05/11/2020 SB Minutes

Bethlehem Board of Selectmen

Meeting Minutes

May 11, 2020
Via Zoom – Chairman Boisseau, Selectman Moore, Selectman Moritz, Selectman Caplain, Selectman Jensen.

Meeting opened at 6:00.

Tax Interest – What to do with interest from taxes being paid late due to hardship from Covid. Chairman Boisseau said we have been discussing this and need to make a decision. Selectman Caplain said to have everyone continue the way they have in the past and have Mary Jackson work with people as she has done in the past or give people 3 months without paying interest. He also suggested giving people the option of paying 1/3 of the taxes due each of the 3 months with no interest unless they miss that payment. Selectman Moore likes the option of paying 1/3 for 3 months. Interest starts accruing after the missed payment. Selectman Moritz said she doesn’t think that would be allowed because that is a condition and we determined conditions are not allowed. Selectman Moore said we can set conditions, time limits etc as long as they are uniform. Selectman Jensen asked what that would do to our cash flow so likes the first option and let Mary Jackson work with people on a case by case basis. Selectman Moritz agrees and said based on legal advice doesn’t think the third option can be done. Selectman Caplain said last week we were defining a group that was experiencing a hardship, this week, option 3 is an option for everyone. Chairman Boisseau said he is torn between 1 and 3 and worries about Mary working out those arrangements with people. Selectman Moore likes number 3 to offer people to help them out. She said this opens it up more and puts it out to everyone. Selectman Caplain likes 3 too and said it has better cash flow option then number 2. Barry Zitser said RSA 76:16c states for good cause shown taxes can be abated so tell Mary Jackson or assessor if there is a late payment up to a certain number of months to waive the late payment charges. Chris McGrath asked if the computer system will allow for that? Selectman Jensen said abatements for penalties should begin in March, so we are not abating past due amounts. Selectman Moritz said they will still need to go through and abate the interest because Mrs. Jackson can’t abate interest. There was discussion about only current interest will be forgiven not interest going forward. Chairman Boisseau would like to get Mrs. Jackson’s opinion on this. They decided to wait a week to include Mrs. Jackson in the discussion. Selectman Moore said she believes the taxes will go out first week of June. Tabled. Frank Claffey said we are going to need revenue coming in, in June. He said we may exhaust the million by July. Selectman Moore asked if we would be okay if we received a 1/3 of taxes in July. Mr. Claffey said he is not sure; he would have to look into that.

Selectman Moritz suggested they move up the logo rankings discussion because many people are on the call about that. Chairman Boisseau agreed to move that up on the agenda. Pam Sullivan, Ellen Chandler, and Kaitlyn Farrar from Sullivan Creative joined the conversation. Ms. Sullivan said they feel strongly about the direction they are going in. Ms. Chandler recommends Just Be because it resonates with character of town – natural setting, individuality, all ages, touch so many communities, many assets, cultural assets, outdoors, adventurous, like the way they are treated in town, Just Be can be used in so many ways and works with all the assets identified. Ms. Sullivan said they sent it out to try it out, they will add photos and may add some of the other taglines. She explained they usually show graphics and support when presenting and can’t do that. Just Be entertained – colonial, Just Be centered – Balance, etc. Can be used for so many things. Caitlyn Farrar said it is modern but not forceful. Ms. Sullivan said it carries well over social media. She understands there is a lot of input that needs to happen on this. Chairman Boisseau said Sullivan Creative was hired to do this job and are the professionals and think this is the correct tagline. He said last week we talked about ranking and would be interesting to have that discussion, but he would be willing to go forward with Just Be. Selectman Moritz said it doesn’t resonate with her and isn’t specific enough. Ms. Sullivan said it will not be used by itself and will always have an image with it. Ms. Sullivan said there will be the ability to have hashtags. Just Be…outdoors, Just Be…. adventurous, Just Be…. engaged, Just Be…entertained, they will capture in where they place the media to resonate with that group. Just Be…. thirsty – Reklis. Selectman Jensen said last week he didn’t understand it but the explanation this week was very helpful, and he likes it. Rita Farrell asked who the 99 people were that were involved. Ms. Sullivan said there were 6 focus groups and an online survey. Selectman Caplain said you want to reach all constituencies, and this does reach them all. He supports it and likes it. Chairman Boisseau said there are other good taglines but feels the others speak to specific areas or topics and Just Be can be used broadly. Selectman Jensen said it is applicable over a broad spectrum. Chairman Boisseau asked the Board if they still wanted to rank it. Selectman Moritz said no but she still doesn’t like it. Ms. Sullivan said Just Be…. adventurous with a snowmobiler picture and can add all paths lead here. She also said they have a strong visual graphic with this, and the other taglines can and will be used too. Ms. Chandler said it could develop some community spirit. Rita Farrell said find your peak experience there is no peak except Agassiz, all paths lead here; they don’t. She also said we don’t make the mountains memorable; the mountains make the mountains memorable. Chairman Boisseau said we are set with going with Just Be. Mrs. Farrell wants to know how the 99 people were recruited. Chairman Boisseau said the reason for this is a campaign to attract visitors for economics; second homeowners and to increase local business revenue and increase businesses. He explained it would maintain a strong cultural presence but bringing in economic growth. Selectman Caplain said the 99 people were not skewed; it was public process and was on the website. The surveys were open to the public for the entire town and the public input sessions were also open to the public. Mrs. Farrell said she understands the need for economic development, but we have a theater, concerts but wanting more snowmobiles – they cause problems and said she is not sure given the master plan and with the people who live here. Ms. Chandler said many people mentioned the Colonial and trails for many different uses. Just Be is fun and welcoming. Chairman Boisseau said he would like to pause the conversation at this point because it is getting off track from the tagline. Mrs. Farrell said this town has lectures and concerts as well and Robert Frost bought a farm here on South Road because he loved it here. This town was called the poetry capital for a long time. Mrs. Farrell said these things draw people to town. Harry Newell said they have done a brilliant thing and everything Mrs. Farrell said can be incorporated into it. Mr. Zitser said he was attracted to Bethlehem because of the mountains. When you talk about the mountains you can add everything to that and said he agrees with Selectman Moritz. Carol Kerivan said she agrees with Selectman Moritz and maybe it would be different with a visual. She said at a meeting with BRI they all agreed that it wasn’t right. She feels people who don’t own a business need to feel included and it shouldn’t just be about the activities and businesses. Selectman Jensen still likes Just Be and thinks it will work well. Chairman Boisseau agrees. Selectman Moritz feels better that the rest of the Board likes it and Sullivan Creative has done a phenomenal job and she trusts them. Ms. Sullivan said they sent it out to others like marketing groups etc. and they felt it was sophisticated and has legs. She feels confidant in it and feels they should launch it. They can send it out to others to see how they feel but would like to launch so they can get the campaign running and do the website. Selectman Jensen moved to go ahead with tagline Just Be. Selectman Caplain seconded. Roll call – 3 – 2 Selectman Moritz and Moore opposed. Motion Carried.

