

# Bennington Board of Selectmen

January 2, 2024

## Meeting Minutes – 6:00 pm

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

**Staff:** Deb Davidson, Town Administrator

**Public:** Colleen Bassett, Haley Minahan, Jeff Danforth, Scott Lester

### Appointments:

#### **6:00 – Chief LePine –**

Chairman Cleary read the appointment to Nicolas Cole, who will be going to the part-time academy and working for the Bennington Police Department on a part-time basis.

**6:15- Police Chief Jason LePine** – Selectmen will be meeting monthly with department heads to be kept apprised of the happenings within departments. Chief LePine was present for his monthly update.

**Mileage Logs** - Chief LePine provided his monthly mileage logs for December.

**Police Academy** – Chief LePine has been getting Nicolas Cole & Haley Minahan prepared for the academy, there are currently 19 enrolled and it is all set to begin on January 13, providing the P/T test is passed.

**Budget** - The equipment line of the 2023 did go over and was discussed, it was for the purchase of the fire arms, there was a \$1,700.00 credit for the used equipment.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Full time Officer** – Hiring a third full-time officer was discussed. Chairman Cleary discussed this could possibly be a warrant article, personal feelings being put aside, Chairman Cleary is aware that Chief LePine has other things he does and wanted Chief LePine to know the Town of Bennington needs to be the priority. Chief LePine discussed he understands where Chairman Cleary stands on a third full time officer. Chief LePine explained the schedules, he is trying to accommodate both Bret & Jeff's schedules. With Haley and Nick, there will be more coverage. Chief LePine discussed the liability if someone is injured and full-time vs. part-time.

Selectmen thanked Chief LePine for his update.

**6:30- Fire Chief David Foster & EMD, Keith Nason**– Selectmen informed both Chief Foster and EMD Nason that monthly updates will become a regular monthly expectation of departments. Both said they understood.

**New Desk invoice** - Chairman Cleary asked about the invoice for desks, the total invoice is \$6,417.00, includes \$885.00 for carrying up one flight of stairs and completion of assembly. Selectmen were informed today, because this has been stored at Granite State Office Furniture since July, there is a \$300.00/month fee starting January for storage. Chief Foster indicated he had not heard about this monthly fee and will take care of it. Selectmen were not supportive of this purchase and do not want such large purchases in the future without knowledge ahead of time.

**Renovations to Fire Station** - Selectmen asked Chief Foster when the Fire Station will be completed? Both Foster & Nason indicated that Mike Anderson is working on it as often as he can. Selectmen encouraged the Chief to put some pressure on Mr. Anderson to finish up asap. A letter will be sent to Mike Anderson, he has been paid 2/3 and now storage fees are a concern.

**Overall Department** - Chief Foster said everything within the department is going fine.

**Crotched Mountain Ski Area** - EMD Nason discussed the ski area saying it has been busy there this year. A good rapport with Sue Donnelly continues. There was an increase in financial support from the Antrim Ambulance for 2024, substantial calls to the Ski area are a big part of this increase. Selectmen would like to invite Sue Donnelly to a meeting, as soon as February if possible. Nason reported the pond has been drained down to far and they are discussing this with Donnelly on a regular basis.

**6:45 – Resident, Crystle Maki & Chad Bullard** – Crystle & Chad were before the board to discuss a grievance they have with the Police Department. Crystle explained she has lived in town since 2019, she supported hiring LePine as the Chief of Police, she does not support this decision any longer. She explained she was recently in a very serious accident on December 12, the Chief responded, Crystle explained the accident. She further expressed she did not feel the Chief was, nor has been since, helpful. Expressed concerns for the speed of traffic on 202, they notice Officer Danforth there a lot, stopping many people, they never see Chief LePine. They see

the Chief sitting at the Rymes parking area and always looking down. Again, comment was made that Officer Danforth is out and about and does a lot of coverage, it is felt by Bullard & Maki that the Chief doesn't seem to care about Bennington and isn't around much.

Selectmen all indicated they understood the concerns, they have asked for more patrolling in the area of 202 and are working on getting signage.

**7:00 – Road Agent, Matt Blanchard** – Selectmen let Matt know they will be having monthly departmental updates.

**Mountain Road** – Chairman Cleary stated he had been up there, and it is much better. Road Agent, Blanchard said it does still need to be dug on the inlet side, under the top rock, but it is much better. The highway crew are making a new hook, the left side is nothing but leaves, and once the new hook is finished, it will clean it out very easily.

