



# **Town of Amherst, NH**

## **BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES**

**Barbara Landry Meeting Room**  
**2 Main Street**  
**Monday, August 15, 2022, 2:00PM**

### **Call to Order**

Chairman Peter Lyon called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

Attendees: Chairman Peter Lyon, Selectman Bill Stoughton, Selectman John D'Angelo, Selectman Tom Grella, and Selectman Danielle Pray

Other persons present during Workshop: Town Administrator Dean Shankle, Department Heads Chief Mark Reams, Chief Matt Conley, Amy Lapointe, Debbie Bender, Gail Stout, Nic Strong, Craig Fraley, Executive Assistant Jennifer Stover, and facilitator Mike Akillian.

### **Workshop**

Mike Akillian shared a Power Point as a tool for guiding the Board discussion of the Board of Selectmen's Strategic Plan in an effort to review "quality of life" priorities. There was a decision to not include the schools and education in the assessment.

The Board was led through a series of eight broad categories and were asked for their individual thoughts. Each Selectman identified the category as a green, yellow, or red level of concern.

### **Public Health and Safety (PD, FIRE, DPW)**

Tom Grella (TG): Green; "we have 24 hour a day coverage"

Danielle Pray (DP): Green; with concern regarding enforcement of zoning issues

John D'Angelo (JD): Green; but has questions about EMS/Fire staffing numbers

Bill Stoughton (WS): Green; concerned about missing single point of failure, being prepared for a catastrophic event, and concerned about recruiting and retaining personnel (Peter Lyon commented this is a discussion point that should be revisited)

Peter Lyon (PL): Green

### **Infrastructure (including cemeteries, technology, buildings)**

DP: Green; questions about technology, ransomware attacks, digitization of records

JD: Yellow; questions about updated computer technology, water and sewer issues

WS: Yellow; so much is old and in need of work, we have improvement on roads but more needs to be done, more improvement with bridges- constant surprises, need for space for personnel and records, need to be planning for the future of our infrastructure

TG: high yellow

PL: Green; tech is good, roads and bridges are a concern

**Financial Condition (Do we have the money to pay our bills, do we have debt, etc.)**

JD: Green; we have money in the bank, are paying our bills on time, getting better at understanding our financial status, almost out of debt  
WS: Green; overall tax rate is high (not municipal), ability to manage inflation  
TG: Green; almost done with road debt  
DP: Green; Finance is in better shape, tax collection is in good shape, not talking about affordability  
PL: Green; still have a ways to go- property taxes and affordability overall, concerned about school tax piece

**Community Services (to both residents and business)**

WS: Yellow; not Departments, but state mandates, personnel, enforcement- violations of our own rules  
TG: Yellow; Signs, ordinances need to be looked at  
JD: Yellow; good at basics, no community center, no senior center, no local transportation services  
DP: Green; We offer a lot through Rec and the Library, yellow for personnel and state mandates  
PL: Green; good things happening at counters in all departments, code enforcement, staffing issues, communication needs improvement, getting the news out

**Town Character/Heritage**

TG: Green; increase in challenges to HDC  
DP: Green; good progress driven by zoning and Master Plan  
JD: Green; we are doing as good as we can, struggling for direction  
WS: Green; strength in our volunteers and our committees, we need to support them  
PL: Green

**Environment**

DP: Green; PFAS issues  
JD: Yellow to red; PFAS, milfoil, blue-green algae at Baboosic, issues with water tests in the Souhegan River; MS4 plan is in place, and Baboosic Lake septic system has made a big difference  
WS: Yellow; same comments as John  
TG: Yellow; irrigation difficulties and the drought concerns  
PL: Yellow; mainly PFAS issue

**Housing (thoughts must be conveyed to Planning Board)**

JD: Yellow, moving to red; school taxation and affordability, what happens if we lose our Volunteer Fire Department if no young people can live in town? There is nothing for empty nesters to downsize to

WS: Yellow; we have an ordinance that allows for higher density, need clear consensus for future housing, have left to free market but we should have our own plan  
TG: Yellow; affordable for fixed income?  
DP: Yellow; affordability for long-time residents, no where for them to go  
PL: Yellow; look at ordinances, free market but do more for diversification

### **Recreation (not just the Rec Department and the Library)**

WS: Green  
TG: Green; concerts on the green well attended, lots of 5ks  
DP: Green; trails and open space, offerings at the library and rec department are broad  
JD: Yellow; flat field shortage, never replaced lost baseball diamond  
PL: Green

### **Priorities**

WS: Environment, Infrastructure  
TG: Environmental, Housing  
JD: Infrastructure, Community Services, what can we influence with Housing?  
DP: Housing, Infrastructure, Community Services  
PL: Infrastructure, Environmental, and don't want to lose sight of Public Safety importance

The Department Heads were asked for their comments and questions with about 30 minutes of the two-hour session remaining.

Mike Akillian reviewed for the Selectmen Strategic Plan discussion points shared at a previous meeting with the Department Heads points including comparable data, the risks of not taking certain action, SWOT including follow-up action, and a comprehensive PowerPoint.

Matt Conley commented that this was a good first step and it was helpful to hear the Board's priorities.

Nic Strong asked for some clarification on budget related to personnel and care of staff and volunteers.

Chair Peter Lyon asked Mike Akillian if those concerns should be part of the strategic plan. Mike replied that the value/cost matrix should be applied. Nic commented that without volunteers and employees, "none of this works". Selectman Bill Stoughton said that if there are issues attracting and retaining employees, he wanted to hear about it. Chair Peter Lyon responded that challenging decisions would have to be made, and that we need to make sure that we are taking care of the staff we have right now or we will find ourselves spending time hiring.

Town Administrator Dean Shankle asked Mike for clarification of Selectmen priorities and a time for them to discuss the individual comments and come up with a list of comprehensive priorities for the Board of Selectmen.

Nic Strong, Amy Lapointe and Craig Fraley asked if a template was going to be shared and Dean Shankle said he would share it the following day.

Mike Akillian reminded the Department Heads that there “needed to be enough meat for the Board to understand their Strategic Plan” and that their Strategic Plan was based on the priorities set by the Board of Selectmen. This is the direction we are headed with the Strategic Plan process.

The Selectmen agreed to find a time to meet again to further discuss individual perspectives and identify Board priorities. After a discussion of availability, Chair Peter Lyon determined that the Board would reconvene August 19, 2022 at 2:00pm to continue this discussion.

*A MOTION was made by Selectman D’Angelo and SECONDED by Selectman Grella to adjourn the meeting at 4:16pm.*

*Voting: 5-0-0; motion carried unanimously.*

**NEXT MEETING: Friday, August 19, 2022**

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Selectman Danielle Pray*

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