



Town of Amherst, NH

BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES

Barbara Landry Meeting Room
2 Main Street
Monday, September 14, 2020 5:30PM

1 **1. Call to Order**

2 Chairman Peter Lyon called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

3
4 Attendees by Zoom conference call: Chairman Peter Lyon, Selectman Dwight Brew,
5 Selectman Reed Panasiti, Selectman John D'Angelo, and Selectman Tom Grella.
6 Also present: Town Administrator Dean Shankle

7
8 **2. Non-Public Session, RSA 91-A:3, II (b)**

9 *A MOTION was made by Selectman Brew and SECONDED by Selectman D'Angelo to*
10 *enter into Non-Public Session, RSA 91-A:3, II (b) at 5:30 PM.*

11 *By roll call vote: Selectman Brew – aye; Selectman D'Angelo – aye; Selectman Grella –*
12 *aye; Selectman Panasiti – aye; Chairman Lyon – aye. 5-0-0; motion carried*
13 *unanimously.*

14
15 *A MOTION was made by Selectman Panasiti and SECONDED by Selectman Grella to*
16 *exit Non-Public Session at 6:29 PM.*

17 *By roll call vote: Selectman Brew – aye; Selectman D'Angelo – aye; Selectman Grella –*
18 *aye; Selectman Panasiti – aye; Chairman Lyon – aye. 5-0-0; motion carried*
19 *unanimously.*

20
21 The Board reconvened Public session at 6:31 PM.

22
23 Attendees by Zoom conference call: Chairman Peter Lyon, Selectman Dwight Brew,
24 Selectman Reed Panasiti, Selectman John D'Angelo, and Selectman Tom Grella.
25 Also present: Town Administrator Dean Shankle, and Kristan Patenaude, minute taker.

26
27 Other attendees and the public accessed the meeting via Zoom.

28
29 Chairman Lyon explained that, pursuant to the State of Emergency declared by the
30 Governor as a result of the COVID19 pandemic and in accordance with his Emergency
31 Order #12, this meeting is authorized to take place electronically. There is no physical
32 location to observe and listen to this meeting. However, in accordance with the
33 Emergency Order, we are:

34 Utilizing Zoom teleconferencing for this meeting. All members of the Board have the
35 ability to communicate during the meeting through this platform and the public has access
36 to contemporaneously listen and if necessary participate in the meeting by dialing +1 312
37 626 6799 and using a webinar ID of 820-7279-9324 or by using the link contained in the
38 agenda posted at amherstnh.gov.

Notice of the meeting and means to access it were previously posted in accordance with law. Members of the public that have phoned into the meeting can raise their hand by pressing the #9 on their phone, in order to make it known that they would like to speak to the Board. If anyone has a problem accessing the meeting, please call 603-440-8248 for assistance. In the event the public is unable to access the meeting, the meeting will be adjourned and rescheduled.

All votes will be taken by roll call and for ease, in alphabetical order.
Lastly, the meeting is being recorded and will be replayed on ACATV.

The Board started by taking a roll call vote and stating if they were alone.

Roll call vote: Selectman Brew – present; Selectman D'Angelo – present; Selectman Grella – present; Selectman Panasiti – present; Chairman Lyon – present. All noted themselves as being alone.

3. Citizen's Forum – none.

Chairman Lyon welcomed the Ways and Means members. Lisa Eastland introduced the Ways and Means Committee members: Danielle Pray (co-chair), Mike Parisi, Scott Tuthill, Matt Seiler, Sarah Bonnoit (alternate), Jim Kuhnert, Bob Ascoco, Lori Mix (alternate)

4. Strategic Plans

4.1 Tax and Assessing Strategic Plan for FY22

Gail Stout, Tax Collector, stated that the Department is made up of two full-time employees. KRT Appraisal is the Town's contracted assessing firm and in the fourth year of a five-year contract. She stated that the Department handles approximately 5,800 properties in town. The next town-wide valuation will be in 2021. Of the Town's taxable property types, Residential properties make up 84.9% of the total valuation, Commercial and Industrial properties are 12.4% of the valuation, and Utilities are 2.7% of the valuation. The net valuation of all properties in town is about 1.7 billion dollars. This number is used to calculate the 2020 tax rate Set by DRA in late October.

