Town of Amherst, NH

BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES

Barbara Landry Meeting Room
2 Main Street
Wednesday, January 11, 2016

1. Call to Order

Chairman Dwight Brew called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Attendees: Chairman Dwight Brew, Vice Chairman John D'Angelo, Selectmen Tom Grella, Nate Jensen, and Reed Panasiti. Also present: Town Administrator, Jim O'Mara and Suzanne Beauchesne taking minutes.

Others in attendance included Ways and Means Committee members John Post, Andy Ouellette, Russ Thomas, Lorelei Haberland, and Jason Lozzi.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance** – Gail Stout, Tax Collector, and Michele Crowley, Executive Assistant in the Tax Collector's office, led the pledge.

Linda Kaiser, past Chair of the Ways & Means Committee, came forward to indicate that taxes were too high to consider hiring a Community Development Planner and she would rather see funds spent on consultants where needed. In addition, Ms. Kaiser distributed materials to the Board on the recent California gas pipeline leak where 1700 families and two schools had to be relocated and Wells Fargo suspended mortgage payments for those impacted.

3. "Kick Off" for 2016 Property Revaluation

Gail Stout, Tax Collector, indicated that the NH Department of Revenue Administration (DRA), in accord with Rev 602.01(e), asked the Town to host a "Monitoring Conference" prior to the start of the 2016 Revaluation. The last revaluation was held in 2011 and must be conducted every five years. Joining Ms. Stout was Greg Heyn, Appraiser Supervisor for the DRA, Ken Rodgers, President, and Rob Tozier of KRT Appraisal, Scott Bartlett of CNHA, Utility Appraiser, and Michele Crowley, Executive Assistant, Tax and Assessing Office. Ms. Stout said that the Revaluation will be drawn from the Assessing Capital Reserve Fund and will be undertaken from January through mid-August 2016.

Mr. Rodgers went over a "Summary of Services" to include:

- Conduct exterior measurement and attempt interior inspection of all sale properties from April 1, 2014 through March 31, 2016.
- Send out call back letters to the sale properties where a homeowner was unavailable for an interior inspection on the initial visit.
- Provide data entry throughout the entire statistical update.
- Analyze all of the qualified sales for the time period of two years prior to the assessment date.
- Update all land and building tables as dictated by the cost, income, and sales analysis.
- Field review 100 percent of the properties and verify property data and valuation.
- Conduct information meetings with taxpayers and consider all credible information brought forth and make any necessary changes.
- KRT Appraisal will review, process and provide written recommendations for all properly filed abatements for the Statistical Update year.
- Submit to the DRA a full Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice (USPAP) compliant report detailing the results from the Statistical Update.

Scott Bartlett stated that his work entails all utility properties and is a bit less intrusive because most of his data collection is done through correspondence. Mr. Bartlett will work closely with staff on USPAP report and with KRT Appraisal on public Rights-of-Ways. Chairman Brew asked about the Bon Terrain substation. Mr. Bartlett indicated that transmission and gas lines owned by Eversource can be difficult to separate out. Utilities must be revalued every five years also and includes telecommunications. Mr. Heyn stated that the DRA monitors the process and asked a number of questions such as space utilized by KRT and the timeline.

4. **Pre-Assessment Review**

Mr. Heyn provided a brief overview of the Assessment Review process. An information packet was included as part of the Board packet. Mr. Heyn went over pertinent statutes and assessment review standards approved by the Assessing Standards Board (ASB). Mr. Heyn said that the municipality will be provided with a final report which would not likely be done until May 2017.

5. **FY17 Budget and Bond Public Hearing**

Selectman Panasiti moved, second by Selectman Grella, to open the public hearing on the FY17 Budget. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

5.1 Presentation

Chairman Brew welcomed and thanked everyone for attending the public hearing on the proposed FY17 budget, and introduced Board members, Ways & Means Committee members, and senior staff that were in attendance. Chairman Brew provided a slide presentation of the proposed budget and initiatives that also included how Amherst compares to other towns, the overall tax impact and how tax dollars are apportioned, town government highlights for FY16, and the default budget. Chairman Brew noted that the FY16 Amherst municipal tax rate of $5.39 per thousand is below

the Hillsborough County average tax rate of $7.25 and of the 31 towns in Hillsborough County, 24 towns have a higher municipal tax rate and only six have a lower municipal tax rate when compared to Amherst.

