

Board of Trustees Meeting
Tuesday, July 11, 2023
7:00PM Village Depot Offices

The Village of North Bennington Trustees held a meeting for business on July 11, 2023, at 7:00 pm. This meeting was held in person and by video and telephone conference via Zoom. This is in accordance with H.681 (section 6.); addendum 01-20/Act 92.

Trustees Rogers, Creedy, Mullineaux, and Lowary along with Treasurer Buggee, attended the meeting in person.

Also, in attendance – Mike Pierce, Brad Myers, Keith Cross, Jeanna Brown, Joseph Brown, Chris Damon, Norm LeBlanc, and Jeff Grey.

Also in attendance via Zoom was Trustee Patterson, and Robert Nowak

Trustee Rogers opened the meeting at 7:00 PM. The order of the agenda was amended to accommodate the Fire Department first followed by the rest of the agenda in the order posted.

Fire Department:

- Mr. Keith Cross Sr. introduced himself and stated he had been elected by fire department members as Chief at their 7/10/23 meeting.
- After brief congratulations, a motion to appoint Keith Cross Sr. as Fire Chief until March 2024 was made by Trustee Creedy and seconded by Trustee Mullineaux. Motion passed unanimously.
- Trustee Lowary and Treasurer Buggee will continue in their roles as liaison for the Trustees with the fire department.

Approval of minutes:

- One spelling correction was noted for the draft minutes.
- A motion was made by Trustee Mullineaux to approve the minutes from the June 13th meeting with this correction and seconded by Trustee Patterson. Motion passed unanimously.

Warrants and Bills:

- A motion was made by Trustee Mullineaux to approve the July Warrant for a total of \$6952.35 and seconded by Trustee Creedy. Motion passed.
- Discussion of the Late June warrant details was conducted. A motion was made by Trustee Patterson to approve the Late June Warrant for a total of \$139,952.09 and seconded by Trustee Mullineaux. Motion passed.
- A motion was made by Trustee Patterson to approve the July Payroll Warrant for a total of \$16,913.89 and seconded by Trustee Rogers. Motion Passed.
- All votes were unanimous.

Highway Report:

- The Overlea culvert project is progressing. There is one more section left to construct, which tentatively will be completed on Thursday. Rock and gravel fill had been ordered. Current plans are that the road will be closed for ten days starting the first week in August.

- Trustee Patterson asked about required signage and Mr. LeBlanc clarified only requisite signs will be placed. Mr. Grey asked if signs would be on Rt 7a. Signs will be posted in both directions.
- Mr. LeBlanc answered questions from Mr. Grey about the size of the culvert, noting that it is significantly larger than the current one and that it meets VT Wetlands requirements. Mr. LeBlanc stressed that this culvert would prevent future issues with flooding that could occur based on the increases in rainfall.
- Sealed bids for preliminary engineering work for the Hall St and Park St projects were opened. Bid 1 for Hall St is \$26,000. Bid 2 for Hall St is \$11,068.40. Bid 1 for Park St. is \$39,000. Bid 2 for Park St. is \$25,947.58.
- Mr. LeBlanc and one or two Trustees will look at the details of each bid and compare the bids for each project. Mr. LeBlanc stressed that this preliminary work is necessary for determining future budget needs and for seeking grants. Mr. LeBlanc recognized the necessity of doing each project correctly once to make a lasting impact on the roads and village funds.
- Tree Warden Grey requested discussion of possible tree and vegetation removal on both sides of the bridge on Prospect Street. He noted this section of the Village is well-traveled and often photographed. The current state of vegetation obstructs the beautiful views. One photo of Mr. Grey's concern was shared on screen. Trustee Patterson asked about cutting the trees and spraying the stumps to thoroughly kill the invasive trees. Mr. Grey agreed that is the proper approach and most effectively done in Fall by a specialist certified in chemical application by waterways. Mr. LeBlanc stated that the village crew must consider safety and does not have the appropriate equipment for such a job. Trustee Rogers supported one contractor handling the whole project. Trustee Patterson agreed. Trustee Rogers asked for bids for the project and to discuss matters with State water departments.
- Trustee Patterson made a motion to seek bids for vegetation removal on BR-72 North St and BR-71 Prospect St bridges. This was Seconded by Trustee Mullineaux. Motion passed unanimously.
- Trustee Lowary asked about Park St. Grading. Mr. LeBlanc said it will be graded tomorrow but the weather makes it harder. He cleared out the storm drain to get water off the road.

