

Bennington Board of Selectmen
Monday, September 23, 2024
Meeting Minutes
– 6:00 pm

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

Staff: Deb Davidson, Town Administrator

Public: Melissa Clark

Selectman Parisi opened the meeting at 6:00 pm. Second by Selectman James.

Appointments:

6:00 Road Agent, Matt Blanchard – Mr. Blanchard had to reschedule due to he is still paving & flagging.

6:15 Fire Chief, Zack Andersen – Selectman Parisi asked Chief Andersen if he wanted to go early since Mr. Blanchard has rescheduled. Chief Andersen said that would be good.

- **Fire Truck** – Chief Andersen provided Selectmen with photos of the frame & cab so far. The pumphouse has been started, but the body has not yet been started. Guessing it is on schedule to be delivered in the spring as originally proposed.

Discussion regarding having the equipment mounted, that will be an additional cost of \$9,800.00. This was a result of a change order that was signed back in May. Zack would like to have Lakes Region install the mounted equipment and lettering. The radio could be installed in house or it could be taken out and installed or bring it to Lakes Region to have them install it, either would be fine. This was discussed and Selectmen agree to budget for this in 2025. Zack is to contact Lakes Region for an accurate pricing for this work.

- **Fire & EMS Gear** – 4 sets of fire & EMS gear were delivered this past week. This will be paid via CRF.
- **Pay Rate** – Chief Andersen provided a pay rate sheet from two neighboring communities. Antrim is the best example, Frankestown pays with yearly stipends. Andersen also provided the original plan from Mike Roina. Discussion followed regarding wages needing to be adjusted in 2025 for the EMT and Firefighters.
- **Dispatching** – Discussion about switching to Concord Capital Area from SWNH followed. The quote Concord Capital Area provided is \$7,000.00 less than SWNH. There seems to be fewer dead spots and they are willing to add repeaters. Keene is likely going to try for another bond for improvements, they have received a grant, but if funding isn't acquired, they will put the costs onto the municipalities. Antrim has indicated they aren't sure, but at this time they are looking towards staying with SWNH and see what happens.

Motion by Chairman Cleary to authorize a contract with Concord Capital Area, providing the fund in is in line with what they have quoted. Seconded by Selectmen Parisi & James. Motion passed affirmatively 3-0.

With nothing further, Selectmen thanked Chief Andersen for the updates.

6:25 – Bennington Recreation, Melissa Clark – Melissa spoke to the Halloween event. The event will be held at the Transfer Station. There will be a haunted hayride and trunk or treating on Saturday, October 26, 2024 from 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm. There are several skits and many wanting to do the Trunk or Treating. The next Recreation meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 2, 2024 at 7:00 at the Town Hall.

On another note, Melissa asked if Selectman Parisi could come to the ZBA Hearing on October 1, 2024 at 7:15. Parisi is the alternate and is needed at the meeting. Chairman Cleary indicated he would also be at that meeting. Code Officer, John Kendall will be asked if he can come also.

6:30 – Mike Hoyt – Update on ConVal Dublin/Francestown withdraw committee. Mr. Hoyt started speaking at 6:30, not all were present yet for the Cemetery Trustee meeting and Hoyt was happy to go early.

Chairman Cleary stated that he was somewhat disappointed in the committee. Before Cleary felt he could vote in favor of the withdraw, more information was needed. There were 4 towns originally targeted for closing, that failed and now two towns are wanting out. There was not enough accurate information on costs to vote in favor. Not knowing an actual impact a withdraw will have on towns, Cleary stated he would not support a withdraw from either Town.

Mr. Hoyt said that budgets are hard to nail down exactly, there was 3 million dollars spent for out of district students this past year. Finding staff has been problematic. Not knowing what impact on the district a withdraw has, Hoyt stated he will not support it.

Going forward, Hoyt said a report needs to be submitted to the State by the committee on or before October 22. Chairman Cleary stated he will get a letter to Hoyt by October 1 to attach to the report.

