



Town of Amherst, NH
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES
Barbara Landry Meeting Room
2 Main Street
Monday, November 24, 2014 at 6:00 PM

I. Public Session

Chairman Dwight Brew called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Attendees: Chairman Dwight Brew, Vice Chairman Mike Akillian, Selectmen John D'Angelo and Tom Grella. Also present: Town Administrator, Jim O'Mara, and Suzanne Beauchesne taking minutes. Selectman Brad Galinson was absent.

II. Pledge of Allegiance - Dave Saxe, Souhegan High School Boys Soccer Team Coach, led the pledge.

The Board rose to honor the Souhegan High School Boys Soccer Team for their Division II Championship win on November 8th. Selectman Tom Grella read a proclamation which was presented to the team. Coach Saxe introduced the members of the team, each received congratulatory applause.

III. Citizen Forum – No citizens came forward.

IV. MRI – Study of Fire and EMS

The Municipal Resources, Inc. (MRI) project team – all practitioners in the field of fire safety and emergency medical services -- introduced themselves as follows: Brian Duggan, Project Leader, Lee Douchkoff (fire services), Sue Prentiss (paramedics) and Bob Craig (former Fire Chief in Acton, MA).

Mr. Duggan indicated that a draft report had been delivered to Town Administrator, Jim O'Mara, which is to be edited and returned to MRI where changes will be incorporated into a final report. The report is intended to serve as a useful guide to the Board in shaping a vision for tomorrow. A PowerPoint presentation revealed the following information.

Observations include:

- leadership between EMS and Fire not always smooth
- exceptional on-call fire department; high quality advanced life support (ALS) service
- on-call service should be preserved and supported
- both Fire and EMS are well-respected
- daytime response availability is decreasing (not unique to Amherst – countrywide)
- EMS has become a hybrid career paid organization (three shifts – 24/7)
- per diem staff from outside of Amherst lack ownership
- leadership has created a functional and cultural separation

Challenges include determining an acceptable level of risk, recruiting a leader to transition both departments (including the police department); developing a shared sense of vision/mission; cross-training; and breaking down the cultural roadblocks.

The options were listed as follows:

- 1) Maintaining the status quo.
- 2) Limited Integration (as has been done) – supervisory oversight of both divisions.

- 52 3) Full Integration (not recommended by MRI due to financial and operational drawbacks).
53 4) Privatizing EMS (not the level of service Amherst enjoys).
54 5) Regional partnerships (fire departments outside of Amherst are not interested).
55

56 MRI's recommendations are:

- 57
58 - a single, visionary leader for one organization with separate divisions; and appoint a
59 leadership team
60 - preserve on-call; strengthen daytime response
61 - address service gaps; provide daytime staffing for 2nd ambulance (still work per diem)
62 - fire and EMS cross-trained
63 - reduce EMS from three to two (reallocate wages)
64 - increase daytime staffing - provide support when on-call least available
65 - save \$81,000/year by eliminating the position of EMS Director
66 - requires co-location of resources and personnel for effective integration and supervision
67 - finish upstairs renovation of fire station at a cost of \$50,000-\$60,000 depending on the
68 decision of sprinkler system; frees up space at the Fire Department
69

70 The MRI team responded to a number of questions posed by Board members. More detail and a proposed
71 organizational chart will be included in the final report due within three weeks. The Board will then decide
72 on an approach and put together an implementation team. There were no questions from the public or from
73 fire/EMS staff in attendance.
74

75 **V. Village Strategic Plan Update**

76

77 Vice Chairman Akillian indicated that the Strategic Planning Committee made up of a Steering Committee
78 and Outreach Committee, comprised of 24 residential and business people, have been meeting monthly.
79 The purpose of the committee is twofold: to expand and engage as many citizens as possible in strategic
80 thinking.
81

82 With the help of Camille Pattison of the Nashua Regional Planning Commission, progress has been made in
83 getting stakeholders involved. To date, 337 residents have responded to the electronic survey. Vice
84 Chairman Akillian again encouraged everyone to participate in the online survey posted on the website at
85 www.amherstnh.gov/villageplan. A house meeting was attended by 16 people. Anyone interested in
86 hosting a meeting should contact Vice Chairman Akillian. A public forum is being held on December 2nd in
87 the Landry Room from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. and more such forums will be planned if interest exists. A lot of
88 information is included on the website. Vice Chairman Akillian expects to have the results of the
89 committee's outreach efforts categorized in January and presented to the Board along with a cost/benefit
90 analysis of identified initiatives. A full report is expected in May or June. Vice Chairman Akillian will
91 provide information to the media as progress continues.
92

93 Chris Buchanan came forward and indicated that he had been working with a company in Massachusetts
94 who provide architectural lighting for historic sites, and suggested providing a free demonstration during
95 the tree lighting event on December 12th. Mr. Buchanan proposed lighting up the Town Hall, the
96 Congregational Church, the Brick School and the Library. Selectman Grella stated that the Historical
97 District Commission had approved lighting of the Congregational Church only. This was not Mr.
98 Buchanan's understanding. Vice Chairman Akillian will seek clarification. The cost of lighting one
99 building is approximately \$12,000. Chairman Brew felt that if the demonstration turned out to be positive,
100 the cost would amount to \$48,000 and, at this time, those funds may better be used elsewhere.
101

