

TOWN OF BENNINGTON

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Minutes of the Meeting – January 5, 2021

Selectmen James Cleary, David Foster, and David Hardwick, Sr. were present as well as Town Administrator Kristie LaPlante. The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m.

The Selectmen reviewed Non-Profit funding requests for 2021 and took the following action:

- Voted to place the Contoocook Housing Trust appropriation request of \$300 on the 2021 Warrant.
- Voted to place the Community Volunteer Transportation Company appropriation request of \$500 on the 2021 Warrant.
- Voted to place The Grapevine appropriation request of \$6,000 on the 2021 Warrant.
- Voted to place the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) appropriation request of \$500 on the 2021 Warrant.
- Voted to place the Child Advocacy Center appropriation request of \$1,100 on the 2021 Warrant.
- In anticipation of a written request, voted to place a \$1,000 appropriation request for End 68 Hours of Hunger on the 2021 Warrant.
- Voted to place the American Red Cross appropriation request of \$700 on the 2021 Warrant.
- Voted to place the Hundred Nights Shelter appropriation request of \$500 on the 2021 Warrant.
- Reviewed and voted to deny the Monadnock Center for Violence Prevention: Crisis & Prevent Center's appropriation request for \$3,408. Supporting documentation from the Organization showed a significantly disproportionate amount of services provided to Bennington residents in comparison to the amount of services provided to the 35 other communities in their catchment area.

The Selectmen reviewed Department requests for 2021 Warrant Articles and took the following action:

- Reviewed a request from the Road Agent for \$90,000 to Address Deferred Road Maintenance to allow sufficient funds to remedy Durgin Road. The Selectmen have previously stated they intend to address the worst areas on Durgin Road but not rebuild the entire roadway. As such, the Selectmen voted to place a \$45,000 Warrant Article to Address Deferred Road Maintenance.
- Reviewed a request from the Conservation Commission for 100% of 2020 Timber Revenue (\$12,500) payable to the Conservation Fund. The Selectmen discussed the need to keep the Town budget down as a means to offset the anticipated heavy burden of the Conval budget and voted to deny the request for 100%. The Selectmen discussed their support of a request for 50% of 2020 Timber Revenue but the request from the Commission was not clear if they would accept an Article for 50%. The Town Administrator will inform the Conservation Commission of the Board's denial and other options for pursuing a 2021 Warrant Article.
- Reviewed a request from the Conservation Commission for 100% of 2020 Gravel Revenue (\$777) payable to the Conservation Fund. The Selectmen discussed the need to keep the Town budget down as a means to offset the anticipated heavy burden of the Conval budget and voted to deny the request for 100%. The Selectmen discussed their support of a request for 50% of 2020 Timber Revenue but the request from the Commission was not clear if they would accept an Article for 50%. The Town Administrator will inform the Conservation Commission of the Board's denial and other options for pursuing a 2021 Warrant Article.
- Dave Foster, in his capacity of Fire Chief, reported that the Fire Department intends to submit a Warrant Article request for a Cardiac Monitor. The Town Administrator reported that the absolute

deadline to receive the Warrant Article in January 11th to allow time for staff to review and process the Warrant Article verbiage in accordance with DRA requirements.

Code Enforcement Officer John Kendall met with the Selectmen to review and discuss Building Permit #18-20 for home renovations. The Town has received several inquiries about the full second floor addition in the rear of the structure. The structure meets rear and side setback requirements but does not meet front setbacks. As such, the structure is considered legal, non-conforming. The vertical expansion does not expand the footprint and property setbacks, but does expand the structure which is non-conforming. After reviewing the Zoning Ordinance, the Selectmen confirmed the second-floor expansion is an expansion of a non-conforming use and instructed Mr. Kendall to issue a Cease & Desist and direct the property owner to the Zoning Board of Adjustment for a variance to allow the added space.

The Selectmen reviewed a report from the School Board's December 22, 2020 meeting outlining the School Administration's second version of a budget for 2021-2022. The Selectmen are gravely concerned about a projected 6% increase in assessment for towns/taxpayers for the Operating Budget and an additional 3% increase to towns/taxpayers if the Collective Bargaining Agreement is approved. The Selectmen requested the Town Administrator to attend the School Board's Budget Hearing on the Town's behalf.

In addition, the Selectmen acted on the following matters:

- Reviewed and approved the Minutes of the Board's December 15, 2020 meeting.
- Reviewed and approved the Accounts Payable registers for December 17, December 24, and December 31, 2020, as well as the Payroll Registers for December 17, December 23, and December 31, 2020.
- Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Town's IT vendor was unable to complete planned Technology upgrades before December 31, 2020. The Selectmen voted to encumber \$4,900 from the Technology and Computers line item for project completion in 2021.
- Tabled repairs to the shared retaining wall between Map 10, Lots 1 and 2 until spring.
- Heard a report that the Road Agent obtained three quotes for a commercial grade leaf blower as requested by the Board on December 15th. Because the Board cancelled their December 29th meeting, the Deputy Town Administrator authorized the purchase from Gary's Power and Equipment with funds remaining in the 2020 Budget.
- Reviewed and discussed a complaint from a Bible Hill Road resident about Highway Department start times for storms on December 17, 2020 and January 2, 2021. The Selectmen reviewed the Town's Snow Removal Policy and noted snow removal operations should begin around 2.5" of accumulation.
- Heard a report that the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) expired December 31, 2020 and was not renewed by Congress. The Selectmen declined an optional extension for Bennington employees but committed to reviewing individual needs on a case by case basis using the FFCRA guidance in effect through December 31st.
- Scheduled the Town's Deliberative Session for Monday, February 1 at 7:00 p.m. with a snow date of Thursday, February 4 at 7:00 p.m. The location will be determined after the January 13 Budget Hearing.
- Appointed Zachary Allen to the Conservation Commission to serve a three-year term expiring in 2024.
- Received and approved a request for Jeremiah Hardwick to trap on Town Property (Map 21, Lot 1).
- Discussed a realtor's inquiry about construction on the Class VI portion of Switzer Road and confirmed the Town's position that the totality of the road would need to be brought up to Class V standards and the property owner would need to prepare and execute an Agreement and Release.
- Authorized the Fire Department to purchase Class A dress uniforms from the Operating Budget.

- Signed Building Permits for Map 2/Lot 5 and Map 11/Lot 9, an Intent to Cut for Map 14/Lot 1, and two copies of a General Assessing Service Contract for 2021-2022 with Commerford, Neider, and Perkins, LLC.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristie LaPlante
Town Administrator