



**Town of Amherst, NH**  
**BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES**  
**Barbara Landry Meeting Room**  
**2 Main Street**  
**Monday, February 27, 2017**

**1. Call to Order**

Chairman Dwight Brew called the public meeting to order at 6:34 p.m.

Attendees: Chairman Dwight Brew, Vice Chairman Reed Panasiti, Selectmen Nate Jensen, Tom Grella, and Peter Lyon. Also present: Town Administrator, Jim O'Mara, and Suzanne Beauchesne taking minutes.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance** – Debbie Bender, Finance Assistant, led the pledge.

**3. Citizen's Forum**

**4. Voter Guide**

Included in the Board packet was the Voter Information Guide. Town Administrator, Jim O'Mara, indicated that the Guide is available at a number of locations throughout town. It will be published in the Amherst Citizen on March 7<sup>th</sup>. Administrator O'Mara said he hopes people will take time to read it and learn from it, prior to the March 14<sup>th</sup> election. Administrator O'Mara also reported that the 2016 Town Report has gone to press and will be available in a week or so.

**5. Fire Station Update**

Town Administrator O'Mara stated that the contractors were meeting tomorrow morning. Ninety-nine percent of the framing is complete. The sprinkler is in. Work is ongoing. Selectman Grella said he is amazed with the coordination; contractor is doing a good job.

**5.1 FY17 Budget Analysis**

As requested by the Board at its last meeting, Administrator O'Mara presented a list of 49 items where he believes the projected expense will come in less than budgeted for and totaling \$395,550. Chairman Brew pointed out that miscellaneous items could pop up, especially if the winter does not get better. Administrator O'Mara said the DPW Director is looking at his budget to cover the salt/calcium expenditure. In response to Selectman Lyon, Administrator O'Mara said that there could be some savings in the wage line, and he is looking at the fuel line as well.

## Department Quarterly Updates

### 6.1 Tax/Assessing

Gail Stout, Tax Collector, came forward to provide a quarterly report on the Tax and Assessing Department, a copy of which is attached to these minutes. Ms. Stout reported the following:

- July 1, 2016 began the fifth year of a five-year assessing contract with KRT Appraisal Services due to expire on June 30, 2017.
- An RFP for contracted assessing services will be released this week with a submission deadline of March 23, 2017.
- The 2016 statistical update of all properties in Amherst (approximately 5,500) was finalized the end of August and submitted to the NH Department of Revenue Administration (DRA).
- The DRA's review is ongoing with their final report expected in mid-April. Amherst's 2016 Valuation Ratio, recently issued by the DRA, is 96.6%. The ratio represents the relationship between current market value and the 2016 assessment of each property.
- The update revealed that Amherst's net valuation increased by \$116.5 million to a total of \$1,693,564,637. This valuation was used to calculate the 2016 tax rate of \$25.10 which was \$1.38 less than the 2015 tax rate.
- Property taxes invoiced for the 2016 tax year are currently 97.5% collected.
- Collections continue at 12% interest until May 5, 2017 at which time a lien will be placed on all properties with outstanding 2016 property taxes and the interest rate adjusted to 18% APR.
- The number of properties requiring a lien each year continues to be on a decline.
- Abatements must be filed by March 1, 2017. Forty-one have been filed to date; all residential except for one.
- The Town's new website offers more user-friendly options with various links to forms and informational items.
- The Vision Assessing Software upgrade from version 6.5 to version 7 is scheduled for FY19.

Ms. Stout also reported on legislation (HB 324) regarding the assessment of utilities. As currently proposed, the legislation would require communities to utilize State determined values of utilities for taxation purposes. Amherst's current utility values are approximately \$12.3 million higher than the current State utility values for Amherst. This is a potential annual recurring loss of approximately \$281,300 in tax dollars and would add .17 cents on the annual tax rate.

Chairman Brew said that the Board has invited all State Representatives to meet with them at one of their next four meetings and suggested the representatives be informed to be prepared to address this issue. In response to Selectman Jensen, Ms. Stout said that some communities can't afford to do their own assessment and rely on the State values. Amherst has not typically used the State values. Chairman Brew asked about Fairpoint not appealing the value but whether they should be taxed at all. Ms. Stout said the DRA would monitor the process. She said they would write the criteria a; however, the measure is not likely to be acted upon this year.