Conversation Protocol – Chairman Boisseau said after the March election they usually go through some protocols and set goals and they haven’t done that due to Covid-19. It has come up in different discussions about how to communicate with each other and staff etc. It has been amplified with some employees working remotely. Who should people communicate with directly? Board should make sure communication avenues are remaining open, calling people who are working remotely. He said they have a flowchart with Dept. Heads with their main responsibilities and employees who work under them. Flowchart was sent out to the Board and to the Dept. Head’s. Chairman Boisseau said he would like to discuss how the Board feels about it. Selectman Moritz thinks it is very helpful and thinks it should be posted on the website and thinks it will be helpful to residents as well. Selectman Caplain said he agrees but thinks names and phone numbers should be added. Selectman Moore agrees. Selectman Moritz said internally; for Board; it is nice to see who they should contact. Chairman Boisseau said he likes the idea of getting it on the website and getting it circulated internally due to some confusion. Chairman Boisseau asked if there is anything on here besides phone numbers/names that Board feels are needed. Selectman Caplain said we should get feedback from Dept. Head’s. Selectman Jensen asked about adding different Boards to it. Selectman Moritz said maybe they could create one and we could add it to this and add to the website as well. Chairman Boisseau said he hopes this will make things more efficient and hopes other departments may want to do this. Wait to publish until all dept heads weigh in.

Gazebo Concerts – First concert is scheduled for June 21st. Tim Fleury said the CDC guidelines allow it to happen because it is outdoors. He said it will be a little difficult to maintain 6 feet social distancing and will not be able to do food. He said the other issue will be the very strict sanitation guidelines and a lot of the attendees are in the higher risk population. He said he thinks they fall under the number of people that would be allowed, so it is more following the strict guidelines. Mr. Fleury also said he is not sure if they could do drive in style or streaming but they do need to decide as soon as they can because the first band on the 21st is coming from the Carolina’s. Selectman Caplain said restaurants can now open with limits. Concern with little kids running around and getting into other people’s spaces or running after dogs. Chairman Boisseau said they need to think about the decrease of revenues and needing to make difficult decisions and is this an area where they could make a cut. Selectman Moritz asked Mr. Fleury about the contracts and if there is a penalty if we cancel. Mr. Fleury said there was a clause that was added to protect us from that. Selectman Moritz said she doesn’t want to cancel at the last minute out of respect to the bands. Selectman Jensen said people look forward to this year after year; he is concerned with the gathering so try it on the 21st and see if people are wearing masks and following social distancing and if so, continue on and if not, cancel them going forward. Selectman Moore said that doesn’t give the performers much notice to cancel. Mr. Fleury will send the contract for them to review. There was discussion about cuts due to less revenue including the pool and would it be safe to open and can they afford to open it. The Board will make that an agenda item at a future meeting. Mr. Fleury said he had a zoom meeting earlier today with northern rec programs discussing issues like this and had a meeting last week with other rec programs about the same thing. Littleton rec director and Mr. Fleury agree that from a safety standpoint and financial they should not open. Mr. Fleury said Covid-19 hasn’t been shown to transmit in water.

