

TOWN OF BENNINGTON

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Minutes of the Meeting – March 30, 2021

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.

Police Chief Bret Sullivan met with the Selectmen to inform the Board of his intent to retire as Police Chief no later than June 1, 2021. Bret expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to work in Bennington and thanked the Board for their support during his tenure. Upon his retirement, Bret will have worked in Law Enforcement for twenty-two years; with the Board's permission, Bret would like to remain a part-time office in Bennington after retirement. The Board thanked Bret for his advanced notice and his dedication to the residents of Bennington.

Town Administrator Kristie LaPlante approached the Board to discuss wages and benefits. Historically, the Board of Selectmen have taken the position that wages paid to full-time Bennington employees are lower than area communities but those wages are offset by paying 100% of Health Insurance. Kristie inquired of now was the time to consider paying employees more but in turn have the employees contribute to their Health Insurance. The Board agreed to an internal wage and benefit study of neighboring communities to determine if the Town's combined wage and benefits are comparable to wages/benefits paid in other Towns. No decisions were made.

Citing recent Permitting questions about camping trailers and tiny homes, Town Administrator Kristie LaPlante provided the Selectmen with draft language from the Town of Jefferson that defines Recreational Vehicles and Campgrounds and establishes regulations for Recreational Vehicles outside of approved or existing campgrounds. Because the Town does not currently have any definitions or regulations, permits are not currently required for campers that are being used as residences and there are no provisions to monitor or regulate tiny homes. The Board reviewed the language and agreed to forward it to the Planning Board for their consideration for potential Zoning Ordinance changes for the 2022 Town Warrant.

The Board discussed the impending Police Chief vacancy and Statewide shortage of certified Police Officers. Prior to making any decisions on promotions or job postings, the Board discussed the concept of combining Police Departments with neighboring communities and creating a regional Police Department. The Town Administrator will contact the Hancock and Antrim Selectmen to schedule meetings to discuss the concept and if they are interested in pursuing.

The Selectmen reviewed or acted on the following:

- Reviewed and approved the Minutes of the Board's March 30, 2021 Meeting.
- Reviewed and approved the Accounts Payable and Payroll Registers for March 18 and March 25, 2021.
- Heard a report that the security cameras at the Highway Department were upgraded and new cameras were added. The underground conduit and wiring for one of the cameras will need to be repaired before the camera can "go live".
- Reviewed and approved a safety footwear purchase made by an employee who will be resigning.
- Approved the closure of South Bennington Road for an additional week when NH DOT replaces the Russell Brook bridge. The additional week allows for the Town to relocate the water line.
- Reviewed an Estimate from JAY Contracting, LLC to correct the installation of existing windows at Town Hall. When the original windows were replaced in 2005, the installer did not remove the old window weights in the jamb area and did not insulate the windows. The Selectmen tabled approval of the estimate until costs are known for the cupula repair project.

- Appointed James Cleary as Chairperson of the Board of Selectmen through 2022.
- Heard a report that the granite bench at the Library and the light for the flag pole at the Fire Station were damaged during snow removal this year. The granite bench will be fixed by the Town's snow removal contractor. The light for the flag pole will be repaired by the Town's electrician.
- Heard a report that communities are awaiting further guidance from the Federal Government on applicable projects and costs to be funded by the American Rescue Plan.
- Heard a report that Town Hall is ready to open April 1, 2021 for appointments (Phase IIIa). The Joint Loss Management Committee is scheduled to meet again on May 4th discuss opening transitioning to Phase IIIb.
- Briefly discussed current and future Town Hall staffing needs.
- Signed updated signature documents for Bar Harbor Bank and Trust.
- Signed three Intents to Excavate (Map 11/Lot 12, Map 11/Lot 16, and Map 3/Lot 1).
- Signed a Building Permit for Map 15, Lot 04-03.
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The meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristie LaPlante, Town Administrator