Board members thanked Ms. Stout for her informative report.

### 6.2 Recreation

Craig Fraley, Director of Parks and Recreation, came forward to provide a quarterly report as follows:

- All summer camps did well; all had wait lists.
- Mt. Vernon School contracted with Parks and Recreation; a great program was offered at Peabody Mill Environmental Center (PMEC).
- His department is asking scouting groups what they want to do.
- Birthday parties are going well.
- Adult exercise classes are becoming more popular.
- Neat classes coming up include computer programming, adult art and makerspace.
- The pump track is popular and an irrigation line was put in.
- A group has worked hard to insulate and heat the barn which houses the bus, tractor and sports equipment.
- Director Fraley has been before the Planning Board and School Board about the disc gold cut. Both Boards are okay with the cut.
- Joshua's Park: playground has been a success; garden has been a huge hit; plots sold out in 24 minutes and 10 are on the wait list. Garden had to be completely cleared by November 1<sup>st</sup> – a great committee of folks did a great job; helped set guidelines.
- Jones Road: chain link fence was taken down; opening and shrubbery will be included.
- Three companies quoted for irrigation of lower Wilkins Field to make it more usable this summer.
- Calvetti Field was opened last year. It is Souhegan High School's property that gets rented through the town; 85% goes to the high school and town keeps 15% for administrative fees.
- Having the shared DPW employee has been very helpful.
- Bus trips continue to grow and keep selling out.
- Winter started out cold and then warmed up which has been tough on skating rink. The rink has been closed for the season.

The Board thanked Director Fraley for great work. Director Fraley credited his "great staff".

### **6.3 Recreation – Revolving Fund**

Director Fraley went over a FY16 mid-year Revolving Accounts Summary and 02-03 Revolving Expense/Revenue comparisons, provided in the Board packet [attached]. Chairman Brew mentioned that the account balances were declining by intention. The purchased bus, for example, puts funds back into the revolving account so that it will be there when the bus needs to be replaced. Director Fraley said they use the IRS mileage rate and that stays in the trip line. Director Fraley also stated that anything paid from the revolving fund should support a program. Chairman Brew suggested that be refined a little and given more thought. Selectman Lyon thought the issue could be added to the Strategic Plan. Director Fraley agreed.

## **6. Town Administrator**

### **7.1 CRF Withdrawal Requests**

#### **7.1.1 Fire Station Renovation Capital Reserve Fund (CRF)**

Town Administrator, Jim O'Mara, sought the Board's approval to withdraw \$150,000 from the Fire Station Renovation CRF. Since construction has begun, he anticipates invoices to arrive monthly. Administrator O'Mara also said that Finance has set up a construction fund for deposits and withdrawals. Selectman Jensen moved, second by Vice Chairman Panasiti to authorize the withdrawal of \$150,000 from the Fire Station Renovation CRF. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

[NOTE: At its March 13, 2017 meeting, by unanimous vote, the Board moved to re-consider this motion].

### **7.1.2 Ambulance Capital Reserve Fund (CRF)**

Administrator O'Mara sought the Board's clarification on a motion passed at its June 27, 2016 meeting on the replacement of the EMS SUV. Selectman Jensen moved, second by Selectman Grella, to authorize the withdrawal of \$26,975 from the Ambulance CRF for the purchase of the EMS SUV. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

## **7.2 Road Reconstruction**

Bruce Berry, DPW Director, and Eric Hahn, DPW Deputy Director, came forward and presented their Road Reconstruction Plan as requested by the Board at its last meeting. A spreadsheet was provided listing all of the remaining road reconstruction sections from the 2010 warrant article, or commonly referred to as "bond roads". The graph also listed the construction work financed through the operating budget. Director Berry said they will continue to present a mixed "budget and bond" approach. He said he is mindful that when presenting a recommendation to award road reconstruction, that once it is executed, it is a legal binding document. Therefore, when a road or road section is posted for consideration, it is based on "need", traffic flow, and how a road aligns itself with the budget cycle. Administrator O'Mara indicated that the spreadsheet provided is similar to that provided during the budget process; that is, it allows one the ability to mix, match, or change roads and the financial impact those decisions represent.

