

Bethlehem Board of Selectmen  
Meeting Minutes  
Bethlehem Selectmen Office  
October 13, 2015

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

Chairman Culver opened the meeting at 6:30pm.

Chairman Culver said public input would be about budget only as we go along.

Fire Chief Anderson came before the Board to give an update on the ambulance paramedic situation (Littleton Hospital no longer providing paramedic services) and how that would affect Bethlehem. Chief Anderson said we have utilized the paramedic program for 10 years but he said we will survive without it. He said there are paramedics in surrounding towns. Chief Anderson also said local ambulance services have had meetings and will be forming a committee for regional based service. He also said he met with Littleton and there may not be Calex ambulance service in Littleton anymore. He said they (Littleton Fire Dept.) are now hiring 2 firefighter/paramedics and may provide ambulance service through the Fire Dept. Selectman Staples asked what happens now if paramedic service is needed. Chief Anderson said dispatch is tracking where the medics are in the area. He said if a medic does respond that town will provide the transport so they can bill insurance.

Selectman Laleme asked Chief Anderson when he is anticipating replacing the ambulance. Chief Anderson said he is hoping to this coming year. He said he is looking at prices for new and for refurbishing the chassis on our current one. He also said it would be a minimum of \$150,000.00 to purchase a new ambulance. Frank Claffey said there will be \$70,000.00 in the Ambulance Capital Reserve in December.

Chief Anderson said he has some budget questions about having to ask liaison to spend. He said it will get ridiculous and there should be a \$ limit on spending. He also said all budgets shouldn't have a freeze because of others being irresponsible with theirs. Chairman Culver said the budget is extremely tight and that this is to keep track of what is happening and spending. Chairman Culver also said nobody is being irresponsible with their budget. Selectman Laleme suggested allowing spending up to a certain amount or certain line items. It will remain the same for now (talking with liaison for all spending).

Chairman Culver said he would like to show a budget that lowers the tax rate by \$1.00. He wants it to show what services would have to be cut to get to that number. Selectman Glavac said they trimmed it last year as much as possible. Selectman Laleme said it was cut as much as they could last year and said there was not any room for unanticipated expenses. Chairman

Culver said he wouldn't advocate or want that budget but wants to show people the effect of that. Selectman Glavac asked what the point was if they don't present it that way.

## **BUDGETS:**

LIBRARY: Doug Harmon, Len Grubbs, Laura Clerkin, Peter Roy, and Sara Plumley came before the Board to discuss the proposed library budget. Doug Harmon said surveys were sent out asking what people wanted and the budget reflects providing the services that people want. Mr. Harmon said they are the only department that gave money back to the Town and said they gave \$5,000.00 back last year. He said they are asking for an increase this year due to salaries. He said the programs have been extremely successful and the librarians do not have time to do all their work. Laura Clerkin said the library has been wildly successful with patron numbers increasing. She said due to that they do not have time to order and catalog books. Selectman Staples asked if the salary increases were due to raises or adding staff. Len Grubbs said it was for additional hours for current staff and that hours were increasing not hourly wages. There was discussion about hours worked and rate of pay for each employee. The extra hours would not increase the hours the library is open but would allow employees to work when the library isn't open to get their work done. It was said they need to increase building cleaning maintenance because they need to increase the cleaning and they need to do maintenance on the boiler. There was also discussion about the snowplowing and landscaping services and how their current contractor cancelled the contract. They are putting this out to bid but anticipate an increase. The increase in the salary is for 12 additional hours to pay staff, 6 hours for Laura, 4 hours for Kathy, and 2 hours for Elaine. Peter Roy said the Library is available to everyone year round unlike the pool that depends on temperature and season and emergency services only if needed etc. Chairman Culver asked what a 10% cut look like and was told a cut in library hours. Selectman Laleme said she is supportive of the new library but said the highway department has been short staffed for years, the police needs to update their computers, Jack wants to buy an Ambulance, which all adds up. Len Grubbs said if they took 10% off this year's budget it would be \$92,000.00 which would be a cut in significant hours. Mr. Harmon said the survey they did indicates this is what the people want (the hours they are currently open). Selectman Blanchard said everyone wants what they want but people are always asking when the tax rate will be lower. Selectman Glavac said if you ask people if they like services like the library and the roads being plowed they are going to say yes. Mrs. Clerkin said the increase will cost people \$5.00 a year. Selectman Staples asked if there were raises worked in the increased salary line. She was told there were raises worked into it for each of the 4 employees.

