

Bennington Board of Selectmen

October 30, 2023

Meeting Minutes – 6:00 pm

Selectboard: Chairman, James Cleary, Tony Parisi, Tom James

Staff: Deb Davidson, Town Administrator

Public: There was no public present

Chairman Cleary called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm

Appointments:

6:15 Road Agent, Matt Blanchard – Road Agent, Matt Blanchard was before the Board to discuss the following.

- **Backhoe purchase** – Matt discussed that Milton Cat has agreed to a \$15,000.00 trade in for the backhoe. This offer is towards the 2023 backhoe, with a 7-year/4500-hour warranty. The Town can take possession of the new backhoe within 2 -2.5 weeks. All of the attachments we current own fit the new backhoe. The end cost with the trade in is \$141,900.00. There is also a remote access agreement, allowing CAT to remotely access the equipment in the event of a problem with the equipment they can quickly diagnose problems. Discussion followed regarding this and it was agreed, this is a good service to have. This can often, alleviate a lot of down time if there are problems.

Motion by Chairman Cleary to enter into a contract with Milton Cat for the purchase of a new backhoe with applicable warranty and a \$15,000.00 trade in for our backhoe and the remote access service agreement at no extra expense. Seconded by Selectmen Parisi and James. No further discussion. The motion passed 3-0.

Chairman Cleary signed the agreement which will be emailed to Jeff Slade at Milton CAT first thing in the morning.

- **CV Truck** – The new truck is still expected around Thanksgiving week. Matt is waiting for an updated trade-in contract for the International.

- **DOT Bridge Grant** – Town Administrator reported to the Board and Matt, there is no expiration date on the Bridge Funding that was previously received. The only stipulation is funds are to be used for bridges.
- **Loam for Cemeteries** - The Town Administrator reminded Road Agent about Loam at Cemeteries. Matt said he will be delivering it shortly.

6:30- Resident, Frank Woodward – Mr. Woodward was present to discuss his problems with his property since raising the building and resetting it on a foundation. Mr. Woodward is not happy with Building Inspector, John Kendall, as his home has many problems since this project was started.

Chairman Cleary stated that looking at the permit, the permit was for a foundation and it is the Town's understanding that the Building Inspector did everything required with a foundation inspection.

Mr. Woodward stated he disagreed with that statement from Chairman Cleary. He further stated he did not want the Building Inspector on his property in the future.

When asked what Mr. Woodward would like the town to do, he suggested firing the Building Inspector.

Selectman James said he would like to hear from Building Inspector, John Kendall who was not able to be present at this meeting.

Selectmen thanked Mr. Woodward for coming to the meeting. Selectmen all expressed their understanding for Mr. Woodward and his frustrations with the situation. However, the Board commented this is actually a civil matter with the contractor and not the town. The Town remains confident that the Building Inspector acted appropriately and in good faith while performing his duties for the Town of Bennington.

6:45 – Library Trustees – Molly Eppig, David McKenzie, Leslie McGregor and Rhonda Davie were present to discuss the future of the Rhubarb Festival.

Leslie opened with discussing some of the history of the Rhubarb Festival, noting that Molly Eppig and Dave McKenzie's wife started the Festival many years ago.

Molly Eppig commented that they want to make the Rhubarb Festival work for the town and the library. It being one of the only successful fund raisers for the library it is important it continue. Was started on the library lawn and was small in town, has expanded and now has vendors and has grown into the size for Sawyer Field. When it used to be run by the Library Trustees, eventually they became a vendor only, they would like to take it back over. Molly discussed expenses such as insurance and port-a-potties. Discussion continued as to where are the Selectmen at with the Festival, what support would they be willing to provide to help make the event a success. Also questioned why was it becoming a multi-day event. Molly will need volunteers to set up/take down, staff booths, organize vendors. Town Administrator, Deb Davidson provided Molly Eppig with the Rhubarb Book that has a very organized detail of procedures. This was provided to Davidson from Jessie Crews.

Chairman Cleary replied in that the town supports the festival with the insurance and pays for the port-a-potties. Selectman Parisi stated the Selectmen will handle parking, Selectmen all agreed with this comment. Selectman James stated he does the music and will continue. Selectmen all discussed this being a 1 or 1-1/2 day event. The field does not need to be tied up for 4-5 days. Selectmen discussed, they thought this past year was a huge success, even with the rain, Jessie Crews and others did a great job with the event.

Motion by Chairman Cleary to authorize the Library Trustees to “chair” the 2024 Rhubarb Festival and to reach out accordingly to those they need to receive volunteerism from. Seconded by Selectmen James and Parisi. Voted 3-0

Selectmen reiterated the Library Trustees have Selectmen’s full support and would like to get together in November or December to see how things are progressing.

- **Library Capital Reserve Fund** - The Library Building CRF was briefly discussed. No one had a definite knowledge of how much money was in the fund. Town Administrator will provide that information to the Board of Selectmen at the next meeting.

Minutes: Motion by Chairman Cleary to accept the minutes of October 23, 2023 as written. Seconded by Selectmen Parisi and James. 3-0 vote

Financial: Selectmen signed the Payroll Register and A/P Register for the week of October 26, 2023

Other:

- **Fencing update** – Town Administrator is still waiting for a quote, she will contact Crowe Fencing again.
- **Elevator update** – Waiting on the State to do their inspection and provide the certificate. Then we will be able to use the gymnasium.
- **Tri-Town Meeting** – Town Administrator reported there is a meeting with Frankestown and Antrim Town Administrators on Wed. November 1, 2023 to review the contract. It is understood, no decisions will be made, information will be brought back to the Board of Selectmen.
- **Budget review** – Selectmen briefly reviewed the budget. They will take home their copies and make suggestions. The budget is up approximately \$111,000, this is a result of 2 part-time officers and the need to send them to the academy, the 1 new hire who is split between highway and transfer station and the cost of insurance increases.
- **Fire mileage logs** – Fire Department mileage logs were reviewed.
- **Transfer Station Hours** – Selectmen reviewed an email from a resident who expressed dissatisfaction with the change in Transfer Station hours. Discussion followed, Selectmen will stand by their decision to keep the new hours. The hours are: Wed. 1:00 – 5:30; Friday 1:30 – 6:30 and Saturday 8:00 am – 4:30 pm. NO hours on Sunday.

Discussion followed that Bennington was one of the only towns with Sunday hours. With the inability to hire and keep workers who are willing to work both weekend days, Selectmen unanimously agree, the transfer station will not change the hours back. The Town Administrator was instructed to notify the resident and let them know of the Selectmen's decision.

- **Painting Quote** – Selectmen reviewed and approved a quote for painting the Town Hall Building interior. The hallway, bathroom and office area were all unanimously approved for \$9,500.00, this price includes any repairs, materials and labor.

Signatures:

- **Intent to Cut** – Forever Forest Lands
- **Tax Collector Deed** – Map 21 Lot 13- the paperwork was provided for Selectmen’s signature authorizing the Tax Collector to move forward with deeding this property.

Adjournment:

With nothing further, Chairman Cleary motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:43 pm. Voted 3-0 in favor. The next Selectmen’s Meeting will be held on Monday, November 6, 2024 at 6:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Davidson, Town Administrator