

Bennington Board of Selectmen
October 4, 2022 6:00 PM
Meeting Minutes

Present: Chairman, James Cleary, Tom James, David Foster

Chairman Cleary opened the meeting at 6:00 pm

Appointments:

6:00 – Water Commission and Matt Miller – Residents: Joe MacGregor & Betty Coffin-Brooks

Chairman Cleary invited Matt Miller to explain to the residents who were present what has happened with the well, what is causing the brown water in Bennington.

Matt Miller spoke to the concerns and reassured everyone that the well is being tested regularly, just as any well in the State of NH, they are all overseen by the NH DES drinking water bureau. Miller further explained how testing works. He explained why the well needed to be cleaned initially, this being a normal cleaning that takes place every 5 years, the Town has always been swapped over to the Antrim well during the cleaning cycle. On September 19, 2020 the VFD (Variable Frequency Drive) was struck by lightning and was no longer working. The well immediately had to be back on Antrim well until it was repaired. The Bennington well should be up and running tomorrow if the repair goes well.

It is standard procedure that every 5 years the well is cleaned, when this happens Bennington always is switched over to the Antrim well.

Selectman James asked in the future, when the well is cleaned is there something the Town can do to notify residents? This would be in an effort to expedite their clean water?

Miller said residents should be aware of flushing their systems in their households. He further stated that during this changeover it seemed to affect Bible Hill Rd., Starrett Rd., and the Mill. Miller reported that he only received 5 calls total. If he doesn't know who is having issues, or what they are he is not able to help defer the problems. Miller said that the town is due to flush the hydrants again in October. He discussed the increase in pressure and how that can also affect water.

Discussion of the 6" line on Bible Hill Road is 100+ years old, most lines are the 6", 100+ year line. Tyler Howe spoke to the matter the line at the top of Pierce Hill Road is a 4" line. He further discussed the need to replace the system, the Water & Sewer is underfunded, it will take years

to catch up for the users to pay for the system. But the SRF does need to be reviewed and additional funds put into the account. Grants are available, but in order to qualify, the users must be paying a higher rate than what they currently are. The grants are all graded, and user contribution is one of the categories that is looked at. Bennington doesn't come close to qualifying.

Miller reiterated that Bennington has been running on a shoe string budget for a long time, and this will only last so long. Again, Miller stated the available grants are many, but the criteria is not met by Bennington. Our rates are far too low. It will take a long time to catch up before Bennington will be considered.

The rate study done in 2019 indicated that Bennington user rates are 40% below user fee rates that would be considered.

Tyler Howe discussed the AMP, it is not an old document. The cost analysis reflects to replace the pipe it is a minimum of \$500.00 per foot.

An example of the cost for water, Antrim water had a new well house engineered, they received 50[^] engineering costs, it is expected to go on line in 2024 and the cost of the project was 3.2 million dollars. The well house alone was 2.2 million dollars for a 26 x 30 building. The transmission line was 1 million. Antrim financed 2.6 million, with inflation, who knows what it would cost by today's costs.

Grants vs. loans were discussed. DES does have a 20% forgiveness loan, usually met with a grant.

To get Bennington into the running for grants, the following needs to be accomplished: the rates need to be increased to a rate that is acceptable and the town would need to meet the everchanging federal requirements for lead. It was discussed that if any resident is aware of lead in their pipes they must replace them. That is the owner's expense. There would have to be a test completed by the water department, if lead or galvanized pipes are discovered they must tell the home owners. There may be funds available to a homeowner through the NHDES.

Betty Coffin-Brooks asked if the water was safe to drink? She explained where she lived. Miller indicated if the water is clear it is 100% safe to drink, if it is not, he is not saying it is not safe but is not pleasing to the eye and probably most wouldn't want to drink it. It does not cause appliance burn out.

Joe McGregor wants to know why residents were not notified. Miller explained it is not common practice to send out notices every time wells are switched. Within 5 years Antrim will be on their new well and hopefully this will not happen again when the well is flushed in 5 years. He further explained what happened this time, is unique and should not happen again. Though it was

unfortunate, the water department did their best to rectify the situation as soon as they were able. Miller explained the levels of manganese and iron, he further explained they are far below the NHDES required levels and the only change after January 1, 2023 is that children under one year old should not drink the water due to the level of manganese. Miller said he treats and keeps a very close eye on the levels. He recommended letting water run for a minute or two before using for cooking or coffee.

