06/15/2020 SB Minutes

Bethlehem Board of Selectmen

Meeting Minutes

June 15, 2020
Via Zoom – Chairman Boisseau, Selectman Moore, Selectman Moritz, Selectman Caplain, Selectman Jensen.

Meeting opened at 5:02. Chairman Boisseau reminded people to mute their microphones when not talking.

Chairman Boisseau explained the Transfer Station would give an update from 5 – 6. Barry Zitser said they needed to figure out a contingency plan with Casella getting a denial on their application. The transfer station committee believes the most economical is to have its own transfer station. He said depending on bids it may make more sense to use a neighboring town for recycling. Mr. Zitser said the highway garage would be best location for it and could access the capital reserve fund so would not affect the general fund. Funded with pay as you throw bags and supplemented with capital reserve funds if needed. He said Brett Jackson supports it. He said they may suggest purchasing equipment in the future. Suggests using Carberry. It is not economical for curbside pickup or single stream recycling. Mr. Zitser said that may be possible through Village District for parts of the town. He said they will have plans in place for people with disabilities and elderly and may start as early as November filling out the application. He also explained that in early December they should start negotiating a per ton fee with Carberry and with Pemi-baker who use NCES. He said when putting out to bid make sure we put the board can accept or reject any bid and may want to publish the plan in the newsletter. Mr. Zitser said they looked into many contingencies. Suggested the Board authorize the transfer station committee to work with the conservation commission on a zero-waste initiative. Nancy Strand said they have researched grants that are available and said there are many, but they have time limits. There is one they could do now for signs, but the others have to be closer to operating. Selectman Moore asked if they got an estimate on the town garage site. Selectman Jensen said Brett Jackson had trouble getting a contractor to give an estimate so does not have a cost estimate yet. Andrea Bryant said they picked this plan because of the uncertainty of NCES getting their permit. Mr. Zitser said the key date is April 2021 which is when the landfill will exhaust its capacity. Selectman Caplain asked what is the longest time frame the temporary transfer station will be at the highway garage. Mr. Zitser said maybe 2 years. Selectman Caplain said we are trying to market the town and worries about having it a block away. Selectman Jensen said it would only be open on the weekends for a few hours. Selectman Moritz said she moved here the year it was at the highway garage and it worked well and does not see it as a problem. Mr. Zitser said they should not be composting at the town garage. Julie Seely said the big question is the permit and if it is not issued and whether they will resubmit. She believes it was denied this time because the public benefit was not adequate and believes there was another question. She said they did not make a ruling on going right up to the boundary. Mr. Zitser said if NCES is granted the permit with conditions, NCES has the right not to proceed if they do not like the conditions. Chairman Boisseau asked how much time it would take to get it up and running. Mr. Zitser said if they had a plan by Feb. 15th, they should be able to have it ready. They discussed a permit by notification that does not have fees. Ms. Seely said DES has to give a decision within 60 days if the application is complete. Chairman Boisseau said it is a working session so would not be taking public comment on this subject. Selectman Moore asked about people with disability and elderly and if they will bring their garbage down for them. Mr. Zitser said they thought of that because of how the select board is handling Covid. He said they could donate bags to the food pantry for low income people. Chris McGrath was on the committee but stepped off a couple years ago. Wanted to thank the committee.

10-minute intermission

Resumed meeting at 6:00. Chairman Boisseau reminded people to mute their microphones when they are not speaking.

