



# **Town of Amherst, NH**

## **BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES**

**Barbara Landry Meeting Room**  
**2 Main Street**  
**Monday, April 6, 2020 6:30PM**

1       **1. Call to Order**

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3       Chairman Peter Lyon called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

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5       Attendees by Zoom conference call: Chairman Peter Lyon, Selectman Dwight Brew,  
6       Selectman Reed Panasiti, Selectman John D'Angelo, and Selectman Tom Grella.  
7       Also present: Town Administrator Dean Shankle, Executive Assistant Mary Guild.

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9       Other attendees and the public accessed the meeting via Zoom.

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11       Chairman Lyon stated that, pursuant to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor  
12       as a result of the COVID19 pandemic and in accordance with his Emergency Order #12,  
13       this meeting is authorized to take place electronically. There is no physical location to  
14       observe and listen to this meeting. However, in accordance with the Emergency Order,  
15       we are utilizing Zoom teleconferencing for this meeting. All members of the Board have  
16       the ability to communicate during the meeting through this platform and the public has  
17       access to contemporaneously listen and if necessary, participate in the meeting by dialing  
18       312 626 6799 and using a webinar ID of 624-178-228 or by using the link contained in the  
19       agenda posted at amherstnh.gov. Notice of the meeting and means to access it were  
20       previously posted in accordance with law. If anyone has a problem accessing the meeting,  
21       please call 603-440-8248 for assistance. In the event the public is unable to access the  
22       meeting, the meeting will be adjourned and rescheduled.

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24       All votes will be taken by roll call and for ease, in alphabetical order.

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26       Lastly, the meeting is being recorded and will be replayed on ACATV.

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28       **2. Citizen Forum** – none.

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30       **3. Board Discussion – Boards, Commissions, Committee Appointments**

31       Chairman Lyon explained that the Board will be making appointments to the Planning  
32       Board, including three full member seats, and one alternate seat. There are 11 applicants  
33       for these positions.

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35       The Board reviewed the process for interviewing these applicants. All of the applicants  
36       were sent a list of 10 questions to answer ahead of time. The Board will review these  
37       answers prior to the interviews. During the interviews, Board members will have a  
38       chance to ask additional questions or clarifying questions. The Board agreed that the set

of questions, while lengthy, is appropriate in order to get to know the pool of applicants and decide which would best serve as Planning Board members.

Selectman D'Angelo suggested an additional question regarding what the applicant would do if forced to recuse him/herself due to current or past vocal opposition over Planning Board business.

Selectman Panasiti suggested that the definition of "conflict of interest" also be sent to all of the applicants along with the questions.

Selectman D'Angelo explained that there is Planning Board training offered by the NH Municipal Association that the Chair of the Planning Board will be keen to having new members go to, when offered.

Chairman Lyon explained that, after all the interviews have been completed, the Board members will each list their top three choices for Planning Board appointees. The top three applicants receiving three or more votes will get the seats. The Selectmen will then complete the same process for the alternate position.

#### **4. Administration**

##### **4.1 Administrator's Report**

Town Administrator Shankle stated that the Buck Meadow purchase closed last Tuesday. The grand opening for the new property will be delayed for now.

He explained that the Town is working on options to provide planning application information online. The Town has also started its own Vimeo channel. He has added the Zoom meeting recordings to the site and interviews with Department Heads. More videos will continue to be added to the channel.

He stated that all of the town departments are working together well. Some of the DPW employees have been working at the Library, while some have been working at the South Fire Station, in order to social distance themselves. The Town Clerk advertised the new outdoor window/ramp in social media.

Town Administrator Shankle stated that he has the preliminary draft report regarding impact fees done by Bruce Mayberry. This is still only in draft form at this time.

##### **4.2 COVID-19 Update**

Town Administrator Shankle stated that the Governor has put forth additional emergency orders, including #23 which alleviates some of the land use boards' application deadlines, and #25 which gives boards the authority to do blanket abatements on taxes. He recommended that the Board not take any action on this second emergency order yet, as there is still time before tax bills need to go out.

He noted that people in town have been generously donating gloves and masks to the Police and Fire/Rescue Departments. If people are interested in donating to the Departments, they can leave the materials outside and hit the buzzer, for a no-interaction

transaction. These Departments have not yet run out of safety masks or gloves, but are always looking for more.

## **5. Department Updates**

### **5.1 Tax & Assessing**

Tax Collector, Gail Stout, presented her department update. She explained that the department has two full-time employees, and the town utilizes KRT Appraisal as its contracted assessing firm. The town's current valuation data has not changed since the last update - \$1.737 billion. There were 18 total abatements for 2019, which is a typical amount. The Board has processed 12 of these 18 abatements so far. KRT Appraisal has been shut down by the Massachusetts government, so the rest of these abatements will be delayed.

Gail Stout explained that there are still 27 properties with liens from 2018, with a total outstanding balance of \$189,226 as of April 1, 2020. In 2019, the town invoiced \$46,421,588 in property taxes, with a collection rate of about 98.9%. There is no lien date currently scheduled. The department has been functioning remotely and by appointment with staggered staffing. She stated that questions for the department can be directed to 603-673-6041 x201, x202, or by email.

