

Town of Benton
Select Board Meeting of November 13, 2017

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

Also Present: Dwight Swauger, Treasurer; John Kamb, USFS Chief Engineer; Marty Noble and son; Aaron Goodwin.

**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.*

Chairman Darcy called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM.

Chairman Darcy moved approval of the October 24, 2017 meeting minutes, seconded by Member Elliott and approved.

Aaron Goodwin objected to not receiving his annual stipend for his Sexton duties. He was told that he would receive it when all other Town officers receive their annual stipend in December.

A discussion was held among the Selectmen, Joe Boutin and John Kamb of USFS on the damage to the end of Tunnel Stream Road caused by Tunnel Brook jumping its banks. Chairman Darcy stated the Town was hit hard by two state and federally declared disasters depleting all our annual road funding. Repairing that part of the road now appears imprudent without external funding, especially because a similar washout is likely to recur unless the Brook is rerouted away from the Road. John Kamb said loggers using Tunnel Brook to log USFS land will not be able to work this year unless either the road is repaired so they can drive toward Rte. 112 or they are allowed to go in the other direction, exiting onto Rte. 116. Opposition was expressed to the latter alternative because it would rapidly deteriorate the portion of Tunnel Stream Road used by many Benton residents. As to repairing the Rte. 112 end of the Road, we first have to explore with the State Department of Environmental Services (DES) getting permission to put Tunnel Brook back on its original banks and then get formal permission from USFS to do the work on their property. Chairman Darcy said he would contact DES about getting their permission to do the work and John Kamb would explore with USFS if they will allow the work if the Town gets DES approval.

John Kamb was asked about the status of Long Pond Road. He said the road was unlikely to be repaired until next summer, but they may be able to use their own road crews to build water bars to help prevent further deterioration of the road until then.

Chairman Darcy reported that he was informed by the regional NH Emergency Management official, Paul Hatch, that both Grafton County and the State met their FEMA damage thresholds for the October storm and that application for a federal disaster declaration was in process.

Marty Noble discussed the fact that his road (Noble Road) was washed out by both of our recent storms, requiring considerable expenditures to repair it. He and Joe Boutin discussed State, Town of Benton and Noble actions that may be taken to mitigate the situation. They agreed to talk to a property owner on Tunnel Stream Road about getting permission to make culvert changes and other modifications which may help the situation.

The Selectmen signed the tax warrant to be filed with the State DRS which enables the Tax Collector to send out this year/s tax bills a little earlier than normal.

The Treasurer reported the operating account balance of \$46,097.05 and ICS balance of \$200,095.68.

There was discussion of the proposed assessing service contracts for general assessing services and the required town-wide reevaluation which has to be performed next year. Negotiations have changed the proposal so the costs are less front loaded into next year. Member Elliott expressed concern about the total costs given how few properties were in the town and it was agreed to explore the costs paid by other small towns.

There was discussion about enforcing the building codes which require a permit for moving a building or mobile home onto a property; specifically the 14 x 70 foot mobile home that was moved onto a lot near the end of Bradley Hill Road this summer. The members agreed to send a letter to the owner of the lot informing her of the requirement of a building permit under the 1976 Benton Zoning Regulations and the \$20 daily fines for violating the Regulations by not obtaining a building permit.

There was discussion of doing a financial audit of the Town and the Request for Proposals which the Chairman had drafted, along with a list of potential responders. The Chairman reported that Haverhill's annual audit costs about \$14,000 and that most of the surrounding small towns do not have an audit performed by an accounting firm. Chairman Darcy said the next budget year would be a bad year to add such a significant expense because of the reevaluation costs and the extraordinary storm related road repair costs that will run into next year. Nevertheless, he agreed to submit the RFP to accounting firms and the Board can review the responses before making any decisions on whether to do the audit next year or the following year.

The Chairman noted the invitation to Woodsville Ambulance to appear at the next meeting, which included informing them that their per capita charges should not include Glencliff Home residents who are served by Warren Ambulance. He also noted that the statistics on the Benton elderly population submitted by Grafton County Senior Citizens Council to justify their funding levels by the Town are also skewed by the elderly population of Glencliff which receives no services from the Council. We still have not received the bill from Haverhill for fire services for the first six months of the year.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:58 PM.