

Bethlehem Board of Selectmen

Meeting Minutes

Bethlehem Selectmen Office

December 16, 2013

Present: Selectman Mike Culver, Selectman Sandy Laleme, Selectman Martin Glavac, and Selectman Mark Fiorentino.

Selectman Culver called the meeting to order at 6:04 pm.

Selectman Culver opens the meeting stating that this is a work session first order is to discuss budget request for next year. Starting with the Executive Budget; Mike noted that there is an increase in the clerical salary line, but pointed out that this now includes the assessing as well, and that the assessing salary line has been zeroed out. Workers comp has gone down, liability went up slightly. Overall the executive Budget went down from \$195,433 to \$184,514. Board attributes some of the decrease to increased organization and efficiency in the town offices. Mark questions why salary line for clerical has increased when we have only spent a little over \$20,000 this year and the year is almost over. Sandy stated that it was because the position did not go to full time until April of this year. The board also discussed a line item for \$4,000 for office furniture. In preparation for the move downstairs, it has come to their attention that the office is in need of some updates, as some of their current file cabinets are broken and need to be replaced.

Town Clerk budget request increased overall about \$5,000. Some of the increase is attributed to an increase in election cost, as there is going to be an extra election; the Town has no choice on this matter as the election is mandatory. There is also a budgeted increase in the Deputy salary line; this increase would include a pay increase and an increase in the number of hours for the Deputy.

Tax Collector budget requesting an increase of about \$2,000: Totaling \$53,824. This increase includes an increase for the Town Treasurer, Deputy Tax Collector, and Tax Collector. Treasurer salary has not increased in some time. Deputy increase would be a result of a pay increase of \$.25 per hour as well an increase in hours, from 16 hours to 20 hours per week. More hours would increase response time, better service and the tax bills will go out quicker. The Board would like to point out that the Tax Office has recovered quite a significant amount of money through back taxes and sale of tax dedeed properties.

The Board discussed the need for a procedure that outlines employee evaluations, yearly reviews, and raise determination.

The Assessing Budget is next. Selectman Laleme briefly goes over the Revaluation process that happened this year. The assessing office has been working closely with the DRA to get into compliance

and meet state standards. The largest budget line for next year is for Assessing line at \$23,000. This is to pay for the contract with KRT Appraisal and includes all pick ups of new buildings, renovations, etc. Map update was also put back into assessing budget.

The Legal Budget this year was \$45,000. Next year the requested amount is \$35,000. The Board is happy to see this budget decreasing. Much of this year's expense was associated with the sale of the tax deeded property.

Planning and Zoning budget is down slightly. It would have been down more except it includes \$7,500 of the Master Plan. The remainder of the cost of the Master Plan will be paid the following year.

General Government Building budget is down from \$77,870 to \$74,445. It looks like there is a lot of money left to be spent this year. But there is still some work that needs to be done that will be charged to this budget. The board talked about the Fire Roof and what we are doing about the leaks. They have spent a lot of money to patch it over the years but it continues to be a problem. They did put it out to bid previously and got an estimate of \$12,000 to replace the roof. Discussion on whether or not it should be done on this year budget, put into next year's budget, or do a warrant article for the roof repairs. Selectman Laleme suggests that the roof repairs be a separate warrant article. The out of district hydrant budget line is based on how much it would cost to replace or repair a hydrant if it was broken.

Visitors' Center budget is level funded.

Police budget request has gone up \$27,844.09. Officer salary increase about \$24,000. Special Duty salary is down, a new budgeted line for Overtime Patrol Grants. The expenses from this line are reimbursed to the Town. Insurance rates are down, dental insurance stayed the same, NH retirement line has gone up. The rates for NH retirement are set by the state, and the state raised the rates this year. Selectman Fiorentino pointed out that as the salary line increases so do other associated cost that are based on salary such as NH Retirement. The salary line increased because of an increase in staff from 6 full time officers to 7. The board went over the rest of the police budget line by line. Selectman Fiorentino wants to know if the Town really needs another officer, as that is the majority of the increase. Selectman Laleme explained that part of the increase is due to an officer expected return from military leave. By having an extra officer on the police could have more community involvement and more involvement with the schools. Selectman Fiorentino still thinks that seven full time officers is too many. Selectman Culver asked; Do we want the services that we are used to? Warns that we can cut the police budget but in doing so, we are cutting services as well. We are a small town, with low crime, and the majority of violations are in traffic stops. He feels that the reason crime is low is because the police are so visible. The board continued to discuss the police budget and would like Chief Ho-Sing-Loy to come in and talk more about his budget.

Fire budget is \$135,892 but the workers compensation and property liability insurance lines are not filled in. Anticipate that with these figures added into the budget is roughly level funded. Discussion of where the officers' stipends are located in the budgeted and how many officers there are.

