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Town of Amherst, NH
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES
Barbara Landry Meeting Room
2 Main Street
Wednesday, January 11, 2016

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1. Call to Order

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

24
25 Others in attendance included Ways and Means Committee members John Post, Andy Ouellette,
26 Russ Thomas, Lorelei Haberland, and Jason Lozzi.

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

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

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3. "Kick Off" for 2016 Property Revaluation

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

49 Mr. Rodgers went over a “Summary of Services” to include:
50

- 51 • Conduct exterior measurement and attempt interior inspection of all sale properties from
52 April 1, 2014 through March 31, 2016.
- 53 • Send out call back letters to the sale properties where a homeowner was unavailable for an
54 interior inspection on the initial visit.
- 55 • Provide data entry throughout the entire statistical update.
- 56 • Analyze all of the qualified sales for the time period of two years prior to the assessment
57 date.
- 58 • Update all land and building tables as dictated by the cost, income, and sales analysis.
- 59 • Field review 100 percent of the properties and verify property data and valuation.
- 60 • Conduct information meetings with taxpayers and consider all credible information
61 brought forth and make any necessary changes.
- 62 • KRT Appraisal will review, process and provide written recommendations for all properly
63 filed abatements for the Statistical Update year.
- 64 • Submit to the DRA a full Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice (USPAP)
65 compliant report detailing the results from the Statistical Update.
66

67 Scott Bartlett stated that his work entails all utility properties and is a bit less intrusive because
68 most of his data collection is done through correspondence. Mr. Bartlett will work closely with
69 staff on USPAP report and with KRT Appraisal on public Rights-of-Ways. Chairman Brew asked
70 about the Bon Terrain substation. Mr. Bartlett indicated that transmission and gas lines owned by
71 Eversource can be difficult to separate out. Utilities must be revalued every five years also and
72 includes telecommunications. Mr. Heyn stated that the DRA monitors the process and asked a
73 number of questions such as space utilized by KRT and the timeline.
74

75 **4. Pre-Assessment Review** 76

77 Mr. Heyn provided a brief overview of the Assessment Review process. An information packet
78 was included as part of the Board packet. Mr. Heyn went over pertinent statutes and assessment
79 review standards approved by the Assessing Standards Board (ASB). Mr. Heyn said that the
80 municipality will be provided with a final report which would not likely be done until May 2017.
81

82 **5. FY17 Budget and Bond Public Hearing** 83

84 Selectman Panasiti moved, second by Selectman Grella, to open the public hearing on the FY17
85 Budget. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.
86

87 **5.1 Presentation** 88

89 Chairman Brew welcomed and thanked everyone for attending the public hearing on the proposed
90 FY17 budget, and introduced Board members, Ways & Means Committee members, and senior
91 staff that were in attendance. Chairman Brew provided a slide presentation of the proposed budget
92 and initiatives that also included how Amherst compares to other towns, the overall tax impact and
93 how tax dollars are apportioned, town government highlights for FY16, and the default budget.
94 Chairman Brew noted that the FY16 Amherst municipal tax rate of \$5.39 per thousand is below
95 the Hillsborough County average tax rate of \$7.25 and of the 31 towns in Hillsborough County, 24

96 towns have a higher municipal tax rate and only six have a lower municipal tax rate when
97 compared to Amherst.
98

99 For the current fiscal year, FY16, which ends on June 30, 2016, the tax rate is \$26.48 per thousand
100 dollars of property valuation. The town portion is 20.3% of the overall tax bill and equates to
101 \$1,779 on a \$330,000 home which is the average home value in Amherst. For the same home,
102 \$426 went to Hillsborough County and \$6,534 went to Amherst schools.
103

