

TOWN OF BENNINGTON

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Minutes of the Meeting – December 2, 2014

Selectmen James Cleary and Jeffrey Rose were present as well as Administrator Denise French. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

Kristie LaPlante, Selectmen's representative on the Police Study Committee, provided a recap of the Committee's December 1st meeting. Due to previous commitments the Selectmen agreed to meet with the Police Study Committee January 5th rather than the proposed date of December 22nd.

Fire Chief Michael Roina met with the Board seeking permission to purchase a Knox box for both the Town Hall and the Water Pump House which would house the key to each facility and be immediately available for Fire Department should the need arise. The Selectmen vetoed the \$400 request and suggested that the Fire Department provide a safe environment within their building to house Town Building access keys.

The following Town Officials met with the Selectmen for the purpose of an internal review of the proposed 2015 Budget: Deputy Administrator Kristie LaPlante, Road Agent Gary Russell; Budget Committee members Debra Whitney, John Baybutt (also Conservation Commission Chair) and Rick Reed; Fire Chief Michael Roina; Police Chief Steve Campbell; Town Clerk Debra Belcher; Library Trustees Jill Wilmoth and Victoria Burnham; Library Director Leslie MacGregor; Trustee of Trust Funds Valerie Germain and David Parker; Capital Reserve Planning Committee Joseph MacGregor and David McKenzie (also Planning Board Chair and Alternate Library Trustee. The following anticipated 2015 expenditures were discussed:

- An additional \$85,000 grant was added to the downtown sidewalk/drainage project. It is assumed that the Town will be financially responsible for a 20% match which equates to \$17,000. These funds do not yet exist. Some attendees expressed their frustration that it seems unfair to receive increased grant funding with a municipal price tag attached to the increase. NHDOT grants do not allow for in-kind services. John Baybutt volunteered his time towards the sidewalk project if he can be of assistance. Deputy Administrator LaPlante reported that changes to the Federal Highway Regulations have, by themselves, increased costs by \$22,000. The Selectmen tabled making any decision on funding the additional \$17,000 until the full Board has an opportunity to review the matter. The Administrator will seek information from NHDOT relative to how the sidewalk project, which is in the Final Design state, could be affected by the loss of \$85,000 in grant funding.
- Discussed the ongoing need to update the tax software at a cost of \$9,520 (plus \$300 IT), upgrade the financial software at a cost of \$23,741 (plus \$600 IT) and purchase a larger file server big enough to process software application and file management at an additional cost of \$6,250. The current tax and financial software programs were purchased in the late 1980s. The software company has failed to maintain the technology associated with their software in a manner acceptable to the Town; the software still runs on a DOS platform although in a windows environment. The Selectmen tabled making any decision on funding until the full Board has an opportunity to review the matter.

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- The pump on the Town's fire engine could need replacement; if so the cost would be borne by the Town's insurance company. Alternately, the pump could need an overhaul, which is considered general maintenance and the Town's responsibility, at a cost of approximately \$10,000. This amount has been included in the proposed 2015 Fire Department Budget.
- If possible at December 31st, the Road Agent requested that 2014 funds be encumbered from Tar/Patch/Seal (4312-1-390), as well as encumbering 2014 funds from Paving (4312-1-391). Gary further requested that the proposed 2015 Budget for these two line items not be reduced.
- Emergency Management Director Steve Campbell agreed that Pre-Emergency Wages (4290-1-110) and Emergency Wages (4290-1-120) could both be reduced by \$500 each.
- After a brief discussion, the Selectmen voted to reduce the Town of Antrim Sewer line-item (4349-1-390) by \$4,000. This action is a result of expenses consistently running less than \$25,000 annually, although the budgeted line-item has been \$29,100.
- A December 10th meeting with the Library Trustees and Philip Germain is tentatively scheduled to receive cost estimates for construction of a side addition to the Library which will provide ADA accessibility and a bathroom. The one existing bathroom is in the basement and not available to the public. Funds for this project will be sought through a 2015 Warrant Article.
- It was suggested that after the Selectmen finalize the proposed 2015 Draft Budget that the Board schedule a follow-up meeting with the participants and the public, advertised as a "Mini Town Meeting" where the proposed 9% increase will be discussed.

The Selectmen took action on the following matters:

- Reviewed and approved Payroll Registers for December 2, 2014.
- Reviewed various letters to/from Mr. Joshi. The Fire Chief reported that the Fire Marshal's Office is still researching Life Safety Code requirements for the Highland Inn (M13/L14).
- Heard a report that ambulance costs from the Town of Antrim will likely increase in 2016.
- The Administrator reported that the Town's water well was out of service during the Thanksgiving Snow Storm "Cato". A power outage is believed to have caused a power surge which led to burnt coils inside the panel. Coincidentally, Antrim's nearby well also suffered a catastrophic failure at the same time. By day's end the Bennington well was able to be filled manually and was able to provide water for both communities. An insurance claim has been filed to cover the cost of repairs.
- Also damaged during the Storm were chain link fences at Newhall Field and at the former Landfill Site. An insurance claim has been filed.
- Reviewed November Police Statistics.
- Agreed that the Board should speak with the Police Chief about excessive overtime incurred that perhaps could be alleviated by scheduling coverage with his part-time officers.
- Chairman Cleary signed Amendment #1 with FST for engineering services to add Right of Way, Phase IA Archaeological and TCC Presentation Services to the Engineering Phase.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Denise French, Administrator