Building inspector increase in salary reflects increase in the number of hours in order to get better organized and have more consistence and better records with standard reports and regular updates to the board.

Highway budget request is higher this year. The increase is due mostly to the highway asphalt line, increasing from \$90,000 to \$150,000. There are a lot of roads in Town that are in need of repair. To help offset this increase the Road Agent, Brett Jackson, plans on reducing the amount he will ask for through a warrant article or a highway truck. There are also increases in health and dental insurance, and NH Retirement. Workers compensation has decreased. Property Liability is a slight increase. Overall budget requested \$644,811.

Ambulance budget is down from last year; however this does not included workers compensation and property liability insurance for a total of \$33,200. Frank Claffey, Town Treasurer, estimates about \$30,000 has been brought in through ambulance revenue. The board would like to point out that the ambulance budget is almost self sufficient. They have redone some ambulance policies and the billing has improved. The town is getting a full ambulance service for about \$5,000 if you factor in the revenue that the department has taken in. This does not include the cost of the Ambulance Vehicle.

Direct Assistant budget shows a very large decrease. Selectman Laleme praises Dawn Ferringo for an excellent job.

Parks and Recreation budget request is increasing. Some of the changes include an increase in the Rec Director's salary, money set aside to get the pool and surrounding area into ADA compliance, and increase in rec staff salaries to accommodate the increased schedule in anticipation of the pool opening. The recreation budget could still change slightly as the Recreation Director, Rhienna Miscio, and the Board are talking with John Starr, of Starr Constructions, about what their options may be and estimated costs. At this point the Recreation budget is their best guess. Rhienna has done extensive research and spoke with other towns that run a town pool. It will be much easier to budget after the pool has been open for a year.

The Library budget is requesting an increase, from \$71,000 to 112,500. As they will be in their own building they will have increased cost that were previously absorbed by the General Government Building budget, such as plowing, heating cost, and custodial. The library is also planning on increasing their hours of operation for the upcoming year. Selectman Glavac thinks that the library should come back in with their budget at the \$105,000 as that was the original projection. Board points out that the new library building was built to be energy efficient standards to help keep operation costs low.

Conservation Commission budget is level funded.

Bethlehem Country Club Budget is based on this year's revenues which total approximately \$305,000, next year budget request is \$307,383. Budget request is going to be resubmitted by the new Bethlehem Country Club Manager. Selectman Laleme introduces the new manager, Darren Perkins. Selectman Laleme points out that next year the golf carts will be paid for. Board discusses the electrical work that

needs to be done at the Country Club and the budget plan for getting high priority issues resolved first, with less critical issues fixed later down the road, to spread out the cost.

The Revolving Recreation budget is also based on revenues from the previous years, and doesn't use tax money. Selectman Laleme pointed out that some of the expenses from the regular recreation budget have been moved to the revolving budget, including park electricity.

The Board meet with David Wiley and Dawn Ferringo. David Wiley was introduced as the new building inspector. Dawn is the planning and zoning secretary. Mr. Wiley passed out a handout for the Board that outlines his goals for the Transition, (attached). Mr. Wiley would like to revise the building permits, rework the fee schedule, and come up with a checklist to help resident through the permitting process. There was discussion about submitting a warrant article to help clear up some of the confusion on what does and does not require a building permit. Mr. Wiley would like to keep Allan Clark, the temporary building inspector, on temporarily. John Starr, of Starr Construction, suggests that when doing the warrant Article the board include the phrase, "NH state building code". The board thanked Dawn and David for their time.

John Starr and Rhienna met with the Board to discuss getting the pool and its surrounding area into ADA compliance. The Board invites the pool committee to join them in their discussion. John has reviewed the ADA Code and took a tour of the pool area and its affiliated buildings with Rhienna. First John said we need to address the entrance into the pool. There needs to be two entrances, and it can either be a lift and stairs, or a ramp and stairs. The ramp we have already can be altered to meet the ADA code. Next we will need to have an accessible trail. When constructing the trail we will have to pay close attention to the slope as it cannot exceed 1 in 20. He suggested they dig a foot deep, pack it with gravel, and ledge pack on the top layer. If during the year the ledge pack proves to be an issue, we can always asphalt it later on. Mr. Starr shows the board a sketch of what we have now. A platform will need to be built for entrance into the pool. Handrails will need to be added as well. There is some clarification that needs to be done on height of handrails. To get the bath house into compliance Mr. Starr has three options for the board to look at.

- A. Reconfigure the bath house to have a unisex handicap assessable bathroom & changing rooms. Would also have to widen all the doors and entrance ways. He feels this would be cost prohibitive and costly to do the plumbing.
- B. Take out all showers and relocate them to the outside wall. Reconfigure what is left and make it accessible. Would still have to widen all doors and entrance ways. Anticipate much lower plumbing costs.
- C. Keep everything as it is, only make it accessible by widening doors and entry ways and reconfiguring bathroom to make it accessible. This would cause the building to be very cramped and could also be costly.

