

TOWN OF BENNINGTON

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Minutes of the Meeting – June 16, 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 6:04 p.m.

Joint Loss Management Committee/Town Hall Building Employees Denise French, Debra Davidson, Debra Belcher, Karen Belcher, and Jason Lepine as well as Emergency Management Director Keith Nason met with the Selectmen to discuss reopening Town Hall, which has been closed to the public since April 1, 2020 due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The following was discussed:

- The customer service lobby is 156 square feet. To maintain proper social distancing Town Hall would only be allowed to open by appointment; the lobby is not large enough to open to the public.
- All employees are concerned about air quality in the lobby area.
- The Police Department has previously discussed their concerns about walking through the small customer service lobby to enter their Department. This issue became more serious as the COVID-19 Pandemic evolved.
- The current customer service window will need to be modified to include installation of a “sneeze guard”. While that modification is being made the employees asked that the service window be enlarged to better serve our taller customers as well as make the window more handicap accessible, especially once the space becomes more restricted with the “sneeze guard”.
- Speaking from their experience before the Town Hall closed to all foot traffic, the Town Clerks expressed their concern that an appointment system for handling customer is not feasible because of the size of the lobby, customer flow, and appointment times.
- The Town Administrator shared a conversation she had with the Emergency Management Director about changing employee access to the Police Department by removing a window in the hallway and replacing it with a door. The traditional entrance to Town Hall could continue to be used for all other guests. The Selectmen expressed their support for that project.
- The Town Administrator shared a conversation she had with the Town’s furnace repair vendor who suggested the Town consider shutting down internal cold air return systems and drawing fresh air from the outside for furnace operations. Modifying the cold air return to fresh air will require an air exchanger to adjust for the temperature and humidity levels outside before the air goes through the duct work.
- The Selectmen asked the Town Administrator to obtain quotes for an air exchanger, UV lights for the duct work, customer service window modifications, and adding a separate employee entrance for the Police Department.
- The Town Administrator asked the Selectmen if they wanted to change the staffing hours and hours of operation for Town Office staff who have been working staggered schedules to maintain social distancing. The Selectmen declined to make a change.
- There was agreement that once improvements are made to address the air quality concerns and once the customer service window is modified then the Selectmen will revisit when to open for appointments for Town Office functions. The Town Clerk’s Office will continue to operate on a “first come/first serve” queue system and conduct business through the drop box.

At 7:10 p.m. a motion was made by Selectman James to enter into Nonpublic Session under RSA 91-A:3-II(c) and seconded by David Hardwick; all voted in favor of entering Nonpublic Session. Also present during the Nonpublic Session was Town Administrator Kristie LaPlante. The Selectmen discussed complaints they have received about the operations of the Highway Department and current and future staffing levels. The Selectmen voted to terminate the 10-hour summer schedule effective June 18th and the Highway Department will resume 8-hour shifts starting June 22, 2020. No other decisions were made. Selectman Cleary made a motion to reconvene the Public Session; seconded by David Hardwick; all voted to reconvene the Public Session at 8:12 p.m.

In addition, the Selectmen acted on the following matters:

- Reviewed the Minutes of the Board's May 26 and June 2, 2020 Meetings. No decisions were made.
- Heard a report that the Town Administrator has recruited help from the Fire Department and Beach Staff to begin issuing Transfer Station Stickers starting June 20th.
- Reviewed a facility overview map of the Transfer Station and heard a proposal from the Town Administrator to temporarily relocate recycling activities in the area between the Salvation Army box and the sand/salt shed. The Selectmen tabled resuming recycling and will revisit the topic in two weeks.
- Reviewed a bid for scraping and painting the VFW building. No decisions were made.
- Reviewed a report of completed Highway Department tasks for June 8 through June 11.
- Heard a report that the Conval High School Guidance Department selected Bennington Seniors Alexis Cleary and Molly Reed as the recipients of the Edward French Memorial Scholarship.
- Reviewed the Unlicensed Dog Warrant as prepared by the Town Clerk and table signing the document. The Selectmen want to clarify the potential financial impact this may have on some dog owners before committing to signing.
- Received a verbal request from the Town Clerk for additional funds for the Town Clerk's Office to cover the additional hours that have been worked during COVID-19. The Selectmen agreed to keep an eye on the Town Clerk's Budget but did not commit any additional funds.
- Chairman Jim Cleary signed the NH Department of Transportation – Crosswalk Maintenance Responsibilities agreement for the crosswalks located at Route 31 and Acre Street, Main Street and Route 47, Cross Street and Main Street, Route 31 and Route 47, and Route 31 (Hancock Road) and Cross Street/Acre Street. The Agreement commits the Town to providing pavement markings and winter snow removal and treatment of ice.
- Chairman Jim Cleary signed the NH Department of Environmental Services Sewer AMP Disbursement Request form.
- Signed two building permits (Map 24/Lot 12 and Map 12/Lot 20).
- Signed the Property Tax Warrant for the 1st issue of 2020.

There being no other business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristie LaPlante, Town Administrator