



Town of Amherst, NH

BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES

Barbara Landry Meeting Room
2 Main Street
Monday, October 12, 2020 6:30PM

1 **1. Call to Order**

2 Chairman Peter Lyon called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

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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 and Kristan Patenaude, minute taker

7
8 Ways & Means Committee Members present: Lisa Eastland (Chair), Danielle Pray (co-
9 chair), Scott Tuthill, Matt Seiler, Bill Loscocco, Lori Mix (alternate).

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

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13 Chairman Lyon explained that, pursuant to the State of Emergency declared by the
14 Governor as a result of the COVID19 pandemic and in accordance with his Emergency
15 Order #12, this meeting is authorized to take place electronically. There is no physical
16 location to observe and listen to this meeting. However, in accordance with the
17 Emergency Order, we are:
18 Utilizing Zoom teleconferencing for this meeting. All members of the Board have the
19 ability to communicate during the meeting through this platform and the public has access
20 to contemporaneously listen and if necessary participate in the meeting by dialing +1 301
21 715 8592 and using a webinar ID of 846-5078-3817 or by using the link contained in the
22 agenda posted at amherstnh.gov.

23
24 Notice of the meeting and means to access it were previously posted in accordance with
25 law. Members of the public that have phoned into the meeting can raise their hand by
26 pressing the *9 on their phone, in order to make it known that they would like to speak to
27 the Board. If anyone has a problem accessing the meeting, please call 603-440-8248 for
28 assistance. In the event the public is unable to access the meeting, the meeting will be
29 adjourned and rescheduled.

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

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

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

39 **2. Citizen's Forum – none.**

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41 **3. Scheduled Appointments**

42 **a. Amherst Garden Club – AGC Anniversary Legacy Gift Proposal**

43 Nancy Head and Christy Belvin, of the Amherst Garden Club, presented the proposal to the
44 Board. Nancy Head explained that the Garden Club, as part of its 50th anniversary celebration,
45 is looking to give a legacy gift to the Town. She explained that Christy Belvin has chaired the
46 subcommittee for this, and the group has settled on a granite bench and Kousa dogwood tree.
47 These are proposed to be placed at the corner of Jones Road and Mack Hill Road. Perry Day,
48 DPW, stated that there was once a cherry tree at this site. The bench will be made from a
49 granite slab quarried from Milford in the 1970's. This will give the bench a historic feel and
50 keep with the historic marker already in place. The subcommittee has spoken to all of the
51 neighbors, who are all in agreement with the proposal. The Heritage Commission, Historic
52 District Commission, and Historical Society are also all in agreement with the proposal. She
53 explained that there will be consistent watering of the tree for the first two years, thanks in
54 part to the Garden Club, the DPW, and a couple of neighbors.

55
56 In response to a question from Selectman Panasiti, Nancy Head stated that the Garden Club
57 will work closely with Perry Day regarding the exact location of the tree and bench.
58 Selectman Panasiti noted that the group should take caution in regard to plowing and salt use
59 that may occur nearby.

60
61 *A MOTION was made by Selectman Panasiti and SECONDED by Selectman Grella to accept*
62 *the gift from the Amherst Garden Club.*

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

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66 **b. Bike/Ped Action Committee: 2021 Potential Grant Funding Opportunities**

67 Chris Buchanan, Chair of the Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee, stated that the group
68 has been working since 2018 to identify potential projects in Town and discuss ways to fund
69 them. The group will continue to work to formalize their part in the CIP process and create a
70 Strategic Plan. There are a number of grant opportunities coming up that he would like the
71 Town to consider taking part in, in order to help offset the cost of some of these projects.

72
73 Chris Buchanan explained that one of these grants, the DOT Transportation Alternatives
74 Program (TAP), usually would be administered at the end of this year but is delayed due to
75 COVID-19. This grant gives an 80/20 match and the Committee is deciding if there is a
76 project to pursue for this grant. He stated that a fund with modest amounts in it would bolster
77 the Town's standing when applying for grants, such as this. These grants can be very
78 competitive, and a Town that can show how it would pay for its 20% might be in better
79 standing. Chris Buchanan explained that the Committee might consider creating a Warrant
80 Article to create a Capital Reserve Fund (CRF).

