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# Town of Amherst, NH

## BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES

Barbara Landry Meeting Room  
2 Main Street  
Wednesday, January 6, 2016

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### 1. Call to Order

17 Chairman Dwight Brew called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m. Attendees: Chairman  
18 Dwight Brew, Vice Chairman John D'Angelo, Selectmen Tom Grella, Nate Jensen, and Reed  
19 Panasiti. Also present: Town Administrator, Jim O'Mara and Suzanne Beauchesne taking  
20 minutes.

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22 Others in attendance included Ways and Means Committee members John Post, Lorelei  
23 Haberland, and Russ Thomas.

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### 2. Pledge of Allegiance -- Peter Lyons led the pledge.

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### 3. Citizen's Forum – None

30 With no objections expressed, Chairman Brew adjusted the agenda and took up Approvals  
31 prior to the Public Hearing discussion.

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### 7. Approvals

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#### 7.1 Payroll Manifests

38 Vice Chairman D'Angelo moved, second by Selectman Jensen, to approve one (1) FY16  
39 Payroll Manifest in the amount of \$7,039.45 dated December 17, 2015, subject to review and  
40 audit. (Replacement check). Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

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42 Vice Chairman D'Angelo moved, second by Selectman Jensen, to approve one (1) FY16  
43 Payroll Manifest in the amount of \$193,798.61 dated December 24, 2015, subject to review  
44 and audit. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

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46 Vice Chairman D'Angelo moved, second by Selectman Jensen, to approve one (1) FY16  
47 Payroll Manifest in the amount of \$194,738.81 dated January 7, 2016, subject to review and  
48 audit. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.  
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50 7.2 Accounts Payable

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52 Selectman Jensen moved, second by Vice Chairman D'Angelo, to approve one (1) FY16  
53 Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of \$27,620.78 dated December 17, 2015, subject to  
54 review and audit. (Town Clerk Transfers to the State of NH). Motion passed unanimously,  
55 5-0.

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57 Selectman Jensen moved, second by Vice Chairman D'Angelo, to approve one (1) FY16  
58 Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of \$29,450.16 dated December 31, 2015, subject to  
59 review and audit. (Town Clerk Transfers to the State of NH). Motion passed unanimously,  
60 5-0.

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62 Selectman Jensen moved, second by Vice Chairman D'Angelo, to approve one (1) FY16  
63 Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of \$919.99 dated December 17, 2015, subject to  
64 review and audit. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

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66 Selectman Jensen moved, second by Vice Chairman D'Angelo, to approve one (1) FY16  
67 Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of \$567,689.23 dated December 19, 2015, subject  
68 to review and audit. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

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70 7.3 Meeting Minutes

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72 Vice Chairman D'Angelo moved, second by Selectman Jensen, to approve the minutes of the  
73 Board of Selectmen meeting of December 14, 2015. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

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75 **4. Public Hearing Discussion**

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77 **4.1 Budget**

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79 Town Administrator Jim O'Mara provided a draft copy of the FY17 Budget and Warrant  
80 Articles to be presented at the Public Hearing that will be held on January 11, 2016. The  
81 FY17 proposed operating budget without initiatives totals \$12,896,109, an increase of  
82 \$468,295, or 3.77%, over the FY16 approved budget. Chairman Brew went over the process  
83 for the evening's review of the budget. Administrator O'Mara stated that two motions are  
84 necessary; one to support a budget item and a second vote to place the item on the Warrant  
85 Article. Chairman Brew suggested going through each item's initial vote, and confirmed  
86 with Administrator O'Mara that if a Board member voted on the prevailing side of an issue  
87 and wishes to change his vote, the Board can re-visit the matter. Chairman Brew then  
88 mentioned that the Ways & Means Committee (W&M) had taken votes on a number of  
89 budget items and invited John Post, Chairman of the W&M, to come forward to update the  
90 Board on the Committee's work.

91

92 Mr. Post stated that the W&M approves the operating budget but feel that the 2.0% COLA is  
93 out of context with the rest of the town and does not seem relevant to other employees of  
94 Amherst. For example, the police increase is 1.25%; some parts of the school have no  
95 increase; Social Security is zero; and the military has a 1.3% increase. The W&M feel that if  
96 COLA is offered at all, it has to be linked to an objective index and provided annually.  
97 Otherwise, it isn't a COLA; it is just a straight up, arbitrary pay increase outside of the step  
98 program.

Vice Chairman D'Angelo pointed out that the police department's COLA includes 1.25% at the start of the year and an additional 1.25% six months later, which is effectively a 1.88% increase for the year. Russ Thomas noted that the increase in health insurance paid by the employee severely impacts those that are making the least and that reductions in COLA are a wash for the budget. Chairman Brew suggested that the pay scale be looked at more closely over the next year. Board members and Mr. Post agreed that there is a complicated intersection between merit, pay scale, COLA, and health insurance costs. For now, the Board was comfortable with the proposed 2.0% COLA increase.

