Bethlehem Board of Selectmen

Meeting Minutes

November 15, 2021

In person – Chairman Boisseau, Selectman Hibberd, Selectman Caplain, Selectman Jensen – Selectman Morris joined remotely

Chairman Boisseau opened the meeting at 6:03pm and reminded people to leave their microphones on mute. He continued to remind in person participants to use the microphone so Zoom participants can hear

**Public Input:**

**David Van Houten:** bid for boiler repair. No responses. What do we do next? Tim Fleury – we can reach out directly to contractors at this point.

**Barry Zitser** – hour ago emailed link to infrastructure bill signed by Biden – several sections of interest to town: grants for charging and fueling, energy efficiency improvements at schools, HVAC systems, consumer recycling education and outreach. It will be discussed at the transfer station committee meeting – Dec 14th.

**Eddie Qi** – change meeting from Monday night to weekends? – Cold weather at night – Chairman Boisseau – meetings traditionally on Monday nights – hears and understands concern – Zoom is option to join from home – Selectman Caplain – believes participation would be lower – Cathy Qi – asked if email can come earlier than Sunday – Selectman Jensen – agenda posted on Fridays.

**Rita Farrell** – hard to hear on Zoom – Ms. Farrell asked about the new free pantry and where the funding is coming from. Selectmen Hibberd and Jensen explained the purpose of the pantry and the funding, no cost to the town.

**Chris McGrath** – If masks required in town building, they should be provided. Rec was short staffed in August – pleased to see Tim Fleury stepping up to keep it going – happy to see it continuing – Selectman Hibberd – masks are available in office – can move out to hallway -

**Andrea Bryant** – transfer station committee – going to rt 116 site to inspect? – Selectman Hibberd waiting until board has time – Selectman Jensen – working with Selectman Hibberd and has gotten busy with welfare needs.

**Solar project – location and ARPA funds match**

**David van Houten –** presented potential locations for the approved solar array behind the elementary school. 3 potential locations: open field by ballfields, treed area behind library, treed area behind elementary school field. Initially the preferred spot would be behind the library, but it would be $20,000 added to cost. Mike Bruno noted it would need a public hearing to use town land for the project. David van Houten noted that if the spot directly behind the school field was chosen, all of the trees beyond the fence would have to be cleared out. Eddie Qi asked about the viability of a green project if all of the trees are being cut down and asked for a breakdown of the costs. Selectman Caplain believes a public hearing is a good idea and the costs have been broken down in previous meetings. It is unfortunate that the trees have to come down, but they do to prevent shadows on the array. Chris McGrath asked about the surface area cleared. – David van Houten - 15,000 sq/ft for panels – 30,000 sq/ft total if completed wooded. Kristin Bruno asked if all trees would need to be cut down behind school, yes, and if it would impact the community garden, no.

**Chairman Boisseau** – thoughts on public hearing date – Dec 6th public hearing on location – Selectman Morris – invite planning board – David van Houten – can give tour for anyone interested – Andrea Bryant – on ballot to vote on location? Necessary? – Selectman Caplain - not necessary – The board and public discussed the ballot in March. Funding will be a warrant if needed but location will not be on the ballot

Selectman Caplain – funding - $475-$500k range of project – funding - $150k unassigned, $165 USDA – NH Charitable 1 $20k donor, 1 donor will bring all donations to $60k with match – reached out to Grafton County - $ focused on broadband – looking for small % to go towards solar – BES board considering funding as well – remaining piece believe coming from separate donor – if all goes well, no taxpayer raised – asking board for match up to $60k – Selectman Jensen – Grafton county to change from broadband to solar?

**Selectman Caplain made motion to allocate up to $60k ARPA funds for 1 to 1 match if needed to match funds from outside donors – Selectman Jensen second – discussion = see below – roll call – all – motion passed**

Mike Bruno – how much did BES commit – Selectman Caplain – asked for $50k, savings of $10k a year for school- $50k over 2 years – Mike Bruno – money coming from school is tax money – Selectman Caplain - $150k from unassigned fund is tax money as well – Chairman Boisseau – what is effect on school’s energy bill? – Selectman Caplain – estimate – savings is $20k a year but can’t get transmission rates back.

**FSA – follow up from last week**

Chairman Boisseau – few minutes to take a look at current limits and what is - Selectman Hibberd – only downside is FSA is preloaded on account – Tim Fleury – limit is up to $2850 now from $2750 – Selectman Morris – doesn’t believe town is on the hook – in favor of raising limit.

**Selectman Morris made a motion to raise limit to $2850 – Selectman Caplain seconded – discussion none – roll call – all – motion passed.**

**Discussion of trucking route on proposed Dalton landfill**

**Chairman Boisseau –** conversation is only about truck traffic through town – not on proposed landfill – Selectman Jensen – part of plan calls for truck traffic from 93 to exit 40 to route 3 and north – average 102 trucks a day – Selectman Caplain – rounds trip doubles amount – 6am-5pm with occasional Saturdays – give residents chance to comment and pass along to appropriate state entities – Chairman Boisseau – public meeting and pass information onto state - Selectman Hibberd – we form opinion based on comments or pass along comments? – pass along comments.

