

Barton Village, Inc.
Regular Trustees Meeting
Monday, November 25, 2024
6:00 PM
Barton Village Memorial Hall

Attendance: Gina Lyon (Chair), Marilyn Prue (Trustee), Ellis Merchant (Trustee), Vera LaPorte (Business Manager), Lucas DiMauro (Chief Water Operator), David Billado, Stephen Hickey

Agenda

Full agenda with additional details can be found at <https://bartonvt.com/agenda-minutes/>

Audio recording of this meeting can be found for 30 days following the official approval of these minutes at the next Regular Board of Trustees Meeting on December 9, 2024 at <https://bartonvt.com/agenda-minutes/>

- A. **Call to Order** – Gina Lyon called the meeting to order at 6:01pm.
- B. **Changes to the Agenda/Additions or Deletions** – None.
- C. **Privilege of the Floor** – None.

ACTION ITEMS:

- D. **Minutes from the Regular Board of Trustees Meeting October 28, 2024** – Gina Lyon made a motion to approve the Minutes from the Regular Board of Trustees Meeting October 28, 2024 as presented. Ellis Merchant seconded. All approved and the motion carried.
- E. **Minutes from the Regular Board of Trustees Meeting November 11, 2024** – Gina Lyon made a motion to approve the Minutes from the Regular Board of Trustees Meeting November 11, 2024 as presented. Ellis Merchant seconded. All approved and the motion carried.
- F. **Minutes from the Board of Abatement Hearing November 11, 2024** – Gina Lyon made a motion to approve the Minutes from the Board of Abatement Hearing November 11, 2024 as presented. Ellis Merchant seconded. All approved and the motion carried.
- G. **Minutes from the Special Board of Trustees Meeting November 20, 2024** – Gina Lyon made a motion to approve the Minutes from the Special Board of Trustees Meeting November 20, 2024 as presented. Ellis Merchant seconded. All approved and the motion carried.
- H. **Bills and Warrants** – Gina Lyon made a motion to review and approve the Bills and Warrants as presented by the end of the meeting. Ellis Merchant seconded. All approved and the motion carried.

- I. **Financials for Period Ending 10/31/2024** – Vera LaPorte presented the Board with an alternative financial report on behalf of Amy Braun (Lead Finance – unable to attend the meeting). The report is generated straight from the Village’s accounting software (NEMRC) instead of being ported from NEMRC and arranged in an Excel spreadsheet, which is how Crystal Carrier (VPPSA) currently presents them to the Board. Marilyn Prue explained that the NEMRC reports are what she uses in Orleans Village and that she finds them to be more convenient for her use, but that she wasn’t sure that Barton Village’s NEMRC software was set up in a similar fashion. She stated that there was nothing wrong with either reporting approach and that it was a matter of preference, but that she liked the NEMRC reports because they were simpler and included past information. Gina Lyon stated that she sometimes found the Excel financial reports to be overwhelming and that she would like Marilyn Prue to work with Amy Braun to see if the Village’s NEMRC reporting function was set up properly.

Gina Lyon asked Marilyn Prue if anything in the financials stood out to her as concerning. Marilyn Prue stated that by this time of year, it is typical for department funds to be “hungry” as they have not yet been fed by taxes, and that the November financial reports would give them a more accurate picture since taxes would be accounted for. Gina Lyon noted that the Village had not needed to draw on a line of credit (tax anticipation note) and that they had survived the year.

Highlights:

- Village: \$223,512 cash balance
- Highway: **-\$106,529** cash balance (mainly due to flood recovery)
- Electric: \$256,742 cash balance
- Water: **-\$3,770** cash balance (mainly due to payroll – will be addressed for 2025 budget)
- Wastewater: \$69,969 cash balance

Gina Lyon made a motion to approve the Financials for Period Ending 10/31/2024 as presented. Ellis Merchant seconded. All approved and the motion carried.

- J. **2025 Employee Benefit Proposal (Non-IBEW)** – Amy Braun prepared a comparison between the insurance benefits offered by IBEW to IBEW employees versus what the Village offers to non-IBEW employees. The main differences are:

IBEW	Village
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Short/long-term disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does not currently offer
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Life insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does not currently offer
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vision covered 100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vision covered 0%
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fixed cost to employee regardless of number of family members	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Variable cost to employee per number of family members

The goal is to have the benefits packages between the two groups of employees as comparable as possible. Marilyn Prue stated that the IBEW package was difficult to quantify because of the additional benefits that the Village does not currently offer, but that the Blue Cross/Blue Shield “Gold” plan was the most similar in price and had comparable deductibles. She also explained the “opt-out” process for those employees who do not wish to participate in the Village’s

benefits plan. She suggested to proceed with the offered plans for now and make the final approval at the next regular meeting on 12/09/2024, and stated that she would like to see the costs reflected in the 2025 budget. Gina Lyon agreed and stated that she wanted to consider it more, as well as consult the personnel policy on the subject.

This item has been tabled until the next Regular Trustees Meeting on December 9, 2024.

Please visit <https://bartonvt.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/11.25.2024-Barton-Village-Agenda-for-Regular-Meeting-wBackup.pdf> for full details.