104 Chairman Brew went over FY 16 highlights by department which included:
105

- 106 • Welcome bags are handed out by the Town Clerk's office to all new residents.
- 107 • New finance software went live for the first payroll of the new year.
- 108 • Credit card transactions are now available for payment of property taxes.
- 109 • New town website will be launched before the Deliberative Session.
- 110 • Updated road construction standards
- 111 • Infrastructure expansion – Sewer
- 112 • Digitization project
- 113 • Re-opening of Manchester Road Bridge
- 114 • DPW rebuilt 30,789 linear feet of roads, overlaid 2,650 linear feet of roads and applied
115 1,400 feet of shoulder gravel, for a total of 6.6 miles of road work completed.
- 116 • Completion of an extensive drainage project.
- 117 • Tree maintenance.
- 118 • Successful merger of Fire Department and EMS
- 119 • Equipment (new Engine 2 pumper)
- 120 • Route 101A PD Substation – 46% decrease in shoplifting arrests.
- 121 • Joined newly created Hillsborough County Street Crimes Task Force.
- 122 • Dispatch center – improved communication with new backup radio console.
- 123 • Recreation Department rebuilt/resurfaced Davis Lane tennis courts
- 124 • Installation of commercial dock system.
- 125 • Cross-country ski trail built on conservation land off of Pond Parrish Road.
- 126 • Recreation for everyone – ages 8 to 80 philosophy.
- 127 • Expanded program offerings.
- 128 • Library digitized “Franklin Society Book”.
- 129 • Expanded staff training; network improvements.
- 130 • Summer reading program breaks all-time record for hours read.

131
132 Chairman Brew showed a summary chart of the FY17 proposed budget. DPW comprises 33
133 percent of the budget, Public Safety (Police, Fire, EMS) 31 percent, and the remaining departments
134 (Library, Recreation, Administration, Debt Services, Community Development, and Welfare
135 /Health) total 36 percent.
136

137 The slide presentation also provided a budget comparison between the FY16 approved versus the
138 FY17 proposed budgets. The increase in the proposed FY17 budget is \$468,295 or 3.768% higher
139 than the FY16 approved budget. Chairman Brew also noted that revenue projections in FY17 are
140 expected to remain flat. The proposed budget without warrants will add \$139 per year to the
141 average home in Amherst.
142

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

147
148 Chairman Brew and Board members then went over the Warrant Articles:

149
150 **Article 21: To choose all necessary Town Officers for the ensuing terms as follows:**

- 151
152 2 Selectmen for 3 Years
153 1 Moderator for 2 Years
154 1 Cemetery Trustee for 3 Years
155 3 Library Trustees for 3 Years
156 1 Supervisor of the Checklist for 6 Years
157 1 Trustee of the Trust Funds for 3 Years
158 1 Zoning Board of Adjustment Member for 1 Year
159 1 Zoning Board of Adjustment Member for 3 Years

160
161 **Article 22: Operating Budget**

162
163 To raise and appropriate an operating budget totaling \$12,896,109. Should this article be defeated
164 the default budget shall be \$12,715,401 which is the same as last year with certain adjustments
165 required by previous action of the town or by law.

166
167 **Article 23: Contingency Fund**

168
169 To see if the Town will vote to establish a contingency fund for the current year, in accordance
170 with NH RSA Section 31:98-a, for unanticipated expenses that may arise and further to raise and
171 appropriate \$100,000 to go into the fund. Said sum shall come from the undesignated fund
172 balance and no amount to be raised from taxation. Any appropriation left in the fund at the end of
173 the year will lapse to the general fund.

174
175 **Article 24: Assessing Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund (CRF)**

176
177 This article adds \$25,000 to the existing CRF that was established in March 2004 to budget for the
178 State-mandated reassessment of all properties in Amherst at least as often as every fifth year. This
179 \$25,000 request is the last installment needed to reach the estimated cost of the 2016 revaluation.

180
181 **Article 25: Communications Center Capital Reserve Fund (CRF)**

182
183 This fund was established in 2006 to fund major emergency equipment repairs and upgrades and
184 also fund anticipated future projects such as radio tower replacement in 2020 and radio console
185 replacement in 2023. It also serves as a source of matching funds for state and federal
186 communications grant projects. \$30,400 has been expended from the fund for those purposes in
187 the last three years.