The bridge near Albertos was discussed. Blanchard said it has been looked at by the State, it is on the list for 2025. It is a red listed bridge, but not the priority bridge for the State.

**Grant** – the paperwork for the grant will be available and accepted next week. It just needs the acceptance vote from the Selectboard and to go before the Governor.

**Truck** – the new truck will be ready next week, waiting on the plow, Keith Nason will do the lettering.

**Bridge Funds** – Blanchard would like to use \$12,000.00 of the bridge funds to do work on Bible Hill Rd. He would like to line it up for spring, precast headers will be used.

**Old Greenfield Road** – Selectman James asked about the guardrail on Old Greenfield Road, it appears to be laying in the road. Road Agent, Blanchard said that is all set, the cross rail is ok, the posts are a little tender and will be replaced when the time is right.

An updated quote of \$108,000 has been received, this would grind the road and reclaim it. Two years ago, the quote was \$130,000 for the same job.

**Mountain Road & Whittemore Road** – Selectmen discussed these roads with Blanchard. The Board of Selectmen will go look at the roads with Blanchard.

Chairman Cleary discussed that in the spring Matt should have on his schedule, the trees will be cut, the old fence hauled out and replaced with a new fence at Whittemore. Discussion of computer lines and power in that area was discussed.

**New Hire** – Road Agent, Blanchard reported to the Selectmen that Curtis Dude is working out great.

Selectmen thanked Blanchard for the updates.

**7:30 – Code Officer, John Kendall** – John Kendall was not on the agenda but did stop in for a quick update with the Board.

**Monadnock Paper Mill** – took a building permit for a new roof, there will be no charge.

**Dave Blanchette** – John discussed the situation with Dave Blanchette, he is in the middle of selling his project. He paid \$12,000.00 for a building permit, John asks that the Selectmen extend the permit for a year so the project can stay on task. Selectmen agree, 3-0, with this request.

**Flooring** – John discussed the flooring in the gymnasium. Selectmen are not ready to move forward on this at this time.

Selectmen thanked John for stopping in.

**Minutes:** Motion by Chairman Cleary to accept the minutes of December 26, 2023 as written. Seconded by James & Parisi. Motion passed 3-0

**Financial:** Selectmen signed the A/P & Payroll Manifests

**Signatures:**

- **Tax Credits** – Selectmen signed the tax credits for Solar – Schnare; Veterans – Skrock, Perry, Reed
- **Sawyer Field Rental** – Men’s Softball League submitted a rental agreement for the League. Dates are for May 1 – September 1, Monday - Thursday – 5:30 – 7:30 pm. Selectmen discussed this agreement. Selectmen signed the agreement. Ivy Battaglia will be sent the signed copy, and will provide the COI as soon as it is available. \$100.00/team for the season was agreed upon by the Selectmen.

## Other:

- **Grant(s)** – FD - \$1,250.00 – backpack blower, 1 wick 4 cycle pump, 1 suction hose, 1 ft., valve strainer and 1 board with straps. Selectmen wanted Town Administrator to ask if the town’s portion was figured into the budget. After receiving that answer from the Chief, if it was budgeted in 2024, the grant can be sent over to the Town Clerk.  
Plow Truck – Vote of Authorization, NHDES – will be prepared next week
- **Miller assessment** – John Hatfield spoke with the Town Administrator indicating he would be going out to the property to assess and Mr. Miller will be notified by the assessor that a supplemental tax bill will be sent out.
- **Bennington Route 202, LLC** – extension on building permit was requested, Selectmen granted the extension with a 3-0 vote.
- **Budget Review** – Selectmen reviewed the budget, there were some housekeeping matters that need revising. The budget will be reviewed again on Monday, January 8.
- **State Education** – Chairman Cleary spoke to the law suit that just was won against the State regarding the State Education Funding. It would be a significant amount of funding, back to the towns. Of course, the court decision was appealed.

## Adjournment:

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

The next Selectmen’s Meeting will be Monday, January 8, 2023 at 6:00 pm.

There will be no appointments at the next meeting. The meeting will be a work session only.

Respectfully Submitted,

Debra Davidson, Town Administrator