Town of Amherst, NH

BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES

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

1. Call to Order

Chairman Dwight Brew called the meeting to order at 4:15 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, Lorelei Haberland, and Russ Thomas.

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

3. Citizen's Forum – None

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

7. Approvals

7.1 Payroll Manifests

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

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

Vice Chairman D'Angelo moved, second by Selectman Jensen, 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.

7.2 Accounts Payable

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

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

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

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

7.3 Meeting Minutes

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

4. Public Hearing Discussion

4.1 Budget

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

Mr. Post stated that the W&M approves the operating budget but feel that the 2.0% COLA is out of context with the rest of the town and does not seem relevant to other employees of Amherst. For example, the police increase is 1.25%; some parts of the school have no increase; Social Security is zero; and the military has a 1.3% increase. The W&M feel that if COLA is offered at all, it has to be linked to an objective index and provided annually. Otherwise, it isn't a COLA; it is just a straight up, arbitrary pay increase outside of the step 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 19th 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

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

Chairman Brew asked if there were any other suggested changes to the budget. Vice Chairman D'Angelo asked that savings be applied to roads which is currently under 4 percent, at 3.77%, and said the town must start chipping away at this deficit. Selectman Jensen stated that he felt it was premature to fund the budget line prior to a thorough review of the Matrix study and DPW operations. Selectman Panasiti agreed. Selectman Grella indicated that the budget line is no where close to the million dollar balance recommended by the committee eight years ago.

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

4.2 **Warrant Articles**

The Board reviewed the Warrant Articles and assigned presentation of each article as follows:

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.	

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

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

5.2 Dedication

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

6. Town Administrator

6.1 Health Officer Appointment

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

6.2 Eaton Road, Culvert Replacement Bids

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

6.3 Historic District Commission Resignation

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

7. Approvals – Taken Up Earlier in the Meeting

8. Old/New Business

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

9. Non Public Session

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

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

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

7/8/2016
Date