

TOWN OF BENNINGTON

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Minutes of the Meeting – January 4, 2017

Selectmen Jeffrey Rose, James Cleary and Steven Osienski were present as well as Administrator Denise French. Also attending the meeting were Bethany Craig and Monadnock Ledger-Transcript reporter Abby Kessler. The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m.

From 6:06 p.m. until 6:53 p.m. the Selectmen met in Nonpublic Session under RSA 91-A:3II(a). Present were Selectmen Rose, Cleary and Osienski, Administrator French and Road Agent Gary Russell. The group discussed another shortage in manpower as well as innovative ways that might be put in place to shore up Highway Department's consistent staffing needs. Further information will be sought. No decisions were made.

Energy Committee representative David McKenzie met with the Selectmen and discussed the following:

- Reviewed a sketch presented of existing street lights which includes a town-wide inventory of existing lights as well as the Energy Committee's recommendation for discontinuance/removal of lighting fixtures as well as the proposed installation of a new street light. The Administrator will inquire of Eversource regarding a street light billed at the intersection of South Bennington Road and Old Greenfield Road even though no fixture exists.
- The Administrator will follow up with TE2 engineers to determine if Federal Highway luminal standards were exceeded when new light fixtures were mounted at each end of the raised sidewalk during the TE2 construction project.

Fire Chief Michael Roina and the Selectmen discussed the following matters:

- Based upon the Chief's report that the Fire Department membership consented their support of the amended Fire Department attendance policy, the Selectmen executed the Policy as of January 4, 2017.
- Radio replacement cycle. Although the Selectmen and Budget Committee were frustrated by the lack of forward planning for radio replacement, the Chief distributed an October 29, 2015 written plan that was put forth to the Budget Committee last year. In view of the fact all radios are still operational, the Selectmen voted not to initiate a radio replacement plan at this time. It was agreed that radios would be replaced on an as-needed basis.
- Brush truck repair. Based upon a Hillsborough Ford "quote of 1996 truck" and the quote's lack of mention of a rot-hole, the Selectmen voted not to budget funds for repair of a rot-hole in the frame as had been requested by the Fire Chief.
- As time permits, Mike will be allowed to work occasional administrative hours at the Fire Department. The Road Agent has agreed to look ahead one week and determine in advance what day should be convenient the following week for the shared employee to work at his secondary Fire Chief job. The Selectmen will review Roina's labor allocations at the end of each month to ensure the employee is not working more than the rolling average on Fire Department tasks.
- Roina reported he worked 547 hours of overtime in 2016; an ongoing concern that the Selectmen are trying to reduce through varied scheduling and employee cooperation.

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- The Selectmen will revisit Mike’s employment activities each week while he is assigned light duty.
- Agreed to engage a local contractor to install three doors at the Fire Station.
- Selectmen Rose and Osienski agreed that it could be prudent for the Chief to present his opinions, at the conclusion of the Deliberative Session, that the community could be better served if the Town were to transition to an ambulance transport agency.
- Although the Board of Selectmen do not support transitioning to an ambulance transport agency at this time they confirmed their agreement to put forth a Non-Binding Referendum for the voters to state their opinion while participating in the March 14th Town Meeting vote.

From 7:23 p.m. until 8:20 p.m. the Selectmen met in Nonpublic Session under RSA 91-A:3(a). Present were Selectmen Rose, Cleary and Osienski, Administrator French and Fire Chief Michael Roina. The group discussed the Board’s continued frustration that the Chief does not seem to accept Selectmen recommendations when it comes to choices/decisions that could have a direct impact on the Budget. Also discussed was the Chief’s choice to authorize the Rescue to respond to every Crotched Mountain Ski Area call with two personnel. Prior to this decision the Selectmen and Antrim Ambulance personnel have questioned the Chief/Fire Officer singular response to every Crotched Mountain call. Eventually, Selectmen Rose and Osienski agreed there could be some benefit for the Chief’s revised response protocol if the responding members were gaining further medical training, as stated by the Chief.