The W&M recommends that a consultant review the whole pay scale considering job descriptions, responsibilities and seniority. The Town has changed significantly in the last ten years due to the addition of several new employees and the effects, both good and bad, that technology and the marketplace have had on staffing needs. The town needs to do a complete analysis, starting with an inventory of positions and bring job descriptions and pay scales up-to-date so that they include the changes of the last decade and are in line with similar towns in NH.

Selectman Panasiti asked to make another plea to include hiring a police officer to the FY17 budget. Chairman Brew reminded the Board member that a motion to reconsider must be made by a member of the Board who initially voted on the prevailing side of the issue. Administrator O'Mara suggested that discussion could be had now or prior to a second vote at the Public Hearing.

Selectman Panasiti said that the police department has been requesting an additional patrolman since 1998 and should be considered a higher priority to ensure community and citizen safety. Selectman Panasiti said that there has been a 40 percent increase in service calls and the Board is not doing its due diligence by authorizing expenditures in other areas over the filling of an open patrolman position. Selectman Jensen asked if an additional patrolman might lessen overtime hours of the department. Police Chief Mark Reams came forward and stated that two positions previously proposed for FY14 and FY16 were carried forward to FY17 and FY19. The department has been operating under the same two-car minimum patrol model for 20+ years. The three sector (North, Central, and South) model is in use but only met 69 percent of the time with existing staffing level. Chief Reams reminded Board members that it was again revealed during the most recent Village Strategic Planning process that the people in the center of town still feel they are not well represented.

Chairman Brew said that the Board has spent time understanding what departments need and have decided differently on the matter, and that staff has been added to the Police Department over the years. Selectman Jensen said he understands the need for an additional patrolman but feels the town would gain more utility by hiring the first Community Development Planner rather than a 19<sup>th</sup> patrolman. It's a matter of prioritizing needs. He would rather add a patrolman next year. Selectman Panasiti said the Board has known about the need for an additional patrolman for 15 years; the need for a Community Development Planner was determined recently. Selectman Jensen added that the merger of Fire Rescue and the relocation of EMS to the Fire Station will give space to the Police Department so that it can operate more efficiently. Vice Chairman D'Angelo took exception to the comment that the Board "doesn't care about safety of its citizens" if it does not choose to add an

147 additional police officer at this time and noted that Amherst is one of the safest towns in the  
 148 safest state in the country.

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 151 Chairman Brew asked if there were any other suggested changes to the budget. Vice  
 152 Chairman

153 D'Angelo asked that savings be applied to roads which is currently under 4 percent, at  
 154 3.77%, and  
 155 said the town must start chipping away at this deficit. Selectman Jensen stated that he felt it  
 156 was  
 157 premature to fund the budget line prior to a thorough review of the Matrix study and DPW  
 158 operations. Selectman Panasiti agreed. Selectman Grella indicated that the budget line is no  
 159 where close to the million dollar balance recommended by the committee eight years ago.

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 161 Vice Chairman D'Angelo moved, second by Selectman Grella, to increase the road  
 162 maintenance  
 163 budget line by \$100,000. Motion failed, 2-3 (Selectmen Panasiti, Jensen, and Chairman  
 164 Brew  
 165 opposed).

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 167 **4.2 Warrant Articles**

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 169 The Board reviewed the Warrant Articles and assigned presentation of each article as  
 170 follows:  
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Article 22	Operating Budget	Assignment: Chairman Brew Operating Budget totals \$12,896,109. Tax impact of \$5.67 per thousand.
	Selectman Jensen moved, second by Vice Chairman D'Angelo, to support Article 22 as presented. Motion passed, 4-1 (Selectman Panasiti opposed) The W&M unanimously supports.	
Article 23	Contingency Fund	Assignment: Selectman Jensen Raise and appropriate \$100,000
	Unanimously supported by the BOS and W&M	
Article 24	Assessing Revaluation CRF	Assignment: Selectman Grella Raise and appropriate \$25,000.
	Unanimously supported by the BOS and W&M	
Article 25	Communications Center CRF	Assignment: Vice Chairman D'Angelo Raise and appropriate \$25,000
	The Board of Selectmen supports this article by a vote of 4-1-0 (Selectman Jensen opposed). The W&M unanimously supports.	
Article 26	Fire Station Renovation CRF	Assignment: Selectman Jensen Raise and appropriate \$65,000.
	Unanimously supported by the BOS and W&M	
Article 27	Land Use Change Tax Funds	Assignment: Selectman Panasiti Raise and appropriate \$60,000 from LUCT and pay into the Fire Station Renovation CRF.
	Unanimously support by the BOS and W&M	

Article 28	Fire Truck Refurbish and Purchase CRF	Assignment: Selectman Panasiti Raise and appropriate \$150,000.
	Unanimously supported by the BOS and W&M	
Article 29	Bridge Replacement CRF/Change of Purpose	Assignment: Vice Chairman D'Angelo Change the purpose of CRF to Bridge Repair and Replacement.
	Unanimously supported by the BOS and W&M	
Article 30	Bridge Repair and Replacement CRF	Assignment: Vice Chairman D'Angelo Raise and appropriate \$25,000 to be added to CRF.
	Unanimously supported by the BOS and W&M	
Article 31	Open Space Land, Conservation Commission (CC)	Assignment: Selectman Grella Raise and appropriate \$100,000.
	Unanimously supported by the BOS. W&M has no position.	
Article 32	Maintenance Garage Construction Project	Assignment: Selectman Grella Raise and appropriate \$145,000 for project.
	The BOS voted 3-2-0 in support (Chairman Brew and Selectman Jensen opposed). The W&M does not support this article. Vice Chairman D'Angelo suggested recording the W&M vote as "abstained" rather than 0-0-6.	

