

Village of Old Bennington
Trustees Meeting Minutes
February 4, 2020

Officials present: Trustees Andy Buchsbaum, Charles Edson, Ron Rabidou, and Jim Warren, as well as Clerk Steven Anisman and Treasurer Kathy Wagenknecht.

Officials absent: Susan Wright

Residents present: Jill Jones

1. Opening. Ron Rabidou called the meeting to order at 7:05pm.
2. Minutes.
 - a. There were no changes to the posted minutes. Jim Warren questioned whether “renewed” or “reviewed” would be the preferred verbiage to use in noting Megan Schwarzkopf’s repeated concern regarding the sidewalk in front of her house. There was no consensus.
 - b. Jim Warren moved to approve the posted minutes for the January 7 Trustees meeting, Andy Buchsbaum seconded the motion, and the Trustees unanimously approved the motion.
3. Citizen Comments. Charles Edson had gotten emails regarding gunshots that had been heard; the police were called and they investigated, but nothing was found.
4. Reports of Commissioners.
 - a. Road Commissioner.
 - i. Andy Buchsbaum presented the report, beginning with the issues regarding plowing and salting. There is a Vermont guideline called “Safe Roads Safe Speeds”; regarding winter storms; there is the understanding that there will be some snow on the roads during a storm, and they do not need to be bare until after a storm. He recommended that at the Annual Meeting, the Village consider adoption of this policy guideline, and we can then instruct the plowing service regarding the urgency and frequency of plowing and salting. This may lead to substantial savings. Charles Edson mentioned that our service can be asked to wait until the Town of Bennington sends out a notification to their plow services before we send our plow service. He also recommended that we not place salt before a storm, noting Connecticut’s bad experience. Many Trustees felt that there appeared to be excessive salt during the most recent storm. Plowing was done for ½” of snow accumulation. \$44,600 has already been spent this season with two months remaining in the typical plowing season. Andy will speak with Jerome.
 - ii. Andy Buchsbaum has printed out the grant application for Class 2 Highways, which is intended to help defray the costs of repairs on Bank Street. There are requirements for other documentation that will need to be met in order to get the application submitted, and standards that may need to be adopted prior to submission, all of which may involve significant work by various Trustees. Andy and Ron Rabidou will meet to review the requirements.
 - iii. Regarding the sidewalk project, the state has returned the final signed paperwork approving a grant. This grant covers 50% of the cost of phase 2 of the sidewalk repair; once we spend \$70k, they will reimburse us \$35. The Schwarzkopfs’

sidewalk portion was discussed; there have been multiple email contacts between the Schwarzkopfs and Andy Buchsbaum. They are hoping for very clean joining between the sidewalk and their driveway, with pristine saw cuts, and they continue to request that they be back from vacation before the work is done so they can oversee it. A meeting with all interested parties will take place this upcoming Friday when the Schwarzkopfs are here in order to make sure that everyone is content with the plans. We are implementing Don Schwarzkopf's suggestions into the contract with Jerome, since the Trustees agree that the fundamental request, for sawcuts rather than digging out and backfilling, seems reasonable and will apply to all residences in the future. Some Trustees recommended the Schwarzkopfs hire a proxy to oversee the work if they cannot be present themselves, rather than postponing the entire project until it aligns with the Schwarzkopf's presence.

- iv. Gorman has given an estimate for Bank St reclamation, with additional work by NSK. The total will likely be around \$285k. Crack sealing on other roads would be about \$10k (plus the costs of traffic control, potentially another \$5k). Church Lane and Catamount, with cold mix overlay, would cost less than the recommended reclamation, but would only last 5-10 years, and cost approximately \$25k (compared to ~\$100k). These options will be presented to the Village during the Annual Meeting.
 - b. Tree Commissioner. Jim Warren noted no changes since the last meeting.
 - c. Parks and Sidewalks Commissioner. Susan Wright was not present. She had discussed with Ron Rabidou an e-mail, which she received from Monument Electric, which indicated that a replacement streetlight has been shipped and it should be installed in the near future.
 - d. Police Commissioner. Charles Edson presented the report. Officer Andy Corey worked 94.5 hours. 21 tickets were issued worth \$3,215 of fines, and 48 property checks/ watches were performed. The car is again needing more repairs, and is likely to need replacement within two years.
 - e. Treasurer.
 - i. Multiple expenses were paid, details are in the Treasurer's Report.
 - ii. The salt and snow bill is significantly above budget.
 - iii. Some quarterly monies were received from the state.
 - iv. There are still properties with outstanding taxes due.
 - v. Kathy Wagenknecht graciously agreed to shepherd the insurance policy documentation, which was much appreciated by the Clerk staff.
 - vi. Kathy Wagenknecht presented the warrant list. Jim Warren moved to approve the warrant list, Andy Buchsbaum seconded the motion, and the Trustees unanimously approved the motion.
5. Planning Commission
- a. The proposed bylaw changes have been received; a hearing must now occur within 120 days. The Planning Commission meets the 2nd Monday of every month; that Monday in March or April will be considered, or before a Trustees meeting in that same time period.
 - b. Interpretation of the bylaw changes remains confusing for readers. According to state law, a summary report is required to be presented to the Trustees by the Planning Commission; our hope is that such a summary report will be presented, both for legal

reasons and for the benefit of the citizens of the Village. Regardless, Bob Bullington agrees to come to a meeting to review the changes and their reasoning.

- c. Hiring of a new administrative officer - advertisements will be placed in the Bennington Banner. The question of hiring a contractor rather than an employee arose, with a contractor preferred, particularly regarding the work involved with payroll and taxes. Using a temp service to assist with management, with additional hourly cost, would be one option. Jim Warren may consider taking the position.
- d. A new possible fee schedule was distributed, which reduces the cost of minor permits, but increases the fines for work done without a permit. Some Trustees felt the other language, which has not been modified, was perhaps too restrictive regarding citizens' rights to make changes on their properties. Jim Warren noted that our fees are higher than North Bennington, and more restrictive. Andy Buchsbaum voted to approve the fee schedule, Charles Edson seconded the motion, and the Trustees unanimously approved the motion.

6. Old Business. There was none.

7. New Business.

- a. Ron Rabidou received a map of the Village Borders from the federal government as part of their Boundary Validation Program; there have been no apparent changes, and he plans to sign and return it as required.
- b. Many trees were recently cut down at 100 Monument; remaining brush and stumps were burned for 3 days, leading to significant smoke in some houses in the Village. An appropriate burning permit to burn for up to 14 days had been purchased from the town. The question arose as to whether long burns such as that should be allowed in the Village. The majority of the Trustees felt that fewer restrictions seemed appropriate and no changes were recommended.

8. Adjournment. Charles Edson moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:22 pm, Andy Buchsbaum seconded the motion, and the Trustees unanimously approved the motion.