

TOWN OF BENNINGTON

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Minutes of the Meeting – October 26, 2016

Selectmen Jeffrey Rose, James Cleary and Steven Osienski were present as well as Administrator Denise French. Also attending the meeting was Bethany Craig. The meeting was called to order at 6:08 p.m.

Deputy Town Administrator Kristie LaPlante met with the Selectmen to report on the financial software replacement project. The Selectmen were pleased to learn that the Town's investment brings about a favorable result with efficiency and better transparency of the Town's financial records.

Simultaneously the Budget Committee met in the Conference Room. Budget Committee representative Barry White met with the Board to inquire about the status of the Road Advisory Committee which was recently appointed by the Selectmen. The Budget Committee is anxious to review the five year Road Improvement Plan as they contemplate 2017 expenditures. Selectman Cleary reported the first meeting will be scheduled when time permits.

Town Clerk Debra Belcher met with the Selectmen and discussed the following:

- An opportunity for the Town to try a 4-station voting booth at the November 8th elections at no cost or obligation to the Town. Should the 4-station voting booth be an asset to the election process the Town could then purchase the booth and associated privacy curtain for \$1,104.20. It is the Town Clerk's goal that the Town replace all twelve deteriorating voting booths over a period of three years.
- The Selectmen's recommendation that the Deputy Town Clerk receive a \$0.50 retroactive wage increase back to the date of her achieving State certifications. Belcher is hesitant to approve the wage increase since it is not budgeted and no other employee in her office has received the same benefit; including herself. Her other stated concern would be the need to increase the Assistant Town Clerk's wages if the Deputy Town Clerk's wages are increased. The Administrator committed to providing the Town Clerk with historic documentation of multiple Town Clerk personnel receiving wage increases upon completion of training.

The Selectmen acted on the following matters:

- Reviewed and approved the Board's October 19, 2016 Minutes.
- Reviewed and approved the October 27, 2016 Payroll and Accounts Payable Registers.
- Were surprised to read in the Greenfield Zoning Board of Adjustment's October 19, 2016 Notice of Decision that the Board denied John Paradise a variance to build on his Greenfield acreage which borders the Town of Bennington's Class V Dodge Road. The Town of Bennington had previously voted on the conceptual plan that it would provide emergency services to the home upon receipt of an Agreement and Release holding the Town of Bennington harmless, as well as development of a designated clearing for Town vehicles to safely turn around at the end of Dodge Road.
- Reviewed an October 20, 2016 Monadnock Ledger-Transcript article that should reverse the public perception of strife and an unwillingness of the Town and Conval School District to work together in harmony.

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- Reviewed a written request from a Deering resident (whose acreage spills over the town-line into Bennington) who is requesting assistance from the Bennington Road Agent and Board of Selectmen to provide necessary material to restore and stabilize the loose mixture on the (Class VI) Codman Hill Road's surface beyond the access point of Gillis Hill Road in Bennington. The resident's property does not have frontage on a Bennington road. The Selectmen tabled any action until the Bennington and Deering Boards of Selectmen can jointly meet to discuss Bennington's perceived responsibility to upgrade the shared road and to also provide emergency services for the exclusive benefit of a few Deering property owners who live on Codman Hill Road (which they access from Gillis Hill Road, to Switzer Road, to Codman Hill Road).
- Briefly discussed an inquiry from Frankestown Officials regarding questions they have received about what implications groundwater withdrawals for snowmaking activities at Crotched Mountain Ski Area might have on drought conditions.
- Received notice from the Cemetery Trustees that the problematic tree located on the upper portion of Sunnyside Cemetery is scheduled to be removed November 16th.
- Read an August 2016 monthly report to the Deering Selectmen, prepared by Deering Fire Chief Doug Connor, who states that August continued to be a tough month for Deering Ambulance crews to provide staffing coverage due to family vacation times and the majority of daytime calls while most members are at work out of town. The Deering Chief strongly feels that next year Deering look to improve staffing their ambulances by utilizing per-diem personnel.
- Signed the Property Tax Warrant and an Employee Time-off Request.
- Voted to authorize a fourth week of vacation to Kristie LaPlante, for the period 2016-2019, in lieu of a wage adjustment.

The meeting adjourned at 7:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Denise French
Administrator