

FINAL February 26, 2024



Village of Bellport

Board Meeting
Monday, February 26, 2024 at 7:00PM
This meeting will be held in the Community Center

MINUTES Subject to Change

This meeting is open to the public in the Community Center, located at 4 Bell Street. It is an in-person meeting and will be streamed on Zoom.

Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call

Updates by Mayor Veitch

Open to Public

Potential Pilot Program at Ho Hum Beach

February 26, 2024 – Statement from Mayor Veitch made to public at Board of Trustees Meeting

Good evening. When I ran for Mayor last year, I ran my campaign on the promise of transparency. I remain committed to that promise.

I'd like to share some of what we've learned since this administration started last July, so that the evening's comments can be put into context.

Over the last eight months, we have been evaluating all of the systems, processes and infrastructure in the village, and what we have found is disappointing. So much of our technology is antiquated, many roads and sidewalks are in poor condition, the solar panels at Ho-Hum, (the only source of electricity) are at the end of their useful life. These are just a few of the many challenges we face.

In addition to the condition of infrastructure, we are faced with increasing costs for services. Here are three examples:

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The employee health insurance has increased 15.5% over the last two years from \$628,200 to \$726,000.

The insurance policy carried for the village has increased 30-38% over the last two years depending on final numbers we are waiting for from our carrier. Specifically, from \$270,000 to \$350,000-\$375,000 for the upcoming fiscal year.

One final example, the cost of lifeguards at Ho-Hum Beach has increased 14% since summer 2022. (From \$64,900 to \$74,000)

So how do we address the challenge? Thoughtful cost-cutting, revenue generation and increased taxes. That deep dive into the budget started this past January.

Over the last several weeks the Board held public meetings with each of the department heads and approached the budgeting process with an eye toward, cost cutting opportunities and revenue generation.

We were able to find some of those opportunities throughout the budget process.

When it came to evaluating the ferry and Ho-Hum operation, we learned that the cost of keeping the beach open with staff alone, on any given day, runs over \$1500/day. Weekday ridership over the last couple of years was sometimes as low as 3-4 individuals for the day.

We discussed this publicly, at a meeting last Tuesday making clear that we did not intend to vote on this but that we wanted to explore the possibility of opening the ferry on Tuesdays and/or Wednesdays in a pilot program to increase revenue. The feedback from our constituents has been decidedly negative.

I'm thankful to the people who contacted my office on this issue.

Because we value your opinions, in response to these overwhelming comments, if at times not fully informed, the ridership rules will remain as they have been in the past which is basically residents and their guests only. This illuminates one very important aspect of the matter which is community input, the very essence of democracy. Public discussion is a very important piece of the puzzle, and we will continue to take this into consideration as we move forward.

I ran for mayor promising transparency, but I also promised fiscal responsibility. The trustees and I will continue to look at other possibilities for cost cutting and revenue generation which are also open for discussion.

I share a love of the Village and doing what is right. I hope that we will continue to communicate with one another in an open and civil manner to get to the right solutions for everyone.

There has been Board discussion regarding changing the Election Terms for Mayor & Trustees from two to four years. Changing terms to four (4) benefits the Board Trustees in their ability to learn the mechanics of running a Village. A related issue is adjustment of term limits. The Board will continue discussion but are not passionate about the change. Mayor Veitch asked the community for their input on this issue and encouraged dialogue from them.

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An update of flooding of Howells Creek and road endings at Otis, Thornhedge & South Howells was discussed. The engineering firm GEI is addressing the flooding from Howells Creek as a high priority. They are securing permits to dredge the mouth of the creek from the Army Corps of Engineers and DEC. The Board will hear in March as to the progress of the dredging.

The 2.8 million grant from HUD which is a 75/25% split with the Village should be in place after the HUD agreement is reviewed by the Village Attorney. VHB, an engineering firm, will manage the project and we received the agreement last week for signing.

The solar panels at Ho Hum Beach are the only electricity source and are on their last legs. This is a top priority of the Board. The batteries are nearly 30 years old and testing of the batteries will be done. If tests are not positive and the batteries fail, worst case scenario they will be replaced with generators.

The Village of Bellport golf course was designed by Seth Raynor, a famous golf architect and engineer in the 1920's. The course is considered a gem. It is the hope of the Board that changes and improvements can be made to bring the course back to its original design. This would take a long-term plan but the Board is looking at ways to make it happen.

The Village audit is in the final stages working with our auditing firm Cullen and Danowski. It should be completed in early March and presented to the Board in late March.

The Highway Department continues to work on Browns Lane/Shore Road with the completion date in April or May. This will be a relief for cars and pedestrians. Drains are in and the Highway Department are working to complete the aprons to several houses.

Mayor Veitch read a memo from Darcia Palmer, Village Treasurer, regarding investing in NYCLASS and will be voted on later in the meeting.

