

**Bennington Board of Selectmen**  
**Monday, January 13, 2025**  
**Meeting Minutes – 6:00 pm**

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

**Staff:** Debra Davidson, Town Administrator, Cathy McGillicuddy, Administrative Assistant

**Public:** Resident, Travis McClure; Town Clerk, Debra Belcher

Chairman Cleary called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm.

**6:15 – Moderator, John Cronin** – Mr. Cronin was before the Board of Selectmen to discuss State Legislature which recently passed that could affect the elections. The legislature passed HB 1264 in the summer, thus implementing an accessible voting system will be required for future elections. The law went into effect on January 1, 2025. It will include hardware that will cost between \$7,500 - \$10,000.00, software costing \$2,500.00 +/-.

Town Clerk, Debra Belcher stated that we can rent the State equipment and the actual system will not be available until after the election. We can rent the current one.

Mr. Cronin would like to have a capital reserve fund established for this purpose and to further put \$1,000.00 in the capital reserve fund.

After further discussion motion by Chairman Cleary to put a warrant article on the 2025 warrant establishing a capital reserve fund for the purpose of allocating \$1,000.00 to assist the town clerk & election workers with the necessary purchase of the accessible voting system when the time comes. Seconded by Selectmen James & Parisi. Motion passed 3-0.

**6:30 – Fire Chief, Zack Andersen –**

- **Budget** - Selectmen asked Chief Andersen to again review the proposed 2025 budget. There were a couple questions, Chief Andersen answered and will be prepared for the budget and deliberative meetings.

- **CRF** – Chief Andersen was asked if in the future, any requests from CRF be broken down and clearly identified what is being purchased. Not to just provide the invoices. This was agreed to do in the future.
- **Training** – Chief Andersen discussed that Great Brook Ambulance out of Hillsborough has offered our EMT/Fire personnel to work for Great Brook Ambulance, each employee would get free training. Discussion followed, Selectmen think this is a good idea. Chief Andersen will get a contract for the Selectmen to review before any final decisions are made.
- **Keene Mutual Aid** – The price of \$22,000.00 for 2025 was solidified. Discussion followed regarding options for services. NO decisions were made at this time.
- **Marketing Agreement** – Chairman Cleary signed the marketing agreement for FireTec for the sale of the fire truck. They will get 10% commission as they have with previous sales.
- **New Truck** – The new truck will be ready as soon as all the incidentals are finalized. Then they will ship the truck to Tamworth and then it will be delivered to the Town of Bennington. Chief Andersen provided Selectmen with a picture of the truck. Selectmen were glad to hear things are going forward and we are close to receipt of the new fire truck.

**7:00 – School Board Representative, Mike Hoyt** – Mr. Hoyt was before the board to discuss status of Conval, the situation with the State Ed Funding being cut so drastically and what ConVal towns can expect going forward.

- **Special Ed Funding** – this funding has been cut drastically, while enrollment of the students needing additional support has increased 15%
- **New laws** require that children with special needs will be entitled to an adequate education from 3 years of age – 22 years old. The funding for these programs was funded at 98% two years ago; last year 87% of the funding for the special ed program was funded and this year only 67.5% is approved for catastrophic aid. Additional options for funding was discussed. As far as revenues for 2025, there is \$185,000.00 less than there was in 2024 and the adequacy grant went down \$450,000.00 for the district. The court case will take several years to reach a final decision, with appeals to the State it will be costly and timely.

There are contracted costs that increase and the district has no control over such as Health Insurance and Transportation. The withdrawal of Frankestown and/or Dublin will make a huge difference in these costs. A March vote is very important. Lengthy discussion followed as to what could happen if a successful withdrawal vote is reached. If it is a successful vote, the towns want to keep their grades 7-12 at Conval. This is very complicated process as establishing new SAU's, budgeting and staffing will be very involved.

A lengthy discussion followed regarding thoughts and options for future of towns in the district. No decisions were made. It is very important to get people out to vote and that message needs to get out to residents.

Selectmen thanked Mike for his time and update.

**Minutes:** Motion by Chairman Cleary to accept the minutes of January 6, 2024 as written. Seconded by Selectmen Parisi & James. Motion passed 3-0.

**Financial:** A/P & Payroll Manifests were reviewed and signed.

**Work Session:** Selectmen reviewed the Budget and Warrant one last time. A Warrant Article for the Accessible voting system will be written. Accessible Dwelling Units was also discussed. This will need to be put on the warrant next year, Planning Board will need to hold hearings and write an amendment to the ordinance.

Selectmen discussed briefly the budget hearing to be held Tuesday, January 21, 2025, 6:00 pm at the Town Hall on the second floor. All will be there and department heads will be notified. Once available, budgets will be made available to the public. Their will be no meeting next week on Monday.

**Adjournment:**

With nothing further motion by Chairman Cleary to adjourn the meeting at 7:44 pm. Seconded by Selectmen James & Parisi. Motion passed 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Debra Davidson, Town Administrator