

Bethlehem Board of Selectmen  
Meeting Minutes  
Bethlehem Selectmen Office  
October 3, 2016

Present: Chairman Glavac, Selectman Staples, Selectman Laleme, Selectman Blanchard.

Chairman Glavac opened the meeting at 6:30pm and welcomed the School Boards from Bethlehem Elementary School and Profile School and the principals from each school and the Superintendent. Chairman Glavac went over the handouts and explained the town appropriation and tax rate. He also went over how the unanticipated fund balance was used to offset the tax rate. Chairman Glavac said he appreciates the three boards coming together. Selectman Blanchard said the municipal boards have been taking money from the fund to offset the tax rate for years and that we can't keep doing that. He also said in 4 more years the income from NCES will be gone and that he wants a good education for the kids but the tax rate is too high.

Selectman Laleme said the rate increase is \$4.00 since 2009 and need to look at trend to get taxes down. She said the capital reserves and projects add up and some are needed, some are desired and some are wish items.

Chairman Glavac said we currently have 6.5% in the unanticipated fund balance and we should strive to get to 8% because the Department of Revenue (DRA) recommends having between 8 and 17%.

Selectman Laleme asked if the educational grants are decreasing. Pierre Couture (Superintendent) said there are multiple grants and they are decreasing in the amount. He said there is nothing done in Concord to help schools on local level.

Andrea Bryant asked when the payment will be up on the Profile building and was told in 9 to 10 years. There was discussion on federal education money being 40% and out of district placement is 40% reimbursable.

Carol Kerivan (Bethlehem Elementary School Board Chairman) said 42% of BES students get free and reduced lunch and the school has 12 paras which 8 are 1 on 1. She said the other 4 are for 9 students. Mrs. Kerivan said to reduce taxes by \$1.00 they would need to cut \$250,000.00 which equates to 5 teachers. She said they made an attempt to cut a teacher when the enrollment was down but the taxpayers voted it back in. Mr. Couture said 80% of the budget is salary and benefits. Chairman Glavac said cutting 5 teachers would make the quality of the school suffer.

Selectman Laleme said if we cut our budget we cut police, highway, etc. and if we increase .75 to 1.00 every year we will have to lose services.

Chairman Glavac said revenues need to be increased instead of cutting expenses and said the town has started a Business Retention and Recruitment Committee to look at that. He said the town has gone as low they can do on expenses.

Kim Shilleto (Profile School Board Chairman) said Profile has kept their budget in a downward amount and said the aid has been decreased. He also said in 2015 the budget was down \$175,000 and in 2016 it was down 222,000 and 2 faculty members have been cut.

There was discussion about the population decreases are spread out over all grades and not all are in the same grade.

Chris McGrath thanked everyone and said quality education is important but that high tax rate will drive families out. Mike Culver (Profile School Board) said all the Boards should coordinate capital projects so multiple projects are not being done in the same year. He also said it is \$300,000 to reduce tax rate by \$1.00. Mrs. Kerivan said the wood pellet is up and running and over \$100,000 was given back to the town. She said next year the system will have paid for itself. Mrs. Kerivan also said the front part of the parking lot was done from money that was in the budget and \$50,000 that is in Capital Reserve was not used. She said they will request \$25,000 for the parking lot to do the side of the building and the amount needed for that is \$69,000. She also said they do not have any other capital projects coming up. Mrs. Kerivan said the school was offered to purchase the Lahout property but they declined. Chairman Glavac asked if they would be using the additional land given to them for the parking lot and was told they will use about 15 feet of it and there will be 48 – 50 parking spaces. Cheryl Jensen asked about money that Mrs. Kerivan said was given back. Mrs. Kerivan explained they appropriated \$189,000 for the estimated cost for the pellet system but because of grants received and money in reserve fund only 29,000.00 plus some for cleanup costs were used. There was discussion about energy efficiency projects including LED lights at profile.

Mrs. Jensen said the town is finding more revenue and asked if the schools could find more revenue. Mr. Couture said there are tuition students at Profile and they hope to recruit more. Selectman Laleme asked if they have done any legislative lobbying. Mr. Couture said they did lobby about the aid and they didn't take any aid away but it also didn't get raised.

There was discussion about costs associated with technology needs and how they are on a maintenance schedule now so they won't have to replace everything at once.

Mrs. Jensen said it bothers her to hear that 80% of the budget is teachers and staff and that there isn't anything they can do about it.

Christine Ash (Profile School Board) said the town needs new businesses. Chairman Glavac explained about the Business Recruitment and Retention committee. Mrs. Kerivan said we need to increase revenue and that we can't keep cutting expenses. She said increasing businesses and getting people here will help grow the town. Mrs. Kerivan also said people will have to let businesses in and said there is a forward thinking group established to try to get businesses in Bethlehem. Mr. Culver said it takes a lot of businesses to increase the tax base. He said it would take 20 Balance's to decrease the tax rate by \$1.00. He also said we need 6 – 7 more Arlington Hotels.

Selectman Laleme said the Master Plan has been worked on for 1-2 years and reads like it is now as the prediction for the next 10 years. Mrs. Kerivan said it will not get the town to where it needs to be. Mr. McGrath said there have been 17 meetings for the Master Plan and there has not been much public input. Mr. Culver said they need to inform people who don't come to the meetings. Mrs. Farrell said when people come to meetings they feel they are not listened to. She also asked what kind of businesses, box stores(?) and said it is important to have public input.