Director Berry said that for 2017 construction, \$612,615 is available now, and \$940,000 or \$1,140,000 after July 1<sup>st</sup>. This will cover the work denoted on the spreadsheet, anything needed to contributed to Douglas and Hickory (for PFOA water main work) and perhaps one or two designated but not yet defined yellow roads. Director Berry also pointed out that previously "bond" sections were longer in length than non-bond sections which are no longer the case. Also, bond monies allowed construction to start in March or April. This will likely be the last construction season work to start before July 1<sup>st</sup>. In the past each construction season included 2.5 to 3 million dollars worth of roadwork covering 4.5 to 6 miles.

Director Berry indicated that a Board member (Selectman Lyon) was correct at its last Board meeting to mention the need for increased engineering on Nathan Lord Road. Besides the usual "checking culvert pipe size and flow", DPW is also working on "Alteration of Terrain and Shoreline Protection" permitting, along with requirements to meet the new Stormwater regulations. Director Berry said that while more detailed written plans are necessary, it will not preclude them from going out to bid by the end of this week.

Selectman Lyon asked how much longer before the bond work is finished. Director Berry said two or three years at the least. The Board commended the Directors for their work. Chairman Brew said it is "nice to have a solid plan".

## **7.3 Cable Survey**

Board members reviewed a proposed survey put together by members of the Internet Committee in order to get a better understanding of how businesses and residents perceive and use the Internet in town, and to gauge any interest or support there might be for pursuing another option to the Comcast Agreement. Selectman Jensen, Chair of the Internet Committee, said the Comcast Franchise Agreement is ten years old and any change would likely take up to five or six years. He said the committee hopes to get the survey out within the next two weeks and will leave it out for response for a couple of weeks. The committee has indications that there is likely to be a strong

response. Chairman Brew said that not enough information is known for anyone to respond to No. 16 and suggested going out a second time with more information. Selectman Jensen said that was doable. Selectman Lyon said residents want to know “how much bandwidth am I going to get and how much am I going to pay for it”. Selectman Jensen said there are four Internet providers with fiber running through town though only two of them actually provide access to customers in town. There are still a few households with no connection to the internet. He said the committee will meet again next Wednesday. Board members were okay with expending \$300 for the survey.

### **Uncollectible EMS Bills**

Town Administrator O’Mara went over a memorandum from Eileen Demers and Rita Donaldson regarding ambulance receivables. The total receivables from Comstar are \$449,657.72 as of October 31, 2016 with 444 accounts having balances over 120 days amounting to \$343,414.35. The balance for accounts 91-120 days old is \$19,686.36. Administrator O’Mara said if someone is having difficulty paying, it becomes more expensive to chase them around and consideration should be given to arrange with Comstar for automatic write-offs. He said a few towns have moved away from Comstar. Administrator O’Mara will arrange to have Rita Donaldson attend the next Board meeting to expand on her recommendation to review Comstar’s Aging Report on a quarterly basis and discuss other options she has been exploring.

## **7. Approvals**

### **8.1 Veteran Tax Credit**

Selectman Lyon moved, second by Selectman Grella, to approve a Veteran Tax Credit in the amount of \$500 for each of the following properties. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

Map 2, Lot 98-26 located at 14 Veterans Road #26  
Map 5, Lot 111-12 located at 12 Candlewood Drive  
Map 5, Lot 135-1 located at 5 Eaton Road  
Map 12, Lot 28 located at 6 Willow Lane  
Map 13, Lot 1-4 located at 6 Meadow Lane

### **8.2 Disabled Exemption**

Selectman Lyon moved, second by Selectman Grella, to approve the disabled exemption for Map 2, Lot 166-31 in the amount of \$61,000. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

### **8.3 Abatements**

Selectman Lyon moved, second by Selectman Jensen, to approve the abatement for Map/Lot 4-161-7 located at 1 Sawmill Lane in the amount of \$17.57. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

Selectman Lyon moved, second by Selectman Jensen, to deny the abatement for Map/Lot 5-16-27 located at 27 Atherton Lane. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

Selectman Lyon moved, second by Selectman Jensen, to approve the abatement for Map/Lot 7-83-1 located at 9 Boston Post Road in the amount of \$50.20. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

Selectman Lyon moved, second by Selectman Jensen, to approve the abatement for Map/Lot 10-48 located at 2 Damon Pond in the amount of \$426.10. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

Selectman Lyon moved, second by Selectman Jensen, to approve the abatement for Map/Lot 11-12-32 located at 38 The Flume in the amount of \$1,942.74. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.



