

TOWN OF BENNINGTON

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Minutes of the Meeting – November 10, 2020

Selectmen James Cleary and David Hardwick, Sr. were present as well as Town Administrator Kristie LaPlante. The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m.

Road Agent Hazen Fisk met with the Selectmen to discuss the used 2002 John Deere 544 Loader the Town recently purchased. Since taking delivery of the equipment, Hazen has been working to grease the equipment, change fluids, and develop a list of repairs that may need to be made. The Selectmen authorized Hazen to advertise the Town's 1982 Loader for sale by sealed bid with a bid deadline of December 8, 2020. The Selectmen established a reserve price they intend to use when evaluating bids.

Hazen reported experiencing a loss of power with the 2015 Freightliner and numerous error lights on the dash. Because of the 2019 Fuel Claim, Hazen brought the truck to Sizemore for documentation.

The Selectmen reviewed the Minutes of the Solid Waste Committee's October 28, 2020 Meeting and agreed that a Commercial Hauler should be defined as "a person, firm, corporation, or other entity that collects, recycles, and/or hauls, for a fee, the solid waste (including recyclable solid waste) generated by other persons, firms, corporations, residential, business, commercial, or other establishments".

The Selectmen reviewed a Transfer Station Proposal for years 2021-2024 provided by Monadnock Disposal Service that had been previously reviewed by the Solid Waste Committee and voted to proceed with renewing the Town's waste disposal contract.

Marie and David Plummer, owners of 12 School Street, met with the Selectmen by invitation to discuss the collapsing retaining wall along the common boundary between the Fire Station and their property. The group reviewed an August 1976 Proposed Boundary Line Change plan as well a July 2008 Property Impact Plan for the Downtown Safety Improvements Project and agreed that the pin locations cannot be located. The Selectmen and the Plummers agreed that the Town will pay for the cost of removing the retaining wall and sloping the earth. Selectman Cleary will meet with the Plummers to discuss trees that may need to be removed for the project.

While in the building for a Cemetery Trustee meeting, the Selectmen spoke with Cemetery Trustee Karen Belcher to inquire if any tree removal projects can be completed with remaining 2020 funds. Karen reported that some of the trees will require a lift or a crane and they have not been successful in finding a vendor with both the right equipment and availability in their schedule.

Selectman Jim Cleary reported to the Board that he met with the logger for Timber Operation 20-041-05 and the logger has agreed to pay the Town the estimate stumpage value of \$450 for the Timber Trespass associated with that Operation.

The Selectmen reviewed the Second Draft of the Proposed 2021 Operating Budget and discussed the following:

- The Second Draft reflects changes made by the Selectmen at their October 27, 2020 meeting as well as adjustments to health insurance as a reflection of final rates.

- The current Proposed Operating Budget, which excludes Capital Reserve Funding and Warrant Article requests, is \$1,806,753, which represents a net decrease of \$5,520 from the First Draft Budget and is \$11,519 below the 2020 Operating Budget.
- The Town Administrator reported that if the Town were to provide a 1.3% wage increase in concurrence with the Social Security Administration, it would increase the Operating Budget by approximately \$7,100, which equates to less than \$0.01 on the Tax Rate. The Selectmen declined wage increases for 2020.
- The Selectmen intend to meet with the Capital Reserve Funding Committee in early December,

In addition, the Selectmen acted on the following matters:

- Reviewed and approved the Minutes of the Board's October 27, 2020 meeting.
- Reviewed and approved Payroll Registers for October 29, November 5, and November 12, 2020 check dates as well as Accounts Payable Registers for October 29, November 2, and November 12, 2020 check dates.
- Heard a report that Utility Appraiser Brian D. Fogg, LLC has established the 2020 assessed value for Eversource at \$3,044,042 using the phase-in provisions of RSA 72:8-d (HB 700). In turn, the Selectmen signed the 2020 Summary Inventory of Valuation for submission to NH DRA.
- Considered a proposal from Brian D. Fogg, LLC for revaluing the hydro facilities associated with Monadnock Paper Mills and voted not to change the assessment method currently in place.
- Reviewed a proposal from A/D Instruments for conversion from copper telephone lines to a cell-based system via radio for the water tank level monitoring system. The total project cost for Bennington will be \$13,250 and is necessitated by TDS abandoning service on their copper telephone lines. The Selectmen approved for the funds to come from the Water Department Maintenance and Repair Capital Reserve Fund.
- Declined to schedule a Tri-Town Landfill Meeting for December while the Board gathers more information on phase boundaries and quantities before meeting with the Tri-Town group.
- Approved the Town Administrator's request to develop COVID-19 safety protocols for Town employees and volunteers. The Town Administrator reported that the Water Department has transitioned to Zoom video meetings due to concerns about COVID-19.
- Heard a report that the entrance doors for Town Hall are still on back order from the manufacturer.
- The Selectmen signed the 2020 MS535 Financial Report as well as a Driveway Permit for Map 13, Lot 4.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristie LaPlante, Town Administrator