

Bethlehem Board of Selectmen
Meeting Minutes
Bethlehem Selectmen Office
December 15, 2014

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

At 6:00 pm Chairperson Laleme opened the meeting.

Nicole McGrath came before the Board to discuss the process for elderly and veteran tax exemptions. Mrs. McGrath explained she changed the form to make it easier for people to comprehend what they need to do and what they need to provide. She also explained that currently people are just checking a box that says they are a full time resident of Bethlehem but we don't ask for proof. Mrs. McGrath talked with our DRA representative and was told we can require 8 different items as proof of residency. She said she would like to ask for 3 forms of proof. She also said the process is the same we will just require more documentation. Chairperson Laleme moved to approve the document requirement process for exemptions. Selectman Blanchard seconded. There was discussion about how often this is done and Mrs. McGrath said it has to be done every 5 years but we could start asking for documentation if there is a reason to suspect it is needed. Carried 4-0.

Chief Anderson came before the Board to bring the dispatch numbers the Board requested and to discuss the ambulance budget. Chief Anderson said there were approx. 1100 more dispatch calls in 2014 than in 2013. He gave the Board members a report that shows what all the calls to dispatch were. Chief Anderson went over the ambulance budget with the Board and explained that over the years the ambulance budget has decreased considerably with it being in the 40 thousands from 2007 through 2013 when he made a big cut and reduced it to \$35,700.00. He said there is no wiggle room in the budget and said the ambulance generates approx. \$40,000.00 a year in revenue. Chairperson Laleme said the Board just needs to understand what the increases are to be able to present it. The Chief said people need to realize that if we contracted out the ambulance service the Town would still need to have a fast squad and vehicle to maintain. Chairperson Laleme said we also would have to consider the response time.

Selectman Blanchard said we (the Select Board) are the ones on the front line about the high tax rate and people need to realize they need to look at the schools. Chairperson Laleme said people have to pay for what they want because we can't keep trimming.

Chief Anderson also discussed the ambulance billing agreement with the Board and said he contacted 3 other companies to get prices. He reviewed the prices from the other companies. There was discussion about doing the math on whether to stay with Omni who charges a minimum monthly charge or 8.5% or to go with a company with no minimum but charges 10%. Selectman Fiorentino said the new company will probably end up raising their price also and asked if they would offer a 2 year contract with a guaranteed price. Chief Anderson will do more research on this.

Chief Anderson was told by the Board that the \$5,000.00 he requested for station maintenance was not put in his budget so he will have to find the amount in his existing proposed budget.

Chief Anderson said the Pleasant Street building is down and it provided training for Bethlehem and some surrounding fire departments.

Rhienna Miscio came before the Board to follow up on some fee increases and a cost analysis on the pool. She explained the legal advice said the Select Board could set fees so she would like to charge a late payment fee and would also like to charge for all days registered. The Board discussed different options for a late fee ranging from charging a % of the amount owed to charging a flat \$5.00 or \$2.50 fee. Mrs. Miscio was told to make a policy to be included in her handbook and incorporate these changes and bring back to the Board. Mrs. Miscio discussed summer recreation numbers with the Board and said last year she had 36 children registered but only 20 children actually participate on average. She said 13 of those children prepaid. She explained this year the prepay amount is \$500.00 with all field trips included which is a great discount. Selectman Culver said he thinks the price needs to increase even if it is \$1.00 a day. Selectman Fiorentino suggested separating the field trips and charging an extra \$160.00 (\$20.00 per each field trip) for the field trips. Chairperson Laleme said there should not be any drop ins allowed on field trip days.

Mrs. Miscio did the cost analysis for the pool and said for 2014 they would have had to charge \$15.00 a day per person to cover the expenses. She said based on next year's budget they would have to charge \$18.00 per day per person. There was discussion about how much revenue the pool generated this year (\$4,694.00). Mrs. Miscio asked the Board if they felt the pool should be open 7 days a week and they all felt it should.

Mrs. Miscio asked the Board to approve the increase for sports registration fee for grades 3 -6 from \$20.00 to \$30.00. She was told to include that in her policy.

Chief Ho-Sing-Loy came before the Board to get approval to purchase two portable lights to be used at night time. He explained the fire dept. purchased 2 and they have stream lights and telescope and will enable them to take pictures at scenes in the evening. The Chief said they

will be paid for with Capital Reserve money from his special equipment reserve. Selectman Blanchard moved to approve the purchase. Chairperson Laleme seconded. Carried 4-0.

The Board reviewed the minutes from 12/01/14. Selectman Blanchard moved to approve the minutes as written. Selectman Fiorentino seconded. Carried 3-0 (Selectman Culver abstained).

The Board reviewed the minutes from 12/08/14. Selectman Blanchard moved to approve the minutes as written. Selectman Culver seconded. Carried 3-0 (Selectman Fiorentino abstained).

Alan Jackson gave the Board a newspaper article about the Littleton Police Dept. offering a \$3,000.00 sign on bonus. He said he is concerned that will create a bidding war for police officers and asked if we contract our officers. He was told the new officers are under a limited contract. Alan Jackson also said we should rent out the pool for people to have pool parties and charge \$500.00 a night for that.

There was discussion about talking to our representatives about training officers and ways to bring in more revenues for Towns. There was also discussion about the school budget and the cost per student. Selectman Culver said running businesses out of town needs to stop and that people need to go to Planning Board meetings and support new businesses. He also said Pete & Jerry's left after 2 meetings, Dollar General never officially applied and a Pellet company never applied. Selectman Blanchard said people have already said they want the Board to restrict what goes on the Cruft lot.

At 7:40 Chairperson Laleme moved to go into non-public session per 91-A for matters of personnel and consideration of the sale of real property. Selectman Culver seconded. Chairperson Laleme did roll call with all members agreeing to go into non-public session.

The Board discussed personnel.

Chairperson Laleme moved to buy 50% of vacation time and carry over 50% to be used in 1st quarter of 2015 for 2 newest hired police officers. Selectman Blanchard seconded. Carried 4-0.

Chairperson Laleme moved to give an extension (90 days in order to notice bank that wasn't noticed) to the buyer of the Cruft lot due to noticing issue. Selectman Blanchard seconded. Carried 4-0.

Selectman Culver moved to not give an extension to the bidder on 2323 Main Street property. Selectman Fiorentino seconded. Motion failed 2-2. Chairperson Laleme moved to extend until 11am Friday the 19th. Selectman Blanchard seconded. Carried 3-1 (Selectman Culver opposed).

At 8:20 Chairperson Laleme moved to come out of non-public session. Selectman Blanchard seconded. Carried 4-0.

At 8:20 Chairperson Laleme moved to adjourn. Selectman Blanchard seconded. Carried 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,
April Hibberd
Administrative Assistant