Bethlehem Board of Selectmen

Meeting Minutes

December 6, 2021

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

Chairman Boisseau opened the meeting at 6:01pm 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:**

**Pam Sullivan**  - update to marketing plan – e-newsletter going out soon – staff sent letters to businesses on lists to gather information – looking for more response from local businesses – pam@sullivancreative.com, visit@discoverbethlehemnh.com, - message through Facebook – Selectman Caplain looking for organizations in town and businesses in town to forward information to Pam. Pam Sullivan – any events in town, seasonal or year round – will help to develop social media campaign – opportunity to promote town and businesses.

**Chris McGrath** – ARPA funds – can they be used for improving facilities? Stairs out front of building a safety issue, understands it is tough to get contractors but has been an ongoing issue. Selectman Caplain – starting to put together a maintenance list of projects for future projects – Selectman Hibberd – contractor coming in Friday 10th to look over building and get quote – Chris McGrath had a meeting with the building inspector and learned he was leaving the town position. Mr. McGrath emphasized the importance of the position and asked the board to take the time to find the right candidate.

**Cathy Qi** – Ms. Qi inquired if the current solar project is taking into account the increased cost of overseas and domestic shipping. Selectman Caplain – still working on updated analysis. The numbers will be brough to a town meeting when complete.

**Barry Zitser** – Mr. Zitser mentioned that they should be looking at the rise of energy costs as well when figuring out the projected savings of the solar project.

**Tax Rate setting –** update to rate as the school portion came in higher than last week – last week $300,000 from the unassigned balance was used to offset the municipal rate for a total amount of $24.69 – school budget went up $.45 – now would be $25.14 with $300,000 offset – Chairman Boisseau gave a recap of last week to Selectman Caplain. The board discussed the options to get the rate back down to last week and the effects on the unassigned fund and potential TAN impacts. Cathy Qi asked of the increase in the school portion would affect other towns as well. Yes.

Selectman Morris made a motion to use $400,000 from the unassigned fund to offset the municipal tax rate. Selectman Caplain seconded – roll call – all – motion passed

New rate - $24.79

**Budgets:**

**Police - $562,076 to $579,602 –** increase of 3% - $17,526 – Selectman Morris asked chief DeMoranville the status of some remaining funds on specific lines. Chief DeMoranville explained the funds and their use. Chairman Boisseau asked about a wish list. Chief DeMoranville listed his ideas: wages and PTO policy, and facility needs. Selectman Morris asked about salary. 6% across the board.

**Dispatch, $60,000 to $60,000 –** flat – 0% increase

**Fire, $164,707 to $189,079 –** 15% increase - $24,372 – mainly salary increases – Chief Anderson – moving base rate up to $15 from $10/hr – added $5 to each level after base rate – took call #’s and used higher rate to get total cost. Majority of calls are ambulance calls and are addressed in another budget. There were legislative changes that have dropped the cost of trainings. Capital funds held offset equipment costs. Will be time for new vehicles soon.

**Ambulance, $48,657 to $73,2198 – 50% increase – $24,562 –** Chief Anderson - salary main increase – maintenance and fuel increases. A few attendants really stepped up during covid pandemic – starting pay increase and increase across board – Selectman Hibberd asked about maintenance amounts and if they are high enough. Chief Anderson explained that this year was a fluke, and he budgeted a good amount.

Chief Anderson – Wishlist - $1.5m for new station – based on similar stations built recently locally. The board discussed planning for a new fire department in the future.

**Cheryl Jensen** – general questions regarding increases – did board ask or give guidelines to departments? Chairman Boisseau – board has asked departments to increase salaries to retain employees in current job market – with no increase, employees won’t stay and hard to fill vacancies – budgets have been kept flat over past years and time to increase on maintenance items –salaries across industry increased substantially over last 8-10 months – need to match to retain employees. Selectman Jensen – 6% salary for inflation – Selectman Hibberd – couldn’t find rec employees at beginning of year, had to increase pay to get employees to continue running the program. Selectman Jensen – existing employees have a wealth of institutional knowledge and would be hard to replace.

**Kathy Qi** – salary increased everywhere – understand – looking to reduce increases across the board. She suggested a decrease to library hours and share fire equipment regionally.

**Mike Bruno** – increase to salaries – firefighters don’t do it for the money - department heads go out in all conditions with salaries and don’t worry about hours – dedicated to town – agree with salary increases with work town employees do – Selectman Morris – 6% reflects social security inflation.

**Selectman Hibberd – move to skip to solar project agenda item. Chairman Boisseau agreed. Moved ahead in agenda.**

**Solar Location Public Hearing**

Chairman Boisseau – been discussing solar array location for the ground mounted array.

David van Houten – showing on screen potential spots – 3 areas – extra lengths of run would add roughly $20k Mr, van Houten gave a tour last Saturday. He didn’t realize BES used area for outside classroom and doesn’t want to remove classroom. The north end of open field on town land ideal. Only a few trees need to be removed. Chairman Boisseau asked if the current funding would cover the increased cost of a longer run. Selectman Caplain – yes, the funding will cover it. The project has received another $65k in funding from the NH Charitable Foundation without a matching requirement.

Chairman Boisseau – happy with new location that preserves space behind elementary school and doesn’t cut down trees.

**Selectman Caplain made a motion to locate the solar array on open lot behind school – Selectman Morris seconded – roll call – all – motion passed.**

**Building Inspection, $17,793 to $20,454**  15% increase – $2,661 increase – salaries, supplies and mileage.

**Insurance, $299,347 to $290,617 –** down 3% - $8,730

**Visitor Center, $26,127 to $27,617 – 6% salary increase**

**Wood Assessor $2,000 to $2,000 - flat**

**Small Acts/OAKS/community volunteers –**

**Selectman Caplain –** Kay Kerr – came to Selectman Caplain after seeing Small Acts in town. OAKS – Organized Acts of Kindness for Seniors – helps keep health care costs down by volunteering with seniors in town - similar to what town did during COVID – Selectman Morris – Tri County Cap has similar program with seniors – may be good resource to use for volunteers.

**Minutes – 11/15/2021, 11/29/2021**

**Selectman Caplain made a motion to accept the minutes from 11/05/2021 – Selectman Jensen seconded – roll call – all – motion passed.**

**Selectman Morris made a motion to accept the minutes from 11/29/2021 – Selectman Hibberd seconded – roll call – Selectmen Boisseau, Jensen, Hibberd, Morris – Selectman Caplain abstained – motion passed.**

**Other/Follow up from the board**

**VM – wish list item of blind cleaning – found ultrasonic cleaning outfit in 2.5 hours – will be up in area so can lower costs and do under $600 – next Friday**

**Cheryl Jensen – conservation commission and transfer station committee hosting Dec 14th by rep Tim Eagan about 4 bills introducing in state legislator – Town hall – 6pm – same night as transfer station committee meeting -**

**At 8:00pm 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 employee resignation and plan moving forward filling position.**

**Selectman Jensen made a motion to accept resignation of Dave Wiley. Selectman Morris seconded – roll call all – motion passed.**

**Board discussed employment policy and PTO policies.**

**Selectman Morris made a motion to adjourn at 8:50 pm – Selectman Hibberd – seconded – roll call all – motion passed.**

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Fleury

Administrative Assistant