Gail Stout explained that the assessment data collection was halted in mid-March due to COVID-19. The exterior only data collection began again in mid-August. In response to COVID-19 the town delayed the 2019 tax lien by four months and the town also delayed the 8% interest charge on July 2020 taxes. This received positive feedback from property owners. The Tax and Assessing office has remained opened to the public by appointment and a drop box was installed in the Town Hall lobby.

Gail Stout stated that, as of July 2020, 96.5% of the total taxes have been collected for the Town. This is 1 1/2% below last year's rate. She explained that there have been fewer liens this year, but that the total liens are up approximately \$120,000 from last year. This is primarily due to two properties that are new to the lien process. She explained that the total number of properties leaned was originally 631; there are currently 117 properties with liens. The goal of the Department is to maintain a downward slope.

Another goal of the Department is to maintain a DRA issued coefficient of dispersion (COD) rating of 12 or below. The Department currently has a 9.2 rating, indicating the revaluation was successful. A fourth goal is to maintain an acceptable rating of four or less on DRA's annual Cyclical Review of Assessment Data. The 2019 rating is still in process and not available at this time.

Gail Stout Stated that the Department upgraded its assessing software in FY20. The next revaluation will occur in 2021 and the Department continues to fund this through a capital reserve fund (CRF) Warrant Article. This CRF currently has approximately \$110,000 in it and the Department will look to add an additional \$25,000 to it by Warrant Article. This amount should cover the revaluation; any additional money will stay in the CRF for the 2026 revaluation.

In response to a question from Selectman Brew, Gail Stout stated that when electronic billing is implemented, tax bills can be sent via email. A database to hold all of this information still needs to be compiled and thus paper tax bills are still being sent.

In response to a question from Selectman Brew, Gail Stout stated that KRT is the Town's contracted assessing team that deals with valuations, collecting data, and the values on tax bills. Vision is the software company that KRT puts the assessing information into. The team completes a cyclical review annually but adjustments to tax bills are only made at the time of revaluation when equations are made to take into account things such as the quality of homes.

Selectman D'Angelo stated that he is thrilled that taxpayers are still paying on time even with the grace of a delay period.

In response to a comment by Selectman Grella regarding sales prices of homes versus their assessed value, Gail Stout stated that she is more concerned with the coefficient of dispersion. She explained that the coefficient of dispersion as of April was 84%, this is 16% below the market being assessed.

In response to a question from Selectman Panasiti, Gail Stout stated that the COVID-19 precautions have worked well for her Department include the online options and the drop box in the lobby.

The Selectmen thanked Gail Stout for her presentation and the great job done by her Department.

In response to a question from Jim Kuhnert, Ways and Means member, Gail Stout stated that the Department's assessing software has an initial licensing fee and an annual maintenance fee.

4.2 Amherst Police Department Strategic Plan for FY22

Police Chief Mark Reams stated that a community survey done in 2013 showed that traffic offenses and property crime are the primary concerns of townspeople. He

133 explained that residential property crime has decreased approximately 10% each year
134 since 2015. One of the Department goals is to maintain and improve that rate. A second
135 goal of the Department is to increase traffic safety along town roads and throughout
136 residential areas. Increased staffing in FY18 and modified sector coverage aims to
137 improve traffic safety along town roads, with an initial increase in enforcement presence
138 of 10 to 15% by 2021. 51% of all traffic enforcement efforts have occurred on town roads
139 for the last three years. The Department is trying new tactics in order to increase local
140 road traffic enforcement.

141
142 Chief Reams stated that a third goal of the Department is to reduce the availability of
143 illicit drugs. The Hillsborough County Street Crimes Task Force was formed in 2015.
144 The Department's goal is to increase major drug arrests by an average of approximately
145 15% each year through 2020. This goal may be disrupted or impacted due to COVID-19.

