

Bakersfield Regular Select Board Meeting
Monday, Oct 12, 7:00pm

Called to order at 7:04pm by Lance.

Members present: Lance Lawyer, Sam Cribb, Gary Denton, Terri Gates, Josh Goss

Members absent: none

Residents/Guests present: Abbey Miller, Mac Newitt, Tami Brennan

Motion made to accept Sept 28th meeting minutes by Gary, seconded by Josh and passed by a vote of 4-0, Lance abstaining because he wasn't at the Sept 28th meeting.

Warrants signed:

Road Commissioner's Order #20&21-2020	\$10,907.69
Road Commissioner's Order #8-2020	\$54.66
Selectmen's Order #26-2020 (80% of the School Tax; remaining Balance due the end of December)	\$1,401,720.99

Lance said that the first bill from East Engineering has arrived for just under \$20,000.00 dollars and the board needs to come up with a plan to deal with these bills until the FEMA reimbursement arrives. The board plans to check with Rufus, the Town's contact for FEMA, because Abbey said that she believed that the State received the money from FEMA to disperse to municipalities three weeks ago.

Rufus was assigned by FEMA to work with the Road Commissioner and Town Treasurer, and not the Select board. Abbey said that she would send emails tomorrow. Rufus was to be working with us in town until COVID hit and that changed. The board decided that they would also speak with the contractors to see if the town could work out some sort of payment plan to help wait for the FEMA money. Also, to begin planning and applying for a loan to pay the contractors until FEMA reimbursements.

Mac thinks that the state is finished doing the jobs that they planned to do. We can submit any job that is 95% finished for reimbursements.

The board discussed an email with concerns from Rod and Deanna Allen regarding the Sept 28th minutes Class IV road discussions. Terri spoke about the importance for the Board to create a Class IV road policy for the town in order for consistent protocol in regards to upkeep. The board discussed the State Statutes for Class IV road required maintenance to keep the road open for One season a year. Terri believed that an unmaintained Class IV required no maintenance to be required at all. The board agreed to research. Lance said that the Town could do more that is required by the State but not less.

Abbey shared concern about how to continue with our current budget cycle. We allocated \$300,000.00 for the road and we've already used \$170,000.00 and have to pay back the Bridge Fund for \$30,000.00., so we currently have under \$100,000.00 dollars to get the road dept through to Oct. 2021. The

problem is with the budget timing. The Select board sets the budget for the year in January, then the budget gets approved by voters in March, and then the monies are collected in October, leaving no monies to carry the town from the beginning of the year until taxes are collected without borrowing funds. The interest on these borrowed funds is around \$5000.00/year. It was pointed out that the board spends so much time trying to reduce small amounts from an already slim budget, but nobody seems to mind the loss of money in interest. Abbey said that she completely understands that nobody wants taxes to be raised temporarily, she doesn't want to pay more taxes either, but she fears that this way of managing the budget is unsustainable. Abbey said her main concern is with the Road budget only. The rotation for the road budget alone would be far easier than rotating the entire budget a fiscal year. The Town part of the budget is around \$655,000.00 and \$1,745,000.00 to the school, making the total budget \$2.4 million dollars. The Town tax rate rose by .07/\$1000.00, and the education tax rose by .30 to .40/\$1000.00, even though we were told that the education tax was supposed to decrease with the reorganization of schools.

Abbey said that we have collected \$1.759 million so far in taxes and taxes are still trickling in. About 75% of Bakersfield Residents paid their taxes on time. The town usually has about 95% of residents paying their taxes by the October due date. In the last two years, the town has not had more than around \$100,000.00 in delinquent taxes.

As far as the budget next year, Lance sees no way to try to adjust the budget timeline for next year because this has been a hard year due to COVID. He asked if the Board should talk to a financial advisor and discussion suspected that they are likely to say the same thing and cost a good amount.

Abbey said that if the Town wanted to take out a bond to pay for the FEMA work until FEMA can reimburse us, they will have to decide soon because it's a lengthy process. A bond needs a thirty-day warning and a vote, so we would need almost two months to get things in order.

Terri suggested having Efficiency Vermont take a look at the shop to see if we qualify for possible rebates.

We have Equipment rental budgeted for \$2500.00, and we've already spent \$4800.00 and we haven't received the final costs yet. FEMA should reimburse us for that. Lance said we need to get a FEMA list so we know what to expect. We really need to break it all down because it's making a mess of our budget.

Sam suggested that at some point the board try to cut down a substantial amount on the budget for one year so that we could fund an 18-month budget for one year and put the town budget on a fiscal year. In the year 2024, the gravel pit will be off the budget since it will be paid off in 2023. That would take off \$40,000.00 a year, which would be around \$60,000.00 for an 18-month budget. Their concern was that by then, the town would have to trade in a truck for a new one, with a further concern about our 30-year grader. The

consideration of sub-contracting a grader was discussed but it was pointed out that the odds of getting a grader when you need one is slim. The point of starting a new equipment fund this past year is that the Town will be prepared to put something toward new equipment when it is needed.