There is the possibility of spreading the work out in steps. Mr. Starr recommends plan B, as the most practical and as the most cost effective. Selectman Laleme warns against doing the work piecemeal, and

thinks we should get an estimate now while the momentum to re-open the pool is strong. Selectman Culver wants to wait until they have the numbers first. A question on how much of the pool budget is remaining.

Mr. Robie spoke up about how much work the pool committee has done and some of the obstacles that they have faced, including trying to explain to the voters how much money they have saved with all of the volunteer hours, work, and supplies that have been donated. Mr. Robie doesn't think that the cost of the ADA compliance should be a Warrant Article, as that would be another obstacle to re-opening the pool. Selectman Fiorentino says that he has to respectfully disagree with Mr. Robie. Discussion continues about ADA compliance and what exactly that means. Possibility of doing the minimum work now and more extensive work in the future. The Board requested that Mr. Starr come back to them with an estimate on Plan B. They thanked Mr. Starr for coming, and he says that he will be back with some figures.

The board discussed anticipated warrant articles. Capital reserve for a Highway truck is going to go down from the usual \$60,000 to roughly \$25,000. Planning Board warrant article to clarify the building codes. Discussion about if they need a warrant article for the fire roof. Warrant article on getting the pool into compliance. A warrant article to put money into the capital reserve fund for abandon buildings. Still waiting to hear back from our attorney on if we can do a warrant article to subdivide Town owned property. Mr. Claffey, town treasurer, states that the town will need to do a warrant article to close out the library and the bridge, to take them off the books. The board has received a petition warrant article from the Grafton County Senior Citizens Council. Discussion about how the Board voted last year to have all agency appropriations submitted by petition warrant article. There was brief discussion on the tax rate and how that number is determined and what it includes. The extra election to replace Ray Burton was discussed and how that has affected the Town Clerk's budget. The board will be submitting a warrant article for the blind exemption as requested by the Department of Revenue.

The Board went over correspondence. Selectman Culver made a motion to waive attorney client privilege on an email from Brenda. Selectman Laleme seconds; all in favor. The email was in regards to tax sale property. There was discussion on a tax deeded lot, and the ownership of that lot, as no title can be found. More research needs to be done to see if these lots were ever built into streets. Selectman Culver explained the process, and summarized the situation. The board is in agreement that they will have Mary Jackson, Tax Collector, and Dawn Ferringo, Planning and Zoning Clerk, look into this further. The Board reviewed tax deeds prepared by Brenda for the sale properties and signed in the required places.

Reviewed the minutes from November 25, 2013. Selectman Laleme moved to accept the minutes are written, Selectman Culver seconded. Three in favor. Selectman Glavac abstains, as he was not present at that meeting.

There is going to be a Public Hearing on January 16th, 2014 at 6:00 pm at Profile High School to discuss Title V operating permit requested by Casella. Rita Farrell made a request that this information be posted at the Town Hall, Post Office, and on the town website. Mrs. Farrell comments on why this public

hearing was needed and how important it is. She would really like to see some of the Board members attend.

Chief Ho-Sing-Loy is requesting that the board enter into a new lease agreement for a copier. It is a five year lease. Selectman Culver wants to get more information before entering into the agreement.

Selectman Culver read a letter from the Department of Revenue that explained the Education Tax and what that amount is for the 2014 year.

Rita Farrell asked the board why she has not received a response to her previous request regarding electronic communication from the DES in regards to Casella. Selectman Culver explained to Rita that Chairman Blanchard and Administrative Assistant, April Hibberd, have drafted a response but that Chairman Blanchard is out of town, and April Hibberd, was out unexpectedly due to a family situation. Selectman Culver tried to address Rita's concerns. However, Rita still feels that by keeping the files electronically the community access is being hindered. Mrs. Farrell also requests that the Board make sure to use peoples last names when introducing them or discussing them for clarification purposes.

Selectman Laleme moved to approved to pay \$639.91 to the Town Visa Card, plus \$98 reimbursement to Jack Anderson for expenses incurred when traveling to purchase the fire truck. Selectman Fiorentino seconded the motion. All in favor.

Selectman Culver moves to enter into non-public under RSA: 91-a, for personnel. Selectman Laleme seconds, Selectman Culver did roll call with all members agreeing to enter into non public.

Entered non-public at 8:38 pm.

Non Public minutes

Discussed personnel.

Selectman Culver makes a motion to come out of non-public Seconded by Selectmen Laleme, roll call vote, 4-0.

Came out of non-public at 10:12 pm

Motion to adjourn meeting by Selectman Culver, seconded by Selectman Laleme, carried 4-0.

Meeting Adjourned at 10:13 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nicole McGrath

Clerical Assistant