

Bennington Board of Selectmen
January 4, 2022 5:00 PM
Meeting Minutes

Present: James Cleary, David Foster

Absent: Dave Hardwick

5:00 PM – Budget Committee – The meeting was called to order, Budget Committee Members Present - John Baybutt, Judy Heddy, Tyler Howe and John Charlonne were present. Chairman of Selectboard, James Cleary was present.

Executive - The meeting opened with reviewing the budget. A few small raises for employees, Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk, Transfer Station Attendant. Health insurance was discussed, Chairman Cleary explained the option of offering a different plan through Health Trust is being considered, the Board is considering offering a comparable plan with significant savings was discussed. If employees want a different plan, they will be given the option of paying the difference.

Discussion of putting our Auditing Services out to bid.

Ambulance cost will remain at \$25,000. This is a direct result of the assistance from BFD.

Discussion that Code Officer, John Kendall is working on a warrant article, updating the Ordinance to include “tiny houses”, and “temporary housing”.

5:45 – Selectman Foster arrived, the meeting was opened as a Selectmen’s meeting with Cleary & Foster present as Selectmen and the Budget Committee present to review the proposed budget.

Highway Budget - Discussion followed about the Highway budget.

Road Plan - Budget Committee members would like to know the road paving plan. Chairman Cleary explained to his knowledge - Pierce Hill, Durgin Road, Gillis Hill Rd. to Curtis Farm Rd. will be worked on in 2022. The need for culvert clean-out is vital was also discussed.

Road Committee - Question was asked by Baybutt if the Road Committee should be resurrected. Brief discussion followed, no decision was made.

3rd Man on Highway - Discussion followed regarding hiring a third person for the highway, there are two full time employees at this time. The cost to hire a 3rd person is approximately \$60,000, though the position would be split between the Highway and Recycling Center. The need for a third person was discussed, at this time it was decided to wait on the position until another time.

Pick up Truck – replacement of the pick-up truck sooner than later was discussed.

Sanitation – Discussion followed about the Transfer Station

Household Hazardous Day – HHD will not be participated in in 2022, there are not enough residents who have utilized the day. The \$1,602.00 of funds will be reduced from the hazardous Household Day and put into Hauling and Disposal, increasing that line item to \$53,602.00. Matt Blanchard will be asked to get bids for Hauling & Disposal.

Water Dept. & Sewer Dept. –

Horizontal Boring – A new line item for Horizontal Boring, \$25,000.00 cost - a grant is being applied for this, hopeful for 100% reimbursement.

CMOM – Another new line item for video technology to allow the sewer lines to be looked at and become pro-active and not wait until a line needs addressing. The cost for this is \$10,000.00, working on a grant for this as well.

Library - There were questions about the library budget, Book Collection? What exactly is this used for, can this line item be replaced with funds from the David Glynn Trust? What is the circulation of the library? How many residents actually use the library? Copier, why is it \$3500/year vs. \$1700/year, Town Office copier is used quite heavily with Town Clerk, Tax Collector, Office, Police. Maybe the Library could buy a copier?

Selectmen and Budget Committee asked Deb Davidson to reach out to Leslie to get some clarification and report back what she finds out.

Other - Discussion followed regarding the lifeguard wages, does the town have to provide a lifeguard or could it be swim at your own risk? This will be looked into. John Baybutt discussed the modification factor for workers comp and the fact that there hasn't been a WC claim in a few years is very good. Right now our modification factor is 1.42 and we will continue to work towards lowering it even more. It makes a big difference in our cost for WC Insurance. Providing a safety class was discussed, Deb will contact Primex and arrange for this later in the spring. Including DPW, and other departments, and possibly offering it to our neighboring communities.

Discussion moved on to CRF, 2025 is the year to potentially purchase a new Fire Truck. Red List Bridges were discussed. The one red listed bridge is scheduled to be replaced in the next few years, approximately \$200,000.00 to replace, 80% paid by the state the remainder by the town.

Discussion that Rick Reed had called and indicated he would be open to stepping down, and being replaced as a member of the Budget Committee due to personal reasons. Motion by John Baybutt to not accept this offer, and to keep Rick Reed on the committee as an advisory and/or consultant. Seconded by John Charlonne, all in favor. Rick Reed shall remain as an honoray, consultant for the Budget Committee.

Deb discussed next year, she will be sure to include the budget committee earlier, getting budgets out in October to them.

With no further questions, at 6:45 the budget committee session of this meeting adjourned.

7:15 pm – Keith Nason, Emergency Management Director – Keith wanted the Board of Selectmen to know that the system for Southwest Mutual Aid (SWMA) is very antiquated and it does not work well. Other towns are also having issues, the PL is blown out again, removing Crotched Mountain has helped but it is problematic, communication is very difficult at times.

Keith discussed \$50,000 of GOFFER Funds that we could potentially obtain Gear, Additional Space and other items. There is a 10% match. The application needs to be completed before June and Keith is going to work on this.

Fire Chief, Foster asked for the contact for Matt Harwood, he may be able to assist with the renovations at the Fire Station.

Minutes: Chairman Cleary motioned to accept the minutes of 12/28/21 as written. Seconded by Dave Foster.

Financial: Payroll Register
A/P Register

Old Business: Bat Clean up – Matt Harwood will begin next week.

New Business: New Hampshire Retirement System has begun auditing the Town of Bennington, hasn't been done since 2013, they have begun auditing the last 5 years. Deb Davidson asked NHRS if they could postpone this audit until after town meeting. The request was denied.

Review/Approve/Signatures: Representation letter to Vachon, Clukay & Co., LLC -Chairman Cleary signed the letter, it will be returned to the auditors on 12/6/2022.

With nothing further, the Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m. The next scheduled meeting will be Tuesday, January 11, 2022 at 6:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Davidson, Town Administrator