Community Mural Project – Jessica Bahrakis said she gave the Board the details of the mural. Selectman Moore asked how long they are up for. Ms. Bahrakis said hopefully years and they would be rotating. The first series would be thanking people on the front lines from Covid. Other themes would be sceneries, dogs in Littleton when dog park opens. She said it could match what is going on in the town. She said they are movable and not permanent. Selectman Caplain asked how they are displayed. Ms. Bahrakis said it is a free-standing stand with plywood and would put stakes in to make sure they can’t be tipped over. One is at Remich park now so they can see it. Selectman Caplain asked if they would make people upset, would they be controversial. Ms. Bahrakis said she could let the Board know what the next one would be before it is displayed so the Board can decide. Selectman Jensen asked about sponsorship. Ms. Bahrakis said they may be able to display the sponsor but doesn’t see it as a problem. She said they are looking at 2 possibly 3 murals. She is thinking by the skate park and maybe the gazebo area. Selectman Moore asked if she is looking for guidance on area to be placed. She said she does have ideas on where she would like them to go. She was thinking of the pool area if it will be open. Selectman Moritz said she thinks it is a great project and appreciates that she will come to the Board before putting one up to get board’s input. She asked when the first one would go up and was told hopefully 2nd week in July to end of July. Ms. Bahrakis said her sponsors now are Home Depot and Lowe’s. Selectman Moritz said she thinks it fits well with Bethlehem. Chairman Boisseau asked the Board if they are in favor of these. Ms. Bahrakis said she can go and take photos of good locations to place them. Chairman Boisseau asked where the artists are from. She said they are all local including from Littleton High School and Profile. Selectman Jensen said seeing how they are going on town property we should see what they look like first. He said it would suggest town endorsement. Selectman Moritz said they already discussed that. Selectman Caplain moved to approve contingent on Board seeing them prior to them going up. Selectman Jensen seconded. Roll call – all – motion carried. Ms. Bahrakis will report back after taking pictures of possible locations. It needs to be 6×8 on the ground and 8 feet tall.

Logo’s for marketing of Bethlehem – Pam Sullivan – Ms. Sullivan shared her screen to show the draft logo’s. Ms. Sullivan went over the different logos with the Board. The Board all agreed to go with the one that had the mountain outline above Just Be. Andrea Bryant agrees with the Board and thinks it is most fitting. Chuck Phillips likes it but also likes the one that has color behind it. Ms. Sullivan said they will utilize that one too. Nancy Strand and Allegra Wright agree with the one chosen. Selectman Caplain moved to accept the Just Be logo with the mountain outline behind it. Selectman Moritz seconded. Roll call – all – motion carried.

Skip Sansoucy – Complex Properties – Will go back to that

Sale of the golf course – Selectman Caplain said Kim Koprowski came forward with interest and he has met with them a few times and they are local and excited about it. Mrs. Koprowski said this has been something that has been on her mind for a while. She left her veterinarian clinic due to son with autism and didn’t want to work full-time until he was out of school. She said this is a way to combine her passions. She loves to cook and would love to renovate the restaurant. She loves that you are greeted with a golf course on each end of town. She hated the thought of it getting developed. She said she can do her ice cream there. She said she just purchased goats and will do some ice cream with goat milk and hopes to help give some kids some job skills. Selectman Moore said she likes to hear about her plans and loves that she is a local. Selectman Moritz said she trusts that she knows what she is getting into and asked if she plans to keep it a golf course. Mrs. Koprowski said yes, she plans on keeping it a golf course. Allegra Wright said she is thrilled to hear of Kim’s plan.

