

Bethlehem Board of Selectmen
Meeting Minutes
Bethlehem Selectmen Office
October 20, 2016

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

Chairman Glavac opened the meeting at 6:00.

Chairman Glavac said this meeting is for the Board to ask follow up questions about the proposed Bethlehem Sustainability Park.

Selectman Laleme said she has thought a great deal about this and looked at the legal advice, agreement, etc. and knows the legal advice says we can do this and knows the financial impact the town is facing. She said the Board that did this agreement was thinking it would end this. She said it tore the town apart for many years and wants to do this the right way. Selectman Laleme said she was a big advocate for the conservation easement in the agreement and sold the town on the benefits to the town; end legal expenses, end strife, etc. She said that Board didn't look to the future and only concentrated on then and now acknowledges that we need to figure out how to replace 1 million. She also said she doesn't feel comfortable opening a discussion without a vote of the town and feels like there is an urgency here that is not warranted and not driven by the Board of Selectmen. Selectman Laleme asked the Board to reconsider and put warrant on to ask voters. She said if it is yes then they will negotiate and ratify the agreement. She also said she is torn because of viability of the town and high tax rate but concerned we need to do this in good faith to the taxpayers. She again said she would like the Board to vote again on this and wants to slow it down and go to the people first.

Selectman Staples said she agrees with what Selectman Laleme said and said this is not about Sustainability Park but an agreement that we should uphold unless the voters say they want to change it. She said at the 04/25/16 Select Board meeting all the Board members agreed to uphold the agreement. Selectman Staples said she also doesn't understand the urgency, that the Board should move forward with intention and integrity, to do it the right way. She said she feels the right way is to hear what the town feels about it. Selectman Staples asked Chairman Glavac for another vote from the Board.

Chairman Glavac said the town will have their say and that one way or another it will go on the ballot. He said there is an urgency because the shortfall (NCES revenue) starts happening next year. He said the town hasn't done anything to plan for the closing in 2021 and there were many missed opportunities from businesses driven out of town. He said he would like to go back to the legal advice that we can talk about this and feels comfortable with that. He said with the settlement agreement he was surprised at how easy it was to be able to come to the

table but we can and the people will have their say on the ballot. He said we are on a fiscal cliff right now.

Selectman Laleme said the presentation was in September, the vote will be in March and nothing will happen until March. She said they could have a special town meeting in June. Selectman Laleme said she assured the townspeople that it was a binding agreement. She said it was wrong that the Board did not look at the future when they made the agreement and said it is a legitimate question on where we will replace that revenue. She told the people that is was a good agreement and said the town has slowly drifted back together and we don't want to go back to them & us. Selectman Laleme said the simple solution is to ask the people first. Selectman Staples agreed and asked if they can just do it the right way.

Selectman Ubaldo said the current agreement is the current agreement and still exist and is legal. He said the new agreement will be new and if there is a no vote the existing one stands. He also said this is informational only and nothing is binding. He said the Board has been talking about financial concerns for the past year. He said they need to make it very clear what the town will be looking at and wants to give as much information to voters to make their decision. He also said he doesn't feel the urgency because we are just gathering information and will not be rushed.

Selectman Blanchard said he saw this as an informational meeting and the voters will have the final say in March and this meeting is to determine what the voters will be voting on in March. He also said an agreement is an agreement and believes in it. Selectman Blanchard said that it is sad that an issue will split a town and doesn't want the town to go back to that. He would like to gather facts to present to the voters so there are no gray areas.

Chairman Glavac said it was the 2012 Board that made that decision and it is hard for this Board to speak to what the 2012 Board did. He said it is a different board now and it will go to the voters in March no matter what, either way and he doesn't think the town will be any less divided if there are 1 or 2 votes. Chairman Glavac said he thinks it should be 1 vote and said they were voted in to do hard job such as this. He said he believes they should gather all the information to give to the voters.