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

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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 for a vehicle maintenance garage so that town vehicles can be served in an environment conducive to efficient and cost effective delivery of service.

239 **Article 33: Old Mail Road from Class VI to Class B Trail**
240

241 The town is prohibited from maintaining Class VI roadways. This article seeks to re-classify Old
242 Mail Road from a Class VI road to a Class B Trail to allow for maintenance by the Conservation
243 Commission and will restrict motor vehicles.
244

245 Chairman Brew repeated that the FY17 proposed operating budget tax rate is estimated to be
246 \$5.67, an increase over FY16 of 42 cents. If all proposed warrant articles pass, the total
247 appropriations requested will increase by \$650,000. This will increase the municipal tax rate by
248 \$0.59 to \$5.99 per \$1,000 on a home valued at \$330,000. This will result in an annual increase of
249 \$198.
250

251 **5.2 Citizen’s Forum & Budget Discussion**
252

253 Mr. Ken Miller rose and asked if the Police Department was sufficient staffed. Town
254 Administrator, Jim O’Mara stated that an additional patrolman is scheduled to be added to the staff
255 in FY18. Selectman Grella moved to add an additional patrolman to the Police Department staff.
256 Selectman Panasiti seconded stating that there has been a 40 percent increase in service calls and
257 the three sector model is in use only 69 percent of the time with existing staff levels.
258

259 Chairman Brew said that the Board has spent a lot of time -- starting with the Strategic Planning
260 Updates in September – digesting all of the facts surrounding this matter and have heard the
261 statistics previously reported. The majority has decided not to add a patrolman this year and there
262 have been staff increases to the police department in previous years. Vice Chairman D’Angelo
263 agreed that no new information has been brought forward. Selectman Jensen said he will vote for
264 an additional patrolman next year but feels that the merger is the priority this year.
265

266 In response to Mr. Miller, Chairman Brew stated that the town’s current staffing level provides
267 very good safety. Selectman Grella said the town could be better prepared for anything that might
268 come up. A vote on the motion was called. Vote 2-3 (Chairman Brew, Selectman Jensen, and
269 Vice Chairman D’Angelo opposed).
270

271 Paul Mancini felt he did not have enough information about fire expenditures to make an
272 intelligent determination. Chairman Brew indicated that meetings have been held since September
273 and much information is provided on the town’s website. He continued, saying that a lot of items
274 are too big to tackle in a single year, such as a \$376,000 fire truck. A new ladder truck will cost
275 \$1.8 million when it needs to be replaced in 2032.
276

277 Vice Chairman D’Angelo stated that the Capital Improvement Plan strongly recommended putting
278 money into DPW. The articles align with the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).
279

280 Selectman Panasiti stated that as a first year selectman the budget process has been a great
281 experience and wonderful for the town. Working through the long range and strategic planning
282 processes and identifying initiatives has made it easier to understand how to finance and run the
283 town. Mr. Panasiti moved to include a warrant article to add an additional patrolman to the Police
284 Department staff. Selectman Grella seconded noting that the hiring would add only six cents per
285 thousand to the tax rate. Selectman Jensen asked if the article were voted down, could it be added
286 next year. Vice Chairman D’Angelo felt it would be asking too much from the voters to make an

287 informed decision at this level of detail and asked at what point this matter “would be put to bed”.
288 Russ Thomas stated that legally, if the voters approve the article, it would be tying the Board’s
289 hands because next year the Board would either have to increase the budget to pay for the officer
290 or deal with a lay-off. If the voters reject it, then arguably, under the “No Means No” provision of
291 the New Hampshire RSA, the Town could not hire another police officer until a warrant article
292 was passed to authorize it. John Post said he admired what Chief Reams has done but feels a
293 Human Resources person is more important. Mr. Thomas said that the article would likely not
294 pass reflecting a 0-6 vote by Ways and Means and a 2-3 vote by the Board. Chairman Brew noted
295 that an article needs three votes to get on the ballot. A vote on the motion was called. Vote 2-3
296 (Chairman Brew, Vice Chairman D’Angelo, and Selectman Jensen opposed)

297
298 Selectman Grella moved, second by Selectman Jensen, to close the public hearing. Motion passed
299 unanimously, 5-0.

