

TOWN OF BENNINGTON

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Minutes of the Meeting – October 19, 2016

Selectmen Jeffrey Rose, James Cleary and Steven Osienski were present as well as Administrator Denise French. Also attending the meeting was Bethany Craig. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

Cindy Stocker met with the Selectmen and Road Agent Gary Russell to discuss the deteriorated condition of Old Stagecoach Road and its affect on their property. Mrs. Stocker was pleased to hear that the road is targeted for 2017 repair which, among other things, is anticipated to include restoring the crown of the road and improved drainage.

The Road Agent and Selectmen discussed the following:

- Numerous complaints received by Town Hall staff relative to maintenance efforts on Antrim Road. Gary reported that too much sand was applied after the seal coat application. The road has been swept; a road roller might be used to embed the nuisance rocks.
- Authorized payment of the \$5,000 excavator fee which the Highway Department rented for a month. In addition to processing winter sand the machine was used for installation of a culvert on Switzer Road and installation of drainage structures on Gillis Hill Road.
- Continued EMS backup support to Antrim, by the shared Highway Department/Fire Department employee, is having an impact on Highway Department operations.
- The pending task list includes:
 - Removal of the raft
 - Antrim Road sidewalk repair
 - Installation of a raised drainage cover on Old Stagecoach Road which is intended to alleviate a Bible Hill Road drainage problem
 - Preparation for the November 2nd Tri-Town Excavation Pit meeting
 - Creation of Acre Street parking at Town Hall
 - Oversight of the Mountain Road M3/L14 berm replacement and improved road drainage project being done by the property owner at the Selectmen's direction

Fire Chief Michael Roina and Rescue Captain Adam Dunning met with the Selectmen to conceptually discuss acquisition of an ambulance:

- From January 1 through October 19th Bennington Fire Rescue has responded to 186 calls; 124 of those calls were for emergency medical services. Some of the calls were mutual aid response to another community.
- Reported that between 50%-60% of the ambulance calls, for which the Town of Antrim invoices and receives payments, include Bennington employees who are supplementing Antrim's shortage of staff.
- The Chief proposed purchasing a used ambulance; he has identified two used vehicles out-of-state, each at a cost of \$41,000. One is a 2005 model and the other is a 2008 model; one with 50,000 miles and the other with 90,000 miles.

Board of Selectmen Minutes – October 19, 2016

- While most of the standard equipment is included in either purchase the Chief has identified the need to purchase a \$25,000 heart monitoring machine.
- Conceptual income and expenses were discussed if the Town should transition to be a transport agency. Information presented seemed to indicate a cost savings might be realized.
- The Chief reported that his wages associated with ambulance calls would not count towards Group 2 Retirement, as does the amount of hours he works for the Fire Department.
- The Chief proposed trading the existing rescue vehicle and a fire truck towards the purchase of a singular piece of apparatus that could be used for firefighting and rescue purposes. This would open up a bay at the Fire Station to house the ambulance.
- The Selectmen expressed the following concerns:
 - The first priority would be seeking voter approval; the decision being contemplated is not one that the Board of Selectmen will make without public feedback.
 - Lack of employees to provide expanded emergency medical services.
 - Lack of staff to provide coverage for multiple pieces of apparatus.
 - Lack of space to park an additional vehicle.
 - The necessary capital outlay costs.
 - Difficulty orchestrating the sale of two existing Fire Department vehicles ahead of the purchase and delivery of a replacement vehicle.
 - The Chief has developed this plan with the impression that the existing Rescue Vehicle Capital Reserve Fund (CRF) would pay for the acquisition of an ambulance, however, it is not clear if the original intent of the Warrant Article approved by the voters in 1992 for a “rescue vehicle chassis” is broad enough to encompass the purchase of an ambulance. The Administrator will review the matter with Town Counsel.

The Selectmen spoke with Chief Roina about the following matters:

- The need for him to ratify the proposed Fire Department Attendance Policy with the membership by a majority vote at a monthly meeting of the Department.
- Was reminded / asked to use discretion in his response to calls for service, particularly when he is working for the Highway Department. This comes in response to the increased calls for mutual aid to Antrim to supplement their ambulance staff as well as the upcoming ski season; particularly when Crotched Mountain Ski and Ride has certified ski patrol personnel.
- Cautioned, again, about the need to carefully plan his Fire Department responsibilities to prevent the majority of his salary being earned as a Fire Department employee rather than his 24 hour Highway Department position.

The Selectmen took action on the following:

- Reviewed and approved the Selectmen’s October 12, 2016 Minutes subject to an amendment to add the omitted Nonpublic discussion about compensation for two employees.
- Reviewed and approved the Payroll and Accounts Payable Registers for October 20, 2016.

Board of Selectmen Minutes – October 19, 2016

- Heard a report that the Administrator, Police Chief, Moderator, Conval Superintendent Kimberly Saunders and Assistant Superintendent Ann Allwarden met to discuss their positive community partnership and the appreciation the Town of Bennington has for using the Pierce School Multi-purpose Room as an election site and a venue for public events. The group worked together to confirm and complete plans for the upcoming November 8th elections.
- Selectman Osienski reported his availability to cover his position at the November 8th election. Bethany Craig and Linda Osienski will split a pro tem Selectman shift; Richard Reed will fill the second pro tem Selectman shift.
- Tabled execution of a Land Use Change Tax for M15/L6-3 pending receipt of an application to add the contiguous acreage to an existing current use assessment.
- In his capacity of ZBA member, Steve Osienski reported on the recent public hearing whereby the owners of M7/L76 requested a variance to allow construction of a front porch within the setback zone. The Administrator was asked to provide documentation of water and sewer lines in the vicinity of the home. The ZBA has recessed the hearing to allow an opportunity to receive further information about the existing utility easements.
- Authorized suspension of an October Forbearance Agreement payment for M24/L15-1. The suspended payment will be added to the end of the existing payment period.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Denise French
Administrator