

MINUTES - REGULAR SELECTBOARD MEETING

TOWN OF BARNET, VERMONT

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2023

Meeting convened at 7:00 p.m. in-person at Barnet Fire & Rescue Station (151 Bimson Drive) and via GoToMeeting telephone/online conference. This meeting was recorded via GoToMeeting.

Board members participating in-person: Dylan Ford, Benjamin Gates (presiding co-chair), and Mark Jefferson.

Other Town officials and employees participating in-person: Road Foreman Mark Chase, Town Clerk Benjamin Heisholt, Planning Commission/Zoning Board Member Dawn Holtz, Planning Commission/Zoning Board Member Susan Sinclair, and Zoning Administrative Officer Shirley Warden.

Other Town officials and employees participating via GoToMeeting: None.

Members of the public participating in-person: Michael Wright (Calex Ambulance Service).

Members of the public participating via GoToMeeting: None.

1. Consideration of approval of minutes of regular meeting held November 13, 2023

Mr. Gates suggested that under item #15 of the minutes, the phrase “Quotes for combined short-term and long-term premiums are as follows” be amended to read “Quotes are as follows.”

- Ms. Ford moved to approve, with amendment as suggested by Mr. Gates, the minutes of the meeting held November 13, 2023. Seconded by Mr. Jefferson and approved by voice vote.

2. Appearance by Michael Wright, Chief of Calex Ambulance Service, regarding contract changes; take any action

Mr. Wright appeared and discussed proposed changes in the contract between the Town and Calex, as outlined in a letter from Calex discussed by the Board at their previous meeting. Mr. Wright discussed financial challenges faced by Calex, including insurance reimbursements for services not covering the cost of services and the performance of non-transport services for which Calex is not paid. Additionally, recent inflationary cost increases have not been matched by insurance reimbursements. Mr. Wright noted that the per capita price for Calex’s services remains low among regional ambulance services. Mr. Wright discussed Calex’s discussions with the St. Johnsbury Fire Department regarding a potential merger. He indicated that the per capita rate increase indicated in Calex’s letter would be in effect whether a merger occurs or not.

3. Other business presented by members of the public

There was no other business presented by members of the public.

4. Appearance by Road Foreman Mark Chase regarding Highway Department matters; take any action

- a. Consideration of, and take any action on, Highway Access Permit application of Robert Warden for driveway on Chamberlain Road**

The Board reviewed an application for a permanent driveway. Mr. Chase indicated that he had inspected the site and found it to be suitable for driveway access; Mr. Chase did not recommend any conditions for the permit.

- Ms. Ford moved to approve the permit. Seconded by Mr. Jefferson and approved by voice vote. Mr. Gates signed the permit.

b. Consideration of, and take any action on, correspondence from Vermont Agency of Transportation regarding grant amendment for fiscal year 2023 Grant-in-Aid

The Board reviewed a proposed grant agreement amendment. Mr. Chase indicated that the purpose of the amendment is to extend the performance period of the grant by one year to September 30, 2024. Mr. Chase indicated that the Town's work on the grant project is expected to be completed this year.

- The Board agreed to sign the grant agreement amendment. Mr. Gates signed the grant agreement amendment.

c. Other business

i. Pick-up truck accident

Mr. Chase reported that the pick-up truck recently sustained damage to its rear bumper when it was backed into the Town's loader at the Transfer Station.

ii. Winter weather

Mr. Chase reported that the Highway Department has spent much of its recent time performing routine winter road maintenance.

5. Consideration of, and take any action on, correspondence from Planning Commission/Zoning Board (PC/ZB) regarding nominations of two members to PC/ZB

The Board reviewed an email from PC/ZB member Mark Bowen informing the Board that he had resigned from his position as a member of the PC/ZB effective November 14, 2023.

The Board also reviewed an email from PC/ZB Secretary Dawn Holtz stating that the PC/ZB would like to nominate the following individuals as members of the PC/ZB: Susan Sinclair (to replace the position vacated by the resigned Elizabeth Evans) and Jacob Stevenson (to replace the position vacated by the resigned Mark Bowen).

- Ms. Ford moved to appoint Jacob Stevenson as a member of the PC/ZB replacing Mark Bowen and to appoint Susan Sinclair as a member of the PC/ZB replacing Elizabeth Evans. Seconded by Mr. Jefferson and approved by voice vote.

