester – Is there a needs assessment for these projects? There should be a committee involved in this process.

Sharon Huxley – Public input on the grants is difficult with the tight turnaround time.

Carol Goldberg – We pay \$103,000 then get \$500,000 from the state. How will this affect our taxes?

Sharon Huxley – We will use this year's surplus funds for the town share, so there is no increase in taxes.

Robert Brinton – Can the town attorney answer the previous question about the deadline for the town to approve the grant?

Vincent Marino – On closer reading of state statute, the STEAP grant can be approved by Board of Selectmen. The board is designated to act in this case for municipalities with a town meeting form of government.

Leslie Bacigalupi, Finance Director – The town still needs to approve the \$103,000 from the General Fund. This will come from the expected \$500,000 surplus for fiscal year 2023.

Vincent Marino – If you say no to the funding for the 20% match, then the Board of Selectmen cannot authorize acceptance of the grant.

Heather Brinton – In favor of the project. The town only pays \$100,000 for a \$600,000 facilities improvement. Town contribution is less than half the cost of just paving the recycling center.

Cynthia Megyola – I would like to table this item until we can review plans.

Vincent Marino – Do you want to see it tabled or postponed until the next town meeting?

Cynthia Megyola made a motion, seconded by Kathryn Sylvester, to postpone voting on item 1 until the next town meeting. The moderator called for a vote on the motion to postpone, and it was defeated by a majority voice vote. **Failed.**

Donna Shea – Where will the money come to pay for plans?

Heather Brinton made a motion, seconded by Donna Shea, to close debate and vote on the question immediately. The moderator called for a vote on the motion to close debate and it was approved by a majority voice vote. **Passed.**

The moderator then called for a vote on the main resolution for item 1, but the voice vote was difficult to determine. A division of the floor revealed 16 YES votes and 11 NO votes. **Passed.**

Item (2) RESOLVED: that the Town of Bethany will accept the Reimbursement HUD Grant project for Town Hall capital project renovations in the amount of \$1,000,000.

A motion was made by Marsha Sawdon, seconded by Brian Eitzer, to discuss the resolution.

Sharon Huxley – This grant, through Rosa Delauro's office, has been on the table for two years. It was recently changed to a reimbursement grant, and it has been approved on the federal level. There are two items that need approval tonight. First, we need to accept the grant and second, we need to set aside a working capital account, so the town has the cash flow to do the work in stages.

Amy Rushlow – By setting up this account we will be able to get reimbursement during the project?

Sharon Huxley – Yes.

Brian Eitzer – Will \$150,000 be sufficient to proceed with the job?

Sharon Huxley – This meeting could amend it to a higher amount if desired.

Marie Pulito – What is on the last page of the handout?

Sharon Huxley – It is simply informational about ARPA expenditures.

Marie Pulito – I don't see speaker system or zoom equipment in the HUD grant.

Leslie Bacigalupi – That is covered under a separate \$350,000 grant the town has already.

Cynthia Megyola – Does the \$1,000,000 grant include showers for town hall?

Donald Shea – Yes, we are planning to renovate the bathrooms and add a few showers.

Lori Patrick – Are these are all new projects? This is in addition to what we have already done?

Sharon Huxley – We have been talking about the DeLauro grant for almost two years. The reason for urgency now is that HVAC rebates amounting to \$41,000 will expire on December 31.

Mary Parcella – Did we get a contractor price on carpeting? Seems expensive.

Donald Shea – We worked with architect to develop estimated costs.

Sharon Huxley – The next project to be done is the gym with the \$350,000 Cabrera grant.

Donald Shea – The \$350,000 grant is just for the gymnasium work. This includes a storage addition on the east side, ADA compliant access, new floor, acoustical ceiling, new HVAC, and state of the art audio/video system. The stage will be a separate project under the DeLauro grant.

Carol Goldberg – Will town meetings be televised after work is done?

Donald Shea – Yes, there will be cameras, more speakers, and acoustic tiles.

Amy Rushlow – Town uses the gym for many different groups and uses. Updates will benefit the town.

There was no further discussion. The moderator called for a vote on the resolution. Approved by a majority voice vote. **Passed.**

Item (3) RESOLVED: that the Town of Bethany approves the creation of a Working Capital account of not less than \$150,000 and not more than \$200,000 from the General Fund for the purpose of providing funds for work on the HUD grant. This amount will be reviewed prior to the May Town Meeting to determine its adequacy, based on the timing of work and the timing of reimbursement from the grant.

A motion was made by Brian Eitzer, seconded by Donna Shea, to discuss the resolution.

Sharon Huxley – If someone wants to increase to \$250,000 it would give Don more wiggle room.

Brian Eitzer made a motion, seconded by Brenda Caldwell, to increase the amount of the working capital account to “not less than \$200,000 and not more than \$250,000.” The moderator called for a vote on the amendment to item 3, but the voice vote was difficult to determine. A division of the floor revealed 18 YES votes and 5 NO votes. **Passed.**

The moderator then called for a vote on the amended resolution, and it was approved by a majority voice vote, with one abstention. **Passed.**

A motion was made by Donna Shea, seconded by Brenda Caldwell, to adjourn the meeting. The motion was passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

William L. Brinton

William L. Brinton,
Bethany Town Clerk