Bethlehem Board of Selectmen

Meeting Minutes

March 17th, 2025

In person – Chairman Bruno, Select Woman Strand, Selectman MacDonald, Select Woman Hibberd, and Select Woman Knowles.

Nominate a Chair- **Chairman Bruno nominated Select Woman Strand as chair of the select board. Selectman MacDonald seconded and all were in favor. Chairwoman Strand abstained.**

**Selectman Bruno nominated Select Woman Hibberd as Vicechair. Chairwoman Strand seconded and all were in favor. Select Woman Hibberd abstained.**

Chairwoman Strand read the following statement:

*First, I want to thank you for your vote of confidence in becoming the chair for this coming year. I wanted to take a moment to mention a few things as we start work as a new Select Board. I’ve been very fortunate to sit on this board for the past two years with excellent leadership from Veronica Morris and Mike Bruno as chairs and thank them for their service each of those years. Since Mike has just stepped down from the Chair position, I want to acknowledge his efficiency in keeping our meetings productive, his diligence in fiscal matters, and although he has left big shoes to fill, how he has inspired me to step up and give this a try myself. However, no one board member gets to make decisions for the board as a whole and I believe an excellent Board is one where all five of us work together. It’s when our best work will get done and your input will always be valued.*

*I’d also like to note how pleased I am that April has agreed to serve as Vice Chair this year. She brings a wealth of experience to this board having served as our Town Administrator for 8 years, now in her 5th year as a Select Board Member. She has an extensive knowledge of procedures, HR issues, state RSAs, our town history and much more.*

*To my fellow board members, I am grateful for all the individual talents, knowledge and experiences you bring to this board. I ask that if you cannot make a meeting you notify Mary Moritz, including whether or not you can attend via Zoom. Our commitment to serve as a Select Board member includes making every effort to attend meetings in person and we must have 3 members attend in person to reach a quorum.*

*To our two new board members, Casey and Andrea, your fellow board members will do everything we can to help explain issues you’re not familiar with. And I will share that I have learned a tremendous amount of information from Mary Moritz. She has always been very patient with my many questions over these past two years.*

*As our town’s primary governing body, we are responsible for setting local policies, managing the town budget, overseeing operations, hiring key personnel like our town administrator, fire and police chiefs, and generally making decisions on behalf of the community, often with input from the public. In everything we do, we want to reflect the wishes of our residents and although we’d be unlikely to have 100% agreement within our community on any single issue, it’s our responsibility to listen and understand various points of view. I know I can speak for the entire board in this respect – that we DO want to hear from the public. It’s one of the reasons we always have Public Input on our agendas and allow public input during agenda item discussions.*

*Over the next month or so, we will be reviewing our goals as a Board. This is an annual process. In addition, we’ll be taking a new look at our rules of procedure and reviewing our fund balance policies. Agendas are set the week before our meetings and if you’d like to add an agenda item, you can do so by speaking with Mary or with me. To our residents, you can also request to be an agenda item by contacting Mary Moritz.*

*Having said all this, are you ready to go? Let’s look at the next item on the agenda.*

Public Input- Allegra Wright thanked the select board for everything they do and congratulated Selectman MacDonald and Select Woman Knowles and welcomed them to the board. Rich Southwell welcomed new board members and noted the meeting guidelines on the website reflected the state of emergency from 5 years ago and should be updated. Dick Robie noted the property on Long Hill had a large amount of garbage and the amount appears to be growing. Chairwoman Strand explained to Mr. Robie that a complaint had been received by the Code Officer, and he would be looking into the situation. Barry Zitzer, Transfer Station Committee member, asked the board if he could represent Bethlehem at NRRA Recycling Conference.

**Chairwoman Strand motioned to authorize Barry Zitzer to attend the NRRA Recycling Conference and represent Bethlehem. Select Woman Hibberd seconded and all were in favor.**

Assign Liaison- The board discussed the liaison list and decided to only have a primary liaison for all but Planning and Zoning, Conservation Commission, and Capital Improvement Committee in case the primary cannot make a meeting the secondary can go in their place.

HB 639- Cheryl Jensen- Chery Jensen, Conservation Commission, is requesting the select board write a letter opposing HB 639 because of the potential environmental and potential negative quality of life impact on residents. Ms. Jensen explained what is being proposed is an act to protect the crypto currency mining industry and has no protection for towns. Chairwoman Strand explained that crypto mining is a huge building that house large computers typically located in rural areas. Ms. Jensen continued in 2020 Arkansas passed a similar bill and there were issues that were later addressed by Governor Sanders in 2024. Ms. Jenson said this is a crossover bill from the House to the Senate which is scheduled for April 10th but it has not been assigned to a committee yet. Selectwoman Knowles noted Ms. Jensen’s point that the bill protects the industry, and that New Hampshire has been identified as a crypto-friendly state due to favorable tax policies. Ms. Jensen asked if the board would send a letter to Senator Rochefort suggesting siting why the project was in opposition of Bethlehem’s Master Plan. Chairwoman Stand thanked Ms. Jensen for the work she had done to provide the board with information on HB 639. The board decided to have the letter on the agenda for the next meeting. Rich Southwell noted neither the bill nor a draft of the requested letter were on the website continuing if residents are going to request the board send letters to legislators’ those documents should be made public prior to the board deciding. Mr. Southwell continued that he is not a fan of data centers noting the noise and energy required to run the facilities however he believes it is more appropriate for the Conservation Commission to send a letter in opposition. He explained if there was a local control issue then it would be the responsibility of the select board to oppose but the version of the bill he read stated the crypto industry couldn’t be regulated differently than other industries not that it couldn’t be regulated. Select Woman Hibberd commented that when the town was in opposition to Northern Pass it was to retain local control, and this situation is about retaining local control. Selectman Bruno noted to Select Woman Hibberd as the NHMA legislative liaison there are at least 6 bills which directly impact local zoning control.

Select Board Guidelines- Chairwoman Strand wanted to give Select Woman Knowles and Selectman MacDonald an opportunity to review the guidelines document and it would be discussed at the next select board meeting.

Updates and other business- Chairwoman Strand explained there was a glitch in the tax software and some residents who signed up for paperless billing did not receive their December tax bill and they are requesting interest to be waived. Select Woman Hibberd noted that the tax bills are sent twice a year, and residents should take some responsibility to contact the town if they did not receive a bill. Selectman Bruno stated that the error was on the town’s software he believes the interest should be waived.

Select Woman Hibberd motioned to charge the interest.

**Chairwoman Strand motioned to waive the interest on the delinquent tax bills because of the tax bill glitch. Selectman Bruno seconded and the vote carried 4-1.**

**Selectman Bruno motioned to approve Tac-2 bid to outfit the police cruiser in the amount of $25,276.35 to be paid from the Police Cruiser Capital Reserve. Chairwoman Strand seconded and all were in favor.**

Chairwoman Strand updated the board that Frank Claffey, Treasurer, needed to be appointed to another three-year term.

**Select Woman Hibberd motioned to appoint Frank Claffey as Treasurer for a three-year term. Select Woman Knowles seconded and all were in favor.**

Chairwoman Strand open discussion on future meetings and the board decided on 3/31, 4/14, 4/28, 5/12, and 5/19.

Chairwoman Strand updated the board that the town attorney had done a review of the STR application and permitting process and outlined some concerns and this will be addressed as an agenda item during a future meeting.

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

The board discussed a personnel issue and legal.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Moritz

Town Administrator