81
82 In response to a question from Chairman Lyon, Chris Buchanan explained that the CRF would
83 be for general purposes, with a primary goal of pursuing grant funding for projects. Chris
84 Buchanan noted that one of the most popular projects for the Committee seems to be a
85 sidepath in the area of the Souhegan High School.

In response to a question from Chairman Lyon, Chris Buchanan explained that, as the Amherst Street sidepath is not yet created, there is no completed project to point to for an example of what a sidepath would look like. Chris Buchanan stated that the Committee would not look to fund another entire project until the Amherst Street sidepath is completed.

The Board agreed that more detail, such as the amount of money intended to fund the CRF and what project or grant it might be seeking, should be included in the proposal. Chris Buchanan agreed to come back before the Board in a couple of weeks with more details and specifics from the Committee.

In response to a question from Selectman Panasiti, Town Administrator Shankle stated that he believes Capital Reserve Funds can be used for projects of this type.

4. Strategic Plan Presentations

4.1 FY22 ACC Strategic Plan

Rob Clemens, Chair of the Amherst Conservation Commission (ACC), presented the Strategic Plan to the Board. He explained that the ACC follows a Conservation Plan that guides its activities and ensures compliance with RSA 36-A. The ACC manages 2,600 acres of land, approximately 13% of Amherst. The ACC has seven strategies for pursuing its mission:

- 1) Influence Zoning and Planning – by providing input to Zoning ordinances, working to ensure that Amherst’s natural resources are addressed in the Master Plan, and advising the Planning Board on CUP applications regarding wetlands and water resources.
- 2) Acquisitions – the ACC uses revenue from receiving 100% of the LUCT funds in order to acquire properties or development rights. The ACC has a prioritization scheme that does not endorse a generic percentage land target. There is some concern on the ACC regarding the variability of LUCT funds and that the Conservation Fund is not as robust as it needs to be in order to acquire certain properties.
- 3) Manage Town Forests – the ACC manages 10 areas, totaling 1,566 acres. The ACC has a Forest Management Plan that the Board will be further briefed on within the next month or so.
- 4) Manage Grasslands – the ACC manages 15 areas in Town, totaling 270 acres, including the most recent Buck Meadow acquisition. The ACC has developed a management plan for these areas.
- 5) Control Invasive Species – the ACC looks to control invasive plant species throughout Amherst. It most recently has worked to clear the edges of the Scott property.
- 6) Low-impact Outdoor Recreation – the ACC’s trails have received tremendous pressure and activity due to COVID-19. Using infrastructure funds, many of the trails have been upgraded, thanks in part to help from the Boy and Girl Scouts and students from the High School. There is also an effort to update signage on ACC properties.
- 7) Public Education & Outreach – the ACC looks to increase public education and outreach through things like updated signage, trail maps, etc.

Rob Clemens explained that the ACC uses its Town budget funds to pay for infrastructure items, professional development, and administrative support. The Conservation Fund is used for acquisitions, surveys, and capital purchases. The proposed FY22 budget has a modest increase, mostly due to items such as increased invasive management, and better outreach methods to the public.

Rob Clemens also noted that a long-time ACC Commissioner, Bruce Beckley, recently passed away. The ACC is memorializing his contributions to the Town and the ACC with a bench and plaque at Grater Woods.

Selectman Brew stated that he believes that the role of the Amherst Conservation Commission takes an increased importance when the Town is seeing increased development. The ACC goals of influencing zoning and planning, strategically acquiring land, properly managing land that has been entrusted to the ACC, and providing the opportunity to hike, bike and provide the opportunity for outdoor winter sports, all benefit the town.

In response to a question from Selectman D'Angelo, Rob Clemens explained that there are other groups that manage land in Town, such as the Audubon Society and Amherst Land Trust. Selectman D'Angelo suggested that the amount of land managed by other groups also be included in the ACC's Plan because that land cannot be used for anything other than conservation purposes. Selectman D'Angelo noted that this means the land cannot be developed and thus cannot be used to increase the number of taxpayers in Town to spread the cost over.