For the current fiscal year, FY16, which ends on June 30, 2016, the tax rate is $26.48 per thousand dollars of property valuation. The town portion is 20.3% of the overall tax bill and equates to $1,779 on a $330,000 home which is the average home value in Amherst. For the same home, $426 went to Hillsborough County and $6,534 went to Amherst schools.

Chairman Brew went over FY 16 highlights by department which included:

- Welcome bags are handed out by the Town Clerk's office to all new residents.
- New finance software went live for the first payroll of the new year.
- Credit card transactions are now available for payment of property taxes.
- New town website will be launched before the Deliberative Session.
- Updated road construction standards
- Infrastructure expansion – Sewer
- Digitization project
- Re-opening of Manchester Road Bridge
- DPW rebuilt 30,789 linear feet of roads, overlaid 2,650 linear feet of roads and applied 1,400 feet of shoulder gravel, for a total of 6.6 miles of road work completed.
- Completion of an extensive drainage project.
- Tree maintenance.
- Successful merger of Fire Department and EMS
- Fire Equipment (new Engine 2 pumper)
- Route 101A PD Substation – 46% decrease in shoplifting arrests.
- Joined newly created Hillsborough County Street Crimes Task Force.
- Dispatch center – improved communication with new backup radio console.
- Recreation Department rebuilt/resurfaced Davis Lane tennis courts
- Installation of commercial dock system.
- Cross-country ski trail built on conservation land off of Pond Parrish Road.
- Recreation for everyone – ages 8 to 80 philosophy.
- Expanded program offerings.
- Library digitized the "Franklin Society Books".
- Expanded staff training; network improvements.
- Summer reading program breaks all-time record for hours read.

Chairman Brew showed a summary chart of the FY17 proposed budget. DPW comprises 33 percent of the budget, Public Safety (Police, Fire, EMS) 31 percent, and the remaining departments (Library, Recreation, Administration, Debt Services, Community Development, and Welfare /Health) total 36 percent.

The slide presentation also provided a budget comparison between the FY16 approved versus the FY17 proposed budgets. The increase in the proposed FY17 budget is $468,295 or 3.768% higher than the FY16 approved budget. Chairman Brew also noted that revenue projections in FY17 are

expected to remain flat. The proposed budget without warrants will add $139 per year to the average home in Amherst.

The Board of Selectmen in cooperation with the Town Administrator, Department Heads, and members of the Ways and Means Committee worked closely in preparing and presenting a budget that meets the needs of all the town departments, being mindful of the financial needs of the Amherst Taxpayer.

Chairman Brew and Board members then went over the Warrant Articles:

Article 21: To choose all necessary Town Officers for the ensuing terms as follows:

2 Selectmen for 3 Years
1 Moderator for 2 Years
1 Cemetery Trustee for 3 Years
3 Library Trustees for 3 Years
1 Supervisor of the Checklist for 6 Years
1 Trustee of the Trust Funds for 3 Years
1 Zoning Board of Adjustment Member for 1 Year
1 Zoning Board of Adjustment Member for 3 Years

Article 22: Operating Budget

To raise and appropriate an operating budget totaling $12,896,109. Should this article be defeated the default budget shall be $12,715,401 which is the same as last year with certain adjustments required by previous action of the town or by law.

Article 23: Contingency Fund

To see if the Town will vote to establish a contingency fund for the current year, in accordance with NH RSA Section 31:98-a, for unanticipated expenses that may arise and further to raise and appropriate $100,000 to go into the fund. Said sum shall come from the undesignated fund balance and no amount to be raised from taxation. Any appropriation left in the fund at the end of the year will lapse to the general fund.

Article 24: Assessing Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund (CRF)

This article adds $25,000 to the existing CRF that was established in March 2004 to budget for the State-mandated reassessment of all properties in Amherst at least as often as every fifth year. This $25,000 request is the last installment needed to reach the estimated cost of the 2016 revaluation.

