

Minutes of the November 24, 2008 Meeting of the Board of Selectmen.

Present: Neal Fox, Bill Richards, Joe DeFreitas, Delbert Cloud, and Geneva Gaiko.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by Chairman Neal Fox, the Board first reviewing and approving the weekly payroll and payables. The minutes of the November 10, 2008 meeting of the Board of Selectmen were approved by motion of Joe DeFreitas, seconded by Bill Richards and unanimously carried. The Constable's report of November 16, 2008, and the Planning Commission minutes of November 10, 2008 were reviewed and placed on file.

The proposed amendments to the Bethel Zoning Ordinance, transmitted from the Planning Commission on August 25, 2008, were then taken up for discussion. The Board re-affirmed its previous determination (November 10, 2008) that it is not necessary at this time to adopt regulations pertaining to outdoor wood boilers, this portion(s) of the draft amendments to be stricken. It was understood that all land uses which had been allowed in the "Highway Commercial District" were intended by the Planning Commission to have been allowable in the new "Highway Development District;" motion was made by Joe DeFreitas, seconded by Bill Richards and unanimously carried, to include "Commercial Group Service" and "Light Industrial" uses as "Conditional Uses" in that newly created District. The Board members expressed their concurrence with the changes proposed for "Multiple Family Dwellings," and with the changes made for general housekeeping/clarification purposes. After due discussion, motion was made by Bill Richards, seconded by Joe DeFreitas and unanimously carried, to warn a Public Hearing for the amendments as now proposed, to be held at 7:00 PM on December 22, 2008 at the Bethel Town Office.

The Board next discussed the "Traffic Ordinance" of the Town, to consider if additional roads should be covered by speed regulations, or if any changes should be made in existing speed zones. It was agreed that Delbert Cloud should seek assistance from the regional planning commission's Transportation Planner to evaluate these matters, with particular interest by the Board in adding additional highways such that the default speed limit under State law would no longer apply to them.

A memo from Trevor Lashua of the Vermont League of Cities and Towns was then reviewed and discussed, this pertaining to raising the weight limits on the Interstate Highway System. After due consideration, the following Resolution was adopted by motion of Joe DeFreitas, seconded by Bill Richards and unanimously carried, said motion including provision for the Board Chair to sign in certification of the action:

"Whereas, two interstate highways crisscross the state of Vermont, connecting it to the rest of New England, New York, and Canada, and

Whereas, the 80,000 pound federal weight limitation is applied to the Vermont sections of the Interstate, and

Whereas, the weight limit on Interstate highways in surrounding states is 99,000 pounds or more; and

Whereas, these higher weight limits at our borders force the heaviest trucks off the Vermont sections of the Interstate and onto state and local highways to traverse the state or to make deliveries or pick up loads;

Whereas, these heavier trucks place an additional burden on local and state roads, bridges, and culverts, and

Whereas, heavier trucks must subsequently pass schools and down Main Streets, presenting additional hazards for pedestrians, motorists, and the truck drivers themselves, and

Whereas, the "invisible backbone" of Vermont's economy – its transportation infrastructure – is already ailing from underinvestment and the effects of usage and age, now therefore be it

Resolved by the Town of Bethel:

That the United States Congress is strongly encouraged to increase federal weight limitations on Interstate highways in Vermont to mirror those on Interstate highways in neighboring states and provinces.”

The Board then reviewed a November 17, 2008 letter from Sally Hull of the Two Rivers/Ottawaquechee Regional Planning Commission, whereby the Town was advised to adopt an “Interim Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan.” After due consideration the following Resolution was adopted by motion of Bill Richards, seconded by Joe DeFreitas and unanimously carried:

“Whereas, the Town of Bethel has worked with the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission to identify hazards, analyze past and potential future losses due to natural and human-caused disasters, and identify strategies for mitigating future losses; and,

Whereas, the Bethel Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan (In the Town Annex section of the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan) contains several potential future projects to mitigate damage from disasters with the potential to occur in the Town of Bethel; and,

Whereas, a duly-noticed public meeting was held by the Bethel Selectboard on November 24, 2008 to formally approve and adopt the Bethel Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan as an annex to the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan.

Now, therefore be it resolved that the Selectboard adopts the Bethel Town Annex and the associated Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan.”

The Board next signed a letter of appreciation for Amy Danley-White for her work as the Town’s Health Officer. She has tendered her resignation to be effective as of January 31, 2009.

The Board expressed its appreciation for Carol DeFreitas’ willingness to help on the Town’s “Human Services Advisory Committee.” Motion to appoint her to the subject Committee was made by Neal Fox, seconded by Bill Richards and unanimously carried.

The Board discussed other vacancies on Town Committees which do need to be filled. It was agreed that Delbert Cloud would prepare a letter for the Board to utilize in asking various individuals if they would be willing to help.

A November 6, 2008 letter from Frances Rhynhart was then reviewed and discussed, this being an expression of safety concerns about the class 2 portion of Christian Hill Road, several attachments being included with the letter. The Board noted that the average daily traffic count is slightly over 500 vehicles and that the speed limit on that portion of the road is 35 mph. Per the “guidance” standards referenced by Ms. Rhynhart, the road does have nine foot wide travel lanes and two foot shoulders, all being paved. The Town crew has done all that it can with installation of gravel to “soften” the transition from the shoulders to the ditch. Since the Agency of Transportation did not do the center-lining in 2008 on this road, the Board will attempt to get this done early in 2009, and will consider if the speed limit should be lowered. A letter of response will be prepared, to thank Ms. Rhynhart for her input regarding these matters.

The Board discussed various matters pertaining to the forthcoming Annual Town Meeting and the publication of the Annual Town Report. The Board members concurred on a “Dedication” for the Town Report, this being formalized by motion of Neal Fox, seconded by Bill Richards and unanimously carried.

A letter dated November 23, 2008 from Kenneth A. Cope was discussed next, this being a request to re-shape the ditchline and back-ditch at a specific portion of the Schweizers’ property on North Main Street. This would involve some work within the highway right-of-way and would thus require the Board’s permission. The Board members agreed that the proposed work would actually make the highway safer for the travelling public by increasing sight distances; motion to approve the request with the condition that the road would be left in as good or better condition was made by Joe DeFreitas, seconded by Bill Richards and unanimously carried.

The following communications were then reviewed and placed on file: (1) a November 10, 2008 letter from Senator Dick McCormack re. State Aid to Highways, (2) a November 19, 2008 memo from Trevor Lashua of the Vermont League of Cities & Towns on the same subject, (3) notice of a seminar on "Municipal Zoning Bylaws" scheduled for December 17, 2008, (4) Project Review Sheets re. State permits being sought by Jonathan Davis and Lisa K. Smith, (5) a notice of grant fund availability to financially assist with hazardous waste collection events from the Vermont Waste Management Division, and (6) a letter from Katherine Z. Pope, Esq. re. assisting the Town with legal issues.

With no further business to attend, the meeting was adjourned at 9:45 PM by motion of Bill Richards, seconded by Joe DeFreitas and unanimously carried.

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Neal Fox

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Bill Richards

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Joe DeFreitas