

Town of Benton
Select Board Meeting
Monday December 21, 2020

Select Board Members: William R. Darcy, Chair; Regina Elliott, Kimberli Carpenter

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.

Member Elliott moved approval of the December 7, 2020 minutes, seconded by Member Carpenter and approved.

The Board discussed the 2021 budget, requested spreadsheet presentation by Treasurer, and a different display for multi-year warrant article funds.

Chairman Darcy said NHEC is now at liberty to discuss some of its broadband plans, including the results of the recently concluded Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Rural Digital Opportunity Fund auction for broadband internet grants. It is good news for Benton residents. NHEC won a census block group that appears to cover all of Benton's residents and is thus obligated to build a fiber optic internet system in Benton. The NHEC Board of Directors in October had previously expressed its intent to build a fiber network for all its members in need of such internet services. Since Benton is 100% served by NHEC, that is also good news for Benton. It will be at least 6 months before the order of building is known, but high speed and reliable internet service is coming to Benton.

Treasurer Swauger reported the operating account had \$385,199.00 and the ICS account \$233,436.77. The Board signed checks prepared by the Treasurer.

The need for a new contract assessor with the retirement of Steve Allen was discussed, with the need to issue a RFP with the help of the Tax Collector.

The Board signed an intent to cut timber by Kennebec Lumber on a 112 acre lot off of Long Pond Road.

The Board discussed the progress in completing the work contemplated by the warrant articles adopted by the Town Meeting last March. 2020 was a very difficult year because of the pandemic and much was left undone, but some very significant work was accomplished, most notably the rebuilt cemetery stone wall.

The Board also discussed 2021 warrant articles. Joe Boutin suggested that this year the first 500 feet or so of Howe Hill be paved, given the deterioration of the start of the road where it joins with Coventry Road (Rte. 116).

Member Elliott suggested and the Board agreed, that the 2020 Annual Report be dedicated to Carol Vincelette.

January 4, 2021 is the next scheduled meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:20 PM.