In response to a question from Chairman Lyon, Gail Stout stated that the current tax bills will be mailed out in May. She is hoping the Board can discuss this item at their May 11<sup>th</sup> meeting.

### **5.2 Police**

Police Chief, Mark Reams, presented his department update. He stated that the number of motor vehicle accidents, compared to the same time period last year, have decreased. While the Communications Center is currently seeing a decrease in lobby activity, there has been a slight increase in the number of 911 calls, compared to last year. He believes that the increase in the total number of events that the Police Department was involved in reflects all of work by the department.

Chief Reams explained that there has been a slight increase in the number of motor vehicle stops, as the department sees more officers trained and out on the road. He stated that motor vehicle stops in town are geared toward encouraging safe driving behavior, not issuing punitive measures.

Chief Reams stated that one of the department's goals is to decrease residential property crime. The department has seen an approximate 10% decrease in this each year since 2015. This year the department saw a nearly 20% decrease from the previous year.

He explained that 19 of the department's officers have attended a combined nearly 230 hours of training. The department-wide awards for this year include: 2019 Overall Arrests: Officer Hans Chapman, 2019 Drug Interdiction: Sergeant D. Mahoney/Officer K. Kelly, 2019 Motor Vehicle Enforcement: Officer Christopher Corey, 2019 DWI Enforcement: Officer Kevin Kelly.

He explained that the slight uptick in drug arrests is probably due to the fact that the department is an active participant in the Hillsborough County Street Crimes task force. The Department is also an active participant in the NH Internet Crimes Against Children task force.

He stated that the Police Union contract was negotiated and approved through 2024 and thanked the public for voting. The hiring process is underway for a vacant full-time dispatcher position. Also, the third full-time officer vacancy has been filled and the candidate has completed all the academic and field officer training.

The Police Station renovation preparations continue. Three bid requests were sent out in March and the bids close on April 15, 2020.

In terms of COVID-19, the department is handling all non-emergency calls remotely, if at all possible. The lobby is still open for emergencies, and people can use the intercom in the front of the building to communicate with those inside. The public is able to request burn permits and non-emergency items via telephone or email. Any criminal activity in town is still being thoroughly investigated and prosecuted. The agency is fully staffed and still patrolling as normal. The department has a sufficient number of personal protective equipment devices. While the department has had a couple of reports of kids congregating in groups, their goal has been to go out to inform and reinforce the Governor's orders.

Selectman D'Angelo noted that driving under the influence numbers appear to be down by about 1/3 from last year's numbers, which were also down significantly from the prior year. This is a win for the town.

In response to a question from Selectman Panasiti, Chief Reams stated that the department has not recently seen any uptick in issues at Wal-Mart.

### **5.3 Finance**

Finance Director, Cheryl Eastman, presented her department update. She stated that, with 75% of the fiscal year gone, the town has received about 78% of its estimated revenue. Through nine months, 27.9% of the budget is still available.

Selectman D'Angelo suggested that future reports include historical numbers to compare against.

Town Administrator Shankle stated that this quarter will be an outlier in the future as the current situation will have an effect on the town's revenue and other items.

### **5.4 Public Works**

DPW Director, Eric Hahn, presented his department update. He explained that Eric Slosek was promoted to Assistant DPW Director in January. Jeff Caswell was then also promoted to Road Foreman in February. The department's Mobile 311 system is working well and more data is being entered. The winter storm event turnaround time has led to a reduced likelihood of injuries to crew members. The department has also repurposed an

old trailer in order to respond to emergency road closures and traffic detours. The department's crew continues to be cross-trained.

He explained that the department has collaborated with the Conservation Commission to take salt samples from the Ponemah Bog. These results have all been very positive, with the highest reading at 24ppm for chloride. The upper limit for drinking water is 100ppm for chloride, and Ponemah Bog water is not drinkable anyway.

He stated that last winter saw 25 treatable events by the DPW, while the previous winter saw 31. On average, since 2002/2003, the town has seen 23.2 treatable winter events. In 2016/2017, the town used 86.46 tons of salt per storm and 117.8 tons of sand per storm. In 2018/2019, the town used 79.87 tons of salt per storm and 108.06 tons of sand per storm. In 2019/2020, the town used 72.94 tons of salt per storm and 35.96 tons of sand per storm.

Eric Hahn explained that, based on the current price, it is estimated that the town has saved \$8,576 on salt this year versus last year. There is also a savings on sand because sand is paid for three times: purchasing it, spreading it, and clean it up. The direct savings in purchasing sand is around \$15,321 this year. He believes the indirect sand savings could be around \$12,500 additional.

#### **a. Recycling, COVID-19 – DPW, Transfer Station**

Eric Hahn stated that there were a couple of hours on Tuesday that the Transfer Station seems busy, while Thursday and Friday seem to have reasonable wait times. On Saturday there were two one-hour periods that operators had to move people into lines in order to get them to the compactors. He believes that people seem to be adapting to the new way of operations at the Transfer Station. He asked the town Safety Officer to review the procedures being taken at the Transfer Station and it was evaluated that the right things are being done.