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John Post indicated that the W&M has no position on Article 31 for the Conservation Commission in the amount of \$100,000 and would like more explanation of the purpose. Is it to buy a particular piece(s) of property that fits in the Master Plan or to increase the CC fund for a future purchase? Could a reserve fund at \$25,000 be a better way to save for the future with taxpayer support? More explanation will be provided at next Monday's public hearing.

With regard to construction of a maintenance garage (Article 32), the W&M acknowledged the need for a proper maintenance facility for all town vehicles but would like to see a well researched plan that serves all departments over the next 20 years and how the garage will be built and funded. In addition, the W&M would like to see this Article changed to a capital reserve plan of an initial sum of \$50,000 to \$75,000 and draw on this to start the project.

Selectman Grella moved to reconsider Article 32. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman D'Angelo and passed unanimously. After some discussion, Chairman Brew suggested changing the wording of the article. Town Administrator Jim O'Mara will re-write the article and disseminate for Board review.

Selectman Grella moved, seconded by Selectman Panasiti, to increase the Warrant Article request for the Amherst Town Vehicles Garage Capital Reserve Fund by \$100,000. Motion passed, 4-1 (Selectman Jensen opposed).

## 5. Town Report

### 5.1 Book Size

199 Town Administrator, Jim O’Mara, proposed changing the size of the Town Report and  
200 provided a sample that was larger than Amherst’s long time sized report of 6x9. Board  
201 members preferred to stay with the usual size.

## 202 **5.2 Dedication**

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205 The Board discussed the loss of three residents -- James “Jim” Bowen, Bill “Wik” Wichman,  
206 and Torrey Anna Demanche -- who contributed to the community in a number of ways. The  
207 Board agreed that the Town Report should be dedicated to Wik Wichman acknowledging his  
208 decades of volunteerism to the community.

## 209 210 211 **6. Town Administrator**

### 212 **6.1 Health Officer Appointment**

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215 Administrator O’Mara proposed appointing Scott Tenney as Health Officer. Selectman  
216 Grella moved, second by Selectman Jensen, to appoint Scott Tenney as Amherst’s Health  
217 Officer to serve a three year term. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

### 218 **6.2 Eaton Road, Culvert Replacement Bids**

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221 Town Administrator O’Mara went over bids received for the Eaton Road culvert replacement  
222 work. Vice Chairman D’Angelo moved, second by Selectman Jensen, to award the bid to the  
223 lowest bidder, Continental Paving Company, for a total of \$39,900. Motion passed  
224 unanimously, 5-0.

### 225 **6.3 Historic District Commission Resignation**

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228 Vice Chairman D’Angelo moved, second by Selectman Jensen, to accept with appreciation  
229 the resignation of Larry McCoy from the Historic District Commission. Motion passed  
230 unanimously, 5-0.

## 231 232 **7. Approvals – Taken Up Earlier in the Meeting**

### 233 **8. Old/New Business**

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236 Selectman Grella indicated that the “lighting” project has been completed and can be seen on  
237 the way out of the building. The wattage on the flagpole will be increased.

### 238 **9. Non Public Session**

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241 Pursuant to NH RSA 91-A:3 II ( c ) and (d), Selectman Jensen moved to enter into non-  
242 public session at 5:45 p.m. Seconded by Vice Chairman D’Angelo. Roll Call: Brew-yes;  
243 D’Angelo-yes, Grella-yes; Jensen-yes; Panasiti-yes. Vote was unanimous, 5-0.

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245 John Harvey, Chairman of the Conservation Commission and Chris Wells, Executive  
246 Director of the Piscataquog Land Conservancy entered nonpublic session at 5:46 PM and  
247 with the Board and Town Administrator Jim O’Mara discuss the acquisition of land.

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The Board and Town Administrator Jim O’Mara discussed a matter which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person, other than a member of the public body itself.

Selectman Grella moved to exit nonpublic session. Seconded by Selectman Jensen. The vote was unanimous 5-0.

The Board exited nonpublic session at 6:55 PM

Chairman Brew stated that in nonpublic session no motions were made and no votes were taken.

**10. Next Meeting: January 11, 2016**

**11. Adjournment**

Selectman Jensen moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:56 PM. Seconded by Selectman D’Angelo. The vote was unanimous 5-0.

The meeting adjourned at 6:56 PM.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Selectman Nate Jensen  
Clerk, Board of Selectmen

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date