Bethlehem Board of Selectmen

Meeting Minutes

November 30, 2020

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

Chairman Boisseau opened the meeting at 6:00 and reminded people to leave their microphones on mute.

Chairman Boisseau announced Chairman Moore would offer the positive news for the week. Chairman Moore – Welcomed Kathryn Fleury to the town employee pool. She has taken on the roll as general assistance administrator. Kathryn has a strong HR background and will be a great asset to the town.

**PUBLIC INPUT**

**Chris McGrath** – Mr. McGrath believes the board should bring the proposed noise ordinance to a town vote and let the town vote on it. He does not believe it should be a board decision with the required two public hearings.

**Sally Fitzgerald** – Ms. Fitzgerald requested an update on the town’s plan for garbage and recycling when Casella is no longer providing the service. She also had questions about the progress of the solar array grant at Library, how often are water tests done, and what is the plan for the revenue received from the sale of Bethlehem Country Club? Chairman Boisseau explained the board’s plan for the BCC sale money and explained that the landfill meeting was run by DES and not the town and that water testing was done by the Village District and not the town offices. Selectman Caplain gave an update on the solar grants.

**2020 TAX RATE**

**Chairman Boisseau** – The tax rate in 2019 was $26.73. Using no unassigned funds, the 2020 tax rate would be $25.20, due to a reduction in school budget mainly. Chairman Boisseau proposed not using any monies from the unassigned fund to offset the tax rate for 2020 due to the uncertainty of state revenue and school budgets for next year. It is better to have a higher unassigned fund balance available if needed. Selectman Moore and Selectman Caplain agreed with Chairman Boisseau. Selectman Moritz agreed but stated it is important to use the BCC sale money for capital investment in the future and not to offset the tax rate.

Selectman Moritz made a motion to set tax rate at $25.20. Selectman Moore seconded - roll call – all – motion passes.

Unassigned fund set at $940,000 roughly. Selectman Moritz wants to follow up with DRA on unassigned balance to check if it had the BCC sale money in it yet.

Frank Claffey – BCC monies not in unassigned fund yet.

The Village District tax rate is $.99 for 2020

**COMPLETE STREETS**

**Selectman Caplain** provided a background for Complete Streets. Katy Lamb from the North Country Council gave a presentation to the town in a previous board meeting. The program is designed to increase traffic flow and safety. Selectman Caplain followed up with other towns that currently use the program. It is flexible for the town to use as needed. It is incorporate into planned projects and upcoming projects to make them cost neutral to implement the program. The goal is to reduce traffic problems using natural ways, to reduce the danger to pedestrians and bicyclists, and to keep the people parking in town to walk through town. He spoke to Brett Jackson and Chief DeMoranville and both Brett and Chief DeMoranville are in favor of the project. The next step would be to set up a committee including Brett Jackson, select board members, local businesses, local community members. They would look for grants and set a mission initially. Chairman Boisseau inquired about funding. Selectman Caplain explained that through the use of grants the cost of implementing program guidelines in future projects would be neutral. Selectman Jensen stated it is a great idea and the grant committee is looking at it. Selectman Moore states it is a good idea and supports moving forward with the project. Selectman Moritz would like to see electric car chargers in town as part of the project. The board agreed to move forward with setting up a committee to look at the feasibility of the project with letters of interest due by Friday, January 15th.

Public:

**Rita Farrell** asked if this would be doing the same work the traffic committee did previously. Chairman Boisseau explained that this was just a preliminary look at the program and the town was not committing to anything at simply looking at the plausibility of implementing the program in the future.

**Barry Zitser** liked Selectman Moritz’s idea of a charging station in town and recommended reaching out to Omni Mount Washington to see what it cost them to install chargers at the hotel.

**UPDATED POLICE COMPUTER QUOTE**

**Chairman Boisseau** presented the updated quote to express Profile Technologies’ recommendation on new computers for the police station.

Select Moritz made a motion to purchase computers based on Profile Technologies’ recommendation – Selectman Jensen seconded – roll call – all – motion passed.

**BUDGETS:**

**HIGHWAY** – Board examined budget. Chairman Boisseau asked if there were any questions. None. Board feels good with budget as presented.