With interest rates at a 22-year high, it's an ideal time for the Village of Bellport to consider diversifying and earning with NYCLASS. The latest NYCLASS rates/earnings sheet for the month of December shows a daily yield is 5.28% for all participants as of 1/8/24. The Village can benefit from the program's same-day liquidity and flexibility (no transaction fees/limits and no minimum investment requirements). A solution is on the agenda to be voted on tonight.

The Finance Committee weighed in on NYCLASS and approved.

Trustee Updates

- a. Steve Mackin – DPW, Kids Camp, Bellport Fire Department, South Country Ambulance, Suffolk County Police Department

Trustee Mackin reported that Kids Camp registration is in April and the program starts July 1st. There is progress in DPW, Fire Department, and South Country Ambulance.
- b. Nathan Rohrmeier – Code Enforcement/Road Safety, Waterfront (HUD), Golf and Tennis, Grill Room

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Trustee Rohrmeier stated that the budget season is going smoothly with the different departments and the budget will be presented in April. Also, he appreciates the passion of the residents regarding Ho Hum Beach and is thankful they spoke out.

- c. Lorraine Kuehn – Communication/Website, Business District, Senior Program, Vouchers, Special Project Arbor Day

Trustee Kuehn was happy to announce the completed application for Tree City with the help of Christine Novelli has been approved and the Village of Bellport is now a Tree City. We are one of the 3,600 municipalities in the nation that is a Tree City.

Trustee Kuehn thanked the anonymous donor for the funds that will go to the Senior Program in the amount of \$1,250. With the funds we can begin to create an event to take place before the year end of June 1st.

- d. Michael Young – Zoning Board of Appeals, Architectural Review Board, Beautification Committee, Planning Board, Historical Preservation, Yacht Club/Sailing Foundation

Trustee Young stated that we are going to be undertaking in the next few months, an effort to review the processes by which the Village approves and evaluates architectural changes. The goal is to make the process more streamlined, more efficient, more consistent, and less costly. He will be the point person for this. Any thoughts, suggestions, or complaints, please contact him.

Village Clerk Pontieri reported on the finalizing of open Certificates of Occupancy in the building department. This project will be handled by Christine Novelli. Permits for homes and other structures may never have been closed out due to the following:

A misconception that closing out the permit and getting the CO would cause the home or structure to be assessed. The assessor assesses based on the permit, not the CO. Prior to the mortgage crisis, COs were not required to sell a house or refinance a mortgage. Banks and title companies started requiring Cos on structures after 2012 – 2013. The benefit of closing open permits is that our files are up to date and residents won't have to scramble at the last minute to get permits closed out when they sell their properties.

Village Clerk Pontieri stated that Katie Mehrkens will be concentrating on Records Management Retention and Disposition in Village Hall. Years of neglect and water damage have left the records in disarray. The records will be boxed, labeled, and reshelved. Active records are the most important management of the government. A Records Management Retention and Disposition guide provided by the state will be followed.

Open to the Public

Special Events:

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Resolutions:

Motion: Young – Second Trustee Kuehn

Resolution: 18 Approved the Board Meeting Minutes of January 22, 2024.

1) Treasurer's Report:

Motion: Trustee Rohrmeier – Second Trustee Mackin

Resolution: 19 Approved General Fund Checking Abstract Report #1, consisting of 79 vendors totaling: \$186,180.53.

Motion: Trustee Mackin – Second Trustee Kuehn

Resolution: 20 Approved the Enterprise Fund Checking Abstract Report #2, consisting of 18 vendors totaling: \$147,759.88.

Motion: Trustee Young– Second Trustee Rohrmeier

Resolution: 21 Approved Capital Browns & Dock Checking Abstract Report #3 consisting of 1 vendor totaling: \$315.00.

Motion: Trustee Mackin – Second Trustee Kuehn

Resolution: 22 Approved Capital Browns & Dock Checking Abstract Report #3 consisting of 4 vendors totaling: \$15,776.06.

Motion: Trustee Young – Second Trustee Mackin

Resolution: 23 Approved the hiring of Kate Nerrie for Chair Yoga program on Thursdays from 10:00 am to 11:00 am at a rate of \$100.00 per session effective March 7, 2024.

Motion: Trustee Young – Second Trustee Kuehn

Resolution: 24 Approved the donation of \$1,000.00 for Senior Program in memory of Pat and Paul Butler from anonymous donor.

Motion: Trustee Young – Second Trustee Rohrmeier (corrected from \$500 to \$250)

Motion: Trustee Kuehn – Second Trustee Young

Resolution: 25 Approved the donation of \$250.00 for Senior Program in memory of Dr. Hendrie from anonymous donor.

Motion: Trustee Mackin – Second Trustee Young

Resolution: 26 Approved the purchase an Cr2AED unit for the Community Center as quoted \$3,030.