Selectman D'Angelo noted that the ACC's financial strategy seems to be working fine. He agreed with the idea of building up the Conservation Fund in order to look at acquiring some connecting parcels in Town.

Rob Clemens stated that the Buck Meadow acquisition was interesting because it gave the ACC a chance to partner with the Recreation Department.

In response to a question from Selectman Panasiti, Rob Clemens noted that the National Society of Forests has stated that the amount of open space maintained in a Town should be about 25%. The ACC has not used a specific percentage in the past as a goal. Rob Clemens mentioned that about 17% of Amherst is developed, and so a large amount of land is held by private landowners in Town.

In response to a question from Selectman Panasiti, Rob Clemens stated that the ACC has identified approximately \$5 million worth of properties it would like to acquire in Town. The Conservation Fund currently sits at about \$250,000.

In response to a question from Lisa Eastland, Ways & Means Committee Chair, Rob Clemens stated that the ACC does not charge for use of the fields at Buck Meadow and will not take in funds from the Buck Meadow 5k. The ACC will, instead, use the event to capitalize on interest from the public to be centered around educational activities. The ACC is evaluating possible fundraising ideas, or the possibility of requesting voter approval to issue bonds or notes in order to move forward with larger property acquisitions.

4.2 FY22 DPW Strategic Plan

Eric Hahn, DPW Director, presented the DPW's Strategic Plan. He stated that the Department has five targeted outcomes:

- 1) 68% or greater of Amherst roads are rated good according to industry standard pavement condition index (PCI) by 2025

- 2) By 2025, six additional Amherst bridges & water crossings will be built or upgraded to last for 75+ years with the last 3 enrolled in DOT's program
- 3) By 2025 all Amherst Town buildings and outbuildings will be functionally sound and compliant with all appropriate regulations and codes
- 4) By 2020 will have achieved workforce productivity of 90%
- 5) Clean Water Act:
 - a. Continued compliance with EPA issued Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit
 - b. Requires collaboration between DPW and Office of Community Development

Eric Hahn stated that, in regard to roads in Town, the DPW is in year two of a seven-year plan that prioritizes arterials, feeders, thru roads, and then cul-de-sacs. He stated that the DPW has completed half of this year's goal to turn red roads to green, based on evaluation and ratings. This year's target will be exceeded when Amherst Street is completed this spring. The ultimate goal is to have 68% of road miles rated green by 2026.

Eric Hahn explained that there are 20 bridges and water crossings in Amherst. Three of these are not under the State Bridge Aid program and needed repairs will need to be entirely supported by the Town. One each of these bridges will be done in FY22, FY23, and FY25. If the Town continues to add \$200,000 to the Bridge CRF each year through FY26, this should cover the three large culverts and three bridges that need to be repaired. He stated that he has met with residents to discuss concerns for the Thornton Ferry I bridge and the Mont Vernon Road bridge. The three large culverts in Town are being monitored, with no significant deterioration observed. He explained that the Boston Post Road bridge, over the Souhegan River, will be up for maintenance next year.

In regard to Town buildings, Eric Hahn stated that there will be collaboration between the DPW and Recreation Department to determine what the needs and functionality of the Buck Meadow clubhouse will be. The Town Hall chimney has been capped, sealed, and filled with perlite to stabilize the brick deterioration. The DPW has also completed numerous building adaptations, due to COVID-19.

Due to COVID-19 concerns, the DPW is currently looking into renting an office trailer in order to separate the DPW crew into two separate groups for the upcoming winter. Using the new Mobile 311 management system, the DPW has achieved workforce productivity of 90.3%. To date, there have been over 1,751 work orders entered into the system, and 1,537 of them have been completed. The system also allows the DPW to track the number of hours worked on COVID-19 related items, and the amount of salt/sand being used. Using the system, the DPW has been able to significantly reduce the Town's financial and environmental impact from storms.

The FY22 goals include: updating the DPW Policies/Procedure Handbook, development and implementation of promotion matrix, improve file management systems, refine winter operations, and renew the vehicle/equipment lease-purchase plan.

