Bethlehem Board of Selectmen

Meeting Minutes

November 6th, 2023

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

Minutes 10/30- Approving the minutes was postponed until November 13th.

Veteran’s Tax Abatement- Chairman Morris explained the board had voted to abate the Veterans tax credit in June and was modifying the original motion. Chairman Morris continued the abatement would be handled internally and recipients would not have to do anything. Selectman Bruno noted that the Veterans Tax credit was not changing from what had been previously adopted. Chris Jensen asked if eligibility was expanding, and Chairman Morris explained that only the people who had previously received the credit would qualify. Selectman Strand would like the board to discuss expanding Veteran’s tax credits in the future.

**Chairman Morris motioned to abate the 97 Veteran’s tax credit per RSA 72:28 for individuals who applied and previously received the tax credit in 2022 and continued to qualify under the language of the statute as it existed before it was the amended by the legislator. Selectman Bruno seconded and all were in favor.**

 Aries Engineering Contract- Chairman Morris opened discussion on the Aries Engineering Ground Water Management proposal noting the town has worked with Aries for several years. Chairman Morris continued she felt working with the same engineering firm that has managed the groundwater testing for over 20 years is a benefit to the town which is why additional proposals were not sought.

**Selectman Strand made a motion to continue to work with Aries Engineering for the groundwater testing of the closed Prospect St landfill. Selectman Hibberd seconded and all were in favor.**

KRT- Municipal Assessment Data Certification- The board signed the Municipal Assessment Data Certification prepared by KRT Assessing. This certification is done during the reevaluation and looks at the most recent property sales to help determine the equalization ratio.

Insurance- The board discussed the insurance increase for 2024. It was decided to stay with Health Trust for 2024.

**Chairman Morris made a motion to continue with Health Trust at the current employee employer share for 2024. Selectman Hibberd seconded and all were in favor.**

**Chairman Morris made a motion to fund the guardrail repair previously approved on May 1st from the Highway Revolving Fund. Selectman Caplain seconded and all were in favor.**

Liaison/Committee Update- Selectman Caplain updated the board that the Sustainability Working Group is working on a strategic plan. Selectman Hibberd asked how many members the Sustainability Working group has. Selectman Caplain replied there were 6 or 7 active members, 2 or 3 additional members that are somewhat active, and 3 to 4 more members that are not active however liked to be informed. Chairman Morris noted when the group was created it was described as a group to work with already existing town committees to share information on sustainability and appears to be evolved into something else. Chairman Morris asked if in the future the Energy Commission could dissolve into the Sustainability Working Group. Selectman Caplain replied that both committees are relevant and should not be combined. Chairman Morris stated town committees created by the select board should operate under a similar model. Barry Zitzer, Sustainability Working Group member, explained the group is working on a strategic plan and goals and until the metrics are defined, they are meeting more frequently. Chris Jensen stated that he believes it is reasonable for the select board to have some control over town committees to ensure coordination.

Selectman Strand updated the board that the Transfer Station Committee received an email from Carberry Landfill, and they have confirmed they can take Bethlehem’s 300 to 400 tons of waste when NCES closes. Selectman Strand continued that members of the transfer Station Committee had met with representatives of Senator Hassin’s office to discuss funding opportunities. Selectman Strand updated the board that she had met with the Rec Director after the meeting on 10/30 and the rec director has already implemented some of the recommendations that were suggested.

Chairman Morris updated the board that there was a Bretzfelder meeting, and the committee is always looking for volunteers.

Selectman Hibberd updated the board that Dawn Ferringo, Welfare Director, was awarded an additional $1,000 to be used at local farms to which she intends to purchase meat for the food pantry. Selectman Hibberd continued that 5 families have already signed up for Thanksgiving meals.

Selectman Bruno updated the board that the Planning Board is having a public meeting to discuss the proposed ordinance changes on 11/29 and the first public hearing for the ordinance’s changes will be held on 12/13. If a second public hearing is necessary, it is scheduled for 1/10.

Other- Selectman Strand asked Selectman Caplain for clarification regarding a recent article where he was quoted as a selectman. Selectman Caplain explained he was not speaking on behalf of the board. Selectman Strand asked the board if the highway department was able to scrap the metal that had been collected.

**Selectman Strand made a motion to allow the Highway department to scrap the metal shelves. Selectman Hibberd seconded and all were in favor.**

Selectman Strand recommended deactivating the Facebook page that had been previously used by the select board and the board agreed.

**Selectman Strand made a motion to deactivate Bethlehem NH News Facebook page. Selectman Caplain seconded and all were in favor. Chairman Morris abstained.**

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 and a legal matter.

Chairman Morris made a motion to adjourn at 8:00. Selectman Strand seconded, and all were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Moritz

Town Administrator