Bethlehem Board of Selectmen

Meeting Minutes

February 24th, 2025

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

Public Input- Barry Zitzer thanked Selectman Morris and Selectman Caplain for their outstanding service on the Bethlehem Select Board.

STR Continued- Fee, Effective Date, and Inspection Frequency- Selectman Morris started discussion on fees for the STR application and inspection stating the fee should reflect the workload necessary to maintain inspections and the required STR documentation. Chairman Bruno asked if the STR Committee was recommending the Building Inspector inspect all STR and Selectman Morris replied that everyone would be required to have an inspection. Chairman Bruno asked if the STR fee would be annual and Selectman Morris the STR Committee deferred to the select board on frequency of inspections. Selectman Morris continued one of the questions they need to address if there is no change in ownership should the STR owner be able to self-certify and how frequently. Select Woman Hibberd asked if the board moved forward with self-recertification what would the process be for complaints that the checklist was not being completed. Selectman Morris explained that if there is a complaint it would be documented and dealt with by the complaint form. Select Woman Strand thanked Julia Brabec for the document she provided which led to additional research and she felt confident the committee addressed some of the issues other towns have faced with adopting STR. Select Woman Strand continued initially when the board discussed STR the primary purpose was to gather data if an issue arose. Selectman Morris clarified that the ordinance was put forth by the Planning Board for the purpose of public safety because unlike hotels and B&B’s STR do not have an inspection method. Selectman Morris continued the intent with having the Building Inspector inspect the properties was not to be burdensome on the property owner rather ensure public safety. Selectman Caplain recommended self-recertification for a few years following the Building Inspectors inspection and then after a certain amount of time require another full inspection. This would allow for a more reasonable fee. Select Woman Strand recommended after the initial inspection by the town recertification should be completed by the property owner unless they choose other wise or there is a complaint. The board agreed to have self-recertification after the initial town inspection with annual renewal. Selectman Morris suggested, however the board moves forward with the implementation, the first year should allow for a lot of grace for the property owners. Chairman Bruno asked if a STR property uses a management company would that management company be able to submit an application on behalf of the property owner. Selectman Morris replied that a management company would be able to submit on behalf of a STR owner after providing proof of signature authority and providing contact information as emergency contact. Selectman Morris continued STR violation notices will go to the Emergency Contact and if a license is revoked the notice will go to both the property owner and emergency contact. Selectman Morris suggested if town inspections are reduced to every 4 years the fee could be reduced to $100, and recertification could be $25 or $50. Chris Jensen recommended the fee be high enough to cover the town’s expenses, so residents are not subsidizing essentially a business. The board decided the fee should be $125 for the initial inspection and annual recertification be $35 fee. Selectman Morris reiterated on an annual basis property with zero violations may choose to self-certify for a fee of $35 and the board agreed. The board agreed to implement by June 1st and the town would send an informational mailer to help explain the process.

**Selectman Morris motioned to adopt the STR application process with the following changes the fee will be $125 the inspection going forward in the first year only and the permitting will start June 1, 2025, applications must be received by that date and renewals on an annual basis with no violations or changes to the property the fee will be $35. Selectman Caplain seconded and all were in favor.**

Chairman Bruno thanked Selectman Morris and the STR committee for the work completed for the STR application process.

Reappoint Health Officer: Virginia Jeffryes- **Chairman Bruno motioned to reappoint Virginia Jeffryes as the Health Officer for a two-year term. Select Woman Hibberd seconded and all were in favor. Selectman Caplain abstained.**

Conservation Commission Appointments-

**Selectman Morris motioned to accept the resignation of Betsy Philips and Vivian Winterhoff from the Conservation Commission. Select Woman Strand seconded and all were in favor.**

**Selectman Morris motioned to reappoint Rachelle Lyons to the Conservation Commission for a three-year term ending March 31, 2028. Selectman Caplain seconded and all were in favor.**

**Select Woman Hibberd motioned to appoint Veronica Morris to the Conservation Commission for a two year term ending March 31, 2027 effective March 12, 2025. Selectman Caplain seconded and all were in favor. Selectman Morris abstained.**

**Selectman Morris motioned to appoint Ivan Ash to a 3-year term as an alternate to end on March 31, 2028. Select Woman Hibberd seconded and all were in favor.**

**Selectman Morris motioned to accept Joanne Jones resignation as an alternate and appoint her as a full member with a 3-year term ending on March 31, 2028. Select Woman Hibberd seconded and all were in favor.**

Tillotson Grant Skate Park- **Selectman Morris motioned to appoint Mary Moritz the point of contact for the Tillotson grant for the skate park. Select Woman Hibberd seconded and all were in favor.**

Northern Boarders Grant: Visitor’s Center**- Chairman Bruno motioned to work with a contractor to facilitate the Northern Boarders Regional Commission Catalyst grant. Select Woman Strand seconded and all were in favor. Selectman Caplain abstained.**

Remove Jack Anderson add John Galloway Woodsville Guarantee- **Select Woman Hibberd motion to remove Jack Anderson from the Woodsville Guarantee Bank and debit card and add John Galloway. Selectman Caplain seconded and all were in favor.**

Abatements-

**Select Woman Hibberd motioned to abate Fairpoint Communication in the amount of $4284 due to a valuation change. Selectman Caplain seconded and all were in favor.**

**Selectman Caplain motioned to abate map 203-005 in the amount of $654 because of an administrative refund. Select Woman Strand seconded and all were in favor.**

**Selectman Caplain motioned to abate map 204-66 in the amount of $825 because of an administrative refund. Select Woman Strand seconded and all were in favor.**

**Selectman Caplain motioned to abate map 205-230-2 in the amount of $329 because of an administrative refund. Select Woman Strand seconded and all were in favor.**

**Selectman Caplain motioned to abate map 208-17 and map 208-18 in the amount of $257 because of an administrative refund. Select Woman Strand seconded and all were in favor.**

**Selectman Caplain motioned to abate map 208-6 and map 208-9 in the amount of $423 because of an administrative refund. Select Woman Strand seconded and all were in favor.**

**Selectman Caplain motioned to abate map 206-68-20 and map 20668-28 in the amount of $819 because of an administrative refund. Select Woman Strand seconded and all were in favor.**

**Minutes 1/20 and 2/10- Chairman Bruno motioned to approve the minutes from 1/20. Select Woman Strand seconded and all were in favor.**

**Select Woman Hibberd motioned to approve the minutes from 2/10. Selectman Caplain seconded and all were in favor.**

Updates and other business- **Chairman Bruno motioned to approve the quote from Berlin City for the new police cruiser. Sect Woman Strand seconded and all were in favor.**

Chairman Bruno recommended the board investigate moving the sign permitting to the Planning Board.

Non-public Session per RSA 91A-3 II (personnel, reputation, and legal) Select Woman Strand motioned to go into nonpublic per RSA 91A-3 II for reasons of personnel, and Legal. Selectman Caplain seconded and roll call followed.

The board discussed a personnel issue and legal.

Chairman Bruno made a motion to adjourn at 9:00. Selectman Strand seconded, and all were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Moritz

Town Administrator