Selectman Laleme moved to draft a binding resolution to put on warrant to ask citizens if they want the Select Board to enter into negotiations with Casella. Selectman Staples seconded. Motion Failed 2-3 (Selectmen Glavac, Blanchard & Ubaldo opposed).

Kevin Roy came before the Board with Brian Oliver, Casella eastern region vice president, and Joe Gay, Casella engineer. Mr. Roy said John Casella was unable to be here. He said he appreciates the Board allowing them to be here and will answer any questions they have.

Mr. Roy went over the slides with the Board. They discussed the parcels and one parcel they have an agreement with Dan Tucker to purchase as soon as it is cleaned up. Selectman Ubaldo asked what if the property doesn't get cleaned up and how does that affect the future and

which part would it affect. Mr. Gay said it would affect the west end but they should have answers soon on that purchase.

Selectman Laleme asked how many total acres there are including that parcel and was told 254 acres. Mr. Roy said on the east portion of the property they have cleared 10 acres and started removing material from there. He said they use 2000 to 3000 thousand cubic yards a day for cover. Selectman Laleme said if they don't purchase that other portion it would affect the sustainability park and Mr. Roy said the parcel has surface oil, heavy motors and he expects it will be cleaned so they can purchase it.

Mr. Roy talked about the geothermal loop that supplies heat to the shop and greenhouse and said there will 5 more loops with the expansion. Selectman Ubaldo asked if the geothermal will tie into the industrial park and was told yes and Mr. Gay explained the geothermal goes in when you build a landfill because it goes under the trash. There was discussion about how District V is 60 acres but the footprint of the landfill is 45 acres.

Mr. Roy said the value to the town revenue and services is taxation, host fee, transfer station operations, and curbside pick-up.

Chairman Glavac asked for breakdown on revenue for services because he said the other parts seem ambiguous and people say they will buy bags and pay for trash removal. Mr. Oliver said they compare a like community to determine expense cost for curbside and estimates it is \$285,000 a year. Mr. Roy said they pay for the truck, labor, maint. Etc. and estimated 300 – 350 thousand for that service. Mr. Glavac asked why the revenue is decreased over the next 4 years. Mr. Roy said it is from taxation because of the value going down. He said the host fee will remain the same as well as transfer station and curbside services. There was discussion that in the agreement it was said the host fee would increase from .25 to .75 in 2018 but they started filling stage V last fall so that is when the host fee went up.

Mr. Roy explained they will contribute 375,000 toward the industrial park and market it to help get businesses in there.

Chairman Glavac asked how the value is determined.

Mr. Oliver said it is determined by permit capacity and said the most it will be worth is when it is empty and said as you add to it the tax value is less. He explained today the capacity is not permissible because there is not a vote to expand the district but once there is a town vote the value will increase because it is permitted. Chairman Glavac asked what was the difference in between 2015 and 2021 on the graph showing the benefit to the town and was told the difference is all taxes. Chairman Glavac asked if the town votes yes wouldn't the permissible capacity change in 2017 and was told yes. Chairman Glavac asked if District V is permissible in 2017 the taxes should increase. Mr. Roy said they only permit sections at a time. Mr. Gay said the state looks at the public benefit; if there is a need and they look at a 20 year window. He said they would look to permit 20 years or less for the 1st phase and said it is similar to how they did the current stages 1-5. Chairman Glavac asked what they used to come up with the tax formula and tipping amount to come up with benefits. Mr. Roy said they used the current agreement and estimated for conceptual volume and the current host fee of .75/ton. He said they can change anything but just expanded the current agreement.

Chairman Glavac said people are saying .75/ton for a host fee is not a good deal for the town and hears comments it was not enough and there is resentment from some townspeople. He asked about the height restriction. Mr. Roy said they used the same as the current agreement.

Mr. Gay said they had steeper design in the past by using mechanic berms but agreed not to do it as part of the negotiating in the agreement.

