

TOWN OF BENNINGTON

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Minutes of Public Meeting – November 10, 2009

Present: Joe Cuddemi
Philip R. Germain (Chairperson)
John Hatfield – Commerford, Neider, Perkins LLC - 5:20p.m. to 5:40 p.m.
Allan Wilson - 6:15 p.m. to 6:45p.m.
Budget Committee members: Rick Reed, Christopher Gladding, Melissa Clark, Harvey Goodwin and Debra Whitney
Town Moderator, John Cronin

Selectmen Joseph Cuddemi and Phil Germain were present. The meeting was called to order at 5:20 PM.

John Hatfield discussed the property assessment relating to the Monadnock Paper Mill and why it was assessed far below its previous years. Most of the shortfall related to the other current commercial properties that were used in comparison to the Paper Mill had a significant drop in their commercial rated value. The Board discussed several different options with John to help mitigate the significant decreased assessment. Some of the options were; 1) Negotiate with Monadnock Paper Mill a “step down“assessment approach, with the property assessments changing in value over a several year period, 2) Accept the assessment as presented and incorporate the change as any other new property assessment in town, or 3) Negotiate with Monadnock Paper Mill regarding the total assessed value and decrease the value of the property to match the negotiated assessed value in two tax billings. At this point 5:40 p.m., the Selectmen had decided to recess the meeting regarding this issue until November 11, 2009 at 8:00 a.m. and resume discussions at that point.

At 5:42 p.m. the Selectmen moved the meeting to the VFW building in preparation for the Liberty Tree Memorial Tree Dedication Ceremony. The Liberty Tree Memorial dedication started at 5:50 p.m. The selectmen presented the Liberty Memorial tree and plaque to the VFW membership and read a poem by Thomas Paine relating to the significance of the tree. The selectmen thanked the VFW for all their service to the country past, present and future.

At 6:15 p.m. the selectmen again moved the meeting back to the Town Hall to continue business. At 6:15 p.m. the Selectmen met with Fire Chief Allan Wilson; Allan requested a non-public meeting to discuss a Department personnel matter. A motion was cast by Phil Germain to go into Non-public Session per RSA 91-A:3 II (c). Joe Cuddemi seconded the motion. A vote was taken; a unanimous decision was reached to go into Non-Public Session at 6:17p.m. No actions or decisions were made. The Non-public portion of the meeting ended at 6:50 p.m.

Next order of business, the Budget Committee met with the Selectmen to discuss the philosophy of the Budget Committee. The first topic of discussion was should the budget committee continue to meet based upon the negative vote last year and if it was worth the

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time and effort if all budgets should remain at virtually zero this year as well. It was agreed that the efforts of the Budget Committee are never wasted and perhaps this year we redirect our focus to getting the budget passed. Discussion then ensued regarding “why” the budget didn’t pass last year. Economics was surely a reason due to many job losses in the community. Warrant Articles that were not represented adequately by the Department might have been a factor. Or a general disconnect between the voter and the article being voted upon could have been the reason. The Budget Committee offered a few suggestions to help market the budget better to the voters: 1) Every Department Head should be represented at the main Budget Hearing and SB2 Hearing and make presentation for their Department’s budget, 2) Increase voter participation by introducing door prizes, 3) Personalize by making one-on-one calls to voters to invite them to the hearings, 4) Send letters to all voters explaining the budgets and articles, perhaps without Town letterhead to make it more informal, 5) Need to get a voters list of those people who vote to get the word out to other voters. The Budget Committee and Selectmen agreed that marketing the 2010 budget more effectively was key and the 2010 budget should be as close to the Default Budget as possible. This way we can start moving forward into a positive voting atmosphere in lieu of a negative one. Discussion also took place suggesting that perhaps we should look at a petitioned Warrant Article for a change towards the traditional town voting format, Non SB2. No decisions were made regarding the petition Warrant Article. The Selectmen agreed to have a budget that was in keeping with the Default Budget given to the Budget Committee before November 24th for their review. Discussions with the Budget Committee ended, the next meeting date for the Budget Committee is November 24th at 7:00 p.m.

Selectmen read and approved the meeting Minutes of November 4, 2009.

The Selectmen approved and signed the Accounts Payable and Payroll Registers for November 10, 2009.

The Selectmen approved and signed an Employee Time Off request.

At 8:41 p.m. a motion was cast by Phil Germain to go into Non-public Session to review legal counsel documents per RSA 91-A:3 II (e). Joe Cuddemi seconded the motion. A vote was taken; a unanimous decision was reached to go into Non-Public session at 8:41p.m. No actions or decisions were made. The Non-public portion of the meeting ended at 8:50 p.m.

No other business took place. A motion to recess the meeting until 8:00 a.m. on November 11, 2009 was made by Phil Germain, Joe Cuddemi seconded the motion, a vote was taken, and a unanimous decision was reached to recess the meeting.

The meeting ended at 8:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Philip R. Germain
Chairperson