146
147 A fourth goal is to maintain professional policing standards and level of service. The
148 Department has maintained a very good to excellent rating based on biennial community
149 surveys. The current police station renovation plan is central to maintain and build upon
150 this level of service. The project began last week with hopes to be done around Christmas
151 time. \$600,000 of capital reserve funding was approved by voters over the last three
152 years. An additional \$175,000 is necessary to complete the third floor of the project. The
153 cost increases were primarily due to an unanticipated need to update the HVAC system to
154 code compliance.

155
156 The Department remains committed to building upon its professional standards and will
157 finalize its ongoing evaluation in the coming year regarding the topic of body worn
158 cameras.

159
160 Regarding the Amherst Public Safety Communications Center, Chief Reams stated that a
161 first goal is to maintain a caller satisfaction rating of greater than 90%. There has been a
162 steady increase in caller satisfaction rating reflected in four biennial surveys. The
163 Communications Center has five full-time employees and contingent part-time
164 employees that run the Center 24/7, 365 days a year. In the past seven years
165 approximately \$120,000 has been expended on major repairs and federal grant matches.

166
167 In response to a question from Selectman D'Angelo, chief Reams stated that the most
168 important thing someone can do for a noise disturbance is to make a report. These reports
169 are followed up on by the Police Department. If the behavior is consistent and egregious
170 enough, the Department can follow the state disorderly conduct statute. There needs to be
171 a history and so calling and making a record is important.

172
173 Selectman D'Angelo suggested that in future reports the Department put the total road
174 mileage in Amherst and the mileage of Route 101 and Route 101A, to show how
175 disproportionate these two roads are in terms of traffic safety and Departmental time.

176
177 In response to a question from Selectman Grella, Chief Reams stated that body worn
178 cameras are an emerging market. Body worn cameras would cost about \$30,000 per year
179 for the size of the Department.

180
181 In response to a question from Jim Kuhnert, Chief Reams stated that the community
182 surveys are put together by the Department and the information obtained from them is
183 kept as consistent as possible. Chief Reams also noted that the \$30,000 estimate for body
184 worn cameras is an all-in cost from a rental standpoint.

185
186 In response to a question from Selectman Panasiti Chief Reams stated that the drug turn
187 in station is still available to the public 24/7. Chief Reams noted that in a number of
188 months hundreds of pounds of drugs turned in were sent to the incinerator. He believes
189 this is a very effective process. No questions are asked during the drug turn in process.

190
191 In response to a question from Lisa Eastland, Ways and Means member, Chief Reams
192 stated that the community vulnerability due to porch pirates, Alexa, etc., could be
193 addressed on a larger than individual scale.

194 195 **4.3 Amherst Fire Rescue Strategic Plan for FY22**

196 Fire Chief Matt Conley reviewed the Department's goals with the Board. He explained
197 that, on the call side of the Department, there are 38 members and nine vehicles. On the
198 rescue side there are 39 members. In looking at a five-year member trend, the on-call side
199 is down to 38 members from 41. Within a couple of weeks this number will go back up to
200 42, with a few new recruits. He explained that the rescue membership is much easier to
201 control due to part-time positions.

202
203 Chief Conley stated that COVID-19 has seemed to have an effect on the fire statistics.
204 There were 536 fires in 2019 but only 448 fires so far in 2020. He explained that code
205 enforcement deals with inspections, building plan reviews, site plan reviews, and
206 community education.

207
208 Chief Conley explained that EMS calls are also down this year, presumably due to
209 COVID-19. He believes that without the pandemic these numbers probably would be
210 climbing. He stated that the main type of EMS call complaint is that of falls.

211
212 Chief Conley stated that the Department's goals include staying the course and
213 maintaining a high level of quality service. The Department plans to replace aging
214 apparatuses and retain a third ambulance. Another goal for the Department is for the
215 Town to become a Heart Safe Community and to continue community paramedicine.