There was discussion about the gas to energy and Mr. Gay said 2300 per cubic feet/minute of gas is getting flared. He said because of emissions they have to do something with it but it is wasted energy by flaring it. He said they would like to develop it further and would look into using that gas for power, contain it, pipeline, etc.

Chairman Glavac said there is an easement in place from the agreement and said in 2041 there will be another board and asked will there be another expansion or is this the end all. Mr. Roy said they looked at what else can be put in conservation. They talked about the possibility of north of District V. Mr. Roy said all the properties along the Ammonoosuc River will be conservation and that is 97 acres. It was stated that 60 acres was used for determining the numbers for 60 additional acres of landfilling. Chairman Glavac said it would be good to have a buffer all around it with conservation land. Mr. Roy said they could put buffer section in conservation.

Chairman Glavac said it would total 105 acres of landfilling and asked how that compares to an average landfill in state, region, country. Mr. Gay said Newport VT has 72 acres permitted and looking to permit another 68 acres. Selectman Ubaldo asked if that was considered large or average and Mr. Gay said it is large for VT.

Chairman Glavac said we are faced with revenue shortfall in 5 years and in 2040 how can we plan for 2040 losing revenue. Mr. Roy said the purpose of the renewable park is to create infrastructure to provide value which will be ongoing.

There was discussion about the industrial park and Chairman Glavac said 200,000 square feet seems small. Mr. Roy said someone should see what the square footage of Littleton's Industrial Park is. Chairman Glavac said Littleton's is thriving and if we had energy supplied it would be attractive to businesses. Selectman Ubaldo asked how long would the energy be supplied and Mr. Gay said they expect the landfill to produce gas for at least 30 years after closure.

Chairman Glavac asked with no 3 phase power how Casella will get the Water/Sewer/power. Mr. Roy said they would have to bring in 3 phase power up Trudeau Road and will bring in water. It was stated that the \$375,000 could be used for whatever is needed; marketing, developer, etc.

Chairman Glavac asked what the timeline is for the recreation area is and was told it would be expedited as soon as agreement is signed. Mr. Gay said the area they want to take out of conservation is very minimal and because the land is flat it would work well for the industrial park. He said they want to take out 3.1 acres but will be putting 50 acres in conservation. There was discussion about the recreation area and Chairman Glavac asked about people working and playing close to the landfill because of the smell. Mr. Roy said a lot of people live around the landfill and said that area is about 1.5 miles away from the landfill. Mr. Gay said there are other places in the country that have done this but it is the town's decision on what to put there.

Mr. Roy told the Board that they will supply road sand to the Town for as long as they have it.

Chairman Glavac said they have dipped into the legal budget for this and told Mr. Roy they should consider covering the legal fees for looking at the agreement. Mr. Oliver said they will talk and consider that. Selectman Ubaldo said they need to do more research. Selectman Blanchard wants comparison to industrial parks and what is the potential benefit. There was discussion about the gas flare and that options for that.

Chairman Glavac said there are still a lot of questions and said there will be an informational meeting on November 7th. He said that was the date that made the most sense even though it is the night before the election. He said it will probably be at Profile cafeteria but April will confirm the location. Chairman Glavac said there will be more questions before then and want to present to what the vote would look like. Selectman Ubaldo said the townspeople will have their own questions and this will give them the opportunity to get them answered. Chairman Glavac said he agrees and that Selectmen Laleme and Staples questioned the urgency but they are not opposed to looking at the next step which is amending the current agreement but not finalizing it. They will take the next step to see what it will look like. He also said he thinks the town is already dividing and there is a lot of talk, some true, some not. He said moving forward is the right step. Chairman Glavac moved to hold an informational meeting on 11/07/16 location to be determined by April. Selectman Blanchard seconded. Carried 3-0. (Selectmen Laleme and Staples left the meeting before this).

At 8:00 Chairman Glavac moved to adjourn. Selectman Ubaldo seconded. Carried 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,
April Hibberd