**GGB** – Selectman Caplain suggested a $15,000 increase to cover the boiler inspection and building maintenance schedule. There are many small projects in the town building that would turn into large projects if they are not addressed now. Board discussed and were all in favor of the larger budget to prevent larger issues in the future.

**TOWN CLERK**

**Mary Jackson** – 8% decrease due to fewer elections this year, 4 vs. 1 in 2021. Board discussed and they were in favor of the presented budget.

**TAX COLLECTOR**

**Mary Jackson** – down $7 due to data processing line item reduced. There will be no tax deeding this year with the current schedule, but it could possibly happen at the end of December. Ms. Jackson asked for board guidance on deeding in 2020 or 2021. This would put us behind in 2021. Board discussed encumbering money from 2020 to sue for tax deeding in 2021 so as not to increase the budget in 2021. Board agrees to encumber funds for 2021 and with Frank Claffey’s input they will vote on any encumbrances all at once during the last budget review meeting on December 14th.

**LEGAL**

**Chairman Boisseau** kept budget flat at $15,000. Selectman Jensen suggested that the budget be raised with possibilities of new legal issues in 2021. Selectman Moritz stated that the legal budget is one of the items that the town can legally go over. Board discussed and agreed that a new budget of $20,000 would make sense.

**Chris McGrath** – Sansoucy Associates’ assessment could bring about lawsuits and asked if the board was planning for that. Board agreed with Mr. McGrath and believe the $20,000 would cover that issue.

**Chairman Boisseau** proposed to move budget to $20,000. All board members agreed.

**Rita Farrell** stated concern that we would not have money to fight Casella if needed. Selectman Moritz explained that we can legally go over the legal budget and if we increase the amount of the budget it will raise taxes and we may not need the money raised. There is no way to predict future legal matters and that is why we can go over in that specific budget. Ms. Farrell agreed and thanked Selectman Moritz for her explanation.

**TAN/DEBT SERVICES**

Chairman Boisseau. Presented budget is $25,000 smaller than 2020 due to the town paying off items that were leased to own.

TAN – kept flat

**ASSESING –**

**Chairman Boisseau** presented the last budget of evening. There is a $28,000 increase for Sansoucy Associates 3-year contract. The tax revenue will increase with new evaluations based on Sansoucy’s assessments. The costs will be covered by increased tax revenue.

**FOLLOW UP**

**Sally Fitzgerald** had numerous questions regarding Casella and the future of the landfill. The board explained the most up to date information and Ms. Fitzgerald had more questions. Selectman Moritz made a point of order that this discussion was not on the agenda and the meeting was going off track. Selectman Moritz suggested Ms. Fitzgerald could contact the select board office to be added to a future agenda if she would like to discuss this further. Chairman Boisseau gave her the contact information of the select board offices.

**Rita Farrell** asked the board to explain state decision with public input. Selectman Moritz stated DES had 2 public hearings. Ms. Farrell stated she made statements at the public hearing and NCES made statements not consistent with their previous statement made.

**OTHER**

**Selectman Caplain** – Sullivan Creative has been using social media to increase the town’s marketing push. They only have 70 names on email list and are using social media to grow the list. Sullivan reached out to local businesses but did not get a great response on Nov 11th. Selectman Caplain asked if the board should take on task. Board members may have better contacts with local businesses. Selectman Caplain will create a list of local businesses and send the list to Tim to circulate so they’re not overlapping efforts. Selectman Jensen will check with Sullivan Creative to add info to newsletter and Facebook page

**Rita Farrell** wanted to thank the Village Store on mask use and implementing mask use at the store.

**MINUTES (11/23/2020)**

Selectman Moritz made a motion to accept minutes from 11/23 – Selectman Caplain seconded – roll call – all – motion carries.

At 7:40 Chairman Boisseau moved to go into non-public session per RSA 91A:3 II for matters of reputation and personal. Selectman Moritz seconded – roll call – all – motioned carried.

Spoke on letter sent to board.

Personal discussion.

At 7:57 Chairman Boisseau made a motion to adjourn. Selectman Caplain seconded – roll call – all – motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Fleury

Administrative Assistant