102 Vice Chairman Akillian moved to authorize a free demonstration of architectural lighting of the four town
103 buildings on December 12, weather permitting, and upon consensus of the Historic District Commission.
104 Seconded by Selectman D'Angelo. Vote 3-1 (Selectman Grella opposed)
105

106 **Report by Dr. Mary Katherine Lockwood**
107

108 In response to questions raised at the previous BOS meeting, Dr. Mary Katherine Lockwood, Health Officer
109 for Amherst, came forward to report on actions related to mosquito control. Dr. Lockwood indicated that
110 the risk of West Nile is low; the risk of EEE (Eastern Equine Encephalitis) much greater. This year, three
111 cases of EEE were reported in NH causing two deaths. Amherst currently contracts with Dragon to do
112 sampling and treat areas if necessary. The sampling is done with a biologic agent that presents little
113 environmental risk and is of no risk to other animals, except bees. In addition, Amherst puts out public
114 service announcements (PSAs).
115

116 Dr. Lockwood provided information taken from the website of Alan Eaton, a professor and specialist in
117 entomology at the UNH Cooperative Extension.
118

119 Dr. Lockwood indicated on a small map that the heaviest risk exists along the Seacoast. The towns
120 bordering Amherst with moderate risk include Nashua, Merrimack, Bedford, and Goffstown. Dr.
121 Lockwood acknowledged that Amherst is outside the lowest risk area; yet, the risk becomes greater every
122 year, and the budgeted amount of \$40,000 per year is used primarily for testing. Dr. Lockwood
123 recommends continuing the program, and while she is "satisfied with Dragon" will prepare a proposal for
124 bid and report back to the Board on whether the market is competitive in this area.
125

126 **VI. FY16 Budget Discussion**
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128 **a) Ways & Means – Funding Options for Vehicles and Equipment**
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130 Russ Thomas, Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee provided overhead charts (attached)
131 demonstrating the benefits of a Lease/Purchase (L/P) financing mechanism for the Department of Public
132 Works (DPW) fleet. The chart listed all vehicles and equipment including current age, condition, trade-in
133 value and replacement cost. The chart shows an ideal annual budget of just below \$300,000. Surpluses
134 would begin in FY31.
135

136 According to members of the Ways and Means Committee, the L/P financing alternative provides more
137 flexibility and levels out large expenses so that there are fewer big swings from one year to another. Over
138 time, L/P financing will build equity and eliminate the need for Warrant Articles. A number of Board
139 members felt that it would make sense to utilize the L/P method of financing for the DPW budget.
140

141 Department of Public Works Director, Bruce Berry, came forward and in response to a question by
142 Selectman Grella, indicated that Truck 1 does not work. Chairman Brew suggested that a discussion of the
143 make-up of the fleet might better be done when determining the DPW budget.
144

145 At its next meeting, the Board will decide whether to expand the L/P financing approach to the police
146 undercover vehicle and will hear more from Administrator O'Mara on financing for the Recreation
147 Department.
148

149 Town Administrator O'Mara went over a prepared spreadsheet that provided departmental budgets along
150 with priority rankings as determined by department heads. The board will meet on December 8th and 9th
151 and be prepared to present a draft budget to the Ways and Means Committee by December 15th.
152

153 **VII. Old and New Business**
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155 Chairman Brew stated that a gift of real estate consisting of three parcels of property and 240 acres of land
156 located on the east side of Chestnut Hill Road was extended so long as the town agreed to pay any and all
157 related legal expenses by year's end. The acceptance of the property requires a public hearing. Selectman
158 Grella moved to hold a public hearing on December 8, 2014 pursuant to RSA 36-A 5(II) and in conjunction
159 with the Amherst Conservation Commission regarding acquisition of the subject property. Seconded by
160 Selectman D'Angelo. Vote 4-0
161

162 Chairman Brew reported that the Board received a letter from Kinder Morgan indicating a revised plan on
163 the proposed natural gas pipeline which is now expected to go through Amherst via a three-foot pipe which
164 will be buried and follow the power lines between AMS and Souhegan. The project is likely to last at least
165 a year. The issue is not yet approved at the federal level and could change yet again. The Board will
166 continue to seek information regarding this pipeline and its impacts on Amherst.
167

168 Town Administrator O'Mara sought approval to hire four fire fighters as recommended by Acting Chief
169 Matt Conley and to fill two vacancies, pending background checks, in the Department of Public Works.
170 Selectman Grella moved to approve the hiring of Karen Lindquist, James Waller, Calvin Weichert and John
171 Turner to the Fire Department and Jeffrey Caswell, Thomas Lones as full-time Labor/Driver and Michael
172 Lott as a part-time on call Labor/Driver to the Department of Public Works. Seconded by Selectman
173 D'Angelo. Vote 4-0
174