300
301 The Board then voted on each Article as follows:

302
303 **Article 21: To choose all necessary Town Officers for the ensuing terms as follows:**
304 Vice Chairman D’Angelo moved, second by Selectman Jensen, to support and place Article 21 on
305 the ballot as written and/or amended. Vote 5-0

306
307 **Article 22: Operating Budget**
308 Vice Chairman D’Angelo moved, second by Selectman Jensen, to support and place Article 22 on
309 the ballot as written and/or amended. Vote 5--0

310
311 **Article 23: Contingency Fund**
312 Vice Chairman D’Angelo moved, second by Selectman Jensen, to support and place Article 23 on
313 the ballot as written and/or amended. Vote 5-0

314
315 **Article 24: Assessing Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund**
316 Vice Chairman D’Angelo moved, second by Selectman Panasiti, to support and place Article 24
317 on the ballot as written and/or amended. Vote 5-0

318
319 **Article 25: Communications Center Capital Reserve Fund**
320 Vice Chairman D’Angelo moved, second by Selectman Grella, to support and place Article 25 on
321 the ballot as written and/or amended. Vote 4-1 (Selectman Jensen opposed).

322
323 **Article 26: Fire Station Renovation Capital Reserve Fund (CRF)**
324 Selectman Jensen moved, second by Vice Chairman D’Angelo, to support and place Article 26 on
325 the ballot as written and/or amended. Vote 5-0

326
327 **Article 27: Appropriation of Previously Collected Land Use Change Tax Funds and Deposit**
328 **to the Fire Station Renovation Capital Reserve Fund (CRF)**
329 Selectman Panasiti moved, second by Selectman Grella, to support and place Article 27 on the
330 ballot as written and/or amended. Vote 5-0

331
332 **Article 28: Fire Truck Refurbish and Purchase Capital Reserve Fund (CRF)**
333 Selectman Panasiti moved, second by Selectman Jensen, to support and place Article 28 on the
334 ballot as written and/or amended. Vote 5-0

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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.

383 **7. Approvals**

384

385 **7.1 Abatements**

386

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

389

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

392

393 Selectman Panasiti moved, second by Selectman Grella, to approve a Veteran Tax Credit for
394 Map/Lot 6-104-1 located at 61 Spring Road in the amount of \$1,900. Motion passed unanimously,
395 5-0.

396

397 Selectman Panasiti moved, second by Selectman Grella, to approve a Veteran Tax Credit for
398 Map/Lot 6-28-37 located at 2 Tarleton Lane in the amount of \$500. Motion passed unanimously,
399 5-0.

400

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

404

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

408

409 **7.2 Payroll Manifest**

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

414

415 **7.3 Meeting Minutes – January 6, 2016**

416

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

419

420 **8. Old/New Business**

421

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

425

426 Selectman Jensen went over pending action items as follows.

427

- 428 • Quarterly Finance Reports – 2nd meeting in February
- 429 • Track Code Enforcement - % of Inspector's work – June
- 430 • Specs on re-model – next Board meeting

- 431 • Letter to PTF – done
- 432 • Letter to AG – done

433
434 9. **Next Meeting: February 1, 2016 at 5:00 p.m.** (The Board cancelled its January 25, 2016
435 meeting).
436

437 **10. Adjournment**

438 Selectman Panasiti moved, second by Selectman Grella, to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m.
439 Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.
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456 Selectman Nate Jensen
457 Clerk, Board of Selectmen

Date