Selectman D'Angelo stated that the wait times did seem more acceptable. He suggested that there be five loading slots instead of four to increase to throughput. Eric Hahn stated that he is leery to do this yet, but will keep looking into it.

In response to a question from Selectman D'Angelo, Eric Hahn stated that adding hours and personnel to Tuesdays or Thursdays would put him over the part-time hours designated by federal law. This could also take away from the core DPW crew that are working on roadwork and COVID-19 items.

In response to a question from Selectman Brew, Eric Hahn stated that he would wait to see how this week goes, and then possibly open up additional Transfer Station hours next Wednesday.

In response to a question from Selectman Panasiti, Eric Hahn stated that the vendors are still accepting recycling and that he is open to the idea of having some hours at the Transfer Station for recycling only. However, in order to recycle people need to walk

across the sorting deck and there is no way to achieve the proper amount of social distancing while doing this.

Town Administrator Shankle stated that the only way to have recycling at the Transfer Station right now would be to have one person allowed on the deck at a time.

Chairman Lyon stated that the Transfer Station could be opened for additional hours on Wednesday, if deemed appropriate by Eric Hahn. He suggested that any decisions made remain for a bit so that people can rely on it.

## **6. Approvals**

### **6.1 Accounts Payable**

*A MOTION was made by Selectman D'Angelo and SECONDED by Selectman Panasiti to approve one (1) FY20 Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of \$28,694.45 dated April 2, 2020, subject to review and audit (Town Clerk Transfers to the State of NH). By roll call vote: Selectman Brew – aye; Selectman D'Angelo – aye; Selectman Grella – aye; Selectman Panasiti – aye; Chairman Lyon – aye. Motion carried unanimously.*

*A MOTION was made by Selectman D'Angelo and SECONDED by Selectman Panasiti to approve one (1) FY20 Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of \$36,305.30 dated April 2, 2020, subject to review and audit (Town Clerk Transfers to the State of NH). By roll call vote: Selectman Brew – aye; Selectman D'Angelo – aye; Selectman Grella – aye; Selectman Panasiti – aye; Chairman Lyon – aye. Motion carried unanimously.*

*A MOTION was made by Selectman D'Angelo and SECONDED by Selectman Panasiti to approve one (1) FY20 Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of \$58,931.07 dated March 31, 2020, subject to review and audit. By roll call vote: Selectman Brew – aye; Selectman D'Angelo – aye; Selectman Grella – aye; Selectman Panasiti – aye; Chairman Lyon – aye. Motion carried unanimously.*

*A MOTION was made by Selectman D'Angelo and SECONDED by Selectman Panasiti to approve one (1) FY20 Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of \$404,056.99 dated March 31, 2020, subject to review and audit. By roll call vote: Selectman Brew – aye; Selectman D'Angelo – aye; Selectman Grella – aye; Selectman Panasiti – aye; Chairman Lyon – aye. Motion carried unanimously.*

*A MOTION was made by Selectman D'Angelo and SECONDED by Selectman Panasiti to approve one (1) FY20 Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of \$2,856,178.00 dated April 1, 2020, subject to review and audit (School Disbursements). By roll call vote: Selectman Brew – aye; Selectman D'Angelo – aye; Selectman Grella – aye; Selectman Panasiti – aye; Chairman Lyon – aye. Motion carried unanimously.*

### **6.2 Previous Meeting Minutes: March 23, 2020**

*A MOTION was made by Selectman Panasiti and SECONDED by Selectman D'Angelo to approve the Board of Selectmen meeting minutes of March 23, 2020. By roll call vote: Selectman Brew – aye; Selectman D'Angelo – aye; Selectman Grella – aye; Selectman Panasiti – aye; Chairman Lyon – aye. Motion carried unanimously.*

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273 **7. Action Items** - the Board reviewed its action items.  
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275 **8. Old/New Business**

276 Selectman Panasiti explained that, during his last call with the Governor, it was  
277 mentioned that the COVID-19 peak for New Hampshire should be within the next week  
278 or two. He maintained that people should continue to stay at home, socially distance  
279 themselves, wash their hands, wear masks, etc.  
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281 Town Administrator Shankle stated that there are no scheduled Planning Board meetings  
282 until May, however there may be a reorganizational meeting at the end of April to  
283 introduce the new members.  
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285 Chairman Lyon reminded everyone that Planning Board applicant interviews will be held  
286 next Monday 13<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> via Zoom.  
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288 Town Administrator Shankle stated that there is also a Conservation Commission  
289 meeting this Wednesday via Zoom.  
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291 *A MOTION was made by Selectman D'Angelo and SECONDED by Selectman Panasiti*  
292 *to adjourn the meeting at 8:30pm.*

293 *By roll call vote: Selectman Brew – aye; Selectman D'Angelo – aye; Selectman Grella –*  
294 *aye; Selectman Panasiti – aye; Chairman Lyon – aye. Motion carried unanimously.*  
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297 **NEXT MEETING: April 13, 2020**  
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300 **SIGNATURE ON FILE**

**04.20.2020**

301 \_\_\_\_\_  
302 *Selectman Reed Panasiti*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*