

TOWN OF BENNINGTON

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Minutes of the Meeting – January 2, 2019

Selectmen James Cleary, David Hardwick, Sr., and Mark Mackesy were present as well as Town Administrator Kristie LaPlante. The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m.

Budget Committee Chair Rick Reed met with the Selectmen to follow up discussions from the Board's December 18, 2018 budget review with Department Heads and the Budget Committee. The Selectmen reported that they met with Police Chief Bret Sullivan on December 26th to discuss the Chief's initial request to add \$15,000 to the Police Part-Time Officers line item. As a result of that meeting the line item increase was adjusted to \$2,400 to allow Part-Time Officers to attend trainings.

Rick complimented the Board on developing a well crafted budget and inquired what the Selectmen had determined for wage increases for employees. Selectman Mark Mackesy shared with Rick the Board's December 12th decision to not provide raises for employees, citing the pay rates currently in place and the compensation package provided to employees (health insurance, dental insurance, NH Retirement). Mackesy noted that when the Board provides raises it is a blanket percentage for all employees because the Board does not have adequate time to conduct individual performance reviews. Citing his concern that if employees aren't appreciated they may go elsewhere, Rick commented that the Board should implement reviews and consider raises based upon that review as a further reward for employees who work hard and are a benefit to the Town. Selectman Jim Cleary noted that the Selectmen recognize the importance of recruiting and maintaining quality employees and one of the ways the Town tries to do that is through our health insurance plan. No changes were made to the Board's December 12th decision.

Selectman Cleary reported that he met with Robblee Tree Service for a third opinion of the trees at Evergreen Cemetery and subsequently delivered a sealed bid for tree removal. The estimate provided from Robblee Tree includes pruning 13 maple trees at a cost of \$1,600 and cabling one maple tree at a cost not to exceed \$400. The bids received were as follows:

- Robblee Tree Service - \$2,000 to prune the 3 marked trees, plus an additional 10 maple trees they identified as having dead wood, and cable 1 maple tree (and remove the brush/debris)
- Andrew Grant's Tree Service - \$2,000 to prune the 3 marked trees and suggested two trees in the roadway right-of-way be pruned or removed for an additional \$500 (and remove the brush/debris)
- Atomic Tree Service - \$2,900 to prune the 3 marked trees (and remove the brush/debris).

Selectman Mackesy made a motion, seconded by Selectman Cleary, to award the Evergreen Cemetery Tree Project to Robblee Tree. All three Selectmen voted in favor of the motion. Jim will contact Robblee Tree Service to let them know; the Town Administrator will let the Cemetery Trustees know of the decision.

The Selectmen reviewed six requests for funding for 2019 for inclusion in the Warrant. The Selectmen voted to place on the Warrant: Contoocook Valley Housing Trust (\$300), The Grapevine (\$6,000), CASA (\$500), Granite State Children's Alliance (\$1,000), and CVTC (\$500). The Selectmen did not support

putting a \$70 funding request from MCVP on the Warrant because they felt the request could be funded through the Operating Budget. The Selectmen also approved \$1,000 for End 68 Hours of Hunger.

In other items on their Agenda, the Selectmen acted upon the following:

- Reviewed a communication from Donahue, Tucker & Ciandella relative to a proposed mediation between Eversource and the Town for the 2014-2016 appeals period for Eversource. The Selectmen approved DTC representing the Town's position in mediation.
- Received notice from the Building Inspector of his impending resignation. The Selectmen will start the search for a new Building Inspector.
- Reviewed and approved the Town Administrator's acceptance of a Technical Assistance Agreement Amendment from Southwest Region Planning Commission relative to the Water Department Asset Management Project.
- Reviewed and approved the Payroll Register for January 2, 2019 and the Accounts Payable Register for December 31, 2018.
- Reviewed the third revision of the 2019 Budget. The Selectmen will encumber \$6,050 in unspent funds for the Water Department Asset Management Project.
- Reviewed and approved the Board's December 26, 2018 minutes (one spelling error to be fixed).

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:07 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristie LaPlante, Town Administrator