Article 25: Communications Center Capital Reserve Fund (CRF)

This article adds $25,000 to the existing CRF. This fund was established in 2006 to fund major emergency equipment repairs and upgrades and also fund anticipated future projects such as radio tower replacement in 2020 and radio console replacement in 2023. It also serves as a source of

matching funds for state and federal communications grant projects. $30,400 has been expended from the fund for those purposes in the last three years.

Article 26: Fire Station Renovation Capital Reserve Fund (CRF)

In 2015 a CRF was established for the purpose of finishing the second floor of the Central Fire Station for fire and EMS personnel. This CRF allows for putting money away over time rather than asking for it in a single fiscal year. The current balance is $55,010. This article would add $65,000 to the CRF.

Former Vice Chairman of the Select Board, Mike Akillian, came forward to state that this renovation has been talked about for many years and asked what the estimated cost might be. Fire Rescue Chief, Matt Conley, who was in attendance, stated that he had received a rough estimate of $220,000. This article along with the next article will provide close to the necessary funds ($180,000) if approved. An additional $40,000 will have to be generated elsewhere.

Article 27: Appropriation of Previously Collected Land Use Change Tax Funds (LUCT) and Deposit to the Fire Station Renovation Capital Reserve Fund (CRF)

This article seeks to deposit previously collected LUCT funds into the Fire Station Renovation CRF established in 2015. Current balance is $55,010.

Article 28: Fire Truck Refurbish and Purchase Capital Reserve Fund (CRF)

To add $150,000 to this fund. In 1999, this CRF was established to purchase, maintain and refurbish fire trucks. In 2010, there was a warrant called fire apparatus which was approved to appoint the selectmen as agents to expend from this fund. The DRA has confirmed that these are one and the same CRF. Current balance is $442,037.

Article 29: Change of Purpose, Bridge Replacement Capital Reserve Fund (CRF)

This article seeks to amend the purpose of the bridge replacement CRF to include bridge repairs. A change of purpose can only occur with the consent of the legislative body.

Article 30: Bridge Repair and Replacement CRF

This article will add $25,000 to the newly created bridge repair and replacement CRF requested in the previous article.

Article 31: Open Space Land, Conservation Commission

This article will add $100,000 to the Conservation Commission's open space acquisition fund. The Conservation Commission's open space acquisition fund currently has a balance of $462,256. $325,000 of this amount is encumbered.

Article 32: Maintenance Garage Capital Reserve Fund (CRF)

This article establishes a CRF and initially funds it at $100,000 for a vehicle maintenance garage so that town vehicles can be served in an environment conducive to efficient and cost effective delivery of service.

Article 33: Old Mail Road from Class VI to Class B Trail

The town is prohibited from maintaining Class VI roadways. This article seeks to re-classify Old Mail Road from a Class VI road to a Class B Trail to allow for maintenance by the Conservation Commission and will restrict motor vehicles.

Chairman Brew repeated that the FY17 proposed operating budget tax rate is estimated to be $5.67, an increase over FY16 of 42 cents. If all proposed warrant articles pass, the total appropriations requested will increase by $650,000. This will increase the municipal tax rate by $0.59 to $5.99 per $1,000 on a home valued at $330,000. This will result in an annual increase of $198.

5.2 Citizen's Forum & Budget Discussion

Mr. Ken Miller rose and asked if the Police Department was sufficient staffed. Town Administrator, Jim O'Mara stated that an additional patrolman is scheduled to be added to the staff in FY18. Selectman Grella moved to add an additional patrolman to the Police Department staff. Selectman Panasiti seconded stating that there has been a 40 percent increase in service calls and the three sector model is in use only 69 percent of the time with existing staff levels.

Chairman Brew said that the Board has spent a lot of time -- starting with the Strategic Planning Updates in September – digesting all of the facts surrounding this matter and have heard the statistics previously reported. The majority has decided not to add a patrolman this year and there have been staff increases to the police department in previous years. Vice Chairman D'Angelo agreed that no new information has been brought forward. Selectman Jensen said he will vote for an additional patrolman next year but feels that the merger is the priority this year.

