

TOWN OF BENNINGTON

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Minutes of the Meeting – January 2, 2020

Selectmen James Cleary and David Hardwick, Sr. were in attendance as well as Town Administrator Kristie LaPlante. The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m.

Road Agent Hazen Fisk met with the Selectmen to provide and updated on the 2007 International Dump Truck:

- The Town's insurance carrier has approved the Town's claim. A fuel contamination specialist has obtained samples from the Town's trucks, equipment, and fuel cell and has sent the fuel out to an independent laboratory for testing. The lab tests all show that the Diesel fuel is heavily contaminated with gasoline or kerosene. At this point the insurance company believes the contamination is tied to a November 27, 2019 delivery from the Town's fuel vendor.
- As soon as the Town was notified on December 9th of the potential contamination, independent vendors were brought in to pump the fuel from the Freightliner, Grader, and Backhoe and flush the equipment. Samples were obtained from the equipment and will be preserved until the claim is complete. Clean Harbors has come and pumped and flushed the diesel cell.
- At the recommendation of the fuel contamination specialist, the Backhoe was thoroughly inspected by Southworth Milton and the Freightliner was thoroughly inspected by Freightliner of NH for any damage to the engines. Each asset received a clean bill the day of their inspections and the contamination has been noted with each vendor for any future engine issues.
- The Town's insurance carrier has authorized a new motor for the International, which will be installed next week. The prior motor had 58,000 miles on in and the insurance company has assigned 15% depreciation to the old motor. This means the Town is responsible for 15% of the cost of parts for the new motor.

Hazen reported that the seal on the cylinder lift arm on the Loader was replaced and has failed again. Because of the age of the Loader (1982), at this point it appears the Town will have to obtain a remanufactured cylinder. After some discussion, the Selectmen reported that they can justify the \$2,000 cost to repair the Loader but cannot justify spending \$147,000 to purchase a new Loader. The Selectmen intend to revisit the topic in the spring once the Fuel Contamination Claim is closed and 2020 funding is established by the voters.

Fire Chiefs Dave Foster, Matt Hall, and Keith Nason met with the Selectmen to introduce Onset Road resident Curtis Dude, who has applied to the Fire Department and has passed the Town's background check requirements. The Selectmen unanimously voted to hire Mr. Dude as a Firefighter.

The Selectmen heard a report from the Town Administrator that Antrim Water Superintendent Matthew Miller has reported that the cost per hour for Water/Sewer services will increase from \$50 to \$85 per hour for 2020. The hourly cost includes labor, equipment, and overhead. An additional \$2,100 will be budgeted for on-call pay. The Selectmen discussed the nearly \$26,000 increase to the budget and expressed their displeasure at the lack of communications directly from the Antrim Water/Sewer Commissioners and requested the Town Administrator obtain additional information. In the absence of formal notification from the Water/Sewer Commissioners, the Selectmen do not support the increase and will not budget the additional funds for 2020.

Librarian Leslie MacGregor, Police Chief Bret Sullivan, Police Sergeant Jason LePine, Water/Sewer Commissioners David Beck and Richard Reed, Road Agent Hazen Fisk, Town Clerk Debra Belcher, Cemetery Trustee Karen Belcher, Budget Committee Member John Baybutt, Building Inspector John Kendall, and Fire Chiefs Dave Foster, Matt Hall, and Keith Nason met with the Selectmen to review the proposed 2020 Budget as amended by the Selectmen on November 26th. Department Heads did not request or recommend any changes to the proposed 2020 Budget as presented. During the meeting, the increased the Highway Department Vehicle Maintenance line item by \$3,000 to cover the Town's portion of the new engine for the International Dump Truck and voted to decrease the Project Lift line item to \$1.

During the Budget Review meeting, the following was discussed:

- Karen Belcher noted the cost of Health Insurance and inquired if the Selectmen had reviewed health insurance options or had revisited their policy to pay 100% of the premiums. The Selectmen reported that they choose to pay 100% of the premiums because employee wages are lower than area municipalities; the Selectmen consider the Health Insurance benefit a supplement to employee wages and that benefit allows the Town to recruit and retain highly qualified individuals. Town Administrator Kristie LaPlante reported that Health Insurance rates have not increased for the last two years so the Town has not recently obtained quotes from other vendors.
- Town Clerk Debra Belcher discussed that the Selectmen's decision to reduce the Deputy Town Clerk wage line item by \$2,038 and the Town Clerk wage line item by \$3,053 and reported that the cuts are the equivalent of cutting vacation time and time needed for the four elections in 2020. The Selectmen reported that they used the 2018 and 2019 budgeted amounts as a basis for decreasing the 2020 amounts requested by the Department Head for those two line items. The Selectmen encouraged the Town Clerk to meet with them at their next meeting to continue discussion.
- Budget Committee member John Baybutt expressed his appreciation to the Fire Department for cutting their budget over the last several years while increasing their service to the Town.

In addition, the Selectmen reviewed or acted on the following:

- Reviewed and approved the Minutes of the Board's November 26, 2019 meeting.
- Reviewed and approved Payroll Registers for December 12, December 19, and December 26, 2019 as well as January 2, 2020.
- Reviewed and approved Accounts Payable Registers for December 12, December 24, and December 31.
- Reviewed an application for the Transfer Station Laborer position and voted to place the application file.
- The Selectmen briefly discussed medical responses to the Crotched Mountain Ski Area and agreed it should be discussed with Mountain Officials after their 2019/2020 season.
- Reviewed a reclamation bond for DH Hardwick & Sons to be held in a Legal Client Account. David Hardwick abstained from signing the document. As such, the Agreement will be signed at the Board's January 7th meeting.
- Heard a report that the sale of the Joshi Hospitality properties at 592-594 and 608 Francestown Road to Bridge Street Recovery has been completed as of December 30, 2019.
- Heard a report that Eversource and its contractors will be cutting trees along the utility lines through Town.

- Voted to encumber \$28,496.35 in unspent funds from the Sewer Department Asset Management Program Warrant Article.
- Signed two Timber Tax Warrants for Operation #19-041-01 and Operation #19-041-08.

There being no other issues before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristie LaPlante
Town Administrator