

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

Chairman Cleary called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm

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

Others Present: Town Administrator, Deb Davidson, Budget Committee Members- John Baybutt, Shelly Griswold, John Charlonne

Appointments: Bennington Budget Committee – to review and discuss the 2023 proposed budget. Chairman of the Budget Committee, John Baybutt opened the meeting by going over the meeting they had on Tuesday, November 29, 2022 at 6:00 pm, explaining they met with the Fire Chief, DPW Director and Police Chief. They recommend increasing the Fire Department fuel by \$500.00, everyone agreed with this recommendation.

They discussed the Highway Department and encumbering the \$17,000 remaining in the Tar/Patch/Seal line item as well as encumbering the \$50,000 for paving. Matt Blanchard had explained why these funds weren't spent during 2022. Everyone agreed these funds should be encumbered.

Budget Committee and Matt reviewed the Transfer Station budget and supported the recommended increase of wages, as there was not enough based on the number of hours and wage as it was originally presented. Also discussed was maintenance on the office at the recycling center that is needed, there is some rot, this will be repaired in 2023, using maintenance funds and some Town Buildings CRF. New T-111 and staining will give the building a great facelift.

Police budget was discussed with Chief LePine, the budget looked fine to everyone. It was discussed that though the town gets \$75.00/hour for special details, the officer gets \$45.00 and the town gets \$30.00 for the vehicle. Town Administrator was instructed to look to the DRA for directive how to do this, it is likely a warrant article for voters to decide.

Discussion followed regarding the price of gas/diesel. It was questioned if the Chief of Police uses the NHDOT in Hillsborough, at this time he does not. It was suggested it may be something to look into, as it may be a much cheaper way to purchase gas.

Discussion continued regarding police vehicles. Keeping up with maintenance & repairs. Any additional mileage should be considered. No decisions were made at this time.

Budget Committee member, John Baybutt asked how many calls are made to Crotched Mountain Ski area? Dave Foster said he will look for actual call numbers, he thinks average is approximately 50+/- calls per season, there are approximately 175 calls per year, Dave will report back. Discussion followed regarding being reimbursed for these calls, \$8-10,000/year could be a good starting place. Ambulance fees are to be considered a significant cost to the tax payers. Dave Foster said he will discuss this with the manager of the mountain.

COLA was discussed. The Federal rate for COLA is 8.7 for 2023. Merit raisers were discussed as was other options of compensation. The importance of keeping employees was discussed. No decision was made at this time.

Interest rates on investments was discussed. Budget Committee member, Shelly Griswold discussed rates at Bar Harbor are 4% and rising. Motion by Chairman Cleary to have the Trustees of Trust Funds shop around for rates on investments. Seconded by Selectman Foster. Brief discussion continued. Motion passed. Ms. Griswold will reach out to TTF member, Bethany Craig and discuss investments.

Everyone agreed they would like to meet with the Librarian to discuss the Library budget next week, December 13, 2022. If she can't come in, perhaps she could answer the questions regarding oil and electric budget prices. This cannot wait until the first of the year.

Minutes: Motion by Selectman James to accept the minutes of 11/29/22 as written. Seconded by Selectman Foster. Motion passed; Motion by Chairman Cleary to accept the minutes of 12/1/22 as written, seconded by Selectmen Foster & James. Motion passed. Minutes of both meetings were accepted.

Financial: Selectmen signed Payroll Register for week ending 12/8
Selectmen signed A/P Register for the week of 12/1

Old Business: Selectmen discussed the recreation storage briefly, room is being created on the third floor of the Town Hall which will be available for either recreation or town clerk storage.

New Business:

Stage Closets - Selectman James brought to the Board a request by Bethany Craig to install and paint the doors for the current storage on the stage. Bethany would like to paint the doors the same color as the current closets. Selectmen approved this request.

Basketball hoops – Selectman James discussed removing the basketball hoops in the gymnasium. Discussion followed. Before they are removed it was determined to discuss this with Bethany Craig.

Gymnasium Floor – Selectman James discussed the need to have the floors redone in the gymnasium. Discussion followed. This will be put out to bid.

Hydrant Usage - Hydrant usage report from Water/Sewer Commissioners was reviewed and signed. It was also discussed to put an additional \$8,000.00 in the operating budget for the flushing of the hydrants. It was agreed this will go under general government buildings.

Cornucopia project – There was a request for a \$500.00 donation. Brief discussion followed. Selectmen supported this request and it will be put into the budget with the other warrant articles for local support of programs.

Resignation Letter – Selectmen received the resignation letter from Corporal, Lester Milton. This resignation will take effect December 7, 2022. Selectmen discussed this and are sad to see Milton go. He has served the Town of Bennington for over 20 years and during his tenure he has done exceptional police work.

Dept. Head Updates:

Fire Chief – Chief Foster reported that Matt Hall has been released to come back to work with no restrictions. Though he may have some limitations. Selectmen were happy to hear this.

Chief Foster also discussed Tyler Howe would like to join the Fire Dept. Foster is excited as Tyler will be an asset to the Fire Department and will only need minimal training. Selectmen support this addition to the Fire Department.

Review/Approve/Signatures:

With nothing further, the meeting adjourned at 7:56 pm. The next scheduled meeting will be Tuesday, December 13, 2022 at 6:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Davidson, Town Administrator