230           **8.4     Land Use Change Tax**

231       Selectman Lyon moved, second by Selectman Jensen, to approve the Land Use Change Tax for  
232       Map 7, Lot 80-2 located at 4 Thyme Way in the amount of \$14,000. Motion passed unanimously,  
233       5-0.

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235           **8.5     Septic Warrants**

236       Selectman Lyon moved, second by Selectman Jensen, to approve and sign the Quarterly  
237       Maintenance Warrants for the Baboosic Lake Community Septic bills due April 3, 2017 as  
238       follows: Phase I = \$904.20; Phase II = \$4,981.47; Phase III = \$5,725.92; and Phase IV =  
239       \$4,052.49. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

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241           **8.6     Payroll**

242       Selectman Jensen moved, second by Vice Chairman Panasiti, to approve one (1) FY17 Payroll  
243       Manifest in the amount of \$215,550.39 dated February 16, 2017, subject to review and audit.  
244       Motion passed unanimously, 5-0

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246           **8.7     Accounts Payable**

247       Selectman Jensen moved, second by Vice Chairman Panasiti, to approve one (1) FY17 Accounts  
248       Payable Manifest in the amount of \$34,448.23 dated February 15, 2017, subject to review and  
249       audit. (Town Clerk Transfers to the State of NH). Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

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251       Selectman Jensen moved, second by Vice Chairman Panasiti, to approve one (1) FY17 Accounts  
252       Payable Manifest in the amount of \$118,014.10 dated February 21, 2017, subject to review and  
253       audit. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

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255           **8.8     Concentration Account**

256       Selectman Jensen moved, second by Vice Chairman Panasiti, to approve one (1) FY17  
257       Concentration Accounts Manifest in the amount of \$15.12 dated February 22, 2017, subject to  
258       review and audit. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

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260           **8.9     Previous Meeting Minutes**

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262               **8.9.1   February 13, 2017, Non-Public Session**

263       Selectman Jensen moved, second by Vice Chairman Panasiti, to approve the Board of Selectmen's  
264       non-public meeting minutes of February 13, 2017, as presented. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

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266               **8.9.2   February 13, 2017**

267       Selectman Jensen moved, second by Vice Chairman Panasiti, to approve the Board of Selectmen's  
268       public meeting minutes of February 13, 2017, as presented. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

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270           **8.   New/Old Business**

271       Selectman Lyon said the Conservation Commission has been active. Selectman Jensen had no  
272       items pending, and the one item coming out of tonight's meeting was to have Rita Donaldson  
273       attend a future Board meeting to discuss the Comstar Aging Report.

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275       Town Administrator O'Mara said the town is going into its fourth year with the same auditor. He  
276       said that while they usually rotate the auditors every three years, he recommended keeping the  
277       current auditors on for one more year, given the changes in staffing over the last several months.  
278       Board members felt this was fine.

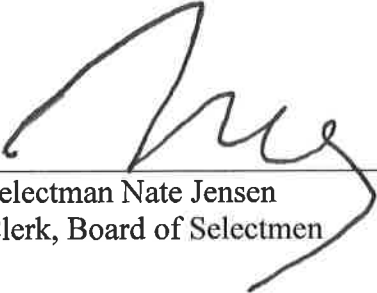
280 Administrator O'Mara also mentioned that comments were made on Facebook regarding a  
281 damaged mailbox on Route 122 which is not a town road, but a State road. The comments  
282 reflected badly on DPW and writers need to direct their concerns to the NH Department of  
283 Transportation.

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285 **9. Adjournment**

286 Selectman Jensen moved, second by Selectman Grella, to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m. Motion  
287 passed unanimously, 5-0.

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290 **NEXT MEETING: March 13, 2017**

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Selectman Nate Jensen  
Clerk, Board of Selectmen

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Date 3/13/17