Selectman Brew stated that the DPW directly and indirectly impacts Amherst businesses and residents on multiple fronts. He explained that it is honestly easier to see this impact when things are not going well. If important items are neglected, it can take a while for this to become apparent. Fortunately, he doesn't believe there is a concern on either front. He believes that Eric has laid out a plan that will not just maintain the status quo, but will definitely result in improved roads, bridges, buildings and other town facilities. The stormwater activities should also improve water quality. And finally, the work that the DPW is doing to increase productivity is something that will benefit all residents and businesses. While not a strategic issue, he would encourage Eric and Cheryl to analyze how we fund replacement vehicles and major DPW equipment and report back in two weeks as a part of the budget. He would be happy and like to be a part of this analysis.

In response to a question from Selectman D'Angelo, Eric Hahn stated that the DPW has managed to get to almost all of the roadwork as planned for this year, aside from the delay with Amherst Street. Eric Hahn explained that, when a road is rebuilt, drainage issues are also addressed. Selectman D'Angelo noted that the plan is to have 90+% of all roads listed as green or yellow by the end of the 7-year plan.

In response to a question from Selectman Grella, Eric Hahn stated that the DPW's plan is to complete work on all three of the large water-crossing culverts in Town by FY26. Two of the red listed bridges in Town are slated to be completed by FY25; the third one, on Brook Road, will be added to the plan by FY25.

In response to a question from Selectman Panasiti, Eric Hahn stated that the State checks on closed bridges each year. Selectman Panasiti suggested that the DPW look at the layout of the Transfer Station and how other towns are laid out.

In response to a question from Chairman Lyon, Eric Hahn agreed that the Transfer Station roof and new deck are on hold, pending a determination of the layout configuration. Eric Hahn explained that the plan to keep green roads green, includes a crack-seal contract and a roadside mower.

In response to a question from Lisa Eastland, Eric Hahn stated that the Souhegan River bridge on Boston Post Road is currently only slated for maintenance. The approaches on both sides of the bridge are very constrained due to conservation and property boundaries. He believes that the guardrails are as far back as possible, while still being located on Town property.

In response to a question from Lisa Eastland, Eric Hahn explained that he has met with Chris Buchanan and George Bower, of the Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee, regarding other painting schemes that might be used in place of double yellow lines. He will meet again with that group, as well as the Traffic Safety Committee.

4.3 FY22 Admin & Finance Strategic Plan

Town Administrator Shankle and Finance Director, Cheryl Eastman, stated that the two Departments work closely together to achieve their goals. Town Administrator Shankle stated that the Administration Department's strategic goals include: continuous improvement of service delivery, improved communications and engagement, and attracting and retaining

quality employees. Cheryl Eastman stated that the Finance Department's strategic goals include: accuracy, efficiency, and transparency.

Town Administrator Shankle stated that the Departments' main budget items are software related. The agenda software aims to make the agenda process much faster and more transparent. Cheryl Eastman explained that the Springbook software for the Finance Department covers all items addressed by the Finance Department. For FY22, the license fees for the finance software are about \$47,000.

Selectman Brew stated that having the full agenda and finance information available online for the public increases transparency and is better for budgeting. He believes an update to the personnel policy would be beneficial. He also believes that a municipal Strategic Plan will support the Master Plan, and vice versa. If the schools also had a Strategic Plan, there would be three documents to look to regarding the overall oversight of the Town.

In response to a comment from Chairman Lyon, Town Administrator Shankle stated that none of the proposed budget numbers are new to the budget. These items are already included in this year's budget.

In response to a question from Lisa Eastland, Town Administrator Shankle stated that he believes any number of users accessing the budget information online makes the new system worthwhile. He will be able to know the number of hits made on the site to access that information. Cheryl Eastman noted that transparency is just a small part of the GovMax software. The program is a huge timesaver for getting key indicators and putting together the entire budget.

Cheryl Eastman noted that the Zoom meeting window for the Ways & Means Committee has expired during the time of this meeting. The Ways & Means Committee can therefore not meet at this time but said she would look for an alternative time if necessary.