From 9:00 p.m. until 9:05 p.m. the Selectmen met in Nonpublic Session under RSA 91-A:3II(c). Present were Selectmen Rose, Cleary and Osienski as well as Administrator French. The Selectmen reviewed the recently received Background Check information for an emergency hire. The Board unanimously voted to confirm their employment of Lawrence Fox as an as-needed Highway Department employee.

From 9:05 p.m. until 9:15 p.m. the Selectmen met in Nonpublic Session under RSA 01-A:3II(a). Present were Selectmen Rose, Cleary and Osienski as well as Administrator French. The Selectmen reviewed 2016 salaried wage payments. The Board requested additional information to support the fixed salaried payments.

In her position as Recreation co-chair, Bethany Craig and the Selectmen discussed the following:

- The possibility of gutting the obsolete second floor bathroom at Town Hall to provide a secure storage area. The Selectmen agreed to have the project done by the same contractor who will be working at the Fire Station.
- The possibility of trimming back shrubs on The Common to provide more space for participants when attending events at that location.
- Agreement that the Town would reimburse the cost of a Life Guard class if the employee satisfactorily passes the class and remains employed with the Town of Bennington throughout the 2017 summer months. Reimbursement would be at the conclusion of the summer season.

The Selectmen acted on the following matters:

- Reviewed and approved the Board’s December 13, 2016 Minutes.
- Reviewed and approved Payroll Registers for December 15, 22 and 29, 2016 as well as January 5, 2017.
- Reviewed and approved Accounts Payable Registers for December 14, 21 and 30, 2016 as well as January 4, 2017.

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- Tabled review of the Proposed 2017 Budget, Draft 2017 Default Budget, Final 2017 Selectmen considerations and review of the First Draft 2017 Town Warrant until a planned January 10th meeting.
- Reviewed requested letters, on the Budget Committee and Board's behalf, to the Water/Sewer Commissioners and the Fire Chief which capture the group's decisions that are contrary to budgetary requests.
- Agreed that the balance for sewer lagoon dredging should be paid from the Sewer Lagoon Capital Reserve Fund and not from the Sewer Contingency Fund as was requested by the Water/Sewer Commissioners.
- Authorized the Administrator to forward a perceived Zoning Ordinance violation (M17/L22) to the Code Enforcement Officer.
- Reviewed January 1, 2017 changes to the Right-to-Know statute.
- Reviewed the Department of Revenues response to an inquiry about assessed values and associated exemptions for solar energy equipment, handicapped/disabled persons. The matter will be reviewed with the Town's assessor when undertaking April 1, 2017 assessing to be sure that there is always an assessment/value stated even if the assessed value is "no value".
- Heard a report of a January 16, 2017 ZBA Hearing for a variance from Article VI, Section D, 2 to permit a proposed 9400 +/- square foot retail store in the Rural/Agricultural District.
- Were pleased to hear that Bennington's Code Officer Dario Carrara has been voted NH Building Inspector of the Year.
- Voted to compensate the Crossing Guard for lost wages on days where school is canceled within hours of their scheduled shift.
- Were pleased to hear that Bennington's Settlement Distribution with Local Government Center's HealthTrust insurance was approved at \$5,139; net proceeds after paying attorney fees and cast costs is \$3,363.
- Declined a request from the Pittsburg Board of Selectmen to write a letter to defend the principle of home ruse as it relates to municipal roads. Pittsburg Selectmen are concerned that Eversource claims they have the right to appropriate municipal transportation rights of way without any consultation or approval from the municipal governing authority to build a high voltage electric transmission line within the right of way.
- Accepted, with regret, a resignation from Water/Sewer Commissioner David Desaulniers, effective after the Commissioners' January meeting.
- Were pleased to receive notice from Honor Flight New England that through the Town's efforts of advertising their organization on the Town's website they have received a call.
- Reviewed and approved Building Permits for M19/L21B, M17/L19 and M24/L15-1.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Denise French
Administrator