Treasurer Report:

- The fiscal year end was June 30th 2023. Budget v Actual was generated. Trustee Rogers and Mr. Buggee will finalize the year-end funds.
- Mr. Buggee reported that the application for a tax anticipation loan approved in June was accepted by the Bank with a closing date by 7/18/23. He stated that an attorney opinion letter is needed for the closing. Trustee Creedy asked why we needed to borrow funds this year and whether this is typical. Mr. Buggee clarified that it only happens when we have fully spent budgeted funds since new revenue does not come in until late September through November. Due in large part to the road and culvert projects, a tax anticipation note is required this year. Grant projects require us to pay out first and then get reimbursed at unknown intervals. The Overlea Culvert project is a good example of expenditures for which we are reimbursed but we need funds prior to that. A motion was made by Trustee Mullineaux and seconded by Trustee Creedy to approve the Bank of Bennington tax anticipation note of \$295,000 at an interest rate of 6.52% payable 12/1/2023, and approval for appropriate board members to sign the loan documents. Motion passed.

- Trustee Patterson made a motion for the Village to make a \$200 donation in the name of Jerry Elwell, long-time employee of the Water Department and former member of Board of Water Commissioners, to the Vermont Paws and Boots non-profit organization. Trustee Rogers seconded. Motion passed.
- Delinquent taxes. Several parcels are very low and should be paid soon. Several will go to collections for resolution, partnering with Shaftsbury where appropriate.
- Mr. Buggee reviewed the West Oil pre-buy offer at a price of \$3.10/gal, at the average usage of 4,300 gal/year. This would be paid in ten payments of \$1,321/mo. Commencing this month. Trustee Rogers made a motion to approve this rate, which was seconded by Trustee Creedy and so voted. Trustee Creedy asked about servicing the fire department boiler. Mr. Buggee said that was done in January 2023 and that West Oil recommends annual service visits. These will be scheduled.
- Trustee Mullineaux asked about the budget v actual. Mr. Buggee stated that final numbers still need to be drawn up, but emails are welcome for questions.

Development Review Board:

- There is a meeting next week on Tuesday July 18th at 7:00.
- Mr. Damon is resigning his position as chair of the DRB. A new member is tentative . The Planning Commission will discuss the recommendation at their July 19 meeting and present to trustees in August.

Planning Commission:

- The recent job search for a zoning administrator resulted on no applicants. Mr. Damon stated a willingness to be appointed again as the Zoning Administrator. Mr. Damon is ready, willing, and able to take on the position. Trustee Creedy expressed his confidence in Mr. Damon's knowledge and ability for the role. Trustee Mullineaux moved to appoint Mr. Damon as ZA. Trustee Patterson seconded. Motion passed.

New Business:

- Trustee Rogers discussed the offer from Phil Jordan to provide us with historical photos of the Village. The photos could be posted to the website with some photo labeling and source crediting. Rob Woolmington was included in the emails to hopefully involve his knowledge and interest on behalf of the Fund for North Bennington. Trustee Mullineaux knows a man who can transfer the photos to digital format. Web designer Ms. Royte can then post to the website.

Old Business:

- MERP, we received a \$4000 mini-grant and Bill Christian has agreed to serve as our consultant as the grant process and eventual project gets underway. Some of the grant money will be set aside for a community meeting. A second phase of the grant process, covering energy audits, has been applied for. Our buildings were prioritized as 1) firehouse, 2) Depot, and 3) Garage. Once assessments are done then applications can be submitted for the \$500k implementation grant.

Executive session: Trustee Patterson made a motion to enter executive session at 8:19 and seconded by Trustee Mullineaux. Motion Passed.

Regular session resumed at 8:59. No further business was conducted.
Trustee Mullineaux made a motion to adjourn at 9:00 PM which was seconded by Trustee Creedy and so voted.

Tara Lowary
Trustee Vice-Chair

Village of North Bennington