Recreation Dept. – Chris McGrath – The Board decided a couple of weeks ago to not have rec. He received the survey that the rec director did and only saw a few comments. He said Lafayette is doing rec. Littleton is doing rec in July. Gorham and Lancaster are doing rec. Some towns are only doing 4 days but that is better than none. He said the Governor lifted the stay at home order. Submitted the petition to show it was more then just him. He said there was a lot of support. Wants the Board to reconsider because families need rec so they can work and for their kids to have socialization. There is not a savings to taxpayers because Tim is still working. Selectman Moritz asked how many people that signed the petition would utilize the program. He said at least 19 – 20 would use the program. She said a couple of people that signed his petition said on the survey said they wouldn’t use the program. Selectman Moritz stands by Tim. He did a thorough job. He would have to hire additional staff because of the guidelines but then have less kids enrolled. She understands how it is difficult for families. She doesn’t see the number of families affected by this. She feels strongly that Tim’s recommendation stands. Mr. McGrath suggested raising the rates. Selectman Moritz said she would feel more comfortable opening rec if she knew school was opening in the fall. Selectman Jensen said Mr. McGrath stated he fully trusted the rec department with his child, but he does not trust Tim’s recommendation that he doesn’t feel it is safe to open. Selectman Caplain asked Tim if his decision changed after seeing the changed guidelines and was told the decision was made after the guidelines. Chris Wilkins is the Littleton Rec Director and can speak to it. He said every dept. is different and has their own dynamics. Tim Fleury said Gorham Rec is closed this year, the Boys and girls club is closed, and copper cannon is closed and half the programs in the state are closed. Mr. Fleury said he has a young staff and they use a facility that is not theirs. Mr. McGrath asked if they could use the pool building or third floor of the town building. Mr. Fleury said the pool building are bathrooms and next to an empty pool which is 9 feet deep and there is not enough room in them. Third floor in the town hall is not enough room with the guidelines. Mr. Fleury said his staff are great kids and great staff, but they are kids. Chairman Boisseau appreciates Mr. Fleury’s thoroughness. He said it is obvious he has put a lot of thought behind it and stands by his decision and appreciates putting safety first. Selectman Jensen appreciated Mr. Fleury’s research about this. Mr. Wilkins said if something goes wrong, they will have to pull the plug. Because of their facility and program which is very different than ours is why they can open but believes Tim is making the right decision. He has all the confidence in Tim and does believe it is the right decision. Mr. Wilkins has had the opportunity to expand the program but does not feel comfortable doing that based on the guidelines. Mr. McGrath appreciates the Board’s time tonight. Nancy Strand who was a single parent and had to work sympathizes with parents. She suggested reaching out to other parents (maybe 5) and hire one of the rec counselors. She said last week scientist put out a risk factor on activities and they are risky. Mr. Fleury said after talking with another rec director he was going to set up a childcare registry. The only role rec will have is to connect the people. Selectman Jensen and Moore expressed concern about the childcare registry and said they should do it on their own. Chairman Boisseau said they are staying with their decision to keep summer rec closed.

Gazebo concerts and rec properties – Mr. Fleury said the tennis courts are easy to open. The playgrounds are an open area. Parents can maintain distance. Basketball he is on the fence with because it is higher risk. Selectman Moore asked about doing a trial for a while. Mr. Fleury said that is probably the best way to do it. He said they can keep an eye on things and always close it again if need be. Selectman Moritz asked if the elementary school is going to open theirs. Mr. Fleury said there is still access to it. Chad Proulx drives by the courts a lot and believes the real risk is with real basketball with contact. He said it is mostly families and little contact. He also said the elementary school courts are wide open. Mr. Fleury said he will open up the properties and will hang up signs saying enter at your own risk etc. He would put a recommended number of people per court. Mr. McGrath asked how many hours a week will it take to keep them sanitized. He said there is not any guidelines for tennis courts and basketball courts and there is a nightly sanitizing for the playground with bleach. There wouldn’t be a guarantee with it. Selectman Moore moved to open the tennis courts, basketball courts and playground with the condition that if we see increased cases up here especially with the bb courts, we close them. Selectman Caplain seconded. Roll call – all -motion carried.

Gazebo concerts – Mr. Fleury said he walked it with Jack Anderson and they will make 6 feet circles for families and there will be 30 – 35 circles and there will also be parking on the side for people. There will also be signs saying use at your own risk. He doesn’t feel it would be safe to offer food at this point. Chairman Boisseau asked when the first concert would be and was told the first Sunday in July. Chad Proulx said he thinks it is a good idea to have them. Selectman Caplain moved to start the concerts the first week of July subject to covid numbers not increasing here then can revisit. Selectman Moore seconded. Roll call – all – motion carried.