5. Administration

5.1 General Administrative Updates

Town Administrator Shankle stated that the doorbells and remote unlocking suggested by the Reopening of Town Hall Task Force seem to be working. Each counter has a bucket for clean/used pens and alcohol wipes to clean them. There is updated signage at the entrance.

Town Administrator Shankle noted that Gail Stout is yet unsure about the tax rate. He suggested that the Board might need to hold a special meeting next week in order to determine this before the tax bills go out at the end of October.

Town Administrator Shankle stated that there seems to be a bit of a spike in COVID-19 cases in Amherst at the moment. He received an email from Bill Paxton, a resident, asking why masks are not being made mandatory at the Transfer Station, especially during a potential spike in cases.

Town Administrator Shankle mentioned that there will be no Town-sponsored activities for Halloween this year. The Board has set a time for trick-or-treating and has made police

support available. The hope is that everyone will follow the guidelines as outlined by the State and CDC.

Town Administrator Shankle noted that the price per ton of winter salt will remain the same as last year. He also gave some guidance, per RSA's and ordinances, for political signage around Town. He suggested that, if someone believes a sign is improperly placed, that person first contact the Community Development Office.

5.2 PD Renovation Change Orders

Chairman Lyon stated that four change orders were received last week in regard to the Police Station Renovation. He questioned how the Board would like to handle hearing about potential change orders moving forward. He assumes that these will be funded out of the Police Station renovation contingency line.

Town Administrator Shankle stated that there have been conversations between himself, the architect on the project, and the Police Chief. The architect has stated that these change orders look a bit high for this stage of the project. The changes are mostly due to a new hot water heater that will be 10x more efficient for the building. The anticipated change orders to come will be about double to triple the current \$11,000 in change orders. While it is unknown if there will be any savings found on the project, the intention is to not go over \$30,000 worth of change orders.

The Board agreed that it would like to be notified of these change orders but does not feel the need to approve each one. Selectman D'Angelo suggested that, if the contingency line reaches about 70% of its total, the Board be notified.

6. Staff Reports

6.1 Signing of Revised MS-535 Form

A MOTION was made by Selectman Panasiti and SECONDED by Selectman Brew to sign the revised MS-535 form.

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.

6.2 Town Hall pave gravel parking on Courthouse

Eric Hahn stated that is he requesting permission to pave the small strip parking lot on the right-hand side of Town Hall, on Courthouse Road. He explained that this is one of the only parking lots in Town that slopes towards the road. Deicing material settles into the gravel, leading it to be treated more frequently. There is also an issue when the area thaws, with tracking sand into Town Hall. He believes this will cost less than \$6,000.

Selectman Brew suggested that Eric Hahn reach out to the Cemetery Trustees and the Historic District Commission. He supports this proposal, as long as all relevant entities are on board.

In response to a question from Selectman Panasiti, Eric Hahn stated that the main reason for this proposal is the slope of the lot and the fact that the parking area is intended for those entering Town Hall safely.

A MOTION was made by Selectman Brew and SECONDED by Selectman D'Angelo that the DPW be authorized to pave the Town Hall parking along Courthouse Road, for a price not to exceed \$6,000, with the concurrence of the Historic District Commission.
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. Approvals

7.1 Accounts Payable Manifests and Meeting Minutes September 28, 2020

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 \$216,259.00 dated September 29, 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 \$67,651.59 dated September 29, 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 \$3,024,202.00 dated October 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. 5-0-0; motion carried unanimously.

A MOTION was made by Selectman Panasiti and SECONDED by Selectman D'Angelo to approve the meeting minutes of September 28, 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 explained that the SAU's Joint Facilities Committee recently presented its options and ideas for a new elementary school and updated middle school. These building are proposed to cost quite a bit of money, and the schools will also be looking to hire additional teachers to fill the new rooms.

In response to a question from Selectman Panasiti, Town Administrator Shankle stated that the Town would provide information to its citizens regarding a COVID-19 hotspot, if one is discovered. There is no such information at this time.

A MOTION was made by Selectman Panasiti and SECONDED by Selectman D'Angelo to adjourn the meeting at 10:01pm.

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

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416 **NEXT MEETING: Monday, October 26, 2020**

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Selectman Reed Panasiti

Date