



Town of Barnard, Vermont

Chartered July 17, 1761

P.O. Box 274
Barnard, Vermont 05031
(802) 234-9211

SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES NOVEMBER 20, 2024

Selectboard Members Present: R. Webster, R. Lancaster, R. Edmunds

Meeting Attendees: Kassie Hull, Nick Stone, Jeffrey Allen, Megan Fuerst, Linda Treash, Carin Park, Cliff Johnson, John Harrington

1. Call to Order at 7:00PM.

2. Review/Approve Minutes of November 6, 2024. Minutes approved.

3. Review Agenda. No additions.

4. Public Comments & Other Business

A. Letter of support. James Clarke wrote to support a fair fee policy for town hall rentals that supports community organizations, and particularly BarnArts.

5. Old Business

A. Class IV Old Stagecoach Rd. Jeffrey Allen at 107 Stagecoach Road inquired about the conversation that took place the previous year between one of his neighbors and the Selectboard regarding gravel. The Selectboard confirmed that they agreed to supply some, and Nick said that the road crew would deliver a load in the morning.

B. Open meeting law compliance. The Selectboard voted to purchase a conference phone to offer a call-in option to satisfy the hybrid meeting requirement of Act 133 that takes effect on January 1, 2025.

C. Town hall rental policy discussion cont'd with BarnArts. Two adjustments will be made to the 2025 Town Hall rental fee schedule for all community groups and organizations: (1) The flat rate for rentals will be \$100 for the first day, and \$25 for each day thereafter; and (2) for half-day uses that are minimal, there will be no charge for the first two uses in a one-month period. After the first two uses, the cost will be \$25 per week for up to three uses in that week. A group may request this half-day usage arrangement for up to three months of any given year.

D. Declaration of inclusion. This request is under advisement.

E. Appoint Tom Morse as Alternate Zoning Administrator. Done.

F. Outdoor camera for town offices. Kassie will research options.

6. New Business

A. Roads Committee to present budget memo. Megan Fuerst, Chair of the Roads Committee, shared the results from a survey and listening



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sessions held in multiple community locations. There were 177 survey responses and 40 people who attended listening sessions. The memo focused on information that may impact or influence upcoming highway budget decisions. (The full memo is attached.)

- B. MERP Implementation Grant.** The Town was awarded funds for the installation of two ductless heat pumps in the basement, programmable thermostats, and fluorescent lighting replacement.
- C. Barnard bonus payment.** The Energy Committee provided the final request for a bonus payment for weatherization work completed and the final request for an audit refund. The Selectboard approved \$1736.25 to close out the ARPA funded program.
- D. Quotes for town phones.** The Selectboard agreed to update the phone plan with Key Voice (at no additional cost) which will provide services such as videoconferencing software and a mobile phone app. Kassie will research the cost savings of importing the Town Garage phone from EC Fiber and the logistics of adding a phone at the Transfer Station.

7. Town & Highway Orders

- A. Lakota & Lime Pond updates.** Re: Lakota Road Project, the aluminum arch culvert is being put together and mounted on the pedestal walls. The Selectboard approved the cost to remove and replace unsuitable material found 4-5 feet under the roadway just outside the limits of the excavation. John Harrington will review the recent invoice from Barnard Excavation & Logging; Kassie will sign the payment approval after. Re: Lime Pond Road, the project completion date is now Dec. 6, 2024.
- B. Berquist project report.** The Selectboard voted to request a time extension to have engineering work completed to present to FEMA for the projects that have not been completed.
- C. Municipal Roads Grants-in-Aid (GIA).** The FY23 & FY24 Grants-in-Aid reporting is due to Rita at TRORC next month. The Selectboard discussed ideas for the \$22,750 available for a FY25 GIA project.
- D. Barnard Academy.** Nick will visit the school to look at the grate to determine the issue, as it is supposed to be low to capture water.
- E. Giroux General Transport invoice.** The Selectboard will request that a line item for "training and education" be added under the Highway budget and approved the \$7,500 invoice for the CDL-A class for the new road crew member who started with the Town on November 4, 2024.
- F. Updates from Road Foreman.** The road crew is preparing for the colder weather. Discussed the need for equipment on Chateauguay to



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be moved out of the Town right-of-way so the crew can move a plow around. Kassie will send a letter to the property owner.

G. 90-day employee review. The Selectboard voted to go into executive session pursuant to 1 VSA § 313(a)(1) at 9:00PM to review Kassie's first three months of employment. The Selectboard voted to leave the executive session at 9:10PM. No decisions to be made.

8. Adjourn at 9:12PM.

Minutes prepared by Kassie Hull, Clerk of the meeting. All votes unanimous unless otherwise indicated. The next regular meeting is December 4, 2024, at 7:00 PM at the Town Hall Offices.