6. Consideration of, and take any action on, scheduling of public hearing on amended Town Plan

The Board discussed scheduling of its second public hearing on the amended Town Plan.

- Ms. Ford moved to hold a public hearing on the amended Town Plan at a special meeting to be held Monday, December 18, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. Seconded by Mr. Jefferson and approved by voice vote.

7. Consideration of, and take any action on, appointment to fill vacancy on Dam Committee

Ms. Ford indicated that there was no new information to discuss or on which to take action regarding this matter.

- No action taken.

8. Other business presented by other town officers

There was no other business presented by other town officers.

9. Consideration of, and take any action on, next steps in Town Hall project

a. Consideration of, and take any action on, correspondence from Estes & Gallup Construction with final guaranteed maximum price estimate

The Board reviewed a guaranteed maximum price estimate. The estimate total is \$1,127,255. Mr. Gates noted that the estimate does not include electrical, alarm system, or furniture.

b. Progress report

Mr. Gates provided an update on the activity of his Building Working Group, including the following notes:

- Temporary heating is being installed in the building, preparing it for winter work.
- The concrete for the basement floor is soon to be poured, followed by the vault.
- There have been discussions about structural analysis of the floor joists and of the roof structure, especially as it relates to the installation of snow brakes.
- After discussions with Vermont Preservation Trust, the Board's decision to avoid the use of stairs, railings, etc. for entry to the building has been modified to allow one step for entry into the building.

c. Other business

No other business was discussed.

10. Consideration of, and take any action on, correspondence from Northeast Kingdom Waste Management District regarding draft 2024 budget

The Board reviewed the proposed draft 2024 budget. The budget represents an increase of 6% compared to the 2023 budget, an increase of \$52,148.

11. Consideration of, and take any action on, correspondence from Caledonia County regarding preliminary budget notice

The Board reviewed an email and attached notices for budget meetings to be held December 27, 2023 and January 31, 2024.

12. Consideration of, and take any action on, correspondence from Vermont Public Utility Commission regarding Scheduling Conference Order on Barnet Solar LLC certificate of public good for solar facility

The Board reviewed a scheduling conference order regarding the application for a certificate of public good for the installation and operation of a 999 kW solar generation facility in Barnet.

13. Consideration of, and take any action on, appointment of Animal Control Officer

Ms. Ford indicated that there was no new information to discuss or on which to take action regarding this matter.

- No action taken.

14. Consideration of, and take any action on, replacement of fencing at Barnet Public Library
Librarian Ms. Ford indicated that there was no new information to discuss or on which to take action regarding this matter.

- No action taken.

15. Consideration of, and take any action on, correspondence regarding disability insurance quotes

- The Board agreed to table discussion of this matter.

16. Consideration of approval of outstanding check warrants

- The Board reviewed and approved all outstanding check warrants.

17. Other business presented by Selectboard

There was no other business presented by the Selectboard.

18. Consideration of, and take any action on, zoning permit application for parcel #0014-01-70

Zoning Administrative Officer Shirley Warden indicated that there was no new information to discuss or on which to take action regarding this matter.

- No action taken.

19. Consideration of, and take any action on, Highway Department personnel matter

- Ms. Ford moved to enter executive session to discuss a Highway Department personnel matter pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3). Seconded by Mr. Jefferson and approved by voice vote. Entered executive session at 7:46 p.m. Those present in executive session: Ms. Ford, Mr. Gates, Mr. Jefferson, Road Foreman Mark Chase, and Town Clerk Benjamin Heisholt.
- Ms. Ford moved to exit executive session. Seconded by Mr. Jefferson and approved by voice vote. Exited executive session at 8:05 p.m.
- Ms. Ford moved to allow the employee discussed in executive session to re-initiate use of Extended Sick Leave beginning Friday, November 24, 2023, thereby waiving the Personnel Policy's requirement of 15 days of continuous absence from work to meet eligibility requirements to claim Extended Sick Leave benefits. Seconded by Mr. Jefferson and approved by voice vote.

20. Consideration of, and take any action on, 2024 Town General Fund budget

The Board reviewed a preliminary budget prepared by Treasurer Benjamin Heisholt. The Board made various amendments to the draft budget.

21. Adjournment

- Mr. Gates moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Ms. Ford and approved by voice vote. Meeting adjourned at 9:11 p.m.

A true copy. Attest: _____ Town Clerk