175 Selectman Grella moved to approve the quarterly Maintenance Warrants for the Baboosic Lake Community
176 septic bill due on January 2, 2015: Phase I = \$4,472.36; Phase 2 = \$5,244.08; Phase III = \$5,529.97; and
177 Phase IV = \$4,082.53. Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian. Vote 4-0
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179 **VIII. Right to Know Requests – None**
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181 **IX. Approvals**
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183 **a. Accounts Payable**
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185 Selectman D'Angelo moved to approve one (1) FY15 Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of
186 \$752,176.00 dated November 18, 2014, subject to review and audit. Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian.
187 Vote 4-0
188

189 Selectman D'Angelo moved to approve one (1) FY15 Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of
190 \$25,685.45 dated November 6, 2014, subject to review and audit (Town Clerk Transfers to the State of
191 NH). Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian. Vote 4-0
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193 **b. Abatement Recommendation**
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195 Selectman D'Angelo moved to approve the recommended abatement for the property located at 85
196 Christian Hill Road, Map 005, Lot 171-001 in the amount of \$86. Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian.
197 Vote 4-0
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199 Selectman D'Angelo moved to approve the recommended abatement for the property located at 467 Boston
200 Post Road, Map 002, Lot 163-044 in the amount of \$56. Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian. Vote 4-0
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202 Selectman D'Angelo moved to approve the recommended abatement for the property located at 32 Cross
203 Road, Map 002, Lot 146-018 in the amount of \$504. Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian. Vote 4-0

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c. Veteran Tax Credit Recommendation

In accord with RSA 72:28, Vice Chairman Akillian moved to approve the Veteran Tax Credit for the property located at 14 Standish Way, Map 001, Lot 035-030, in the amount of \$500. Seconded by Selectman Grella. Vote 4-0

In accord with RSA 72:28, Vice Chairman Akillian moved to approve the Veteran Tax Credit for the property located at 27 Pond Parish Road, Map 006, Lot 027-002, in the amount of \$500. Seconded by Selectman D'Angelo. Vote 4-0

In accord with RSA 72:28, Vice Chairman Akillian moved to approve the Veteran Tax Credit for the property located at 37 Thornton Ferry Road I, Map 006, Lot 110-000, in the amount of \$500. Seconded by Selectman D'Angelo. Vote 4-0

In accord with RSA 72:28, Vice Chairman Akillian moved to approve the Veteran Tax Credit for the property located at 4 Fox Run Road, Map 003, Lot 067-001-008, in the amount of \$500. Seconded by Selectman D'Angelo. Vote 4-0

In accord with RSA 72:28, Vice Chairman Akillian moved to approve the Veteran Tax Credit for the property located at 14 Williamsburg Drive, Map 008, Lot 077-017, in the amount of \$500. Seconded by Selectman D'Angelo. Vote 4-0

d. Conservation Restriction Assessment Recommendation

Selectman D'Angelo moved to grant the application for the Conservation Restriction Assessment recommendation for the property located at New Boston Road, Map 007, Lot 080-001. Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian. Vote 4-0

e. Levy of Timber Yield Tax

Selectman D'Angelo moved to approve the Levy of Timber Yield Tax for the property located at Austin Road, Map 008, Lot 008-001 in the amount of \$425.13. Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian. Vote 4-0

f. Payroll

Selectman D'Angelo moved to approve one (1) FY15 Payroll Manifest in the amount of \$173,096.52 dated November 26, 2014, subject to review and audit. Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian. Vote 4-0

g. Board of Selectmen Minutes

Selectman D'Angelo moved to approve the Board of Selectmen meeting minutes of Monday, November 10, 2014. Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian. Vote 4-0

X. Non-Public Session 91-A:3 II (c)

Vice Chairman Akillian moved to enter into non-public session at 9:00 p.m. pursuant to NH RSA 91-A:3 II (c). Seconded by Selectman D'Angelo. Roll Call: Akillian-yes, Brew-yes, D'Angelo-yes, Grella-yes. Vote was unanimous.

255 Nonpublic Session Minutes

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258 Mr. Akillian moved to enter non-public session at 9:00pm pursuant to
259 NH RSA 91-A: 3 II (c). Second by Mr. D'Angelo.
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261 Roll Call: D'Angelo -yes, Brew-yes, Grella-yes, Akillian-yes. Vote was unanimous, 4-0.
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263 The Board and Town Administrator Jim O'Mara discussed a matter which, if discussed in public, may
264 adversely affect the reputation of someone other than a member of the body.
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267 Mr. D'Angelo moved to exit non-public session at 9:15pm. Second by Mr. Akillian. The vote was
268 unanimous, 4-0.
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270 The Board exited nonpublic session at 9:15pm.
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272 Chairman Brew stated that in nonpublic session no motions were made and no votes were taken.
273 Mr. Akillian moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:16pm. Second by Mr. Grella.
274 The meeting adjourned at 9:16pm.
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277 **XI. Adjourn**