Selectboard:

Rock Webster, Chair

Richard Lancaster, Vice Chair

Robert Edmunds

TO: Town of Barnard Selectboard
FROM: Barnard Roads Committee
RE: Town Highway Budget
DATE: November 18th, 2024

Dear Town of Barnard Selectboard,

The Barnard Roads Committee respectfully submits this memo for your consideration as you develop the town highway budget for fiscal year 2026. Since our inception, the Barnard Roads Committee has conducted a series of public listening sessions and deployed an online community survey to hear from townspeople in regards to our roads. We look forward to sharing complete survey results whenever appropriate. For the purposes of this memo, we are sharing information from the survey as well as from independent research conducted by committee members that is **relevant** for budget considerations specifically.

Throughout October, our online community survey received responses from **177 Barnard residents**. Some of the largest takeaways include:

1. A large percentage of respondents support a town highway budget increase for improved road quality:
 - **83% (147 people)** said they support an increase in the Highway Budget to support road improvements.
 - **12% (22 people)** said maybe; and
 - **4.5% (8 people)** said they do not support an increase to the town highway budget.
2. Many respondents are concerned about drainage, ditching, the quality and application of road material, and roadside maintenance as things that need the most attention.
3. When it comes to roads of particular concern, people are most concerned with Barnard's Class 2 roads: the Royalton Turnpike, East Barnard Road, Stage Road and Broad Brook Road, in that order.

The cost of living in Barnard is negatively impacted by the road conditions. When we talk about the costs associated with our roads, we cannot ignore the personal costs and adverse economic impacts that people living here experience. Some of these personal costs include:

- **Vehicle damage** – **63%** of respondents (**92 people**) have experienced this personally
- **Not being able to get to work** – **36%** of respondents (**53 people**) have experienced this
- **Loss of business or income** – **10.3%** of respondents (**15 people**) have experienced this
- **Not getting deliveries or packages** – **33%** of respondents (**48 people**) have experienced this

There were many more “costs” reported, including challenges with getting kids to school (20.5% of respondents); Isolation (25% of respondents); missing important events (22% of respondents); and not seeking or having to reschedule medical care (15% of respondents). The list above represents only the costs that are monetary or economic in value. These survey results, along with the public listening sessions, revealed that many people in our community would rather share the cost of improved road conditions at the town level, rather than incur the many personal costs - both monetary and emotional - that come with undrivable roads.

We also asked about a couple of specific highway budget items:

1. **Road Crew:** **50%** of survey respondents (**87 people**) said they think the Town of Barnard should hire additional road crew members to increase capacity for road maintenance.
 - **40% (71 people)** said maybe, while **11% (19 people)** said no.
2. **Contracting:** **58%** of respondents (**103 people**) said they support the Town of Barnard contracting out specific services such as mowing or larger, one-off projects to help increase capacity for road work.
 - **36% (63 people)** said maybe, while **6.2% (11 people)** said no.

Finally, to supplement the survey results which help us understand public opinion around our roads, Roads Committee members did some independent research into the town highway budgets of surrounding towns. We compared town highway budgets from the following towns: Barnard, Pomfret, Royalton, and Bethel. One major takeaway from this project is: **Barnard has the highest overall highway budget in FY25, but spends the least on materials**, as shown below.

TOWN	Dirt Road Miles	Hwy Budget	\$ Materials
	Class 1-3	FY2025	FY2025
Barnard	51	\$1,497,237	\$186,500
Pomfret	48	\$1,309,401	\$271,000
Royalton	58	\$1,324,040	\$401,500
Bethel	56	\$1,478,868	\$295,000

While the Roads Committee does not have any specific (dollar amount) recommendations for town highway budget line items for fiscal year 2026, we do hope this information is valuable and will be taken into consideration prior to budgeting. From what we have heard from the public, some of the most important things to consider as our Town Selectboard are:

- **The quality and application of road material.** We have received many complaints from townspeople, both in person and via email, regarding the quality and application of material on our dirt roads. The table above suggests that the Town of Barnard could spend more of its highway budget on acquiring more quality material that can be applied to our roads more frequently.
- **The frequency of grading and ditching.** Again, we have received many public comments regarding the insufficient frequency of grading and ditching on their roads. Residents see these two road practices as critical for maintaining satisfactory roads, and they notice when their road has gone long periods of time without grading when it is needed.
- Similar to the point above, in both the community survey and the public listening sessions, we heard concerns about **problematic road areas not being addressed** despite the Town being notified. There are many problematic road areas throughout our Town, and we have heard from many people who are frustrated with their poor road conditions never being addressed. We recommend that the Selectboard consider any budget practices or other initiatives that would result in quicker response times for responding to public concerns and fixing problematic road areas.

Overall, we want to encourage the Selectboard to **budget what you need for town highway operations and take advantage of opportunities to improve the quality and professionalism of road maintenance operations.** We know there are always concerns about raising taxes, but knowing that our survey went out *after* people received their tax bills, it is clear that the majority of townspeople are frustrated with the status quo and are supportive of spending more to improve road conditions.

Again, we look forward to sharing complete survey results whenever appropriate. We hope the information in this memo is valuable and helpful. Thank you for all you do for the Town of Barnard.

Thank you,
Barnard Roads Committee