

Bennington Board of Selectmen

March 18, 2024

Meeting Minutes – 6:00 pm

Selectboard: Chairman, James Cleary, Tom James

6:10 Selectman Parisi joined the meeting

Staff: Deb Davidson, Town Administrator

Public: Joe MacGregor, Bethany Craig, Mike Hoyt, Mike Munhall, Riche Colcombe, Melissa Clark, Jon Manley

Chairman Cleary opened the meeting at 6:00 pm

Appointments:

6:00 – Bethany Craig – Facebook Post – Mrs. Craig stated she was recording this meeting and will be live streaming future meetings. Mrs. Craig was before the Selectboard to express and read her thoughts about a Facebook post created on 3/12/24 by Tony Parisi, on his personal page.

Chairman Cleary stated he had a conversation with Attorney Cronin, who is also the moderator, the electioneering allegations stated by Mrs. Craig are incorrect. There was no electioneering taking place at the polls.

Town Administrator briefly discussed she has been speaking with neighboring towns, and it has been discovered Town Administrators do not maintain a town Facebook page. Town Administrator has asked that the Selectmen consider deactivating social media platforms that are expected to be maintained by the office. This was tabled at this time.

6:15 – Bennington School Board Rep., Mike Hoyt – Mr. Hoyt was invited to the meeting by the Board of Selectmen to discuss his thoughts going forward now that the Article 10 Vote failed. Mr. Hoyt stated there is a meeting tomorrow at ConVal SAU, with Frankestown and Dublin starting the process to begin a feasibility study to withdraw from the district, this will require one Selectman and 1 School Board

Member. We would have 1 of 13 votes. Mike stated he would attend both meetings, both towns are looking towards each other moving forward.

Discussion followed on the financial impact this will have going forward. Forums that are being offered, studies, and what would determine if any schools would be shut down. Major increases to the budgets were oil/fuel and healthcare. Healthcare for the school system saw a 25% increase.

Chairman Cleary discussed the future of the district as a whole is a big concern. The 400-page report has a lot of information. Cleary also asked what Mr. Hoyt knew about weighted votes and how familiar he was with the idea. Mr. Hoyt stated he is familiar.

Cleary discussed weighted votes may help us down the road, Peterborough does have majority of voting power. There are a lot of questions, concerns regarding the time starts for the high-school children, inadequate housing is already a problem.

Joe MacGregor asked when was the first meeting, does the agenda have bringing the district back to whole, it is very divided. MacGregor asking is there a plan? Interference with athletics and other matters were questioned. Further it was asked if it is true Charter Schools could outbid the town, right to first refusal for Charter Schools?

Hoyt stated the agenda for tomorrow is review of the vote and review of the feasibility study. Already reviewed have been athletic programs, vocational programs would be more affected by a time change. More study is needed before change can take place. Budget cuts have been reviewed. Commenting on the State has not adequately funded education. The Federal Government has never funded special education anywhere close to their obligations. These are all being looked into. With regards to Charter Schools there are Federal Laws stating any new agreement cannot supersede prior agreements.

Jon Manley discussed if the House of Representatives don't vote for a change, there won't be funding to look for answers to where/what surplus went to and how much was leftover.

Mike Hoyt made a list of items to get clarified and also discussed positions that are vacant within the district.

Selectmen thanked Mr. Hoyt and Chairman Cleary stated he would be at the meeting on Tuesday.

6:45 – Chief Foster, Keith Nason – Monthly Update, Update on Fire Truck Status – Chief Foster stated that the fire truck is scheduled for assembly in June. Selectmen indicated they haven't signed anything, they would like to see a copy of the signed contract in the office as soon as possible. The warrant article was discussed, Selectmen reminded Foster that he cannot change the price of the vehicle from what the original vote was. Foster indicated he has signed the contract. Foster further stated that any changes would only be made if the manufacturer did not have the parts, they would do an upgrade.

Melissa Clark asked why the parts aren't available? Foster indicated he did not know that answer.

Discussion regarding funds for the new truck. Dave stated with the \$67,500 from the sale of the old truck, there should be plenty of funds in the CRF.

At 7:00 pm in accordance with RSA 91A:3 II (c) motion by Chairman Cleary to enter into a non-public session. Seconded by Selectmen Parisi & James.

Motion passed 3-0

7:35 motion by Chairman Cleary to enter out of the non-public session and to further seal the minutes. Seconded by Parisi & James. Motion to enter into regular session and to seal the minutes passed. 3-0

Decision: Selectmen will meet with members of the fire department on Tuesday, March 26, 2024 at 7:00 pm.

Minutes: Selectmen approved the minutes of March 4, 2024 as written.

Financial: A/P & Payroll Manifests were signed by the Selectmen

Other:

Sawyer Park Rental Request – Selectmen denied the request to use Sawyer Park on Monday's from 5:30 – 6:30 from June – August. The field is already rented. Alternative options will be suggested.

Tri-Town Meeting with other towns date – Town Administrator, Deb Davidson discussed she and Antrim Town Administrator, Donna Hanson and Francestown Town Administrator, Jamie Pike would like to set up a meeting with Selectmen and Road Agents to go over the Tri-Town Agreement and discuss moving forward. Brief discussion followed, Chairman Cleary discussed the two phases of the Tri-Town Pit, bounds and reclamation briefly. A meeting for Monday, April 22, 2024 at 6:15 will be arranged. Town Administrator to arrange this with Francestown and Antrim.

Rate increase for water/sewer discussion – Selectmen reviewed the rate increase and the letter presented by the Water/Sewer department. Chairman Cleary explained the need for the rate increase in order to apply for future grants. Further explaining there is going to be a large bond issue in the future, consideration of establishing a Capital Reserve Fund in the future will be on the agenda for the next budget cycle. Upon completion, the increases will be approximately \$1.00/gallon per quarter and \$10.00/flat fee per quarter.

Water Commissioner, Melissa Clark explained the rate increases and stated that a CRF would be necessary in the future. The increases will be seen over the next 18 months.

Motion by Chairman Cleary to accept the water/sewer rate increases as written and proposed by the Water/Sewer Commissioners. Seconded by Selectmen Parisi & James. Motion passed (3-0)

Landfill Property & Well – discussion regarding the quotes from Eastern Analytical & Second Wind. The quote from Eastern Analytical is a standard price, \$5,193.50 is the quote. This is for the monitoring requirements at the Tri-Town Site, the cost is split between Bennington, Antrim & Francestown. The quote from Second Wind is \$3,390.00 for rebed 2x, 2 cube carbon absorbers. This price is also split between Antrim, Bennington & Francestown. These are annual costs. Selectmen unanimously approved the quotes.

Keys & Fobs – Access to building was briefly discussed. This matter was tabled until a later date.

Abatement – Tax abatement, \$5.08

Adjournment:

With nothing further, motion by Chairman Cleary to adjourn the meeting at 7:40 pm.
Seconded by Selectmen Parisi & James. Motion passed 3-0

The next Selectmen’s Meeting will be scheduled for April 1, 2024 at 6:00 pm. A non-public staff meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 26, 2024 at 7:00 pm to discuss personnel matters.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Debra Davidson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Debra Davidson, Town Administrator