

TOWN OF BENNINGTON

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Minutes of the Meeting – May 26, 2020

Selectmen James Cleary, David Foster, and David Hardwick, Sr., were present as well as Town Administrator Kristie LaPlante. The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m.

Road Agent Hazen Fisk met with the Board of Selectmen for a six-month probationary review. No decisions were made.

The Selectmen and Road Agent discussed projects of mutual interest:

- The culvert supply has been inventoried and reorganized.
- The Highway Department will utilize the pugmill material made in 2019 for winter sand in 2020/2021. When the crushing company comes this year they will replenish the ¾" crush stock.
- Once the backhoe is fixed the Department will be able to complete more projects in Town.
- The body has been removed from the 7400 International and the frame has been painted. The new body will be installed within the next week.
- The Road Agent reported a conversation he had with NH Fish & Game and their interpretation that the Tri-Town Pit does not need to be posted to enforce trespassing ATVs. The Selectmen asked the Road Agent to install signage to increase awareness of the violation.
- The Selectmen are still waiting for confirmation if a stump dump is required by the Town's DES permit or if it is there as a convenience for residents.

The Town Administrator reviewed with the Selectmen the status of the budget, revenues, and any increased costs the Town has incurred that are directly attributed to COVID-19 and discussed the following:

- The Town can receive reimbursement from FEMA for Personal Protective Equipment. At this time the Town has not reached the \$3,200 minimum threshold.
- The Town can receive reimbursement of up to \$35,000 from the Governor's Office for Emergency Relief and Recovery (GOFERR) for COVID-19 related costs. At this time the Town has approximately \$6,000 in costs eligible for reimbursement.
- In a five-year analysis of Solid Waste Expenditures, there has not been an increase in disposal quantities as a result of the March temporary suspension of recycling.
- Because the Police Department has been out of the office due to COVID-19 and on patrol more often, the Town Administrator conducted a five-year analysis on Police Department fuel and reported there has not been an increase in gasoline use.
- In a review of Year-to-Date Expenditures, the Selectmen noted that the Deputy Town Clerk line-item is over budget in comparison to year-to-date percentages of other wage line-items. The Town Administrator reported that the Deputy Town Clerk has been working an average of 14-16 hours a week despite the 2020 Budget allowing for 9 hours per week. No decisions were made.
- The Town Administrator reported that she has spoken with Bethany Craig from the Recreation Committee. Whittemore Beach will be open this summer but the picnic tables and raft have been removed. The side buoys will be placed to identify the swimming area from the fishing area; the rear buoys will not be installed. The Selectmen discussed Whittemore Beach and agreed to not staff the Beach with Beach Attendants this summer.

The Town Administrator reported on conversations she has had with Town Hall staff about the eventual reopening of Town Hall and their collective concerns about adequate air ventilation and space in the customer lobby. The Selectmen discussed a Feasibility Study that was completed in 2017/2018 by Mike Petrovick that was tabled when the Town received notice that we would be receiving funds from the David Glynn Estate that would be earmarked for rehabilitating Town Hall. The Selectmen declined to assemble a Committee to discuss the options and obtain updated estimates for future repair. The Selectmen discussed erecting a separate entrance for the Police Department to minimize their exposure to guests in the customer service lobby, established a two-person maximum limit in the lobby, and the likely need to require customers and employees to wear masks.

The Selectmen acted on the following matters:

- Reviewed and approved the Minutes of the May 12, 2020 with one content change.
- Reviewed and approved the Accounts Payable Registers for May 21, 2020 (2) and the Payroll Registers for May 14 (2) and May 21, 2020.
- Requested the Town Administrator to expedite the ordering of Transfer Station Facility Use Stickers.
- Heard a report that an employee will not be utilizing the Town's Health Insurance as provided for in the 2020 budget; the Town will recognize an 80% savings of the budgeted amount.
- Reviewed a May 20, 2020 Cost and Savings report from the Conval School District. The Selectmen were pleased to see savings of \$815,000 but were shocked to see unanticipated costs of \$1,946,200. The Selectmen expressed their frustration that the Town Administrator needs to seek out budget impact information due to a lack of communication from the Town's School Board Representative. The Town Administrator will update the Selectmen as she receives information from the School District Business Office.
- Heard a report that flags were not placed for Memorial Day 2020.
- Discussed reports of fishermen using the Town Beach for fishing despite signage that prohibits the use of the beach area. The Selectmen will talk with the Police Chief and ask him to increase patrols to ensure compliance with fishing at the boat launch.
- Requested an update from the Road Agent of projects completed since April 20, 2020 as well as weekly reports of tasks scheduled and tasks completed.
- Heard a report that the second Police Cruisers is no longer parked at Town Hall at the end of shifts and has been going home with an officer. Selectman David Foster reported on a recent instance where the part-time officer had to go out of Town to retrieve a cruiser while on shift. The Selectmen will discuss this change with the Police Chief.
- Signed the GOFERR Coronavirus Relief Fund Grant Agreement.
- Signed three Building Permits (Map 2/Lot 8, Map 10/Lot 47-4, Map 2/Lot 6).

There being no other business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 7:58 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristie LaPlante, Town Administrator