

# Bennington Board of Selectmen

November 27, 2023

Meeting Minutes – 6:01 pm

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

**Staff:** Deb Davidson, Town Administrator

**Public:** There was no public present

Motion by Chairman Cleary to open the meeting at 6:01 pm. Seconded by Selectmen Parisi and James. Motion passed 3-0

## Appointments:

**6:00 – Police Chief, Jason LePine** – Chief LePine was present to discuss monthly updates within the Police Department.

- **Signage** – Chief LePine discussed information he received from Scott Lester regarding the traffic signage and a grant that Selectman James had given to LePine earlier in the year. LePine stated he is waiting for prices from two different traffic sign companies, he will be applying for a grant, 75% paid by the state, 25% paid by the town.
- **Budget** – Selectmen reviewed the budget with Jason –

**Vests** – Chief LePine is budgeting for vests, he also is looking into a grant for the vests.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Full Time Officer** - Selectmen discussed part-time officers, Chief LePine discussed scheduling can be challenging when vacation, sick time or injuries occur. This is one of the reasons he would like to have a 3<sup>rd</sup> full-time officer considered.

Chairman Cleary suggested LePine consider working 5 8-hour days, the town would have better coverage with only two officers. Even if there was a 3<sup>rd</sup> full

time officer, residents want to see Chief LePine more. Chief LePine discussed the schedules of Brett, Jeff and himself and how that is working.

LePine discussed further how a 3<sup>rd</sup> full time officer would provide a more stable budget, giving weekends off to everyone if a rotation of schedule was utilized. LePine provided the rough cost of a 3<sup>rd</sup> full-time officer would be \$100,000.00, and increase of 5.2% increase for the town portion of the tax rate based on 2023 numbers. This number does not consider the part-time, over time or on call time that would be reduced. LePine discussed the expense of a 3<sup>rd</sup> full-time officer on an average \$250,000 home would have an impact of approximately \$135.00/year or \$11 - \$12 per month. Chief LePine said the police department has seen 1800 calls for service, there will be 2,000 by the year end. Chief LePine believes the Town is ready for a 3<sup>rd</sup> full-time officer. Selectmen asked to see a schedule of what is current vs. with a 3<sup>rd</sup> officer.

Chief LePine discussed sending Haley Minahan to the academy, if he sends her to the full-time academy it is a cost of \$14,080 for 16 weeks. If she goes to the part-time academy it is 3 days per week, and is a cost of \$9,350.00.

Selectmen are not sure they are supportive of a full-time position at this time, they would like to discuss it amongst themselves before making a decision.

**Prosecution** – Chief LePine stated he has received approval from Chief Parsons from Hillsborough to prosecute for Bennington. They have agreed to prosecute for Bennington for \$17,000 for the year. Discussion followed. Selectmen agreed this is a good move, however they want a written contract, signed by each town. Chief LePine said he would have it tomorrow (November 28, 2023).

**Parade** – Chief LePine stated he would be at the parade on Sunday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> with two cruisers. Selectman Parisi suggested Haley could be in one of the cruisers.

**Credit Cards** – Chief LePine discussed the need for a credit card for the Town. He has several odds & ends that need replacing for the “Go Bags” in the cruiser

and the vendors want payment via credit card. Selectmen are aware of the need for a town credit card, they will revisit this in the near future.

**Minutes:** Motion by Chairman Cleary to accept the minutes of November 20, 2023 as written. Seconded by Selectmen Parisi & James. Motion passed 3-0

**Financial:** There were no manifests this week. They were done in advance last week.

**Other:**

- **Budget review & Work Session** – Selectmen reviewed the budget as proposed. They made some adjustments to the proposed budget, department heads will be notified of the changes.
- **Minutes follow-up** – Selectmen discussed the allegations of Selectmen having a lack of communication & a lack of transparency. It was noted that the Webmaster and the Town Administrator spoke and there was a minor clerical error. There will be some cross training for both Town Administrator and the Administrative Assistant for posting items on the website, however the board agrees the Webmaster does a fine job. It was again noted minutes and agenda's being posted on the town website is a courtesy and not a mandate. In accordance with RSA 91-A:1, minutes are always available in a timely manner at the office and can always be emailed to a resident if they contact the office.
- **Lights Parade** – On schedule for Sunday, December 3 at 5:00 pm. Volunteers are welcome. This will be held directly after the Nativity Play at the Bennington Congregational Church.
- **Recent Weather** – Selectman Parisi reported that a resident had contacted him with concerns about the roads after the recent weather. The resident felt the roads were untreated and unsafe. Selectmen discussed this and instructed the Town Administrator to discuss this with Road Agent, Matt Blanchard.
- **Backhoe & Truck** – Selectmen asked when these vehicles would be delivered. Town Administrator reported within the next two weeks.
- **Cyanobacteria update** – The State will be testing Whittemore Lake again on Thursday. Waiting for Attorney Courtney's response regarding policy and testing residence on the lake before any action from the town will be made.

**Adjournment:** With nothing further, Chairman Cleary motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:45 pm. Seconded by Selectmen James & Parisi. Motion passed 3-0

The next Selectmen's Meeting will be scheduled for Monday, December 4, 2023 at 6:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Debra Davidson, Town Administrator