

Town of Benton
Select Board Meeting
Monday May 11, 2020

Select Board Members: William R. Darcy, Chair; Regina Elliott; Carol Vincelette

Also Present: Dwight Swauger, Treasurer; Joe Boutin, road contractor

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.

The Board discussed the Coronavirus (COVID-19). The state has allocated money for municipal grants for reimbursement of virus costs which requires completion of an extensive application, but Benton does not yet have any significant costs. There are almost no confirmed active infections in the local area, with previous infections in Haverhill, Littleton and Bethlehem having been resolved. Almost all the NH deaths are in nursing homes. The Governor's "non-essential" business closures expire today for some businesses under new rules (retail, salons, barbers, golf, etc.) The White Mountain National Park has reopened most hiking trailheads consistent with state parks. The Appalachian Mountain Club has closed its high huts for the entire year. An email was sent to Executive Councilor Michael Cryans encouraging the state to use a regional approach to COVID-19 that recognizes almost all the infections and deaths are in Southern New Hampshire and almost none in the North Country.

The Chairman has made contact with the Haverhill Broadband committee as recommended by Lara Saffo. He also attended the North Country Council's Broadband meeting via Zoom and followed up with contacting the organizers of the Carroll County broadband committee. He also made contact with the folks in the Town of Bristol organizing a three county (Coos, Grafton and Carroll) solution to developing broadband solutions, hopefully with the support of the New Hampshire Electric Cooperative.

The Board discussed the cemetery lawn maintenance contract and agreed to renew the contract with Daryl Brooks Lawncare who did a good job last year. The Chairman was authorized to sign the contract.

The Chairman placed another RFP ad for the cemetery wall repair in *The Bridge Weekly*, running for two weeks. One proposal has been received. The Board also agreed to relocate and improve the cemetery road to the upper part of the cemetery and charge the road account for the work.

Treasurer Swauger reported the operating account had \$197,016.80 and the ICS account \$383,234.86.

We received the mandatory filing by NHEC itemizing the cost of their electric utility assets in town, but the number and type of specific property (poles, transformers, meters, etc.) was not listed, nor was any explanation provided about new meters. The Board authorized the Chairman to follow-up with more detailed inquiries about the utility property in Benton.

The Board signed the previously approved elderly tax exemption application for Dwight Swauger and restated its policy that social security income would be counted net of the mandatory Part B deduction.

The Chairman reported on the Planning Board meeting earlier in the day, which involved the first request in many years for a subdivision of property. No application form has been found for a subdivision and one must be developed.

The next meeting will be the day after Memorial Day, on May 26 at 6:30 PM.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:25 PM.