## **CONSERVATION COMMISSION:**

Cheryl Jensen said they are requesting the same as last year which is \$1270.00. She said there is an increase in dues but she said they would absorb that. Selectman Laleme asked if the leftover money from the budget goes into the savings account and was told it was. Selectman Blanchard asked what the future work in the Town forest is and Mrs. Jensen said they will do selective cutting of timber.

#### VISITOR'S CENTER:

Selectman Blanchard said they have done more advertising without increasing the cost and thinks the Visitor Center is a plus for the town. There was discussion about staying open one more week a year which Carole Hammarberg said would have put them over budget. There was a suggestion about joining another area Chamber seeing how a lack of businesses in Bethlehem has been identified as a concern. Mrs. Hammarberg said they had 1161 people that visited and have 39 members. There was discussion about how there are 20 members who haven't paid yet and the possibility of changing the date to pay by. Selectman Glavac asked Mrs. Hammarberg what a 10% cut would impact and she said a loss of hours. Selectman Blanchard will reach out to other Chambers to talk about joining them. There was also discussion about combining web services with the Town's.

#### STREET LIGHTING:

The proposed \$37,000.00 was discussed. There was a discussion on whether we get billed for street light repairs or not.

The Board reviewed minutes.

Chairman Culver moved to approve the minutes from 08/31/15 as written. Selectman Blanchard seconded. Carried 3-0. (Selectmen Staples and Glavac abstained).

Selectman Blanchard moved to approve the minutes from 09/14/15 as written. Selectman Staples seconded. Carried 4-0. (Chairman Culver abstained).

Selectman Glavac moved to approve the minutes from 09/23/15 as written. Selectman Laleme seconded. Carried 4-0. (Selectman Blanchard abstained).

Selectman Blanchard moved to approve the minutes from 09/28/15 as written. Selectman Glavac seconded. Carried 3-0. (Chairman Culver and Selectman Laleme abstained).

Selectman Staples moved to approve the minutes from 10/06/15 as written. Selectman Blanchard seconded. Carried 3-0. (Selectmen Glavac and Laleme abstained).

The Board discussed a credit card company that offers a 2% cash back on charges. Selectman Laleme moved to have Frank Claffey review this and see if the Town should go with this. Chairman Culver seconded. Carried 5-0.

It was stated that an email was sent about the Littleton Rail Trail saying we are interested but want to see a commitment.

The Board wants to have a meeting with the new Littleton Town Manager to discuss the boundary line issue on Railroad Street.

Chairman Culver said he reviewed the quote for the police dept. for the server but said he has questions so he will be looking into that further.

Cliff Crosby came before the Board and handing them each a packet. He said he would like to see the tax rate cut by 41% by bringing in another million in revenue. He said he would like to talk with Casella to see what ideas he has and try to stop him from leaving us and wants to know from the Board if that is a good idea or not. Chairman Culver said he is out of his 5 minutes of time and suggested he get on the agenda if he wants to talk further on the issue. He will be on next week's agenda.

After asking if there was any other public comment with there being none Chairman Culver moved to go into non-public session at 8:15 per RSA 91 A for matters of personnel and reputation Selectman Laleme seconded. Chairman Culver did roll call with all members agreeing to go into non-public session.

The Board discussed a property that was deeded by tax collectors deed.

The Board discussed personnel. The Building Inspector will become a Town employee effective November 1<sup>st</sup>. The clerk duties for the building inspector will be handled by the selectmen's office.

At 9:15 Selectman Blanchard moved to come out of non-public session. Selectman Laleme seconded. Chairman Culver did roll call with all members agreeing to come out of non-public session.

At 9:15 Selectman Blanchard moved to adjourn. Selectman Staples seconded. Carried 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,  
April Hibberd  
Administrative Assistant