

TOWN OF BENNINGTON

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Minutes of the Meeting – June 23, 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 6:03 p.m.

Road Agent Hazen Fisk met with the Selectmen to discuss the Board's June 16 decision to switch his Department from 10-hour shifts to 8-hour shifts amidst complaints from the public about the Department's progress. The group discussed the following:

- The Selectmen have been receiving negative feedback from some residents about the progress of the Highway Department. This has led to a larger discussion about the need for a third full-time employee at the Highway Department.
- Hazen reported that remote learning and illness has significantly impacted the productivity of the crew. Since remote learning ended May 29th, an employee has been out on medical leave for 11 of 14 working days (the employee has provided documentation from their health care provider).
- The Selectmen and Hazen discussed the summer schedule proposed in April and inquired where on the schedule the Department was. Hazen again reported that remote learning and illness have stalled substantial progress.
- The Highway Department has finalized most of the ditching on Gillis Hill Road; the crew will start ditching Old Stagecoach Road and Dodge Hill Road later this week.
- The Selectmen reported to Hazen that if progress and attendance do not improve within the Highway Department, the Selectmen are strongly considering utilizing the third person on the Highway Crew to staff the Transfer Station.
- The Selectmen encouraged the Road Agent to discuss the attendance policy with his employees to ensure that future absences are scheduled and/or fall under the Town's Personnel Policy.
- The Selectmen and Road Agent agreed to revisit the summer schedule at the end of July to determine if the Crew can return to 10-hour shifts.

The Selectmen continued discussion of the one quote received for scraping and painting the VFW. The Selectmen have tried to get a quote from the Town's preferred painter, Norm Mercier, but he is unable to complete the project this year. After considerable discussion, it was agreed that Selectman Cleary would speak with Norm Mercier to get a quote for the project to compare to one already received to determine if the cost is appropriate.

In her capacity as Tax Collector, Kristie LaPlante shared with the Board of Selectmen a list of property owners with unpaid 2016 and 2017 Tax Liens which are eligible for Tax Deed in 2020. The Governor has recently terminated the Emergency Order that prevented foreclosures and evictions which also impacted the Tax Deed process. After review of the list, the Selectmen asked the Tax Collector to communicate with the property owners who remain delinquent for 2016 and 2017 to determine if a hardship exists that has prevented them from paying the obligation. The Selectmen will review the results before determining the effectiveness of continuing with the Tax Deed process.

In addition, the Selectmen acted on the following matters:

- Approved the Minutes of the Board's May 26 and June 2, 2020 meetings.

- Reviewed and approved the Accounts Payable Registers for May 28, June 8, and June 18, 2020.
- Reviewed and approved the Payroll Registers for May 28, June 4, June 11, and June 18, 2020.;
- Heard a report from the Road Agent that an employee requested (and was given) permission to work four 10-hour days this week to make up for his absence due to illness.
- Heard a report that 250 Transfer Station Stickers were issued Saturday and Sunday. The goal is to utilize supplemental staffing to issue the stickers through July 5th, evaluate stickers already issued, and hopefully transition to the Transfer Station staff issuing stickers starting July 8th.
- Reviewed the Request for Proposals for COVID-19 Town Hall Improvements that has been sent to area contractors and the Monadnock Ledger-Transcript.
- Agreed to meet every two weeks starting June 30th through September 1st.
- Discussed the December and February fuel contamination claims and agreed to terminate the Town's relationship with Rymes Heating and Propane for heating oil and propane. The Town Administrator will obtain quotes from three other vendors for the Board's review.
- Signed the Town Clerk Unlicensed Dogs Warrant, a Building Permit for Map 7/Lot 18, and the Local River Management Advisory Committee Nomination Form for Joseph MacGregor.

There being no other business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 7:28 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristie LaPlante, Town Administrator