- K. **CNB Line-of Credit Loan Documents** – At the Regular Trustees Meeting on November 11, 2024 the Board approved short-term financing with Community National Bank for some immediate needs for the hydro facility upgrades, including a backup generator. Gina Lyon asked to confirm that this was because the Vermont Bond Bank did not fund until spring. Marilyn Prue explained that accepting the full amount of \$3,000,000 from Vermont Bond Bank in the spring meant immediately beginning to pay interest on that amount even though the bulk of the construction at the hydro facility would not occur until at least summer 2025, and that the line of credit from CNB would cost the Village less in the meantime. Gina Lyon then asked if the CNB loan could be repaid with the Vermont Bond Bank funds. Marilyn Prue confirmed that it would.

Gina Lyon made a motion to approve the Community National Bank short-term line of credit financing for the hydro facility upgrades as presented. Ellis Merchant seconded. All approved and the motion carried.

- L. **Lien Discharge** – A lien had been previously placed on 46 High Street in Barton for delinquent electric service. The balance has been paid and the owner has requested a lien discharge. Gina Lyon made a motion to approve the lien discharge for 46 High Street in Barton as presented. Ellis Merchant seconded. All approved and the motion carried.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

- M. **Water Department Update** - MSK Engineers conducted a water service line inventory in October 2023 and are now sending property owners letters containing the results of their observations. Two letters were originally sent: one for those with galvanized material requiring replacement, and one for those with unknown material. While MSK Engineers observed no evidence of lead pipe in the Village's water service nor found any record of it being used, there are some segments categorized as unknown material and therefore must be considered to potentially contain lead. That being said, 74 property owners were erroneously sent unknown material letters despite their material being known as non-lead. Correction letters have been sent to these property owners.

Gina Lyon asked to clarify whose responsibility it would be to replace the unknown materials service lines as she believed that it would fall to the homeowner and not the Village. Lucas DiMauro stated that it ultimately was the homeowner's responsibility, but that the State's intention was to provide funding for the replacements, though the status of the funding was currently uncertain.

Gina Lyon stated that according to the letter the water was safe to drink, but that consumers could improve the quality by running the tap to flush their lines and use a water filter.

The Village has received a Notice of Alleged Violation (NOAV) from the State for exceedance of the maximum contaminant level for total trihalomethanes (TTHM), which is a natural byproduct of the water treatment process. Lucas DiMauro explained that because the Village's source water is open surface (May Pond) it is impossible to completely eliminate all natural organics contained in the water, and that when these natural organics react with the chlorine necessary for treatment, they create TTHM. He further explained that it was not the first time that Barton Village had exceeded the TTHM limit, but that it was the first time that they had received a NOAV for it, and that many municipalities with surface water treatment facilities had recently been experiencing the same issue because of the historic amount of rainfall over the last few years.

Ellis Merchant asked who was responsible for developing a plan for resolving this issue. Lucas DiMauro explained that he would like to increase the settleability at the Village's two ponds, with the focus on the one located on Doyle Lane. He explained that he would like to use a long-arm excavator to dredge the built-up silt from the pond and said that he had already gotten permission from the State and US Army Corps of Engineers when initially considering this project earlier in the year. He would like to shut the plant down for a few days and truck water in to keep the reservoir filled until the results of the dredging clears out. Ellis Merchant asked whether they would need to have a wetlands study done first. Lucas DiMauro said that they would, and that he would contact the State, but that it was possible the Village might be exempt.

Gina Lyon asked if Lucas DiMauro was certain that this issue was the result of the flooding over the past few years, and he stated that he was. Gina Lyon asked whether this project could be covered by FEMA and whether it was too late to add this project to the Disaster Inventory. Vera LaPorte said that it was not too late and she would see what FEMA had to say.

Next steps according to the NOAV are as follows:

- Before December 8, 2024 complete and issue the provided public notice.
- Within 10 days of issuing the public notice, complete the online Public Notice Certification of Delivery form.
- On or before February 10, 2025, submit a complete Operational Evaluation Report for TTHM identifying system improvements to necessary to return to compliance.
- On or before April 1, 2025, submit a Disinfection Byproduct (DBP) reduction plan and schedule under which the water system will return to compliance.

Lucas DiMauro then explained that he had been spending time repairing/maintaining some older equipment at the water plant and that his variable frequency drives (VFDs) "tripped" for a reason he has yet to discover. He believes that it could be related to the plant's three-phase electric service that needs upgrading. Lucas DiMauro stated that despite all this, the water plant is in good condition but needs a little work.

- N. **Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP) Grant** – Barton Village has been granted \$303,012.45 with no match requirement from the VT Department of Buildings and General Services via the Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP).

The grant amount and list of approved projects were based on an assessment of the Barton Memorial Building performed by Nova Group in October 2023. The list of approved projects is as follows:

HVAC

- Replace two current window AC units with mini-split heat pumps.
- Install smart thermostats.
- Insulate exposed heating hot water with R-3 or greater.
- Insulate exposed domestic hot lines with R-3 or greater.
- Replace the existing electric hot water heater with an electric heat pump hot water heater plus greater insulation.