In response to Mr. Miller, Chairman Brew stated that the town's current staffing level provides very good safety. Selectman Grella said the town could be better prepared for anything that might come up. A vote on the motion was called. Vote 2-3 (Chairman Brew, Selectman Jensen, and Vice Chairman D'Angelo opposed).

Paul Mancini felt he did not have enough information about fire expenditures to make an intelligent determination. Chairman Brew indicated that meetings have been held since September and much information is provided on the town's website. He continued, saying that a lot of items are too big to tackle in a single year, such as a $376,000 fire truck. A new ladder truck will cost $1.8 million when it needs to be replaced in 2032.

Vice Chairman D'Angelo stated that the Capital Improvement Plan strongly recommended putting money into DPW. The articles align with the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

Selectman Panasiti stated that as a first year selectman the budget process has been a great experience and wonderful for the town. Working through the long range and strategic planning processes and identifying initiatives has made it easier to understand how to finance and run the town. Mr. Panasiti moved to include a warrant article to add an additional patrolman to the Police Department staff. Selectman Grella seconded noting that the hiring would add only six cents per thousand to the tax rate. Selectman Jensen asked if the article were voted down, could it be added next year. Vice Chairman D'Angelo felt it would be asking too much from the voters to make an informed decision at this level of detail and asked at what point this matter "would be put to bed". Russ Thomas stated that legally, if the voters approve the article, it would be tying the Board's hands because next year the Board would either have to increase the budget to pay for the officer or deal with a lay-off. If the voters reject it, then arguably, under the "No Means No" provision of the New Hampshire RSA, the Town could not hire another police officer until a warrant article was passed to authorize it. John Post said he admired what Chief Reams has done but feels a Human Resources person is more important. Mr. Thomas said that the article would likely not pass reflecting a 0-6 vote by Ways and Means and a 2-3 vote by the Board. Chairman Brew noted that an article needs three votes to get on the ballot. A vote on the motion was called. Vote 2-3 (Chairman Brew, Vice Chairman D'Angelo, and Selectman Jensen opposed)

Selectman Grella moved, second by Selectman Jensen, to close the public hearing. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

The Board then voted on each Article as follows:

Article 21: To choose all necessary Town Officers for the ensuing terms as follows:
Vice Chairman D'Angelo moved, second by Selectman Jensen, to support and place Article 21 on the ballot as written and/or amended. Vote 5-0

Article 22: Operating Budget
Vice Chairman D'Angelo moved, second by Selectman Jensen, to support and place Article 22 on the ballot as written and/or amended. Vote 5--0

Article 23: Contingency Fund
Vice Chairman D'Angelo moved, second by Selectman Jensen, to support and place Article 23 on the ballot as written and/or amended. Vote 5-0

Article 24: Assessing Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund
Vice Chairman D'Angelo moved, second by Selectman Panasiti, to support and place Article 24 on the ballot as written and/or amended. Vote 5-0

Article 25: Communications Center Capital Reserve Fund
Vice Chairman D'Angelo moved, second by Selectman Grella, to support and place Article 25 on the ballot as written and/or amended. Vote 4-1 (Selectman Jensen opposed).

Article 26: Fire Station Renovation Capital Reserve Fund (CRF)
Selectman Jensen moved, second by Vice Chairman D'Angelo, to support and place Article 26 on the ballot as written and/or amended. Vote 5-0

Article 27: Appropriation of Previously Collected Land Use Change Tax Funds and Deposit to the Fire Station Renovation Capital Reserve Fund (CRF)
Selectman Panasiti moved, second by Selectman Grella, to support and place Article 27 on the ballot as written and/or amended. Vote 5-0

Article 28: Fire Truck Refurbish and Purchase Capital Reserve Fund (CRF)
Selectman Panasiti moved, second by Selectman Jensen, to support and place Article 28 on the ballot as written and/or amended. Vote 5-0

Article 29: Change of Purpose, Bridge Replacement Capital Reserve Fund (CRF)
Vice Chairman D'Angelo moved, second by Selectman Grella, to support and place Article 29 on the ballot as written and/or amended. Vote 5-0

Article 30: Bridge Repair and Replacement CRF
Selectman Jensen moved, second by Vice Chairman D'Angelo, to support and place Article 30 on the ballot as written and/or amended. Vote 5-0

