Bethlehem Board of Selectmen

Meeting Minutes

January 18, 2021

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

Chairman Boisseau opened the meeting at 6:00pm and reminded people to leave their microphones on mute.

**PUBLIC INPUT:**

Allegra Wright:Ms. Wright asked if theissue of water quality was coming up in a future board meeting?She wouldlike to discuss in future meeting. Chairman Boisseau explained the Village District has own board meetings and Select Board does not oversee water/sewage.

**BUDGET HEARING:**

**Chairman Boisseau:** will go through various departments. Broad strokes – 2020 -2,737,738, 2021 – 2,825,389 – 30% increase – $87k up – majority is building maintained - hwy dept, visitor’s center – no pay increase – flat salary – direct assistance program manager – Board/public questions/comment on broad overview? None

**Executive** – $169,911 to $168,011 - $1900 decrease – mainly salary decrease.

**Town Clerk** - $68,632 to $63,102 - $5500 decrease – less elections in 2021

**Finance Tax collecting** – $57,330 to $58,823 - $1493 increase

**Appraisal** - $29,870 to $57,295 - $27,425 increase – new assessment firm for special properties

**Legal** - $15,000 to $20,000 - $5000 increase – budget legally allowed to go over if needed.

**Planning Zoning** - $21,822 to $21,822 – flat

**General Government Buildings** - $100,433 to $165,433 - $65,000 increase – visitor center roof, town hall maintenance, highway trusses

Chris McGrath asked if we could use capital funds for repairs. Selectman Boisseau stated there is no specific fund for that kind of maintenance.

**Insurance** - $265,274 to $263,353 - $34,073 – increased insurance rates

**Visitor center** - $10,412 to $11,127 - $717 increase

**Wood assessing** - $2,200 to $2,200 – flat

**Police** - $562,498 to $557,916 - $4,582 decrease – salary changed with new position and in-house prosecutor.

**Fire** - $154,915 to $164,707 – increase of $9,792 – increase call out pay to 2 hours from 1 hour

**Dispatch** - $85,000 to $60,000 - $25,000 decrease

**Building** - $17,793 to $17,793 – flat

**Highway** - $747,030 to $751,420 - $4,389 increase

**Street Lighting** - $26,000 to $26,000 – flat

**Ambulance** - $42,274 to $48,657 - $6,383 increase

**Emergency Management** - $500 to $500 – flat

**Welfare** - $12,000 to $28,013 - $16,013 increase – stipend for general assistance manager

Chris McGrath asked why the welfare stipend increased. Selectman Boisseau explained that to fill position they needed to increase stipend.

**Recreation** - $127,921 to $113,047 - $14,874 decrease – salary position changed.

Chris McGrath asked if the new salary was enough to retain a new person and if there was a line for property maintenance. He believes there are enough issues on the fields that can be safety issues and they need to be addressed. Chairman Boisseau stated there is currently no line item for maintenance.

Mike Culver asked if we could expand the budget tonight to cover those costs? Now is the time to expand the program for the kids.

Chairman Boisseau – fence repair approx. $15k potentially double for all projects – pool maintenance is a lot – hard to decide without estimates for work needed to be done –

Chris Jensen – can we use country club sale to fund maintenance? GB – can add to budget and offset tax rate at end of year or on a warrant article

The board discussed the options and amounts of adding a maintenance line item to the rec budget.

Selectman Boisseau made a motion to add a $10,000 maintenance line to the recreation budget. Selectman Jensen seconded - roll call – all – motion passed.

**Library** – $123,621 to $123,621 – flat

**Culture** – warrant article for concerts

**Conservation Commission** - $1,270 to $1,270 – flat

**Debt services** - $86,035 to $55,284 - $30,751 decrease – paying loans off

**TAN notice** - $10k to $10k – flat

**Rec Revolving** - $35,005 to $24,250

**Rec Expenses** - $41,115 to $41,273 –

Highway revolving fund – Frank Claffey – revolving funds by warrant funded by Block Grant from state.

Revenues – no questions

**Warrants** – Capital reserve – $166,500 – Petition articles – board decided to sponsor non-profit articles that were on warrant last year – Only Bridge House is a warrant – all others will be board sponsored – No signatures for safety reasons. $31,971 total of all articles -$198,471

Selectman Boisseau opened the floor to any public questions or comments not already addressed in the individual budget discussion.

Barry Zitser asked how was the host fee calculated in revenues? The board explained how the fee is calculated and discussed looking into the fees with the new expansion of operations at the landfill.

**NOISE ORDINANCE – FIRST PUBLIC HEARING**

**Selectman Boisseau** gave a recap of the previous discussions regarding the proposed noise ordinance. The board stripped down the ordinance as the general provisions cover the focus of the ordinance. He asked if the board had any more questions or discussion. Selectman Jensen reminded the public that the ordinance is based on complaints and the police department will not be looking for offenders on their own accord. Selectman Boisseau opened the floor to public comments.