Envelope

- Improve air sealing by reducing ACH (air changes per hour) rate by repairing the ventilation dampers.
- Replace existing lath and plaster walls with drywall and add R-21 fiberglass insulation.
- Install spray foam insulation to the basement walls.
- Insulate attic.
- Replace 100% of single pane windows (will need to work with Historic Preservation).

Resilience

- Combined solar and battery system estimated at \$96,006 (before FITC and including a new roof). The system includes a 10.73 kW rated solar panel system combined with a 42 kWh battery storage system.

EV Charger

- Install a 240V standalone level 2 EV charger for \$10,000.

Gina Lyon voiced concerns about whether the Village could afford to front the cost of the suggested projects and wait for reimbursement from the grant in December 2026. Vera LaPorte clarified that the full amount of the grant would be disbursed by December 2026, and that the State had committed to reimbursing invoice submittals within 30 days.

Gina Lyon asked whether if the solar panels and EV charger were a condition of the grant. Vera LaPorte explained that the HVAC and Envelope projects were first priority and that the solar panels and EV chargers could be installed if and only if there was enough grant money left over. Marilyn Prue asked if they were optional, and Vera LaPorte confirmed that they were.

Ellis Merchant asked if they were obligated to use the entire grant. Vera LaPorte confirmed that they were not, and any unused grant funds would be returned to the State for use by other municipalities.

Marilyn Prue stated that she believed it would be very easy to prove financial hardship to take advantage of the 20% advance clause in the grant agreement to begin the recommended projects.

After further discussion, the Board decided to revisit the topic at the next Regular Trustees Meeting on December 9, 2024 after thoroughly examining the agreement.

- O. **Flood Update** – Please visit <https://bartonvt.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/11.25.2024-Barton-Village-Agenda-for-Regular-Meeting-wBackup.pdf> for full details.

Highlights:

- 11/18/2024 – New State contact assigned for DR-4810. Currently working to rewrite the Disaster Inventory per new FEMA process/directives.
- 11/20/2024 – Recovery Transition Meeting for DR-4720. FEMA will no longer be involved and the State will now be the point of contact.
- High Street guard rail will be installed on 11/27/2024.
- Pageant Park culvert was replaced on 11/18/2024.

- P. **Department Operations Updates** – Please visit <https://bartonvt.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/11.25.2024-Barton-Village-Agenda-for-Regular-Meeting-wBackup.pdf> for full details.

Highlights:

Electric Department

- Tariff rider – The Public Utility Commission (PUC) has opened an investigation despite the Department of Public Service's (DPS) advice to approve the tariff rider. The PUC particularly did not like that the rider was restricted to non-profit organizations and felt that it was discriminatory. Steve Farman (VPPSA) is currently working to refine the criteria. The deadline for responding to the PUC is December 11, 2024.
- With hunting season, impending holidays, injuries, and an influx of work orders and new service installations, the Orleans crew has fallen behind on make-ready work for NEK Broadband. In agreement with NEK Broadband, Grattan Line Construction Corp. has been hired by the Village to complete some of the make-ready work. While they are more expensive than the Orleans crew, this will be a pass-through expense ultimately paid for by NEK Broadband. Grattan Line Construction Corp. will begin work on December 1, 2024 (they have already begun storing trucks and equipment at the Village garage).

Wastewater Department

- Glover Agreement – Sampling to determine the source of high-strength flow will begin December 4.

Water Department

- See Water Department Update memo.

Highway Department

- Salt/sand shed – The Request for Proposal (RFP) is currently under review with the USDA.
- The replacement license plate for the 2012 International is in and the truck is currently at Pepin's Truck Repair for inspection and estimate for repairs if it does not pass. The truck passed inspection on 11/25/2024.

Village Department

- School crossing signs – LED flashing signs with timers have been ordered.

OTHER ITEMS:

- Q. **Other Business** – Gina Lyon asked to revisit DPW Foreman Andy Sicard's request to use one of the Village trucks for transportation between his home and the Village garage. She stated that she is not comfortable with him using the truck, especially when he receives a winter stipend, and would like to deny his request. Marilyn Prue and Ellis Merchant agreed. Gina Lyon made a motion to deny Andy Sicard's request to use a Village truck for transportation between his home and the Village garage. Marilyn Prue seconded. All approved and the motion carried.

Vera LaPorte informed the Board that Coe + Coe has requested to appear on the agenda for the Regular Trustees Meeting on December 9, 2024.

EXECUTIVE SESSION ITEMS:

- R. **Executive Session - Legal Action: 1 V.S.A. § 313 (a)(1)(E)** – None.
- S. **Executive Session - Personnel: 1 V.S.A. § 313 (a)(3)** – Gina Lyon made a motion to enter Executive Session for the purpose of discussing Personnel: 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3). Ellis Merchant seconded. All approved and the motion carried.

The Board came out of Executive Session with no action taken.

- T. **Adjourn** – Gina Lyon made a motion to adjourn. Marilyn Prue seconded. All approved and the motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 10:05pm.

Upcoming Meetings:

Regular Board Meeting: 12/09/2024

Regular Board Meeting: 12/23/2024