Terri suggested reducing the hours of the Town Clerk to save money. The Select board said that they have received complaints that the office isn't open enough as it is and reminded all that the Select board doesn't govern the office of the Town Clerk which falls under the State. Terri questioned the line item of Overtime for the Road Crew and was assured that 90% is winter plowing. And that there are times at other times of the year when weather dictates the road crew work during overtime hours.

The board plans to go into executive session during the next Select Board meeting on Oct. 26th to discuss employee salaries.

The assistant town clerk/treasurer position was discussed. Terri wanted to know who pays for the assistant, who hired them, how long the position is to exist, what the hours are and if this position was new. Abbey explained that the town clerk and treasurer interviewed, the Select board hired, the position is permanent for the hours that they are needed and the position is not new. The Town pays the salary. Also Ballot clerks, what their rate was and who hired them. That Ballot clerks were hired as needed to count votes and people not already on the payroll were paid a straight rate.

Terri asked if people pay for the copies and pages they request at the Town Clerk's office and how the clerk fees work. People do pay for the pages they request and residents can get a copy of their tax bill at no charge and the clerk fees are set by State Statutes. A Clerk fee distribution sheet could clarify things.

Abbey welcomed the questions and encouraged the board to keep asking questions to help them understand all that goes on in the office before they start tearing things apart. For example, to understand our cost for paper includes printing off town reports to save money, instead of sending projects to the printers.

The board questioned why the town was paying the electricity for the Cemetery park. The town has paid \$972.00 since the first of the year and believe that that should come out of the Cemetery Committee's budget. The Select Board said that they needed to discuss who is responsible for which expenses with the Cemetery Committee. The Board decided to shut off the power to the park until Thanksgiving week, then have the power turned on for the Holidays and then turn it off again January 5th. The fee to turn on the power is \$20.00 and no charge to discontinue the service. Also, to have the Electric meter taken off the Brigham Academy building to avoid the \$20.00/month charge. The board also discussed the placement of a solar LED flood-light and charger placed at the top of the Flag pole in Maple Grove Cemetery Park to illuminate the flag from above.

The town received one Roadside mowing bid from the same party who has been mowing and whom the board has received many complaints about. Mac is to get some quotes on prices to rent a tractor with a PTO shaft, from Harvest or Champlain Equipment, for a month in the summer and get our own mower up to speed so the road crew can mow. And another thought was to check with Gervais' to see if they had a used tractor at a good price. Not this year but to keep it in mind.

The board brainstormed about how to get the involvement of the town in the budget shift to a fiscal year discussion. Last time that the Select board encouraged residents to attend budget meetings, nobody came until the last meeting, even though the Select board had posted notices inviting residents at the Store, Post office, library, on the School sign and on the Town website. Josh noted that some of them must have been noticed since the notice at the Store had even been defaced. The board suggested using a sandwich sign. Someone said that there was a sandwich board at the North Station.

Road work will be beginning on Rt 108 toward the end of the month. The signs and stakes will go up. They hope to set the big catch basin and set up the outfall and work on some of the drainage.

Road Report-

Terri asked why the town didn't pull back the gravel and rocks that had been washed off Whitney Rd into the farmers field back onto the road and was told that the State explained that the gravel and rock now belonged to the farmer. If we pulled the gravel and rock from the field at the owner's request, then it would be at our own expense, FEMA would not reimburse. FEMA will only pay if the Town uses new gravel and rock.

Jackie Machie sent word to the Board wanting to know why the meeting minutes were not posted sooner. The Meeting minutes are mandated by the State to be posted by 5 business days after the Select Board meeting takes place. During COVID, that dead line was extended to 10 business days, which may have expired by now. Our minutes are posted by the Monday following the Select Board meeting which is the 5th business day.

ATV ordinance- Terri asked if signs were to be posted on the Roads that are to be closed and was informed that the ATV club had already posted signs and that the signs are being disregarded or taken down. The Town can't stop people from parking ATV's on private property. The Board requested that Mac put the gates back up down by the reservoir, with the No Trespassing sign.

Sam made the motion to accept the minutes from the October 6th, site inspection of the Class III section of King's Hill Rd. Josh seconded the motion and it passed with a vote of 5-0.

Mac said they took up six loads of gravel and placed it on the Class III section of the Kings Hill Rd. and will be back up there with a grader after it rains.

The board received a complaint that the Enosburg Fire Truck lost a hubcap, as they responded to the fire at Levi Joyal's house, because of the potholes in the road.

There was a complaint about the resident at 176 North Main St. by a neighbor. Josh said that he would look into it.

Josh noted that the ditches are starting to look pretty good. He suggested that Mac try to hog it in where there was still a bit of grass on the edges. Lance said the last time that Mac hogged it in, it created a kind of slimy surface that was super slippery and Lance almost went off the road. Josh pointed out that some of the shoulders still needed to be ditched out, since they were still slightly higher than the road.

For the next meeting's agenda, the board plans to vote on the ATV ordinance and then go into executive session to discuss employee salaries and Personnel Policy.

Sam made the motion to adjourn at 9:55pm. It was seconded by Gary and passed by a vote of 5-0.

The next Regular Select Board meeting will be held on Monday, Oct. 26, at 7:00pm.

Meeting minutes recorded by Tami Brennan.