

TOWN OF BENNINGTON

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Minutes of the Meeting – July 26, 2017

Selectmen James Cleary, Jeffrey Rose and Mark Mackesy were present as well as Administrator Denise French. The meeting was called to order at 6:10 p.m.

The Selectmen hosted a Public Informational Hearing to discuss the Street Lighting Proposal which was developed by the Energy Committee and the Board of Selectmen. Before the Board of Selectmen enter into a contract to upgrade light fixtures they wanted to receive public input to ensure the community's interest is fairly represented. Notice of the Public Hearing included 652 mailed letters with a street lighting map as well as using the "sandwich" message boards and internet postings. Attendees included: Energy Committee members Peter Martel, David McKenzie and Michael Munahll; Deputy Administrator Kristie LaPlante; Police Chief Bret Sullivan; Fire Chief David Foster; Jon and Robyn Manley; Doreen Robertson; Rhea Taylor; Vicky Turner; Rose Melanson; Rick Reed; Tom and Char James; Joe and Leslie MacGregor; Kimball Buccheri; Christine Kaltsas; David Beck, Steve Roy; and Cathy Joyl. The following comments were put forth:

- Kudos to Town Officials for their informative communications about the Street Lighting Proposal which, in addition to the town-wide USPS mailing, included enlarged street lighting maps put up at the Transfer Station, Library and Town Hall.
- The Proposal recommends removal of twenty-three fixtures, upgrading twenty-seven fixtures, and adding three new fixtures.
- The need to reduce the Town's carbon footprint, save energy and darken the night sky.
- The primary need should be to focus on safety and security – not saving money.
- Frustration with the excessive LED lumens at the Antrim Road, Bible Hill, Eaton Avenue and Main Street intersection which were mandated by Federal Highway and installed during the 2015 downtown construction project.
- A query wondering if the raised sidewalk were removed at the aforementioned intersection, would this allow the Town to remove both 180 watt LED fixtures.
- The 2017 Warrant Article raised \$5,000 towards the costs to upgrade existing street lighting; the proposal to remove street lights is evolutionary.
- Should street lighting be addressed in the Zoning Ordinance?
- Consider installation of timers, motion detectors or remote control devices.
- Lighting should not be removed in the vicinity of fire hydrants.
- The addition of sidewalks is more important than lighting.
- It isn't advantageous to darken the highways leading into Town.
- We shouldn't remove lights that illuminate the sidewalks.
- Why are lights proposed to be removed from Bible Hill Road and not Pierce Hill Road; Bible Hill Road is more heavily traveled.
- The following comments were received in advance of the Public Hearing:
  - A resident stated they would be petrified and scared to death if lights were removed in their neighborhood.
  - Concern that the LED lights would be as bright as those found at the Henniker Dunkin Donuts Route 202 intersection.

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- Concern that safety would be impaired if Light #17 was removed from Francestown Road where the speed zone changes and the safety of two residential driveways at the knoll would be compromised.
  - Street lights are only needed at pedestrian crossings. They aren't necessary elsewhere and taxpayers shouldn't have to pay for them.
  - Light #15 is intrusive to the neighbor.
  - Light #4 is intrusive to the neighbor.
  - Do not remove any lights, upgrade them all to LED.
  - Gratitude that a fixture will be reinstated on Light #48.
  - Why darken Sawyer Park when the Town has re-established a playground there?
  - Selectman Cleary passed on a complaint of light outage on pole #13 on Eaton Avenue. The neighbors have previously reported the outage but Eversource has been slow to respond to this safety issue. The Administrator will follow up with Eversource on the delayed repair.
- The Police Chief reported his street light tour with the Deputy Town Administrator. Their recommendations include removing seven fixtures (rather than the planned twenty-three) and upgrading forty-three fixtures to LED (rather than the planned twenty-seven). No opinion was put forth on the addition of two new lights; the addition of a light at Francestown Road/Eaton Avenue may be unnecessary because of the two existing lights on the opposite side of Francestown Road.
  - No decisions were made. The Selectmen will continue their review and discussion at their August 9<sup>th</sup> meeting.

The Selectmen took action on the following matters:

- Reviewed and approved the Board's July 12, 2017 Minutes.
- Reviewed and approved Payroll Registers for July 20 and July 27, 2017 as well as Accounts Payable Registers for July 20, July 24 and July 27, 2017.
- Heard a report that the NH Department of Transportation has denied the Town's request to landscape the triangular state-owned patch of land at the Route 202/47/31 intersection.
- The Administrator reported her amicable discussion with a Cora Curtis Family representative relative to non-permitted construction at the family campground. Arrangements are underway for the Building Inspector to visit the site and assist family members with after-the-fact Building Permit Applications.
- Were disturbed to hear about the negative actions of Town Officials at the July 17<sup>th</sup> ZBA Hearing; the public has reported their disgust as well. The Administrator will draft a Letter to the Editor for the Board's consideration at their August 9<sup>th</sup> meeting.
- Were pleased to learn that the Town will receive \$37,913.09 in unanticipated moneys from the NH Department of Transportation for expressed purpose of highway construction, reconstruction or maintenance purposes that are not included in the 2017 Budget. The Selectmen voted to hold a Public Hearing August 9<sup>th</sup> to accept the funds.
- The Board authorized the Administrator to schedule an informal meeting with Architect Mike Petrovick to identify conceptual opportunities to explore for expanding Town Hall work space.

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- Tabled a request to sell vacant land on Class VI Birch Drive. The Selectmen requested an inventory of all Town property that might be sold.
- Were pleased to receive an update from website developer Ethan Aho who volunteered to work with Chief Sullivan to upgrade the Police Department website at no cost.
- Reviewed and approved a Driveway Permit application for M3/L6; a revised Cemetery Deed for Lot 6, Row 10; and Building Permits for M7/L68, M16/L2A, M19/L4 and M21/L6.

From 8:35 p.m. until 8:45 p.m. the Selectmen met in Nonpublic Session. Selectman Cleary made the motion to enter into Nonpublic Session under RSA 91-A:3II(c); Selectmen Mackesy seconded the motion; the Board unanimously voted to enter the Nonpublic Session. Also present during the Nonpublic Session was Administrator Denise French. The Selectmen discussed a report from the Town's IT vendor which indicated possible misuse of equipment. The matter will be reviewed with the Department Head at a later date. Selectman Mackesy made a motion to adjourn the Nonpublic Session; Selectman Cleary seconded the motion; the Board unanimously voted to reconvene the public session at 8:45 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Denise French  
Administrator