216
217 In response to a question from Selectman Brew, Chief Conley stated that the number of
218 structures proposed to be built in some of the new proposed developments could put the
219 medical on-call Department in jeopardy. He also explained that the staffing numbers have
220 decreased, in part, due to the number of hours required for a volunteer position.

221
222 Selectman Brew stated that he would like to look more at the cost numbers and out of
223 town support prior to adding a potential third ambulance.

In response to a question from Selectman D'Angelo, Chief Conley stated that some of the decrease in staffing has come from potential members not being able to find housing in Amherst in a reasonable price range.

Selectman D'Angelo pointed out that the issue of not needing affordable housing in Town has been brought up during certain Planning Board meetings. He would like it noted that the absence of lower priced housing has cost the town some of its volunteer firefighting staff. A paid firefighting force would cost the town well over a million dollars a year.

Selectman Grella suggested that Chief Conley analyze the geographic areas where applications for housing developments are being proposed. This might indicate how these proposed developments would affect the Department and if a third ambulance should be located in a different spot in town.

In response to a question from Lisa Eastland, Chief Conley stated that the Fire Department did not receive any of the online costs for fire permitting and fees.

5. Administration

5.1 Town Administrator's Report

Town Administrator Shankle stated that the Town has started using the new software to create agenda packages. The whole package is now available online for the public.

Town Administrator Shankle stated that Map Lot 5-51 off Amherst Street was sent to the ZBA for a variance regarding access to the lot. The ZBA approved the request on August 18th. The Board must now decide if it wants to grant a waiver in this case, but not until this is sent to the Planning Board for review and comment.

A MOTION was made by Selectman Brew and SECONDED by Selectman D'Angelo to send the request for a backlot on Map Lot 5-51 to the Planning Board before review and comment.

By roll call vote: Selectman Brew – aye; Selectman D'Angelo – aye; Selectman Grella – aye; Selectman Panasiti – aye; Chairman Lyon – aye. 5-0-0; motion carried unanimously.

Town Administrator Shankle stated that Building Official Scott Tenney spoke to DHHS regarding Halloween. DHHS will be conducting a webinar with the New Hampshire Municipal Association on September 30th regarding this issue. He will put this item on the Board's next agenda to discuss further.

Town Administrator Shankle noted that a drought is being experienced by 100% of the state. Also, the proposed developer of the Jacobson property has served the town with a lawsuit.

5.2 Discussion of Election Officials Pay during COVID emergency

Chairman Lyon stated that there are currently four paid election officials; the Town Moderator and three Supervisors of the Checklist. These officials have been paid \$9/hour

for at least the past five to six years. He is proposing an increased rate of pay for these officials and to then tie this increase to COLA increases in the future.

Selectman Brew stated that in recognition of the extra work these officials have taken due to increased absentee ballots from COVID-19, he will be making the following motion retroactive.

A MOTION was made by Selectman Brew and SECONDED by Selectman Grella to increase the rate of pay for the Supervisors of the Checklist and the Town Moderator from \$9/hour to \$12.00/hour, effective July 1, 2020, and to adjust this rate annually by the same percentage given to town employees.

By roll call vote: Selectman Brew – aye; Selectman D’Angelo – aye; Selectman Grella – aye; Selectman Panasiti – aye; Chairman Lyon – aye. 5-0-0; motion carried unanimously.

5.3 Town Hall Reopening Task Force Update

Jennifer Stover, Executive Assistant, explained that the Task Force consists of herself, Chief Matt Conley, Scott Tenney, and Perry Day. The group has met three times, and most recently spoke with Nancy Demers, Town Clerk. She reviewed some of the suggestions the group has discussed in terms of reopening Town Hall, such as: masks to be worn by all residents entering Town Hall and employees, a script for employees to reference when making appointments, two doorbells and two buzzers into the building, a plexiglass divider for the Town Clerk, a limit of five people in the lobby at any one time, and for the ramp to remain at least through the period of time for absentee drop-off ballots. She explained that Board and Committee meetings will remain viz Zoom for the time being, as there’s no current way to limit the number of people who attend. She asked for suggestions on which door into Town Hall should be used for the main entry/exit(s).