Assessing Complex and Unique Properties – George Sancousy – Has a firm that blends engineering and assessing. Has provided a need for new England for complex properties. They used to provide engineering appraisals. They value most of the special purpose properties around us. Pipelines, Telecommunications, hydro, gas, etc. They are certified assessing supervisors – DRA. In the last 5 – 8 years there has been a change in assessing in commercial values. Town and Cities are looking for ways to get advice. They valued the paper mills in Berlin for many years. They are the largest in country that value nuclear plants. They value landfill and gas to energy. He was the chair on the state level on incinerator. He does the Moore dam in Littleton. He said he does 12 properties in Littleton. Selectman Moritz said we do have a lot of unique properties and said his resume is very impressive. Pinetree Power – they are being valued as they are being built and valued as they are closed. They do a lot of regulatory work on whether they will reopen or not. They manage the value in Berlin and Springfield and Ryegate and Whitefield. The Whitefield one is closed. Lahout apartments is market based. He said they do most of the commercial properties in Berlin and Gorham and do many hotels. He used to build hotels in his off time. Bretton Woods – Omni was not 100% complete. It was entirely complete on the outside but not on the inside. The value includes the land as well. If a company appeals the conference center on the top having the land on the same card causes problems in the appeal. King Ridge decision makes lifts taxable – ski lift houses and towers. If they are permanent, they are taxable. The gondolas are not taxable. He said you have 2 – 3 other lifts as well. Has worked with Walter Mitchell for decades and checked with him on the King Ridge decision. Gas to energy he has done in Rochester. They have done the one at Coventry. It is not owned by Casella but on their property. He said the gas to energy plants are significantly valuable to towns. He said you don’t want to enter into a pilot too early they are a publicly traded company. He said it would be important to value the landfill as well for negotiating or tipping fees. Selectman Moritz asked if he helped value businesses that are closed because the landfill will be closed. He said that is correct and there is a trust fund for that for the closure. The management of the gas is a revenue stream. State values from the state is what we use. He said there is a protocol HB 700; transmission utility and distribution has to be separate from. State rate is house rate. State has never done the easement. The values will go up if he does the utilities. Dummer, Berlin, Gorham, Whitefield, Dalton, Littleton, Northumberland all had increased value. Cell tower can be assessed. Chairman Boisseau thanked him for his thorough analysis. He said he is interested in moving forward in working with him on properties mentioned and any others they come up with. Selectman Moritz asked about fee structure. He said he can do hourly or contract. Most people do a 5-year contract to go through reval. He suggested before that he go through all the properties and he report back to them to determine what properties should be addressed. He said they can enter into a multi-year contract with flexible fees so it can be different each year. He said they need to determine what they need to address this year. He said they need to do the conference center on the mountain. The ski lifts should be done. The public utilities should be done. Someone has to work with the utility company. Pinetree power – is it acceptable for this year. Have Walter work with Casella about reimbursement about working out a deal with the gas to energy. Selectman Jensen asked if Rudarpa would ask for a pollution exemption. He said he fully expects they will, and he will defend Bethlehem on it. Selectman Caplain said he is really interested in moving forward but would like to have a budget, so they know the cost. George said he would work with April immediately and would start looking at properties from the road on his own dime and would prepare a proposal on how to proceed this tax season. He will give a first proposal on whether they are too high or too low. Second proposal will be to assess the properties the board wants him to. He has 18 employees. Selectman Moritz moved to move forward with Skip Sancousy for Preliminary work. Selectman Jensen seconded. Roll call – all – motion carried. Proposal will be ready next week.

Board meetings in person – Chairman Boisseau said if Board isn’t comfortable, they can still participate via zoom. Selectman Moore said she is all for meeting in person. Selectman Jensen said he doesn’t think they should rush it. Selectman Moritz agrees if they want to, they can meet in person. Selectman Caplain agrees. He said he thinks they are still allowed to make up the rules about meetings so are able to determine if only board and presenters attend. Mike Bruno said the Planning Board has had 2 meetings where they had issues with zoom and they have plans and plats and it is difficult to not meet in person. They would like to have permission to meet in person. Selectman Moritz said she feels it is not the Select Board’s role to say how the Planning Board runs their meeting. Mr. Bruno said it is a matter of using the building or not. Tabled.

Public Input

Julie Seely was surprised to hear discussion about assessing the landfill. She was told he was aware of the agreement.

Selectman Moore moved to approve the minutes from 06/08/20. Selectman Caplain seconded. Roll call – all – motion carried.

Chairman Boisseau moved to go into non-public session per RSA 91A:3 II for matters of reputation, personnel, and real estate.

The Board discussed a rate increase for an employee. Table so the Board liaison can talk to the dept. head.

The Board discussed an abatement request. This was tabled.

The Board discussed the sale of the Country Club.

Selectman Caplain moved to adjourn. Selectman Moore seconded. Roll call – all – motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

April Hibberd

Administrative Assistant