

TOWN OF BENNINGTON

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Minutes of the Meeting – June 2, 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. Also in attendance for part of the meeting were Bethany Craig and Donald Trow.

Road Agent Hazen Fisk met with the Board of Selectmen to discuss Highway Department operations:

- The group discussed projects/tasks completed since April 20th and the impact Remote Learning had on staff availability as well as equipment breakdowns.
- One employee is out being monitored by his doctor for COVID-19 like symptoms. If the test comes back negative and symptoms improve, the earliest the doctor will release the employee back to work is June 10th.
- The backhoe has been fixed and is now fully operational.
- At the end of 2019 the flags for downtown were removed and disposed due to wear and tear. New flags, poles, and brackets have been hard to acquire and a recent order was not fulfilled by the vendor. Hazen will continue to work on finding a suitable vendor to replace the 40 units.
- Chip seal is scheduled for Thursday, June 4th.

Recreation Committee Chairperson Bethany Craig met with the Selectmen to discuss the following:

- While Bethany largely agrees with the Board's May 26th decision to not staff the Beach with Beach Attendants, she shared her concerns that without Beach Attendants doing routine maintenance (raking, filling in holes, checking on trash) that the beach will be harder to maintain in 2021. Similarly, if visitors know there is no supervision it may increase occurrences of littering and smoking on the beach.
- The Selectmen agreed that minimal staffing for 1-2 hours every other day is an inexpensive way to maintain the Beach and authorized staffing for that purpose. The estimated cost is less than \$500.
- A resident has been asked to rototill the beach sand at their convenience.
- Bethany also shared with the Board her ideas for replacing the excess signage at the Beach with new sign kiosks. The Selectmen agree that signs need to be replaced and are awaiting a quote from Bethany on costs for one kiosk for Whittemore Beach rules and one kiosk for fishing rules.

Gillis Hill Road resident Donald Trow met with the Selectmen to discuss the Road Agent's progress and share his observations and concerns:

- Brush needs to be trimmed at intersections.
- The locations of new culvert installations on Gillis Hill Road.
- The appearance that most work completed is done with machinery and not manual work.
- A grader blade is in the scrap metal recycling at the Transfer Station. The Road Agent has reported to the Board that the blade does not fit any of the equipment.
- Reports that the Road Agent has made comments to the other communities about the quality of the Grader equipment and his personal opinion on replacement plans.

Police Chief Bret Sullivan met with the Selectmen at their request to discuss the following:

- Chief Sullivan reported that the Police Cruisers now go home every night with the full-time officers to prevent vandalism to cruisers, vandalism to officers' personal vehicles that are at Town Hall during shifts, and to improve response times. Having a cruiser at home is more of an inconvenience for officers because of winter weather conditions and always having an extra vehicle in their driveways.
- A plan is in place and communicated to the Part-Time Officers of where to pick up the cruiser for their shift.
- The Police Department has shifted their on-call and patrol schedules to better align with periods of higher activity.
- The Selectmen asked the Chief and his Department to monitor the Beach more frequently for fishermen on the Beach, alcohol, and to make a presence since there won't be regular staffing this summer. Chief Sullivan reported that he welcomes the community to communicate with the Department in real time and report issues as they arise instead of after the fact.

Emergency Management Director Keith Nason met with the Selectmen and discussed the following items relative to COVID-19:

- He continues to participate in routine conference calls with State agencies to ensure Bennington remains in compliance with the Stay at Home Orders.
- Reopening Guidance from the State has been very loose in interpretation and compliance. State Agencies don't seem well informed as Guidance rolls out, which has made the State's intent very difficult to interpret and enforce.
- Alberto's Restaurant and Common Place Eatery are open for take out and outdoor dining. Curtis Campground has communicated with their family members the importance of following the Governor's Orders for campgrounds.
- The Town's inventory of Personal Protective Equipment is robust at this time and has been disseminated to Departments as necessary. The goal is maintain a healthy stock of PPE in the event there is another major occurrence of COVID-19 later in the year.

The Selectmen discussed an inquiry from a resident to reopen recycling at the Transfer Station. At this time proper social distancing will create a traffic bottle neck and impede Transfer Station operations if the Town reopens recycling in the current shed building. Town Administrator Kristie LaPlante reported on her conversation with Jaime Colby from NH DES Waste Management Division. The Town has permission to temporarily move recycling activities to another location on site but the Town must provide a staff member to oversee the operations to ensure proper disposal of recyclable materials. After consideration of the current configuration, social distancing, staffing, and market conditions, the Selectmen voted not to resume recycling at this time and to reevaluate after June 15th.

In addition, the Selectmen acted on the following matters:

- Heard a report that Transfer Station stickers will not be mailed with Tax Bills due to timing. The Town Administrator will develop a checks and balance system to disseminate and track Stickers at the Transfer Station.
- Accepted Keith Nason's offer to have "Stickers Required" signage made for the Transfer Station.
- Tabled approval of a six-month probationary raise for the Road Agent.
- Heard a request from a business to utilize the grass at the Civil War Monument as part of their temporary business plan. The Selectmen declined to approve the request until all other options are considered.

- Requested the Town Administrator to obtain a quote for installation of a ventilation fan in the restroom in the lobby of Town Hall.
- Reviewed and signed three Yield Tax Levies (Operation #s 19-041-04, -05, and -06), one Gravel Tax Levy (Operation 19-041-01), and two Building Permits (Map 19/Lot 21B and Map 7/Lot 24A).

There being no other business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristie LaPlante, Town Administrator

Unofficial Until Approved