Chairman Glavac gave an update on the proposed Bethlehem Sustainability Park. He said the Board received legal advice on how to go forward and can they enter into a discussion with them. He said the advice said the Board could do that. Chairman Glavac said they would like to hear from the public and will have a meeting with NCES so people can ask questions and give comments. He said he understands there was a contract signed but to look at the future to see if they can talk about it and get public input. Selectman Staples said they just received the legal advice and was not satisfied with the advice. She said she needs to digest it and is not comfortable that even talking about it doesn't violate the agreement. She said the Board all agreed not too long ago to uphold the agreement and agrees the public should have a say if it is assured it's not against the agreement to do so. Chairman Glavac said before today the Board all had concerns that discussing it would jeopardize it but the advice today said it is not a violation on either side by discussing it. Selectman Laleme said she read through the legal advice and has questions and doesn't want to take the next step until the questions are answered. She agrees that the public should be brought in to have their say and said the advice is complex and wants to ask follow up questions to the attorney. Selectman Blanchard said he has questions also. He said the public had questions that were not addressed and wants clarity that purchasing the Tucker property was not a violation of the agreement. He believes 125% that the voters have a say in this and doesn't see the presentation as a proposal. He said it doesn't have hard facts and wants more details. Selectman Staples said she is in favor of bringing public in when/if that time is right. She said there has been progress as a town and the Board needs to do due diligence. Chairman Glavac said we are not asking for guidance from attorney, we are asking questions and getting answers and the Board will take the answers into consideration. Selectman Blanchard said the Board is taking it very seriously and remembers the days when pro/anti didn't talk to each other. He said he doesn't want to get back to that. Chairman Glavac said NCES coming in is not a violation of the agreement and discussing it is not a violation. He said the public forum will be advertised. Andrea Bryant asked if the legal advice was public and was told no. Mrs. Bryant said it had to be made public if it wasn't related to personnel and Chairman Glavac said it will not be released. Selectman Laleme said not to release the actual document but to summarize the advice. Don Lavoie said this would involve the Planning Board so should they be invited to have joint meeting. He also said any group of 25+ can put it on the ballot and recommends the Board stays on top of it to prevent it getting chaotic. Mrs. Farrell said the agenda was set by a company who will be breaking a contract. She said the sustainability park is not the issue but bringing in more waste is. She said 170 people from the Master Plan survey said they didn't want the landfill and 50 were ok with it. She said there were duplicate surveys of people saying they were ok with it. Chairman Glavac told Mrs. Farrell that she could not make a statement like that. He said she doesn't know that the 170 are legit and the 50 have duplicates and said that statement put the process in question. Andrea Bryant said she has a CD when the Select Board in 12/10/11 talked with the town about the settlement agreement and then Selectman Mike Culver spoke saying with a yes vote for the zoning amendments the lawsuits would stop and any enforcement would be handled by petitioning the judge and that a lawsuit would not be needed. Mrs. Bryant also said that Mr. Culver said if it is a no vote they will go to court and there would be an appeal from one side and if we lost the appeal they would be able to expand. Mrs. Bryant told the

board to find a different attorney because it is a violation of the agreement by purchasing the Tucker property.

Chairman Glavac said there is no violation of the agreement. Donna Brooks asked what the Master Plan is for and said if we want people and businesses to come we need good schools and that is the #1 reason why people move to a town. She also said we need to have a town where people want to be and said the landfill would prevent people from wanting to come. Mrs. Farrell talked about the flower garden at the country club and how she offered to take it over when Mr. Baker stopped tending to it and the sign *courtesy of Casella* is still in the garden. She said the last vote (zoning change) you could only vote on dimensions and said there was nothing in the agreement that said District V was limited. Selectman Laleme said District V cannot expand without a vote from the legislative body. Mrs. Farrell said she didn't hear they would be on the agenda until the last minute and asked why the meeting was kept a secret. Don Lavoie said it is perfectly legal to do away with District V. He said the Planning Board would have to have a public hearing and the Select Board would have to put it on the warrant and said whether for or against it the town has to be on top of it.

Chairman Glavac told Mrs. Farrell that he appreciated her comments and told her he is also receiving calls urging the board to go forward with talking with Casella and we now have legal advice to open the discussion.

Selectman Blanchard said if a petitioned warrant article is submitted it will not be controlled by the town and said the board is trying to stay ahead of this. He said they can renegotiate the contract and the Board is adamant about being transparent and getting the townspeople's input.

\*Selectman Staples left at 8:20

At 8:25 Chairman Glavac moved to go into non-public session per RSA 91A:3 for matters of personnel. Selectman Blanchard seconded. Chairman Glavac did roll call with all members agreeing to go into non-public session.

The Board discussed personnel.

Chairman Glavac moved to approve the hire of Patrick Cullen for the highway Department. Selectman Blanchard seconded. Carried 3-0.

Chairman Glavac moved to approve the hire of Sean Moran for the highway department as a part time employee with the option to make him full time if Road Agent, Brett Jackson determines he needs him full time. Selectman Blanchard seconded. Carried 3-0.

At 8:55 Chairman Glavac moved to come out of non-public session. Selectman Blanchard seconded. Chairman Glavac did roll call with all members agreeing to come out of non-public session.

The Board discussed the cost for audit and after the discussion decided to obtain a quote from the company the school uses which our former consultant now works for. The Board said they wanted the quote to be for 3 years.

At 9:30 Selectman Blanchard moved to adjourn. Selectman Laleme seconded. Carried 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,  
April Hibberd