Mr. Fleury said the Rec uses the school and they have a meeting about using the school and if they can’t use the school, they wouldn’t be able to operate. He said they are still waiting on the state’s guidelines. Mr. Fleury said summer rec is up in the air for surrounding towns. He said he is planning to open if he can with no field trips and no echo lake trips but they would have to limit kids, 2 counselors per 8 kids and no mingling with other kids or staff. He said an employee would have to sanitize throughout the day. They have been filling out the schedule to fill those gaps from field trips and not going to Echo. He said he would recommend not opening the pool. He also said he is concerned with not being able to watch kids more than providing the rec opportunities because he knows of the needs of parents for childcare. He said he will send out a survey to parents to see what the need is. He said if they opened today it would only be for essential workers. Selectman Moritz appreciates how quickly Mr. Fleury gets information she requests and said if the pool does not open it would save approximately $38,000.

Mr. Fleury said for the little cost it is a big give to the town for the concerts but would have to measure to make sure there is enough room and would recommend face coverings. He will check to see where the bands are coming from in case people are not following guidelines and they need to cancel. Selectman Moore asked about allowing older folks to pull in from Prospect Street and staying in their cars. Selectman Jensen suggested checking with Chief Anderson. Chief Anderson agrees with Selectman Moore that we really need to look at it and if we get tough with masks and set a limit on number of people to allow there. He said they could have counters. He said they are talking about 50% occupancy for events like this and can also see what governor’s recommendation would be. He said it would probably depend on numbers (virus) as we get closer too. The Chief asked about how many non-residents attend. He said he would like to see it happen. Chairman Boisseau asked the Board how they feel about making a decision tonight. The Board agreed to wait a couple of weeks. Chris McGrath said if people don’t feel safe at the concert don’t go and said dogs shouldn’t be allowed. He also said food should be allowed. Mrs. Farrell asked how many people attend the concerts. Mr. Fleury guessed around 75 – 150. Mrs. Farrell suggested going with an expert who works at Littleton hospital who understands the science of this epidemic. She said she would like to know if it could be a problem where it could be another area where it could be spread. She said the problem isn’t at the concert but what happens when they are in the area after. Tabled.

Country Club Opening – Today was first day they could be opened. They have received some guidance from Primex. Selectman Caplain said the state allowed it to open to today but put very strict guidelines on it. He said he has spoken to Matt Courchaine many times over the last couple of weeks and he is well aware of all the guidelines. He said 2 port-a-potty’s will be there and people will be prepaying so he is very well prepared. Chief Anderson is willing to go over periodically. Selectman Caplain feels comfortable with it opening. Selectman Moritz and Moore agree, and Selectman Moore said she is happy Mr. Courchaine is so prepared. Selectman Jensen said he would like to be able to revisit it if people are not wearing masks etc. The Board agreed. Selectman Moore asked if someone buys a membership and they end up closing down will they get a refund prorated somehow. Selectman Jensen said we should keep an eye on the balance sheet. Selectman Caplain said Mr. Courchaine is cognizant of that. Mrs. Farrell agrees with opening because it can be controlled with social distancing so golfers and people in community will be protected. Selectman Caplain moved to open CC tomorrow assuming all comply with guidelines. Selectman Moore seconded. Roll call – all – motion carried.

Covid 19 update – Chief Anderson said there are no active cases in Bethlehem right now but also said people need to stay vigilant. It was noted that businesses can get PPE and the Chief will help them if need be.

Public Input

Chris McGrath asked if Rec could use the third floor of town building if the school isn’t an option.

The Chief told the Board about the stipend program for first responders and said benefits are only the only costs, but no retirement involved so no expense from that.

Mrs. Farrell asked about staff communication protocol. Chairman Boisseau said it is to make communication clear.

Mrs. Farrell asked how it is determined how a 501c3 can submit to the town report. She was told it used to be the health agencies we supported then it was expanded upon and the Board a couple of years ago made the stance to not prevent any 501c3 from submitting a report.

Mrs. Farrell asked about the Master Plan and when that is due to be done again. Chairman Boisseau said they should put on the agenda goal setting from the Master Plan.

Other

Town highway truck – Selectman Jensen said was going to apply for a grant, but it isn’t going to work because Brett Jackson doesn’t have enough money for a dump truck. He said Mr. Jackson would like to replace a truck with the village district truck that is being sold. Selectman Jensen said with concerns over the budget they should wait on that at this time. There was discussion about the money for the truck coming from the highway block grant and not affecting the budget. Selectman Jensen will follow up with Mr. Jackson.

Liaison for NRRA – Selectman Jensen volunteered as liaison because he is the liaison for the transfer station. Selectman Moritz moved to appoint Selectman Jensen as liaison. Selectman Moore seconded. Roll call – all – motion carried.

Meeting schedules Chairman Boisseau said they have been meeting weekly mostly due to Covid and having to make decisions but in the past meet weekly at this time of the year. He asked the Board to keep weekly or go every other. The Board agreed to weekly meetings.

Minutes from 05/04/20. Selectman Caplain moved to approve. Selectman Moritz seconded. Roll call – all – motion carried.

At 8:48 Gabe adjourn. Bruce seconded. Roll – all. Motion Carried.

Respectfully submitted,

April Hibberd

Administrative Assistant