

Bethlehem Board of Selectmen

Meeting Minutes

Bethlehem Selectmen Office

November 17, 2014

Present: Chairperson Laleme, Selectman Blanchard, Selectman Culver, Selectman Glavac.

At 6:00 pm Chairperson Laleme opened the meeting.

Brett Jackson came before the Board to discuss his proposed Highway budget. He said he still needed the updated Health, dental, Workers comp, and Property Liability insurance amounts and NH Retirement. He reviewed the different line items that went up or down. There was discussion about the cost to pave a 1 mile road and Brett said it is approx. \$88,000.00. Selectman Glavac said he would like to see the asphalt line increased and said they need to come up with a plan to get the roads paved.

The Board discussed the tax rate setting. Chairperson Laleme said the Chair of each of the two school boards were invited to come to this meeting but they were unable to come. Chairperson Laleme explained that the Select Board is restricted in the amount they can offset the tax rate with unassigned fund balance money. She explained that the \$711,300.00 we have in that fund is an accumulation of assets and not all is actual money. Chairperson Laleme said the Department of Revenue requires that 5 to 17% remain in that fund for emergencies. She said the most that can be used to offset the tax rate is \$294,000.00 which will leave just over 5%. The Board reviewed different options of offsetting the tax rate. It was noted that if nothing was used to offset the tax rate it would go from 28.55 to 32.16 and if the Board chose to use the \$294,000.00 it would go from 28.55 to \$30.83. Chairperson Laleme referenced a letter from Carol Kerivan, Bethlehem Elementary School Board Chairperson, that said the state grant has gone down every year and said the Board is trying hard to keep the expenses down.

Selectman Culver said he is torn on what to do. He said this is a band aid and taxes are still going up because of the schools and county. He also said it would take \$300,000 worth of cuts to make the tax rate \$28.55 and said that would be getting rid of services. Selectman Culver said he doesn't know if people want to keep existing services with the increased tax rate or if people want to cut services and lower the tax rate. He also questioned how to build that fund up and said it is a bigger issue than this year's tax rate.

Chairperson Laleme pointed out that \$125,000 will be put in overlay and that we are anticipating a big abatement for Fairpoint. She said people are paying their taxes because there is only \$142,000 (5%) that is not collected from the 1st issue bill.

Selectman Culver said potential businesses are being run out of town. Selectman Blanchard agrees that using the \$294,000.00 is a band aid and said we are paying for the pool, library, and taking down the

Cruft Building. He also said the schools have not reduced their taxes and said he doesn't want to lessen education but the schools need to do better about reducing the budget. He said people have fixed incomes and thinks the Board does need to use the \$294,000.00 to lessen the burden. Selectman Blanchard said the amount of unpaid taxes will probably double with the increased amount and said we really need to get businesses into Bethlehem.

Selectman Glavac said the library and pool add to the Town and also said the roads are not being addressed because of wanting to keep taxes down. He said he is not in favor of using \$294,000.00 to lower the tax rate.

Chairperson Laleme moved to apply \$294,000.00 from unassigned fund balance to lower the tax rate. Selectman Blanchard seconded. Selectman Glavac asked to hold off on making this decision to look at the budget and possible revenue from Time Warner. He was told that wouldn't matter for this tax rate anyway and the bills cannot be mailed until they set the tax rate. There was discussion about looking at how to generate more revenue and how to get more taxpayers involved. Carried 3-1 (Selectman Glavac opposed).

Cheryl Jensen came before the Board to discuss the proposed budget for the Conservation Commission. She explained it increased by \$35.00 because of dues. She also explained the budget consists of dues, \$500.00 to offset costs for families for a school field trip, and t-shirt costs for roadside clean-up. Mrs. Jensen said they have approx. \$14,000.00 in the bank and said the amount from the land use change tax has not amounted to much the last couple of years. Chairperson Laleme asked if the Conservation Commission is subsidizing a school field trip. Mrs. Jensen said the school pays for the bus and the student pays the admission so the amount paid by the Conservation Commission reduces what the family has to pay.

The Board discussed the Cemetery budget and determined that cemetery salary should be \$6,000.00, equipment should be \$500.00 and cleaning and repairing of stones should be \$1,000.00 with a total of \$7,500.00.

The Board discussed the budget for street lights and lowered it to \$36,000.00 because of the agreement for all electric accounts.

