Bethlehem Board of Selectmen

Meeting Minutes

November 28, 2022

In person –Chairman Caplain, Select person Hibberd, Select person Jensen Select person Queiroga, and Select person Morris

**Chairman Caplain opened the meeting at 6:00**

**Public Input –** Barry Zitser noted there is public discussion regarding gun violence but also wanted to highlight motor vehicle fatalities and therefor suggested reconsidering the Complete Streets initiative and having the Energy Commission take the lead. Chairman Caplain suggested he and Mr. Zitser work together regarding Complete Streets. Vincent Sorrentino inquired about locating his food truck between the Visitors Center and the Irving Gas station. Select person Morris noted that the location Mr. Sorrentino suggested was not possible because his truck was too large to park off a state highway and vendors are not allowed on state highways. Select person Morris noted the town will be working on a hawkers and vendors license in the future. Frank Piazza discussed his disappointment regarding the junk yard properties in Bethlehem.

**Budget Overview (GGB, Town Clerk and Tax Collector. Legal, TAN/Debt Services, Assessing, Planning and Zoning)**

**Mary Jackson-Town Clerk and Tax Collector-**Mrs. Jackson explained her budget for town clerk is down because 2022 there were more elections. She noted that there was a pay increase of 3% for her and her deputy and $100 for the Supervisors of the Checklist because they do a lot of work for very little pay. Mrs. Jackson explained that she added the new expense of the E Poll pads to services and supplies and overall that line item was down because there are fewer elections in 2023. Mrs. Jackson moved to discuss the Tax Collector Budget. She explained the 3% increase was a result of the pay increase. Select person Queiroga asked Mrs. Jackson what was included in the services and data processing line items. Mrs. Jackson explained services included lien and deeding searches and data processing includes the tax collector software. Mrs. Jackson would like to change tax collector phone to reflect.

**Mike Bruno- Planning and Zoning-** Planning and Zoning budget was reduced by -34% as a result of reducing consulting services which was budgeted for but paid from a grant and services because the meeting will be managed by the town office going forward in 2023.

**Chairman Caplain-Real Property Assessing-** Proposed budget is a 2% increase. The select board discussed the software maintenance line item and it was clarified that we own the software not the assessing company. Select person Morris was concerned that the budgeted postage was low given that it is a reevaluation year and Select person Hibberd explained that the mailer that will go to residents is part of the KRT services include in the fees. Nancy Strand asked where the funds for the reevaluation funds came from and Select person Queiroga explained it was funded through a capital reserve.

**Chairman Caplain-Legal Budget-**discussion regarding increasing the legal budget and it was decided to leave the legal budget the same as 2022 at $20,000

**Chairman Caplain- General Buildings-** Proposed budget is down -13% because salaries. There was discussion regarding the building maintenance line item, and it was requested that a forecasted project list including cost for 2023 be prepared. The board discussed the $5000 for the parking lot and it was decided to verify that number with Brett Jackson, the Highway Agent. Nancy Strand inquired whether it is cost effective to do a major renovation on the Visitors center building. Bob Francis, Code Officer, commented it would likely be more cost effective to tear down the building and rebuild. Paul Greenlaw questioned whether there would be grant funding available because the building is historical.

**Chairman Caplain- Debt Services-** Proposed budget is a -1% decrease because of a reduction in what is owed. TAN proposed budget was increased by 50% from $10,000 to $20,000 because of interest rate increases.

**Code Officer-Letter for unsightly properties-** Bob Francis, Code Officer, discussed the two letters, one from the code enforcer from the town of Littleton and the other from the town attorney. Select person Queiroga asked Mr. Francis to draft a letter to be presented to the board using the two examples referenced. Paul Green law thanked both the select board and the code officer for their efforts. Dick Robbie stated that people should not have to live next to the junk yard properties and we owe the neighbors of these properties more. Chairman Caplain noted the town is working with our attorney and has hired a new code officer to work towards eliminating the junk yard properties. Select person Morris commented that the select board is working on these properties however much of what is being done is not public because it is a legal matter. Nancy Strand asked if the letter was specifically pertaining to junk yard properties or if abandoned properties were also included. Select person Hibberd confirmed that the letter would apply to both junk and abandoned properties.

**Sullivan Creative Marketing Update-**Chairman Caplain introduced Pam Sullivan from Sullivan Creative Marketing. Ms. Sullivan gave an overview of the marketing report (see attached) The 2023 plan includes driving people to the website using social media and digital media using the assets Bethlehem offers including biking, golfing, and the mountains but also adding the cultural benefits of the town and the 2024 eclipse. Select person Hibberd relayed a question the board received regarding website hits and how do we know its not the same group of people and Ms. Sullivan explained because they are unique users and people with VPN’s are not counted because they cannot be tracked. Chairman Caplain asked Ms. Sullivan to prepare a 2023 budget and to consider what was successful in 2022 and what didn’t work. Mike Bruno thanked Sullivan Creative for all the work that has been done. Mr. Bruno continued he would like to see more businesses than just the Main St village showcased and recommended working with Beech Hill Auto and the car show.

**Minutes – 11/21/2022 Select person Hibberd made a motion to accept the 11/21 minutes. Select person Morris seconded and Select person Jensen agreed. Chairman Caplain and Select person Queiroga abstained.**

**Other-** Select person Morris updated the board that Tara Bamford confirmed that Select person Hibberd was correct that short term rentals are not a permittable use. Select person Hibberd asked if the select board wanted to introduce a warrant adding short term rental as a permittable use. Select person Morris said the Zoning board is going to be working on this next year and given the number of Planning Board and Zoning warrants it would be preferred to wait. Select person Queiroga explained she didn’t believe adding short term rentals as a permittable use was a complicated process as it is just updating to allow short term rentals as a permittable use. Select person Morris asked if short term rentals should be allowed as permitted use by special exception or variance and is it permitted in every district. Select person Hibberd thought it should be permitted everywhere. Select person Morris pointed out if they are permittable now it may be difficult to restrict in the future. It was decided to put short-term rentals on the agenda for 12/5.

**Non-public Session per RSA 91A-3 II (personnel, reputation, and legal)**

**Chairman Caplain moved to go into nonpublic and Select person Hibberd seconded followed by roll call.**

Select person Hibberd made a motion to adjourn 8:30 pm Select person Queiroga seconded, and all were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Moritz

Administrative assistant