

Bennington Board of Selectmen
March 1, 2022 6:00 PM
Meeting Minutes

Present: James Cleary, David Hardwick, David Foster

Chairman Cleary opened the meeting at 6:07 PM

Selectmen discussed employee wages for a brief moment.

Appointments:

6:30 – Road Agent, Matthew Blanchard - Blanchard was present to discuss wages and update the Selectmen with highway matters.

- **Water Break** - Main water break on Hancock Road, it was repaired, the James property was impacted. The crew is still at the site working and will remain until it is complete.
- **Wages** – Matt and Selectmen discussed a wage increase for DJ Wing. DJ successfully obtained his CDL within 3 months of hire, he is learning very quickly, has taken to the big equipment, spends a little time each week to learn various equipment. After a brief discussion, Selectmen authorized a pay increase of \$2.00/hour for DJ at this time, this raise is to be retroactive to January 1, 2022. The Board then discussed Matt and his wages, though he is doing a good job, they reminded him there were a couple items that still need working on as a lead. The Board is aware there are only two men, they are doing a lot. They realize what Matt would like as a goal and are happy to help him achieve that goal. He is still on probation, however the board agreed to authorize a pay increase of \$1.00/hour, retroactive to January 1, 2022 at this time for Matt with a review in April.
- **Backhoe** – Matt discussed replacing the 2011 backhoe in a few years, it has been well maintained and he would like to keep it for as long as possible. A new backhoe is approximately \$136,000+/- . The loader has taken a lot of wear and tear off the backhoe. The pick up is getting a little worn; it has 75,000 miles on it, though that doesn't seem like a lot, it is a lot of hours. Discussion followed regarding options for rotating out before it gets too worn. We may be able to get more money if we rotate it sooner than later. Matt stated that DJ did most of the front end on the truck last year. Discussion regarding vehicle options followed. No decision was made at this time.
- **Roads** – It was mentioned to Matt that South Bennington Road to Old Greenfield Road has a pile of snow that needs to be removed. The Town does not want water going into the storm drain. Matt was reminded to keep track of areas of road in town that have

pools, they will need to be shimmed in the spring. Matt received a quote on grinding, stone and piping in a ditch for Curtis Farm Road to Pine Meadows. Two different quotes one is with a 2 ½" base - \$75,000 total redo; the other is a 3" base - \$89,000 total redo. Greenfield Road also needs to be looked at. Discussed Bible Hill Road near Newall Field, there is a culvert with a catch basin that is needed to be installed. Matt discussed an Engineered design would be the best option, there is a tree that needs to be removed, Eversource was supposed to remove it and never came back. Matt stated the roots under the road could be problematic.

- **VFW** – Matt has a quote from JCL for a new pump at the VFW, the price is \$4,656. Board of Selectmen discussed this. Motion by Chairman Cleary to get this on the schedule as soon as possible. Seconded by Hardwick & Foster. Matt will set up the schedule with JCL to be done as soon as possible. Motion passed.
- **MDS Contract** – Matt reported the MDS contract was renewed in 2020, it is good through 2024. Motion by Chairman Cleary to remain with MDS through 2024. Seconded by Hardwick & Foster. Brief discussion followed. Motion passed.

7:00 – Police Chief, Jason LePine –

- **Vehicle Maintenance** - Selectmen invited Chief LePine to the meeting to discuss the vehicle maintenance. They have had these conversations in the past with Chief Sullivan, it is important to keep up with the maintenance. LePine was reminded to check the oil on a weekly basis, have DJ change oil on the regular schedules. Selectmen reiterated that regular vehicle checks are one of the most important factors of the new vehicle. Chief LePine indicated he will be taking the Tahoe home or it will be in Officer Danforth's driveway, it will not be left at the Town Building, this will be safer for the vehicle, will allow for a better response time. Chief LePine discussed the gas mileage for the Tahoe will be a lot better than the Ford Explorer was. Chief LePine stated that since we now will have a new Tahoe he would like to maintain the vehicle and work towards a 7 year rotation, rather than the 6 year rotation the town is currently working with. The 2019 Ford Explorer was discussed; LePine stated it has 45,000 miles, LePine would like to keep it for a while, maintenance is up to date and it is running very good. LePine indicated Antrim and Hancock both have Tahoe vehicles and are very satisfied with the vehicle.

Selectman Foster reiterated being sure to utilize a pro-active maintenance plan on the new vehicle is vital, assuring undercoating, checking fluids weekly, tire rotation etc.

Chief LePine asked if the Town Administrator could work with him to put the old cruiser out to bid. The production of the new cruiser is scheduled to begin on March 7, 2022, he is looking to have delivery or pick-up at the end of March. The current cruiser which is being replaced,

currently has 135,000 miles on it and it has a problem with the steering column freezing up, this has been being addressed for the last two years, it is not safe, there is no diagnoses from Ford though. He hadn't thought about the rise in gasoline prices.

- **Department Update** - Chief LePine discussed everything is going great within the department. They are busy, certain cases are taking more time than others. LePine read a list of what he has done since October, updating all policies, he is almost complete. LePine reviewed his goals which include being more active, have more visibility around town, school lunch visits on a regular basis, foot patrols and more. Officer Danforth is getting trained on investigation and it is hopeful he will become the investigative officer. And it is the goal to promote Danforth to Sergeant within the next two years.
- **Corporal position** - Lastly, LePine would like to promote Officer Milton to Corporal. He has had 20 years with the Town of Bennington, he is not looking for more money, just a promotion in title.

Minutes: Chairman Cleary motioned to accepted the Minutes of 02/22/22 as written, seconded by Hardwick and Foster. Minutes accepted

Financial: Payroll Register was signed
A/P Register was signed

Old Business:

New Business: Town Administrator reminded Selectmen they MUST be available to count ballots on the 8th, they do not all have to be present during the day though (per Moderator)

Items for signature:

- Elderly Exemption – Whittemore
- Building Permit – Osienski – Passive Solar Greenhouse
- Equalization sheet for DRA

With nothing further, Chairman Cleary adjourned the meeting at 7:30 pm. The next scheduled Selectmen's Meeting will be on March 15, 2022 at 6:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Debra Davidson, Town Administrator

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