Rhienna Miscio came before the Board to discuss her proposed Recreation budgets with the Board. She explained her 01 (general fund) budget is down over \$8,000.00 and her revolving budget is up \$275.00. Mrs. Miscio explained the increase in the revolving budget is because summer rec will be open an additional week this year. Mrs. Miscio explained that she is asking for an increase in her salary due to the addition of running the pool which also added 5 more employees. Selectman Glavac said the salaries for the after school and summer programs should be in the revolving budget. Chairperson Laleme said the revolving budget cannot make enough money to be able to support the salaries. Selectman Culver said more could be moved to the revolving budget though. Mrs. Miscio said the prices would have to increase significantly to offset that and said it would be \$72,300.00 that would need to be raised in fees a year. It was noted that so far this year the revolving account has raised \$33,000.00. Mrs. Miscio said if the rates increase it may decrease participation. Selectman Glavac wants to see

increased revenues and asked Mrs. Miscio to do a spreadsheet showing different options. The budget will remain as is until then.

The Board reviewed the information from Aries Engineering about monitoring and testing the old dump on Prospect Street. They will be applying for the waiver to eliminate a portion of the yearly testing. Selectman Blanchard moved to authorize Aries to apply for the waiver. Chairperson Laleme seconded. Carried 4-0.

Selectman Blanchard moved to have Aries do the monitoring of the old Prospect Street Dump for this year with a cost of \$4,400.00. Chairperson Laleme seconded. Carried 4-0.

Selectman Culver said he did some research on the PCI compliance to be able to accept credit card payments. He said he still needs to check about the computer that has communication with the state and said he doesn't know how that works. Frank Claffey said we will need to establish another checking account for state transactions.

Frank Claffey told the Board he will most likely need them to sign for a TAN advance next week to cover the school payment due on December 1st. The Board said they would come in and sign what is needed.

Margaret Gale asked the Board to clarify what they meant by businesses being run out of town.

Selectman Blanchard said Pete & Jerry's egg farm and the Dollar Store were both not well received and said the Town needs a direction. He said when a business shows an interest there is immediate opposition.

Selectman Culver said the Planning Board is currently reviewing an application for the Arlington Hotel that is facing opposition. He also said we need to figure out the tax burden.

Dick Robie said there are too many police officers, police cruisers, firefighters, and full time employees. He also said he went to Planning Board meetings and at these meetings it is the same 10 people objecting to the Arlington, drag strip, etc. and everyone should come out to vote on these things and said these same 10 people shouldn't have this much clout. Mr. Robie also said the owners of the Arlington pay their bills and they have investors and want to operate year round. He said we need businesses. There was additional discussion on what the Planning Board is addressing with that application. Chairperson Laleme said she wouldn't speak on this because she is on the Planning Board and suggested if anyone has concerns they attend the next hearing on 12/17/14.

Cheryl Jensen said no one complained about Balance when they came before the Planning Board and also said if there are concerns people have the right to express them. Chris Jensen said to explain to people to pay more attention to the school budgets. Chairperson Laleme said she thinks people will take notice because of the tax increase.

Selectman Glavac said there is no need to apologize for the tax rate because it is the cost to run the town. He said there is an auction this weekend with 2 prime lots for sale. He did say people are already

raising questions about restricting certain businesses from going there. The Town will have test after sale of lots to see how much the Town wants businesses in town.

Dick Robie asked if money left over from the pool budget is available to spend. He said he would like to see a low diving board, a slide, and a mushroom in the baby pool. Selectman Culver said there is money left over from the pool budget but it may be needed because the legal budget is over and the highway budget is 1 storm from being over. Chairperson Laleme said there is time before it opens next year to discuss purchases for the pool. Phil Bell asked if the fundraiser money will carry over and was told it would.

At 7:45 Chairperson Laleme moved to go into non-public session per 91-A for matters of personnel. Selectman Blanchard seconded. Chairperson Laleme did roll call with all members agreeing to go into non-public session.

Chairperson Laleme moved to approve the vacation request from Chief Ho-Sing-Loy. Selectman Blanchard seconded. Carried 4-0.

The Board discussed personnel.

At 8:15 Chairperson Laleme moved to come out of non-public session. Selectman Blanchard

Respectfully submitted,

April Hibberd

Administrative Assistant