

TOWN OF BENNINGTON

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Minutes of the Meeting – December 19, 2017

Selectmen James Cleary and Jeffrey Rose were present as well as Administrator Denise French and Deputy Administrator Kristie LaPlante. The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m.; Selectman Mackesy joined the meeting at 7:50 p.m.

Road Agent Gary Russell met with the Selectmen and discussed the following:

- Frustration with the existing Personnel Policy that does not permit an employee to be compensated for sick and/or vacation time if such sick and/or vacation pay would exceed the employee's regular workday and/or workweek hours. Gary cited a recent instance when each of the Highway Department's employees were out sick during various times of the workweek and were all obligated to work a weekend storm at straight time. The Selectmen voted that, on a case by case situation, an employee may request payment of sick and/or vacation time at the standard hourly rate; all hours *worked* in excess of forty will be paid at time and one-half.
- Although the Governor submitted for a Disaster Declaration for the October 30th rain event Hillsborough County did not meet the monetary threshold to qualify for FEMA funds. The end result for Bennington is that Public Assistance funds won't be received to address the Mountain Road culvert damage.
- In anticipation of receiving FEMA funds the Town engaged CLD / Fuss & O'Neill for engineering assistance in evaluating the Mountain Road drainage. The Selectmen tabled approval of CLD's proposed \$13,002 Scope and Fee for the culvert project. The Road Agent will explore possible alternative remedies to address the failing culvert.
- Due to the cold weather the Highway Department wasn't able to pave as much as had been planned.
- The Road Agent is finalizing plans to join the Town of Hillsborough for the one-day (spring date) disposal of Household Hazardous Waste.

The Selectmen acted on the following matters:

- Reviewed and approved December 13, 2017 Minutes.
- Reviewed and approved the December 21, 2017 Payroll Register.
- Heard a report that the Whittemore Lake Road West right-of-way damage situation has been turned over to the Attorney General's Office for determination of responsibility (Fish & Game or property owners along the deeded right-of-way) for replacing the fifteen foot section of washed out roadway and replacement of failed culverts.
- Voted to sign a \$5,000 contract with George E. Sansoucy, PE, LLC for defense of Eversource valuations before the Board of Tax and Land Appeals and/or court appeal. This action was recommended by the Town's utility legal counsel, Donahue, Tucker & Ciandella.
- Signed a \$5,000 contract with George Sansoucy for assessment of TDS poles, conduits and real estate.

Board of Selectmen Minutes – December 19, 2017

- Voted to commit the 2019 town-wide revaluation of property to Commerford, Neider & Perkins at a total cost of \$51,000; this is the same cost per parcel as was the 2009 town-wide revaluation that they also provided. The CNP Contract does not include five utility values. The early Contract committal will provide the opportunity for 2018 data collection ahead of the April 1, 2019 assessing year; the Town will not be billed until 2019.
- Voted not to place KENO on the Town Warrant.
- Voted to encumber funds for the following 2017 unpaid obligations:

4195-3-430	CE Stone/Tree/Maintenance	\$2,205
4967-1-007	WA Natural Resource Inventory	\$1,500
4967-1-010	WA Street Lighting Upgrade	\$5,000

The balance of the meeting was spent in a detailed review of the proposed 2018 Budget. Present for this portion of the meeting were Budget Committee members Debora Ash, Judith Heddy and Richard Reed (also Water/Sewer); Water/Sewer Commissioners – David Beck and Dennis McKenney; David McKenzie – Planning Board/Energy Committee/Library Alternate/Capital Reserve Funding Committee; Michael Munhall – Conservation Commission Co-Chair/Energy Committee; Valerie Germain – Conservation Commission Co-Chair; Police Chief Bret Sullivan; Fire Chiefs David Foster and Matthew Hall; Librarian Leslie MacGregor; Town Clerk Debra Belcher; Cemetery Trustees – Joshua Segal and Karen Belcher (also Assistant Town Clerk). The following funding requests were discussed:

- 4140-1-580 - Mileage/Expenses. The Town Clerk’s proposed budget included an additional \$400 for the third part-time staff member to attend the annual three day conference in North Conway. Funding for the Assistant Town Clerk’s attendance at the conference was denied. The line-item was funded at \$1,300.
- 4150-8-301 - IT Support. The proposed budget was overstated by \$930. The line-item was reduced to \$5,455.
- 4195-3-430 - Stone/Tree/Maintenance. The Cemetery Trustees’ proposed budget included an additional \$2,000 for tree removal at Evergreen Cemetery; \$2,205 remains unspent in the 2017 budget. The Selectmen agreed to encumber the unspent \$2,205 funds for 2018 expenses. The line-item was funded at \$2,000.
- 4215-1-304 - Antrim Rescue/Ambulance. For the second consecutive year Antrim Ambulance has increased Bennington’s cost by \$4,000. All agreed that the ambulance service provided to the community is excellent. The Selectmen agreed to inquire of Antrim about their future plans and associated cost. Funding of \$16,000 was not altered.
- 4220-5-610 - Forestry. The proposed budget included an additional \$500; the Budget Committee previously denied the increase. Through discussion it was learned that the portable forestry pump used by the Town is on loan and actually owned by the State. Ideas for emergency pump replacement (if the State needs their equipment immediately returned) were discussed. The line-item was funded at the proposed budget of \$1,500.
- 4324-1-421 - Hauling & Disposal. The proposed Transfer Station budget appeared to be underfunded by approximately \$8,000. The line-item was increased to \$48,000.
- 4520-9-115 - Lifeguards. The Budget Committee previously reduced the proposed budget of \$6,000 to \$1. The general consensus was to request funding through a Warrant Article as has been done in the past few years. Funding remains at \$1.

Board of Selectmen Minutes – December 19, 2017

- 4611-1-119 - Labor/Secretary. The Conservation Commission requested a \$150 addition to the budget. Absent the submission of the Commission's proposed 2018 budget, the Budget Committee had established funding at the prior year's level. The line-item was revised to \$400.
- The Water/Sewer Commissioners discussed their submission of a Warrant Article for funding of an Asset Management Program.
- The Selectmen briefly spoke of the following unanticipated financial needs:
 - ✓ The State has listed the bridge over the Mill canal as red list status. This designation entails extensive rehabilitation or replacement. The financial implication is unknown. The Selectmen have applied for State Bridge Aid which eventually (approximately ten years) should pay 80% of the total bridge cost.
 - ✓ As a result of the October 29/30 rain event at least one of the two Mountain Road culverts is failing and in need of repair/replacement. Hillsborough County did not meet the financial threshold for receiving Public Assistance, thus the entire cost of the project will be borne by the Town.
 - ✓ Through the Feasibility Study of available space at Town Hall and the VFW, compared to required space to adequately and legally serve the public, it is likely the Town will need to retrofit the VFW into space for relocating the Police Department.

The Selectmen adjourned the meeting at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise French
Administrator