Article 31: Open Space Land, Conservation Commission
Vice Chairman D'Angelo moved, second by Selectman Panasiti, to support and place Article 31 on the ballot as written and/or amended. Vote 5-0

Article 32: Maintenance Garage Capital Reserve Fund
Vice Chairman D'Angelo moved, second by Selectman Panasiti, to support and place Article 32 on the ballot as written and/or amended. Vote 4-1 (Selectman Jensen opposed)

Article 33: Old Mail Road from Class VI to Class B Trail
Selectman Jensen moved, second by Vice Chairman D'Angelo, to support and place Article 33 on the ballot as written and/or amended. Vote 5-0

6. Town Administrator

6.1 Loader Funding

Town Administrator Jim O'Mara indicated that based on the Board's approval, staff sought bids for financing the Loader and Backhoe. Vice Chairman D'Angelo moved, second by Selectman Panasiti, to award the bid to Granite Bank, the lowest bidder, for a total financed amount of $203,372 at 1.875% fixed interest for the 60 month term of the loan. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

6.2 Town Report Printing

Town Administrator, Jim O'Mara, stated that five printers were contacted for printing quotes for the 2015 Town Report; three responded, including Smith & Town, the printer Amherst has used in recent years. Selectman Jensen moved, second by Selectman Panasiti, to award the bid to the lowest bidder, Select Print Solutions from North Brookfield, MA for a total of $1,975.00 for 1000 copies averaging $1.98 per copy. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

6.3 Bertha Rogers Trust - Grant

Administrator O'Mara reminded the Board of the Bertha Rogers Trust Fund that was established in 1992 for the "betterment of the Town of Amherst". Only the interest may be expended every three years. The last award went to the Amherst Recreation Department. Administrator O'Mara proposed making awards after the election and in April/May/June 2016. Chairman Brew asked that the trustees be informed of the award and timeframe.

7. Approvals

7.1 Abatements

Selectman Panasiti moved, second by Selectman Grella, to approve abatement for Map/Lot 2-124 located at 16 Veterans Road in the amount of $641. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

Selectman Panasiti moved, second by Selectman Grella, to approve abatement for Map/Lot 6-95 located at 11 Baboosic Lake Road in the amount of $2,314.00. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

Selectman Panasiti moved, second by Selectman Grella, to approve a Veteran Tax Credit for Map/Lot 6-104-1 located at 61 Spring Road in the amount of $1,900. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

Selectman Panasiti moved, second by Selectman Grella, to approve a Veteran Tax Credit for Map/Lot 6-28-37 located at 2 Tarleton Lane in the amount of $500. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

Selectman Panasiti moved, second by Selectman Jensen, to approve a Land Use Change Tax for Map/Lot 4-147-12 located at 9 Victoria Ridge in the amount of $22,500. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

Selectman Panasiti moved, second by Selectman Grella, to approve Land Use Change Tax for Map/Lot 5-59-3 located at 8 Lyndeborough Road in the amount of $16,990.00. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

7.2 Payroll Manifest

Selectman Jensen moved, second by Vice Chairman D'Angelo, to approve one (1) FY16 Payroll Manifest in the amount of $194,738.81 dated January 7, 2016, subject to review and audit. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

7.3 Meeting Minutes – January 6, 2016

Vice Chairman D'Angelo moved, second by Selectman Jensen, to approve the minutes of the January 6, 2016 meeting, as amended. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

8. **Old/New Business**

Vice Chairman D'Angelo reported that the Pipeline Task Force met last Thursday and discussed the possibility of hiring the same engineering firm as the Town of Hollis to help determine conditions that Amherst may want to insist upon.

Selectman Jensen went over pending action items as follows.

- Quarterly Finance Reports – 2nd meeting in February
- Track Code Enforcement - % of Inspector's work – June
- Specs on re-model – next Board meeting
- Letter to PTF – done
- Letter to AG – done

9. **Next Meeting: February 1, 2016 at 5:00 p.m.** (The Board cancelled its January 25, 2016 meeting).

10. Adjournment

Selectman Panasiti moved, second by Selectman Grella, to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

Selectman Nate Jensen
Clerk, Board of Selectmen

2/3/16
Date