Discussion of town vote followed. No matter what, towns would still need a vote to allow for a withdraw for either community. Each town needs a 60% vote, as does the district overall need a 60% vote. Francestown & Dublin are expected to file a minority vote and submit it to the State for approval. If approved, if the district votes yes, they can still withdraw. Cleary reiterated, this is going to be a financial hardship to the remaining communities.

Hoyt discussed if they both decided to withdraw from the district, but remain in the SAU, additional funding will be needed and it will be expensive. Budgets will be required for the overall SAU, Conval District, Francestown District and Dublin District. Hoyt further stated that the Financial Committee needed more information before making public statements or decisions. They are still meeting and working on numbers. A more reliable cost will be available before the March 11, 2025 vote. Hoyt reminded everyone nothing will take effect until 2026.

Lastly, Mr. Hoyt would like to submit a note from the Communications Committee to be put on the website and the Facebook page. This was approved and Mr. Hoyt will get the note to the Town Administrator as soon as possible.

Selectmen thanked Michael Hoyt for the update and for all the work he has put into the committee.

6:45 RSA 91A:3 II (C) – Cemetery Trustees – In accordance with RSA 91A:3 II (C) motion by Chairman Cleary to enter into a non-public session. Seconded by Selectmen Parisi & James. Voted 3-0 in favor

6:56 – Motion by Chairman Cleary to enter out of the non-public session and to further seal the minutes. Seconded by Selectmen Parisi & James. Motion passed 3-0.

In accordance with RSA 31:19 II, motion by Chairman Cleary to accept a donation, less than \$10,000.00 from a charitable organization for the purpose of cemetery upgrades, funds are to be held by the Trustees of the Trust Funds. Seconded by Selectmen James & Parisi. Motion passed 3-0.

Decision: To authorize the Cemetery Trustees to move forward with quotes for upgrades at the cemeteries in the form of cutting trees and to further accept an anonymous donation in support of the cost to cut the necessary trees.

Minutes: September 9, 2024

Financial: A/P & Payroll Manifests

Other:

Sawyer Field – Maintenance of the memorial stone will still move forward. Selectman Parisi & Chairman Cleary will take care of this before snow fall.

Signage – NHDOT asked for permission to post weight limit signage on three bridges in town, the bridges are Antrim Road/Contoocook River, Antrim Road/Monadnock Mill Canal and NH 31 over Contoocook River. Discussion followed. Before Selectmen are comfortable authorizing this signage, they would like the NHDOT to address signage directing trucks away from Antrim Road. The intention of this is to alleviate trucks from attempting to go under the 13'2" trestle. This has remained an on-going

problem and needs to be addressed as soon as possible. The Town Administrator will contact NHDOT, Project Manager William Saffian and Robert Landry. Both work for the NHDOT.

MS-525 Selectmen signed the MS-525

Roads – Chairman Cleary discussed shimming still needs to be completed, but the roads that have been paved are in great shape.

Matt & DJ and Chief LePine will be asked to be sure to post slow children signs on Old Greenfield Road.

Speeding – Selectmen discussed speeding within town. This has become more of an issue as of recently. Selectman James indicated he has seen the Bennington Police Department out on the weekends on 202 and it is noted they have stopped several people. Many younger people have been stopped going in excess of 30 mph over the speed limit. Selectmen will address the speeding with the Police Department and it will be discussed the BPD needs to stay on this matter. Tickets must be issued and people need to slow down in Bennington.

Dumpster – The Town Administrator discussed the dumpster that is at the Fire Station. This wasn't budgeted and TA asked if we should keep it. The cost is \$55.00/month. Brief discussion followed, Selectmen encouraged the TA to talk with Fire Chief, Zack Andersen. No decisions were made.

Karen Belcher – Karen Thanked the Selectmen, especially Selectman James, for help on voting day. Selectman James was there all day and night and his time was very much appreciated.

Adjournment: With nothing further, Chairman Cleary adjourned the meeting at 7:15 pm, with the next meeting to be on Monday, October 7, 2024 at 6:00 pm. Seconded by Selectmen James & Parisi.

Respectfully Submitted,

Debra Davidson, Town Administrator