Selectman D’Angelo stated that the schools and Library are open. He believes Town Hall should also be open. He agrees with capping the number of people in the lobby at five. He doesn’t believe that there needs to be a separate entrance and exit, but that the front door can be used for both.

In response to a question from Selectman Panasiti, Jennifer Stover stated that, per RSA 41.11.A, the Board has the ability to control if masks are required to be worn in Town Hall.

6. Staff Reports

6.1 APD Sole Source Cruiser Computer Bid

Chief Reams explained that this expenditure is part of the second year of a three-year plan to replace the computer systems in all of the Police cruisers.

A MOTION was made by Selectman D’Angelo and SECONDED by Selectman Grella to approve the sole source bid for Police cruiser computers to Advanced Electronic Design, Inc., for \$12,234,74.

By roll call vote: Selectman Brew – aye; Selectman D’Angelo – aye; Selectman Grella – aye; Selectman Panasiti – aye; Chairman Lyon – aye. 5-0-0; motion carried unanimously.

318
319 **6.2 Stop Sign Ordinance Recommendations**

320 Chief Reams stated that there has been no public comment regarding the public hearings
321 for the proposed stop signs at Douglas Drive and Hickory Drive, Hickory Drive and
322 Maple Drive, and Town Crier Road and Cricket Hill Road.

323
324 *A MOTION was made by Selection Brew and SECONDED by Selectman Panasiti to*
325 *approve and sign the following: Pursuant to the authority granted to the Board of*
326 *Selectmen of the Town of Amherst by virtue of NH RSAs 31:39, 41:11, and 47:17 for the*
327 *purpose of enforcing and regulating traffic, the following traffic control regulation is*
328 *hereby established for the Town of Amherst:*

329
330 *Five (5) STOP SIGNS at the intersections of the following Town of Amherst roads:*
331 *Hickory Drive @ Douglas Drive (north)*
332 *Hickory Drive @ Douglas Drive (south)*
333 *Douglas Drive @ Hickory Drive*
334 *Maple Drive @ Hickory Drive*
335 *Town Crier Road @ Cricket Hill Drive (south)*

336
337 *This ordinance shall take effect on September 14, 2020.*

338
339 *By roll call vote: Selectman Brew – aye; Selectman D’Angelo – aye; Selectman Grella –*
340 *aye; Selectman Panasiti – aye; Chairman Lyon – aye. 5-0-0; motion carried unanimously*

341
342 **6.3 DPW Vehicle Lift**

343 DPW Director, Eric Hahn, explained that the existing DPW vehicle lift is about 5-6 years
344 old. It recently failed inspection and attempts to repair it have been unsuccessful. He
345 stated that the DPW would like a heavier duty machine and solicited four bids. The
346 machine proposed will lift just about all of the DPW vehicles.

347
348 In response to a question from Selectman Panasiti, Eric Hahn stated that this new lift will
349 be moved into the new mechanic’s garage.

350
351 *A MOTION was made by Selectman Panasiti and SECONDED by Selectman Grella that*
352 *NE Auto Lift & Equipment be awarded the purchase and installation contract for the*
353 *vehicle lift specified in DPW RFP 01-21 from the DPW Highway Equipment*
354 *CRF, for \$11,514.00, and that the Town Administrator be authorized to sign related*
355 *documents.*

356 *By roll call vote: Selectman Brew – aye; Selectman D’Angelo – aye; Selectman Grella –*
357 *aye; Selectman Panasiti – aye; Chairman Lyon – aye. 5-0-0; motion carried*
358 *unanimously.*

359
360 **6.4 DPW Heating Oil and Propane Contract Extension**

361 Eric Hahn stated that he is requesting that this contract be extended by one year. The
362 schools moved forward with their own contract for the year, but next year the Town will
363 try to join forces with the schools again, in an effort to save money.

