

Bennington Board of Selectmen

February 26, 2024

Meeting Minutes – 6:00 pm

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

Staff: Deb Davidson, Town Administrator

Public: Melissa Clark

Chairman Cleary opened the meeting at 6:01 pm

Appointments:

6:15 – Matt Blanchard, Road Agent – Matt was before the Board for a monthly update with the Selectmen.

- **New truck** - Mr. Blanchard stated that the new truck is undercoated and waiting for seat covers. Matt questioned should he pay for it and get reimbursed. A very brief discussion of a town credit card followed. No decision regarding a town credit card was made at this time.
- **Posting Roads** - Matt reported he will be posting the roads at the end of the week.
- **Gillis Hill** - Working on Gillis Hill Rd. tomorrow, near Switzer, the department will be adding crushed as soon as it opens up a bit.
- **Backhoe** – The backhoe is also undercoated, seat covers will be ordered.
- **Sale of Freightliner** – Matt is going to put the truck on a few sites, NHMA, Municibid and other sites. Discussion as to the value of the vehicle ensued, wings will be sold with the truck.
- **Clean-Fleet Grant** – the grant is before the governor, if approved the old engine & frame will need to be destroyed of the vehicle to be replaced. The grant does

not require the vehicle be destroyed until the delivery of the new vehicle is received.

- **Resident Complaints** – Selectman James reported that he has received some complaints regarding roads, and the need to fill in the pot holes. Discussion followed, Mr. Blanchard assured Selectmen this was being addressed this week. The roads are also being posted this week.

6:30 – Mike Munhall & Joe McGregor, Conservation Commission – Mr. McGregor started out by thanking Chairman Cleary for attending the recent ConVal Meeting.

Mr. Munhall stated he has a copy of the letter that John Kendall has sent to Harley Miller.

Selectmen Parisi & James discussed their thoughts on the recent Conservation Commission meeting. Selectman Parisi was in attendance. Selectman James commented that he felt Mr. Miller felt heard and was satisfied with the outcome. It was unfortunate how it all unfolded, but has resulted in the Town Office establishing a policy for complaints.

Chairman Cleary provided Mr. Munhall a copy of the DRAFT policy. letter to NHDES and Conservation Commission Meeting.

Mr. McGregor discussed the procedure the Conservation Commission followed and would like to read a portion of a proposed policy for the Conservation Commission to follow.

Discussion followed regarding recommendations and how to move forward in the future.

If/when a concern is brought to the Conservation Commission, they will do an investigation. If necessary they will bring before the Selectboard and the board will review the concern. With Selectmen following their own policy, the landowner will always be notified.

Selectmen thanked Mr. Munhall & Mr. McGregor for the followup.

6:45 – Bethany Craig, Mike Munhall & Joe McGregor - ConVal Town Resident Forum Update – Mrs. Craig discussed how the group came to be, and mentioned it has met informally as citizens once.

They would like the support of the Selectboard moving forward. More work to be done after the election. Craig stated she would like to see more public forums to discuss this in the future, no matter how the vote goes on March 12, 2024.

Discussion of the enrollment of each of the four schools ConVal is considering shutting down, Temple, Dublin, Bennington & Frankestown. Two towns, Dublin & Frankestown have articles on the warrant to leave the district. Discussion followed of the impact this will have on the district if the town's both leave the district. A committee to be formed with Schoolboard & Selectmen from all 9 towns. Bennington is a little different in that we are a receiving town, rather than a donor town. Craig stated it makes sense to keep PES open. Asking that Selectmen are sure the School Board does do studies before closing any schools. Tuition for Bennington is approximately \$11.6K/student, significantly less than other towns. Closing these schools will have a huge impact on Bennington. Discussion Continued.

District wide mailing with facts was discussed.

Letter from Frankestown Selectmen on Frankestown Webpage was discussed.

Continue to fight to keep Pierce Elementary School in town. The impact on the community as a whole was discussed.

- If closed – could/would the town purchase the building
- Community Center
- Playground/Parking

Important to get people out to vote. There were only 19 registered voters at the ConVal SB2 Deliberative Session.

Minutes: Motion by Chairman Cleary to accept the February 12, 2024, inclusive of the letter provided by Matt Miller. Seconded by Selectman James. All in favor. Motion passed 3-0

Financial: Selectmen signed the A/P & Payroll Manifests

Other:

- **Policy for complaints & complaint form** – Selectmen reviewed a policy and form for residents &/or employees to voice complaints. After a brief discussion, it was decided these forms will be used, no anonymous complaints will be addressed.
Motion by Chairman Cleary to accept the complaint policy and complaint form with some minor changes. Seconded by Selectmen Parisi & James. Voted affirmatively (3-0)
- **New Facilities rental contract** – Selectmen reviewed the updated Facilities Rental Agreement. Discussion followed. Motion by Selectman Parisi there will be no fee for Bennington residents to use buildings for personal events. Seconded by Selectmen James and Chairman Cleary. Voted unanimously (3-0) with amendments. Examples are: No fees for Birthday Parties, Baby Showers, Wedding Receptions, Anniversary Parties, personal and/or family events. It will be at the discretion of the Selectboard to charge if it appears the event doesn't meet the criteria of the intention of the no fee policy.
- **Hardwick reclamation bond agreement** – All three Selectmen signed the updated reclamation bond agreement.
- **Veterans Exemption** – Selectmen signed a qualifying veterans exemption for M19 Lot 12
- **Building Permit** – A building permit for Map 12 Lot 11, replacement of front porch entrance w/cover was signed by the Selectmen and Code Officer, John Kendall.
- **Boiler Inspection** – Selectmen were informed Travelers representative for NHDOL was in town today, inspected boilers.
- **Mileage logs** – Selectmen reviewed the mileage logs.

Adjournment: With nothing further, Chairman Cleary motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 pm. Seconded by Selectmen Parisi & James. The next Selectmen's Meeting will be Monday, March 4, 2024 at 6:00 pm. Motion passed 3-0

