

TOWN OF BENNINGTON

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Minutes of the Meeting – January 21, 2020

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

Hillsborough resident Dennis McClure met with the Selectmen to discuss his displeasure with the performance stage at Sawyer Park and his continued assertions that it is there illegally. Also in attendance were Recreation Committee members Bethany and Jim Craig. The Selectmen showed Mr. McClure a picture of signage the Town recently removed from the stage that read “Help Us Remove”, of which Mr. McClure admitted to posting. Mr. McClure was directed not to post any signage on Town property without the Selectmen’s permission. The Selectmen and Recreation Committee explained that the stage’s location was set in 2017 based on consultation with Scott Liljeberg, abutters, and users of the field. After a lengthy discussion, Mr. McClure was encouraged to come back to the Board with his softball league information, proposed schedule, and their rules to see what the Town can do to accommodate their request to utilize Sawyer Field.

Antrim Road resident Nate Carmen met with the Selectmen to discuss the Selectmen’s’ decision to post “No Parking Signs” at the parking-lot across from the Historical Society. Mr. Carmen had been having tenants and guests at his family’s house park at that lot and inquired if he could have permission to use the lot moving forward. The Selectmen reviewed a property map provided by Mr. Carmen and their observation that the current driveway can accommodate up to three vehicles. The Selectmen denied Mr. Carmen’s request to use the lot for personal use. Mr. Carmen intends to request permission from the Town in the spring to change the location of the existing driveway to improve visibility.

Town Clerk Debra Belcher met with the Selectmen to discuss the State of NH Division of Motor Vehicles January 14, 2020 performance audit of the Town Clerk’s Office. As a result of the audit, the State determined that the daily ACH transfer schedule was noncompliant with State standards. Deb requested the Selectmen’s permission to change the daily transfer responsibilities from the Town Administrator to the Town Treasurer.

Town Administrator Kristie LaPlante reported that Bennington has been a “one-check Town” and required to do ACH transfers of State registration fees since July of 2017. At that time the Treasurer and Town Administrator met and agreed not to add another user (Town Clerk) to the Town’s bank account and that the transfers would be completed by the Town Administrator. However, neither the Treasurer nor Town Administrator were provided information from the Town Clerk or from the State of NH that stated that his was a daily requirement, as outlined in the recent audit report. The Town Administrator discussed with the Town Clerk an apparent gap in communications and the need to improve. Now that appropriate information has been shared about ACH transfer requirements, the Selectmen declined to change the current ACH transfer process.

The Selectmen discussed with Deb their January 2, 2020 decision to supplement Town Clerk staffing with current Office Staff. Deb told the Selectmen they would have to fully train Debra Davidson and that would require funding and time. The Selectmen assured Deb Belcher that funding was in the Budget to provide the staff and training and that their goal is to manage staff and services available to residents

and customers. Deb Belcher asserted that she has additional staff available on Thursdays and Saturdays and that the office is routinely covered on Tuesdays except for training opportunities and election days. The Selectmen reported that they still intend to use Debra Davidson to supplement Town Clerk staffing primarily on Tuesdays.

The Selectmen continued discussion of the Timber Tax and Gravel Tax Warrant Articles as requested by the Conservation Commission January 14th. Town Administrator Kristie LaPlante reported on her conversation with Conservation Commission members and that their ultimate goal is to obtain 100% of Timber and Gravel revenues for the Conservation Commission Fund. At this time the Conservation Commission is developing a Conservation Plan that will outline their priorities for preservation which will dictate their priorities for acquiring certain assets in Town. Motion was made and seconded by Selectman Jim Cleary and seconded by David Hardwick to request that voters appropriate the equivalent of 50% of 2019 Timber and Gravel Tax revenues from unassigned fund balance and deposit those funds in the Conservation Commission Fund. Selectmen Cleary and Hardwick voted in support of the Motion; Selectmen Mark Mackesy abstained from voting. The Selectmen intend to meet with the Conservation Commission later in the spring to discuss mutual goals and objectives.

In addition, the Selectmen reviewed or acted on the following:

- Finalized the 2020 Budget and Warrant. Changes were made to the Town of Antrim-Water line item, Town of Antrim-Sewer line item, the Timber Tax Revenues Payable Warrant Article, and Gravel Tax Revenues Payable Warrant Article.
- Reviewed a preliminary report from the Health Officer that the Ski Area may have exceeded capacity on January 19th which impacted their water well. The Health Officer will work the Ski Area and other Town Officials to determine the cause for water loss and discuss future plans to prevent a reoccurrence.
- Heard a report that the Department of Labor has provided their report of their October 2nd inspection of Town properties. No major safety violations were noted. The Town will receive an Administrative Penalty for not having an active Joint Loss Management Committee.
- Discussed the need to upgrade the Town's loader. The Selectmen were in agreement that they need to wait until the Insurance Claim on the 2007 International Dump Truck is completed and rehabilitation costs of existing equipment is received before determining what amount of Capital Reserve Funding can be utilized to acquire a used piece of equipment.
- Asked the Town Administrator to obtain an update on piston cylinder repairs for the Town's existing Loader.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristie LaPlante
Town Administrator