In response to a question from Selectman Brew, Eric Hahn stated that there may have been more of an associated savings, if the Town had joined in with the schools. As it is, this contract will be \$0.50 per gallon more favorable this year in terms of heating oil. This request is for a contract extension which, per contract language, can be extended if both parties agree.

In response to a question from Selectman Panasiti, Chairman Lyon stated that the schools recently had a change in Facilities Manager, which may have led to the miscommunication on this item.

A MOTION was made by Selectman D'Angelo and SECONDED by Selectman Panasiti to extend the Heating Oil and Propane contract for one year with Rymes Oil at a price of \$1.74/gallon and Suburban Propane at a price of \$1.265/gallon.

Discussion:

Selectman Brew stated that he would be voting against this motion because it was not competitively bid.

By roll call vote: Selectman Brew – no; Selectman D'Angelo – aye; Selectman Grella – aye; Selectman Panasiti – no; Chairman Lyon – aye. 3-2-0; motion carried unanimously.

Selectman Panasiti stated that he is concerned that it took years to get a joint contract with the schools, only for it to not be reinstated this year. Chairman Lyon stated that the Board is not in a position to hold the schools accountable for this. Chairman Lyon agreed that he is not happy that this was not competitively bid but is concerned that if this is delayed prices could rise. Selectman Brew stated that he is frustrated that multiple bids could have been sought in the same time it took to receive one for this extension.

7. Approvals

7.1 Payroll, August 27, 2020

A MOTION was made by Selectman D'Angelo and SECONDED by Selectman Panasiti to approve one (1) FY21 Payroll Manifest in the amount of \$231,322.95 dated August 27, 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. 5-0-0; motion carried unanimously.

7.2 ACH Payment to Schools

A MOTION was made by Selectman D'Angelo and SECONDED by Selectman Panasiti to approve one (1) ACH Payment to SAU39 Schools in the amount of \$3,024,202.00 dated September 1, 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. 5-0-0; motion carried unanimously.

7.3 AP1-AP4, Accounts Payable Manifests

A MOTION was made by Selectman D'Angelo and SECONDED by Selectman Panasiti to approve one (1) FY21 Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of \$167,203.78 dated August 27, 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. 5-0-0; motion carried unanimously.

A MOTION was made by Selectman D'Angelo and SECONDED by Selectman Panasiti to approve one (1) FY21 Account Payable Manifest in the amount of \$47,279.40 dated August 28, 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. 5-0-0; motion carried unanimously.

A MOTION was made by Selectman D'Angelo and SECONDED by Selectman Panasiti to approve one (1) FY21 Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of \$231,322.95 dated August 27, 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. 5-0-0; motion carried unanimously.

A MOTION was made by Selectman D'Angelo and SECONDED by Selectman Panasiti to approve one (1) FY21 Payroll Manifest in the amount of \$330.00 dated September 2, 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. 5-0-0; motion carried unanimously.

7.4 Previous Meeting Minutes 8/24/2020

A MOTION was made by Selectman Panasiti and SECONDED by Selectman D'Angelo to approve the meeting minutes of August 24, 2020, as presented.

By roll call vote: Selectman Brew – aye; Selectman D'Angelo – aye; Selectman Grella – aye; Selectman Panasiti – aye; Chairman Lyon – aye. 5-0-0; motion carried unanimously.

8. Action Items

The Board reviewed its action items.

9. Old/New Business

Selectman D'Angelo stated that all of the School Boards met tonight.

A MOTION was made by Selectman Panasiti and SECONDED by Selectman D'Angelo to adjourn the meeting at 9:38pm.

By roll call vote: Selectman Brew – aye; Selectman D'Angelo – aye; Selectman Grella – aye; Selectman Panasiti – aye; Chairman Lyon – aye. 5-0-0; motion carried unanimously.

NEXT MEETING: Monday, September 28, 2020

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<i>Selectman Reed Panasiti</i>	<i>Date</i>