

Meeting Minutes from Town of South Bristol Committee for Community Engagement

Tuesday, February 24th, 2026

Attendance: Christopher Bennem (Chair), Deborah Denome, Lenore Friend, Tom Hawks, John Holtz, Amy Luersen, Beth Thomas
Observing: Jaimie Hall (Board Liaison), Meg Fuller

Overview

The Community Engagement Committee met to discuss several key initiatives, including plans for quarterly community conversations focused on signature issues facing South Bristol. The first two topics proposed would be digital accessibility this spring and impacts of the landfill closure this summer. The committee reviewed a proposed format for these conversations, which will include informational talks, panel discussions, and opportunities for community input. They also discussed creating a new town newsletter called the South Bristol Gazette, which would be distributed quarterly. Additionally, the committee explored ideas for the town's celebration of America's 250th anniversary, including potential events at Casey Woods' venue and coordination with other local organizations. The conversation ended with plans to form separate working groups for the Gazette and 250th celebration initiatives.

Next steps

- CB: Reach out to panelists for the digital accessibility community conversations to confirm dates and times (targeting a weekend morning in April for the panel discussion) and report back to the group.
- CB: Double check with Dave Wolf about his preferred date/time for the April panel discussion and coordinate with other panelists.
- Lenore: Revisit with Carla Jordan and Chris DeBolt (county solid waste/county administrator) about their participation in both the informational talk and the panel discussion for the landfill closure topic, and confirm their availability for a Monday or Tuesday in July, 6-7pm start.
- CB: Add Jim (Highway Superintendent) and/or a transfer station representative to the landfill closure panel discussion.
- CB: Work with Lenore to create a format for the suggestion box cards (both physical and electronic/Gravity Forms version), including categories and workflow.
- Lenore: Volunteer as co-lead of the suggestion box working group; work with CB to implement the suggestion box process.
- CB and Lenore: Empty suggestion boxes at Town Hall and transfer station weekly and respond to submissions within 7-10 days.
- CB: Ask Jim if there is a suitable place to mount a suggestion box at the transfer station and seek town board approval for both locations.
- CB: Provide a motion for town board approval to install suggestion boxes at Town Hall and transfer station.

- John: Reach out to Bruce Gilman and Sam Seymour regarding participation in the "Protecting the Lake" panel discussion.
- Deb: Serve as vice chair of the 250th celebration working group; start organizing the working group, loop in Beth, and begin planning the celebration event(s).
- 250th Celebration Working Group (Beth, Deb, Tom, Casey): Begin planning South Bristol's 250th celebration event(s), including coordination with Casey Woods and consideration of insurance/legal requirements; report progress to the committee.
- CB: Post the supervisor's letter in both Town Hall and at the transfer station.
- Tom: Draft a brief proposal for the South Bristol Gazette and consider presenting the idea at the March town meeting.
- Tom: Put out a call for volunteers to help write, edit, and produce the Gazette; consider reaching out to local schools or community members for support.
- Tom & CB: Prepare a budget request for Gazette mailing and printing costs for the March town board meeting.
- CB: Edit and distribute meeting summary and follow-up action items to all committee members.

Community Conversations: Broadband

The group discussed plans for community conversations focused on digital accessibility, with the first quarter featuring an informational talk by Dan Marcellus of Skyport in early March, followed by a panel discussion in April. They agreed to structure the panel discussions around specific questions to guide the conversation and help identify actionable solutions. Meg mentioned ongoing digital improvements in the town, and the group decided to check with her about existing initiatives to avoid duplicating efforts. (UPDATE: Dan's informational talk will include discussion of SB efforts thus far.) They also discussed the need for a moderator to facilitate the panel discussions and help summarize key points for the town board.

Community Conversations: Landfill Closure

The group also discussed plans for informational talks and panel discussions about the landfill closure and waste management. One proposal was to hold all spring quarter events at the town hall, with potential summer events at various locations including Cumming Nature Center and the Grange. They agreed to schedule a discussion with Lenore to reach out to speakers. For the summer quarter, they decided to have County Solid Waste Director Carla Jordan give an informational talk about current recycling and landfill operations, followed by a panel discussion with Carla, County Administrator Chris DeBolt, and Highway Superintendent Jim Wight (since revised to Town Cler Judy Voss). It was noted that the town may need to update their insurance policy to cover special events and get town board approval. (UPDATE: Lisa has checked with insurance, and no additional insurance is likely needed.)

Town Hall: Landfill Solutions Discussion

The group discussed plans for a town hall meeting focused on the landfill closure and waste reduction, with Jamie explaining that initiatives would be developed in an advisory capacity before being presented to the town board. They agreed to organize a panel discussion lasting approximately 90 minutes, starting at 6 or 7 PM, with the first 30-45 minutes dedicated to presentations and the remainder for Q&A. One proposal included exploring South Bristol-specific

solutions for waste reduction, including potential sponsorship of dumpsters before special recycling days, and suggested holding a month of research followed by a town hall format to gather community input on proposed steps.

Community Conversations: Clean Water (Protecting Lakes & Hills)

The group discussed organizing a panel discussion about water quality in South Bristol. They identified potential panelists including Megan Webster, Bruce Gilman, and Sam Seymour, with John agreeing to connect them with Bruce. The panel will focus on individual actions residents can take to improve water quality, with a 15-20 minute presentation similar to Kevin Olvany's CLWA talk. They agreed to schedule a 6-month follow-up town board meeting to discuss next steps and establish a call to action based on the panel's findings.

Community Suggestion Management Process

The chair outlined a process for managing community suggestions, which includes creating a vetting system using Gravity Forms for electronic submissions and physical cards with category options. He proposed a review timeline of 7-10 days for initial responses and up to a month for decisions, with a matrix for evaluating suggestions based on alignment, impact, and feasibility. Lenore agreed to collaborate as the co-lead of a working group to oversee this process.

Suggestion Box, 250th Celebration, & South Bristol Gazette

The committee discussed two main initiatives: a suggestion box program and planning for the town's 250th anniversary celebration. For the suggestion box program, they agreed to place boxes in the town foyer and transfer station, pending town board approval, with Chris and Lenore managing the keys and weekly collections. Regarding the 250th celebration, they decided to form a separate working group led by Beth, with Deb and Tom as members, to plan events including potentially using Casey Woods' venue for an August celebration. The committee also reviewed Tom's proposal for a quarterly print publication called the South Bristol Gazette, which would focus on town updates and community stories, with a plan to launch in May after seeking town board approval for the budget.