

Meeting Minutes from Town of South Bristol Committee for Community Engagement

Tuesday, July 28th, 2026

Attendance: Christopher Bennem (Chair), Deborah Denome, John Holtz, Beth Thomas
Observing: Jaimie Hall (Board Liaison)

Overview

The Community Engagement Committee elected a new co-chair (Lenore Friend), reviewed the successful Community Conversation Panel on the Landfill Closure, recapped the July grant application efforts, discussed 2027 restructuring around updating the Comprehensive Plan, and confirmed plans for forthcoming 250 Celebration events.

Key Discussion Points

Lenore Friend elected Co-Chair. Committee Chair Christopher Bennem pointed out that increasing commitments were taking more of his time and that he needed a co-chair. He had approached Lenore Friend (absent for this meeting) who agreed to do it if called upon to do so. The committee agreed that her management of the landfill panel was impressive and that she would be an excellent fit for the job. She was elected by unanimous vote. She and Chris Bennem will Co-Chair meetings henceforth.

Recap of Grant Applications. The Chair summarized the recent activities on the Grants Working Group (Co-Chairs Jennifer Sinsebox & Alyssa Trego, Finance Committee; Jeff Liebenritt, Co-chair Parks, & C. Bennem, Co-chair Engagement; board members: Supervisor Moore, Meg Fuller, Chris Abraham). Meg Fuller and Jen Sinsebox co-wrote a Smart Growth Communities Grant to fund the 2027 Comprehensive Plan update with Meg as lead writer, and with minor contributions from C. Bennem (who co-wrote parks grants with lead writer Alyssa Trego). (NOTE from 8/5: All grants were submitted on 7/28).

If awarded, the Smart Growth grant would fund a professional engagement and administrative cohort to oversee the Comprehensive Plan revision (approx. \$130,000 with approx. \$110k covered by the grant.)

Updating Comprehensive Plan in 2027. With the understanding that the Smart Growth Community Planning grant may or may not be awarded, the committee agreed that its most productive efforts in 2027 would be to facilitate the updating of the comprehensive plan. New issues such as data centers, the closing of the landfill, increased options to work from home in rural areas, have accelerated the existing concerns of affordability, a rapidly aging community, and stress on land use, as the town seeks to maintain its historic identity and rural character. These and a myriad of other pressures—and aspirations—will need to be incorporated in any new plan.

Community Conversation preparation. The committee agreed that the July Landfill discussion event went well. Attendance was ~30. The final event in the series will be a Town Hall with Supervisor Moore on August 26th. In preparation for that it was decided that a survey should go out to residents (also given out at event) which could be used as a discussion prompt for event. Lenore Friend will generate first draft. Town Clerk will distribute via email prior to event.

Water quality programming. No grant monies were found to support mailing for water quality events. Co-Chair Bennem will design flyer and will distribute through existing methods: digitally via Town Clerk, post throughout town, and on Town's Facebook page, etc. Speakers will be: Bruce Gilman (FLCC). Sam Seymour (industry). Emily DeBolt (CLWA). Meghan Webster or Alaina Robarge (OCSWC). John Holtz & C Bennem to confirm.

250th celebration events. Planning continues for summer and fall schedule of 250th-related events:

1. **August 8, 1pm. Playground Opening/Gamaliel Wilder Birthday.** Balloons have been ordered, cupcakes will be made. Beth Thomas to deliver presentation. Event has been promoted on Town FB page and in Letter from The Supervisor.
2. **Sept 3, 7pm. History & Mystery Bus Tour.** Committee decided to cancel Ring of Fire bus tour as bus companies have not been very responsive and most residents' plans are made early. Two quotes have come in but more needs to be decided. 250 Planning Subcommittee will meet to finalize. Tickets should come out to be around \$40 if possible. Brew & Brats to do cash bar at Grange with art exhibit and brief presentation with preview video of Book 2.
3. **Oct 17, 7pm. Period Costume Dance at Grange Hall.** Music will be supplied by Bruce McLelland (\$400). Tickets should be available at door for \$20. Brew & Brats to do cash bar. Costume will be of "any period".

The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:25 p.m.