MacGregor said they would have liked a notice in a newsletter. Miller again stated he didn't know about this as it was a lightning strike. In the future the electronic sign will be used. Miller indicated that Chairman Cleary was notified asap when the well died, both Tyler Howe and Matt Miller notified the Chairman. A survey is being prepared and will go in water bills regarding the lead piping and needs to be addressed in 2024.

Discussion followed regarding options for a future well. No decision was made. Miller recommended hiring a Geologist for consultation before any decisions are made regarding a new town well. Reminding those present that before grants should be sought out, rates need to be more in line with State requirements. The system could use some work before grants would likely be awarded.

Miller stated that the well should be on tomorrow afternoon. Also, an insurance claim will be filed for this incident.

In the future Signage at the Town Office and social media sites will be noted, the LED sign board will be utilized and notice at the Transfer Station will be displayed.

Selectmen moved on to the public hearing at this time.

7:00 – Public Hearing – In accordance with RSA 31:95A at 7:00 pm, Chairman Cleary opened the hearing with a motion to accept \$122,500.22 of Unanticipated Funds. The breakdown of the unanticipated funds are as follows:

State Highway Block Aid in the amount of \$37,799.49;

2nd Traunch funds payment for the Municipal Waste Water System Meters in the amount of \$79,354.76

\$5,346.00 of unanticipated Goffer funds.

Motion was seconded by Selectmen James and Foster.

A brief discussion followed.

Motion was passed and accepted.

Minutes: Chairman Cleary motioned to accept the minutes of September 20, 2022 as written. Seconded by James and Foster. Minutes were accepted.

Financial: Selectmen signed the Payroll Registers for weeks 9/22 & 9/29 as well as, the Accounts Payable Registers for weeks 9/22 and 9/29

New Business:

- **Review/Approve/Signatures:**
Timer Tax Warrants – Tenny; Warren

Miscellaneous:

- **BTLA** – Eversource is appealing 2021 assessments – Brian Fogg & Upton & Hatfield are handling the appeal
- **Transfer Station** – Selectman James recused himself as a Selectman at this time, he discussed the Transfer Station is advertising for part-time Help Wanted. There has been a change in current employees and more help is needed; Selectman James also discussed wanting to change hours of operation at the Transfer Station. Beginning November 6, 2022 James would like to change the hours of operation on Wednesday to close at 5:30 and at 3:30 on the weekends. Residents who show up right at closing time, especially with trash not sorted, cause a hardship to the Transfer Station employees who need to leave no later than 4:30. Discussion followed. Chairman Cleary motioned to accept the change of hours, effective November 6, 2022, and see how it goes. Noting this may be a temporary change. Seconded by Selectman Foster. Motion passed.
- **DPW** – Help Wanted for winter months on a part-time, per diem basis was discussed. This is to do parking lots and shovel walkways.
- **Community Supper** – Town Administrator discussed the Town Office, Police Department & Highway Department sponsoring the dinner on Thursday, October 13, 2022. Discussion followed with the Board. Selectmen approved this request. A sign-up sheet is available for employees to sign up for their contribution. Town Administrator will notify Stephanie Mackesy, who is the coordinator of the Community Supper program and let her know the Town will sponsor the next Community Supper.
- **Cupola** – Town Administrator let Selectmen know that Matt Harwood intends to get the lift here next week and is ready to get started on the Cupola repairs; he is also getting prices for us on a chair lift and possibly a sprinkler system. The hope is to utilize the Town Hall Gymnasium more frequently.

Other Business:

Chairman Cleary discussed today he attended the Active Shooter Training at Pierce Elementary School. Cleary discussed what he learned. Selectmen discussed the importance of these trainings.

Selectmen asked what time Trick or Treat will be, Town Administrator will verify with the Police Department and get the word out.

With nothing further, Chairman Cleary motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:43 pm. Seconded by Selectman James. Motion to adjourn passed.

The next scheduled Selectmen's Meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 18, 2022 at 6:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Davidson, Town Administrator