Bethlehem Board of Selectmen

Meeting Minutes

September 25th, 2023

In person –Chairman Morris, Selectman Strand, and Selectman Bruno.

Public Input- Eddie Qi inquired if the board had received his Notice to Keep Accurate records. Chairman Morris responded they had received the notice and they had no comment.

Minutes 9/11- Selectman Bruno suggested the minutes be postponed until 10/2 and the board agreed.

250th Anniversary Committee- Date of event- Chairman Morris introduced Linda Moore from the Historical Society to discuss the date of the 250th Anniversary celebration. Mrs. Moore suggested July 6th and it was decided to seek another date because of Franconia’s Old Home Day event. It was decided that the Historical Society would propose another date and report back at a future meeting.

DOT Public Hearing- Selectman Strand updated the board on the DOT Public Hearing that took place on September 14th at the Bethlehem town meeting room. Selectman Strand suggested the town seek a TAC representative and Jared Sullivan and Selectman Caplain have volunteered for the position. It was decided to add North Country Counsel TAC representation to the next agenda.

Reevaluation update- Chairman Morris updated the board that KRT has added additional appointments for Thursday September 28th and people should contact the town administrator with questions. Eddie Qi stated that it was unconstitutional to use a private company to assess town property for the reevaluation.

Grant Strategy- Chairman Morris opened discussion on defining a grant strategy for the town. Chairman Morris continued any grant application that is submitted or facilitated by the town should have a strategic procedure to limit competition between the towns grant submittals. Selectman Strand noted that coordination between grant submittals was recommended because it creates a stronger comprehensive story. Chris Jensen stated there must be transparency between organizations. Chairman Morris agreed stating the town could be benefiting from contact sharing. The board will continue to discuss the grant strategy during the meeting on October 2nd.

Other – Selectman Bruno updated the board that the Historical Society would be hosting an event on October 15th at Maplewood from 2:00-4:00.

Selectman Strand asked Eddie Qi why it was important to him to include the quotes he provided for the minutes dated September 11th. Mr. Qi responded that the Select Board are the agents for the town, and he didn’t believe the draft minutes accurately represented the meeting. Selectman Bruno explained minutes are not a transcription of select board meetings however a representation of what occurred for historical purposes. It was agreed by Mr. Qi and the select board to add the “Notice to Demand to Stop” to an appendix of the September 11th meeting minutes.

Non-public Session per RSA 91A-3 II (personnel, reputation, and legal) Chairman Morris made a motion to go into non-public for reasons of Legal. Selectman Strand seconded and roll call followed.

The board discussed personnel.

Chairman Morris made a motion to adjourn at 8:30. Selectman Hibberd seconded, and all were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Moritz

Town Administrator

Selectman Strand’s notes from the DOT Hearing:

NH DOT Fall 2023 GACIT Hearing to introduce the draft of the 2025-2034 Ten Year Plan

* Panel consisted of 4 DOT members and Cindy Warmington, our regional representative at the NH Executive Council. Attending from Bethlehem were Mary, Bruce, myself, Jared Sullivan (Grafton-02 State Rep), and several Bethlehem residents
* A Powerpoint presentation was given on the Ten Year Plan with lots of graphs, charts and numbers. Presentation included where funds come from. Total budget over the ten year period is $10 Billion.
* In the plan itself, Bethlehem had three projects listed:
  + Bethlehem-Littleton rehabilitation on 1-03 from MM 120.5 to MM 125.0, including ramps at Exits 40, 41 & 42 – scheduled for 2030 and 2031. Budgeted: $25,728,051
  + Red List Bridge carrying NH 142 over the Ammonoosuc River – scheduled for 2027. Budgeted: $3,991,280
  + Bethlehem-Franconia Rte 18 & off-Rd Trail Connecting Bethehem and Franconia (Safe Routes to School) – Scheduled for 2025. Budgeted: $353,755
* Best information came from the Q & A session and one on one discussions after the meeting ended.
* We learned that almost all projects that made it into the Ten Year Plan were first brought to our regional North Country Council. Communities submit their proposals to the North Country’s Transportation Advisory Committee for vetting before being submitted to the state for review and final scoring and approval. They help prepare those applications. But Bethlehem has not had a TAC rep for some time. Therefore I think most of our want list items have not been submitted through this channel.

I believe we need a better organization and procedure for grant applications. It goes without saying that if the Town of Bethlehem is a fiscal agent for any grant (no matter who submitted it), then we’re responsible for facilitating it and ANY grant application of this nature should be vetted and approved by the Select Board BEFORE submittal. In addition, any grant application that is spearheaded by any Town Committee should be vetted and approved by the Select Board.