Motion: Trustee Young – Second Trustee Kuehn

Resolution: 27 Approved Brookhaven Free Library request to use the Village Green Gazebo and lawn space, Monday April 8, 2024, for a Solar Eclipse viewing party 1:30 pm – 4:00 pm.

Motion: Trustee Young – Second Trustee Rohrmeier

Resolution: 28 Approved South Bay Art Association monthly General Membership Meeting use of Bellport Community Center as follows: February 21st, March 20th, April 17th, May 15th, June 19th, August 21st, and September 18th (6:30 pm – 8:30 pm).

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Motion: Trustee Young – Second Trustee Rohrmeier

Resolution: 29 Approved South Bay Art Association use of Bellport Community Center as follows: May 31st (5:30 pm - 8:30 pm), June 1st (10:00 am – 8:00 pm), and June 2nd (10:00 am – 4:00 pm) for Annual Judged Member’s Exhibition.

Motion: Trustee Young – Second Trustee Rohrmeier

Resolution: 30 Approved South Bay Art Association use of Bellport Lane and closing of streets for the Annual Artists on the Lane July 4th.

Motion: Trustee Young – Second Trustee Mackin

Resolution: 31 Approved South Bay Art Association use of Bellport Community Center November 10th (10:30 am – 3:30 pm) for the Annual Membership Meeting & Potluck Lunch.

Motion: Trustee Young – Second Trustee Rohrmeier

Resolution: 32 Approved South Bay Art Association use of Bellport Community Center November 15th (5:30 pm – 8:30 pm, November 16th (11:00 am – 8:30 pm), and November 17th (10:00 am – 4:00 pm) for Annual Student Scholarship Exhibition.

Motion: Trustee Young – Second Trustee Mackin

Resolution: 33 Approved Bellport Fire Department request for street closure for the Bellport Fire Department 3rd Annual Classic Car Show June 30, 2024 (6:00 am – 3:00 pm).

Motion: Trustee Young – Second Trustee Rohrmeier

Resolution: 34 Approved Bellport Bay Yacht Club/BBSF use of Bellport Village Marina for the 2nd Annual GSBYRA Youth Instructional Racing Clinic July 8th – July 10th (8:00 am – 4:00 pm).

Motion: Trustee Young – Second Trustee Kuehn

Resolution: 35 Approved Brookhaven Historical Society use of Mother’s Beach for “Habitat Restoration 101 for Kids” July 20th rain date July 21st 9:00 am to 11:00 am hosted by Friends of Bellport Bay.

Motion: Trustee Rohrmeier – Second Trustee Mackin

Resolution: 36 Accepted the cancellation of UMG Cleaning agreement for cleaning services effective March 31, 2024.

Motion: Trustee Kuehn – Second Trustee Mackin

Resolution: 37 Approved Christine Novelli to work with the Building Department to finalize open Certificates of Occupancy at an annual stipend of \$4,000 effective February 27, 2024.

Motion: Trustee Young – Second Trustee Kuehn

Resolution: 38 Approved the following, pursuant to Village Law Section 3-300.2, The Village Justice for the Village of Bellport need not be a resident of the Village of Bellport but must be a resident of Suffolk County.

Motion: Trustee Young – Second Trustee Mackin

Resolution: 39 Approved the Village of Bellport invest in NYCLASS.

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Motion: Trustee Mackin – Second Trustee Rohrmeier

Resolution: 40 Approved the celebration of Bellport Ball Bearing Day 158th Anniversary, March 13, 2024.

Motion: Trustee Rohrmeier – Second Trustee Kuehn

Resolution: 41 Approved Mary Immaculate Church to hold the Easter Ecumenical Prayer Sunrise Service March 31, 2024 (5:30 am to 7:00 am) at the end of Bellport Lane.

Open to Public

Leslie Carroll is concerned about kids walking or biking to the Country Club. Residents on the west side have a hard time getting across South Country Road. Ms. Carrol suggested a cross walk, bike lane added or pedestrian light at that location to make it user friendly.

Doug Hoffman reported that he helped in coordinating a petition that was signed in the community. This petition was regarding the proposed Pilot Program of opening the ferry to the public. Mr. Hoffman knows the Village has to raise revenue but provided the Board with alternatives. He thanked the Board for their consideration in this issue.

Pete Roe addressed the issue of Election Terms for Mayor & Trustees from two (2) to four (4) years. As a prior Village Justice for 14 years, Mr. Roe commented that term limits be revolved. Only 10% of the residents fall into a category of qualified potential candidates. Also, he would support changing the Mayor and Trustees from two (2) to four (4) years. It makes sense to serve for four (4) years. It is not appropriate in the 21st century to have two (2) year terms. It takes time as a Mayor or Trustee to become familiar with issues and programs in the Village.

Close Meeting – Enter Executive Session (if needed)