Bethlehem Board of Selectmen

Meeting Minutes

December 13, 2021

In person – Chairman Boisseau, Selectman Hibberd, Selectman Jensen, Selectman Morris, Selectman Caplain not present

Chairman Boisseau opened the meeting at 6:01pm and reminded people to leave their microphones on mute. He continued to remind in person participants to use the microphone so Zoom participants can hear

**Public Input: none**

**Budgets:**

**Library: $123,621 to $175,560 42% increase**

**Doug Harmon** - chair of board – been a difficult year for the library but made it work with curbside delivery and masked service – the library worked on their 5-year organization plan during the downtime – Selectman Morris stated the increases are in wages and the library system fee – Leonard Grubbs – treasurer – explained the increases. Main push is to get the director healthcare coverage and increase her hours to 40 per week. Laura Clerkin explained the new database the library system uses – Core Logic – database that helps collection development. Selectman Morris inquired about guidelines for the state pension plans and the salary increases. The treasurer explained the increases are across the board and not just the director. Chris McGrath asked if the operating hours would increase with the increased budget. Dough Harmon explained that increased operating hours are not in the current budget. Cheryl Jensen expressed her support of the library and the programs they offer and her concerns on the large increase in budgets across all departments.

**Conservation Commission, $1,270 to $1,270 – 0%**

**Lindsey Webb –** Selectman Morris – budget is basically dues, clean up supplies, BES fieldtrips, supplies and misc. items – the dept has a savings account with a balance of $14,695 for future work on town properties – Selectman Hibberd – would anticipate more money into savings – land use tax gets 5% into the conservation commission’s account when they come out of current use.

**Welfare: $28,013 – $53,148 – $25,000 increase**

**Selectman Hibberd** – created new line for emergency shelter expenses – Selectman Morris inquired if state helps with emergency housing. Selectman Hibberd – Tri County Cap assists but funds take 2 weeks before they kick in. The town pays until it kicks in. There are limited shelters in the area and they are frequently at capacity. Selectman Jensen asked where the money was budgeted before and if the town could limit the use of hotels. Selectman Hibberd explained the RSA requirements and the financial information he was looking for. Chris McGrath asked if the shelters in the area that receive funds from town warrants are full and if the town is receiving the equivalent amount of care back. Selectman Hibberd explained that even if the shelters are full they are a resource that are used to find additional help.

**Recreation: $**127,616 to $209,877 – $82,261 up – 64%

Selectman Morris – do revenues match increases? Abbie Sawyer introduced herself and explained the salary increases and expenses incurred with expanding the programs and the increased participation in the programs. Chairman Boisseau explained the afterschool program and summer program are essential services in town for working families. Selectman Hibberd asked if expenses could be moved from the revolving fund into the general fund to save on the budget. Abbie Sawyer the biggest expense is the bussing for field trips. She is proposing renting vans for the summer in her “wish” budget. She will look at the expenses to see what can be moved. Chairman Boisseau noted the wish list includes more staff. Abbie Swayer list also includes repainting all town courts and rebuilding the fences around the ball fields.

Selectman Jensen brought up the topic of the town swimming pool. High expenses for a smaller return. Ms. Sawyer went over pool numbers: 55 rec kids in lessons, 45 Lafayette rec lessons, 25 public lessons, roughly $14,000 in revenue. Selectman Morris noted families spend the entire day at the pool and is a good resource to teach swimming to the residents. Chris McGrath suggested that the pool should be free for town residents. Cheryl Jensen – how much is offset by fees? – roughly $20k over last year’s budget – offset roughly $54k of expenses with revenues – can fees be increased for programs? Abbie Sawyer – moving to 2 week sessions for all ages in summer to streamline fee structure. The board discussed making pool complimentary for residents. Cheryl Jensen – doesn’t agree with free pool for residents – if more people come would it increase maintenance and staffing needs?

Selectman Jensen made a motion to allow resident to use pool for free – Selectman Hibberd – seconded – Selectman Jensen withdrew motion and Selectman Hibberd withdrew second without more input and information on pool operations.

Chairman Boisseau – board needs to have a larger conversation on the future of the pool. Possibly on a future warrant to judge resident’s interest in continuing the pool.

**Street Lights: $26,000 to $20,000 –**

Chairman Boisseau –reduced costs with LED lighting – board discussed budget and number of lights in town – Chris McGrath – when LEDs were installed explanation given for locations – helpful to have lights where they are for walking at night. Chairman Boisseau – light audit done when LEDs installed – roughly 4 years ago.

**Executive: $169,036 to $181,303 – 7% - salary and computer expenses –** Board moved to discuss salary information in non-public.

**Discussion of potential zoning warrant in March –** Selectman Jensen discussed the potential of a zoning warrant on the ballot in March. The zoning board talked about it at their last meeting and decided to wait until after the zoning review. They did not want to rush it to try to make the warrant.

**EV charger discussion: holding off until Selectman Caplain is present**

**Minutes – 12/6/2021**

**Selectman Morris made a motion to approve the minutes form 12/6/2021 – Selectman Hibberd seconded – roll call – all less Selectman Caplain – motion passed**

**Other/Follow up from the board**

**Selectman Morris –** STR meeting date? 1st January meeting? Selectman Hibberd agreed.

**Selectman Hibberd** – benefits discussion for employee packages – STD and LTD with insurance. She proposed discussing it the first month in January as well. Chairman Boisseau – agreed. – Selectman Hibberd will present bullet points in January. The board discussed information to send to department heads to gather information before meeting.

**Selectman Hibberd** – moving from welfare position – want to get prepared for transition. She asked the board if she can bring in former welfare director for 10/12 hours to get all files up to speed and get prepared to transition - approximately $250-300 for expense.

**Selectman Jensen – made a motion to hire former welfare director to help handle transition at estimated cost of $250-300 – Chairman Boisseau seconded – roll call – Selectmen Boisseau, Jensen, and Morris - Selectman Hibberd abstained, Selectman Caplain absent – motion passed.**

**At 7:54pm Chairman Boisseau made a motion to go into non-public session per RSA 91A-3 II (personnel, legal) – Selectman Hibberd seconded – roll call – all – motion passed.**

Board discussed salaries for executive department, visitor center and town clerk/tax department salaries. The board discussed department head salaries.

**Selectman Morris made motion to raise visitor center hourly rate to $15/hr – Selectman Jensen seconded – roll call - all less Selectman Caplain – motion passed.**

**Selectman Morris made a motion to make salary changes as discussed: deputy town clerk and tax collector - $16/hr – planning and zoning clerk to $15.20, increase clerical salary to $42,000, - Selectman Jensen seconded – roll call - all less Selectman Caplain – motion passed.**

**Selectman Hibberd made a motion to increase proposed salaries for all department heads at 7%, executive, town clerk/tax collector, road agent, fire chief, police chief – Chairman Boisseau seconded – roll call – all less Selectman Caplain – motion passed.**

Selectman Hibberd discussed possible building inspector replacements.

Selectman Jensen discussed potential health officer replacement.

**Selectman Jensen made a motion to hire Anna Ostrander pending separation of employment of current welfare officer – Selectman Morris seconded – roll call – all less Selectman Caplain – motion passed.**

**Selectman Morris – made a motion to ask Virginia Jefferies to be interim health officer at a rate not to exceed $30/hr – Selectman Hibberd seconded – roll call – all less Selectman Caplain – motion passed.**

Board discussed pending legal matter.

**Selectman Jensen made a motion to adjourn at 9:15 pm – Selectman Boisseau – seconded – roll call all – motion passed.**

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Fleury

Administrative Assistant