

Town of Benton
Budget Hearing and Select Board Meeting
Monday, March 6, 2023

Select Board Members: William R. Darcy, Chair and Regina Elliott

Also Present: Dwight Swauger, Treasurer; Mike Stiebitz, Town Clerk and Tax Collector; Joe Boutin, Road Contractor and Surveyor of Wood and Lumber; Laura Richardson, Trustee of the Trust Funds; and Gil Richardson, Town and School Board Moderator

These draft minutes of the Town of Benton Select Board are believed accurate and correct, but they are subject to additions, deletions, and corrections by the Select Board at the next meeting when the Board votes its final approval of the minutes. These minutes are made available at this time to conform to the requirements of New Hampshire RSA 91-A:2.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Darcy at 6:30 PM.

Member Elliott moved approval of the February 22, 2023 meeting minutes, seconded by Chairman Darcy and passed.

Chairman Darcy and Tax Collector Stiebitz discussed the meeting they had with DRA officials and Avitar about the five year reevaluation. It was noted that DRA believes based on their data that Benton properties are assessed at only 58% of their market value, and that the purpose of the reevaluation is to list all properties at 100% of market value. That means every property owner is likely to get notice that their property is worth substantially more than it's current assessed value. That does not mean that any individual property owner's taxes will go up, because as town tax values go up the tax rate per \$1,000 of property value goes down. Chairman Darcy said we need to let those at the Town Meeting know about this so everyone does not get upset when they hear from Avitar later in the year.

The mechanics of the transfer of funds from Woodsville Savings Bank to the NH Public Deposit Investment Pool were discussed and those authorized to access the PDIP website were discussed. Laura Richardson noted that all Benton funds, including the Trustee Funds were counted against the FDIC insured limit of \$250,000 at Woodsville Savings Bank. There was discussion of how best to allocate town funds to increase interest payments while retaining some FDIC guarantees.

Laura Richardson noted that she had prepared a manual on how to manage the Town's Trust Funds, and provided the Selectboard with a copy.

Gil Richardson discussed some of the details of the upcoming Town Meeting, including candidates to fill all the positions. He also noted the need to have the parking lot across the street plowed for the event.

Treasurer Swauger reported that the operating account balance was \$287,205.54 and the NH PDIP account had \$409,023.41.

Member Elliott noted that John Lord will present his cemetery maintenance seminar at Town Hall on April 8. She also noted that Gravestone Services out of Manchester will be here on May 6 at 10 AM to assess the condition of the Cemetery and give us some options for starting the work.

On the traffic sign front, Member Elliott noted that she is getting some information from the Piermont Police Chief on their implementation of traffic speed signs.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 PM.