Public comments:

**Scott Stevenson** had concerns that the board was trying to enact a subjective ordinance based on the responding officer’s idea of reasonable noise. He asked if there are exceptions for businesses that may need to open early to take advantage of short operating seasons. The board explained the permitting process for exceptions and expressed their support for leaving it to the officer’s discretion when responding to calls.

**Nancy Strand** stated she no noise problems where she lives but the ordinance is straight forward and gives police tool to use when going to noise complaint call. If living next to noisy business, noise is expected. If living in town and noisy Air BNB police can shut it down without criminal charges

**Chris McGrath** stated he doesn’t support the ordinance as presented and would like to see a decibel limit so as to protect the individual the complaint is against. He believes the ordinance only coverers a small amount of people in the town and asked if the police department is ready for more calls. He asked about the permitting process. Chairman Boisseau addressed Mr. McGrath’s concerns.

**Dick Robie** stated decisions are being made without input form everyone. His issue is not the ordinance but if selectman can do what they want. He stated he was told a board member stated they can do what they want when it comes to ordinances. Chairman Boisseau explained the board’s right to propose and pass an ordinance by law with two public hearings. Mr. Robie would like to see the ordinance as a warrant article so the town can vote on it.

**Johnny Stevenson** asked if the police department has to write a citation if responding to a complaint and asked if the current law has similar restrictions. Chairman Boisseau explained the proposed ordinance and the current law does not require the responding officers to write a citation. Mr. Stevenson stated that a town level ordinance may not be a large enough deterrent to prevent repeat offenders. He has an issue with officers making a decision without hearing the noise involved in the complaint. Mr. Stevenson is confident that the planning board will have something on the ballot within the year to address the noise issue with short term rentals.

**Kimberly Johnson** asked what currently happens with a complaint. Chairman Boisseau stated that there is only the state law to fall back on currently. Ms. Johnson stated that the ordinance is subjective and should be voted on as a warrant.

**Candy Murphy** relayed her experiences calling in a noise complaint. She appreciates the board making an effort to help residents and she feels the board is voted in by the town to represent the town and that is what they are doing.

**Nancy Strand** stated she doesn’t attend all select board meetings and understands there has been lengthy discussion on the ordinance over many meetings. The select board has investigated and discussed at length. If it is on a warrant most people will not even know the issue exists.

**Johnny Stevenson** asked if the board looked at other town’s ordinances before drafting their own. Chairman Boisseau explained the history of this ordinance and the changes made before it was presented.

**Anthony Rodriguez** -stated that the state has established laws and we rely on them. He believes there are too many ordinances where laws exist to handle the issues already.

**Mike Culver** asked if a short-term renter gets fined and doesn’t pay, what happens. Selectman Jensen explained it would go to district court if not paid.

**Chairman Boisseau** reminded the public that there will be a second hearing regarding the proposed ordinance before it is considered for adoption.

**ENERGY COMMISSION – TOWN SOLAR ARRAY**

**David VanHouten** explained the need for a warrant article to cover a USDA requirement for the grant consideration. The warrant can be edited at deliberative if the grant is not awarded. Mary Lou Krambeer spoke to the USDA Rural Development and confirmed that Bethlehem is still on the list of towns considered for the grant. The decision should be made in the next few weeks.

**Board discussion:** – Selectman Caplain explained the energy commission learned last week that it needed commitment before moving forward from USDA. The project is cost prohibitive without a grant but can’t get a grant without a warrant. The warrant article can be adjusted at deliberative session once grant is awarded or not. The board discussed potential savings and what the array will offset in town. They believe that there is no downside to submitting the warrant and it can always be pulled if the grant is not awarded.

Selectman Caplain made a motion to accept the warrant article as presented by the Bethlehem Energy Commision. Selectman Jensen seconded – roll call – all – motion passed.

**SULLIVAN CREATIVE – MARKETING UPDATE**

**Pam Sullivan** explained Phase 2 of the marketing plan and the use of the $15,000 budget. Savor and Tour Bethlehem – tourist focused recipe collection. It would collect emails to market and engage with potential visitors. Ms. Sullivan explained the plan breaks down each expense for the total budget. The board discussed Sullivan Creative’s phase 2 plan.

Chris McGrath asked if all businesses in town would be paying to be included in the recipe book and if it would be open to all businesses. Ms. Sullivan explained that it would be open to all businesses in town.

The board discussed the $15,000 added to the marketing budget. The board made decision to discuss at the meeting next Monday.

**FOLLOW UP**

**OTHER**

**MINUTES - 12/14/2020 and 1/4/2021 – Selectman Moore motion to accept minutes from 12/14/2020 and 1/4/2021 – Selectman Moritz seconded – roll call – all – motion passed.**

**At 9:11pm Chairman Boisseau moved to go into non-public session per RSA 91A:3 II for matters of personnel. Selectman Caplain seconded – roll call – all – motioned carried.**

**Selectman Moritz made a motion to move forward with Abbie Sawyer for the assistant recreation director. Chairman Boisseau seconded – roll call – all motion passed.**

**At 9:26 Selectman Moritz made a motion to adjourn. Chairman Boisseau seconded – roll call – all – motion passed.**

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Fleury

Administrative Assistant