**Joanne Blaney** – landfill in Bethlehem for some time – contract so trucks don’t come through Bethlehem to Bethlehem landfill – ironic if Dalton landfill goes through, trucks come through Bethlehem now – trucks coming from 93 through entire downtown area – lots of traffic in pristine downtown area – safety issue with trucks going through town – Dec 2019 – leachate truck leaked into Black River – not if, but when an accident happens with trucks.

**Randy Smith** – live on 116 – addressing issues on 116 today? – Selectman Caplain – Bethlehem roads – Mr. Smith – if coming from south, still using 116 to head to Dalton – living there 13 years – 50 MPH currently and speeding occurs – safety issues in that area – 200 trucks increase traffic and safety issues – traffic studies done? – does Bethlehem respond to accidents there – Selectman Hibberd – DOT told us traffic studies can actually raise speed limit if traffic does higher speed – Selectman Jensen – good idea to expand it to proposed traffic through Bethlehem – Selectman Hibberd – budget hearings start soon – as long as its not posted as a public hearing can schedule it for anytime – Chairman Boisseau – can list as information gathering session – budget hearings coming up – next week 11/22?

Elliot Wessler – Whitefield resident – formal standalone meeting – recommend posting information on website – map important – Littleton remains untouched in proposed truck route

Selectman Morris – before we schedule – 22nd is week of thanksgiving – does it need to be next week, or can it be pushed to January? Selectman Jensen – can pick date and let people know about it. The board discussed possible dates and decided on Dec 20th for public forum for proposed Dalton trucking traffic.

Chairman Boisseau – written comment can be sent to town office – move conversation to 12/20.

**Scheduling public hearing on use of ARPA funds**

**Chairman Boisseau –** hearings needed to schedule hearings for funds – 2 weeks needed for public hearing – Selectman Caplain – good idea for budget hearings at same time – Chairman Boisseau – Jan 3rd at same time of total budget hearing – Selectman Hibberd – gives time to change budget before official hearing – Selectman Morris – budget hearings give ideas for ARPA funds.

**Mask mandate in town buildings**

**Chairman Boisseau –** currently requiring masks in town building due to uptick in cases – BC – originally – Kathy Qi brought her concerns to the board – Selectman Jensen – not going to debate about mask use – Selectman Hibberd – governor allows municipalities to make own decisions. Selectman Morris – facemask use is #6 in NH state best practices list, 6b. can require employees, visitors, or public to wear face masks – no issue with requiring mask use.

**Selectman Morris – made a motion to require mask use in town buildings – Selectman Hibberd – seconded – roll call – all – motion passed**

**Postage machine for town clerk**

**Chairman Boisseau –** Tim Fleury – proposal for postage machine for town clerk’s office - $73 monthfor 5 years– will add to budget hearing for proposed town clerk budget.

**Overpayment refund – Map/lot 205-020**

**Selectman Caplain made a motion to process refund for Map/lot 205-020 – Chairman Boisseau seconded – roll call – all – motion passed**

**Minutes – 11/01/2021**

**Selectman Caplain made a motion to accept the minutes from 11/01/2021 – Selectman Hibberd seconded – roll call - all – motion passed**

**Other/Follow up from the board**

**Selectman Hibberd –** still have GGB money left – Selectman Caplain – list available will get to Selectman Hibberd to search for contractors.

**Selectman Morris** – STR draft ordinance – add to agenda at future meeting – Selectman Caplain – will send comments to Tim Fleury and he will pass it along – Selectman Morris – will pass it along to get more comments – format makes sure to list appropriate RSA’s and ordinances for owner’s use – fines listed but can be tweaked – fees kept low – Selectman Jensen – if pushed too far out and changes needed will it push it too far out? – Selectman Hibberd – 2 public hearings needed – The board discussed potential dates and decided on Dec 13th – after budgets presented that day – working session.

**Selectman Caplain** – reminder for board to put speed feedback signs back on agenda – possibly ARPA funds -don’t want to forget about it – possible warrant article to put $ aside for heating system to prevent big bill in future – start putting money aside now – Selectman Jensen – if infrastructure bill can add to any possibilities for town use – is state still doing rebates? – will check.

**Selectman Caplain** – BTA considering putting in a gear library – outdoor gear available to come and borrow – big lockers with access – BTA consider putting it by basketball courts – good lighting and visible – beginning of safe routes to school trail.

**At 8:23pm Chairman Boisseau made a motion to go into non-public session per RSA 91A-3 II (personnel) – Selectman Caplain seconded – roll call – all – motion passed.**

**Board discussed mask use by specific employees in town buildings. Board will clarify mask use for all employees.**

**Board discussed employee performance.**

**Policy for exposed employees to be discussed in public forum.**

**Board discussed new employee job performance.**

**Selectman Caplain made a motion to adjourn at 9:13pm – Chairman Boisseau – seconded – roll call all – motion passed.**

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Fleury

Administrative Assistant