



Town of Amherst, NH
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES
Barbara Landry Meeting Room
2 Main Street
Monday, December 06, 2021, 6:30PM

1. Call to Order

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

Attendees: Chairman Peter Lyon, Selectman Dwight Brew (remote), Selectman John D'Angelo, Selectman Tom Grella, and Selectman Danielle Pray.

Ways & Means Committee present: Mike Parisi, Diane Leyton, Lisa Eastland, Wendy Rannenberg, Bill Loscocco, and Jim Kuhnert.

Also present: Town Administrator Dean Shankle and Recording Secretary Kristan Patenaude (remote).

2. Pledge of Allegiance – led by Jim Kuhnert.

3. Citizen's Forum – none.

4. Scheduled Appointments

4.1 AFR Association President John Leonard, and continued discussion of the Solar System donation Conservation Commission, and presentation of donation

Fire Chief Conley explained that this anonymous donation was made to the Amherst Fire Rescue Association. There will be a public hearing for acceptance of this donation on December 20, 2021. He explained that the Department currently has an application in to the Historic District Commission to hear this item on December 16, 2021. Chief Conley explained that the cost of replacement panels has been noted to be \$3,250. The warranty for the panels is 25 years, the warranty for the inverter is 12 years, and the warranty for workmanship on the panels is 12 years, or if the panels drop below a certain tolerance.

Selectman D'Angelo stated that he would like to know the cost of disposal of the panels at end of life.

Selectman Pray asked if a representative from the solar panel company could potentially be available to answer questions at the public hearing. Chief Conley stated that he will try to arrange this.

Mr. Leonard noted that the anonymous donor is hoping for the Fire Department to accept the donated funds for the solar panels in this year for a tax write-off. He explained that the

38 Association won't accept the funds until the Town has accepted the solar panels. Chairman
39 Lyon explained these decisions could be made at the December 20, 2021, meeting.

41 **4.2 Trygve Halverson, Granite Group Benefits**

42 Town Administrator Shankle explained that the Board recently discussed looking at seeking
43 new bids for the Town's health insurance. He explained that he found a consultant to help the
44 town, Granite Group Benefits.

45
46 Mr. Halverson explained that his company is an employment benefits broker out of
47 Manchester. His company works with a number of municipalities and school districts on a
48 consulting basis. The process would be to analyze the Town's current benefits, gather bids,
49 and recommend plans to the Town. The group would also help to educate employees as to any
50 changes made to their health insurance plans. The quote for Tier 1 services is \$10,000, with an
51 additional \$5,000 option for Tier 2 services.

52
53 Town Administrator Shankle noted that the Board may need to waive competitive bidding and
54 move forward with the proposal from Granite Group Benefits, if it would like to see this item
55 completed this year.

56
57 Mr. Halverson explained that insurance companies usually request decisions by the end of
58 March, giving his group approximately three months to do the analysis and go to market. He
59 believes this is a sufficient time period.

60
61 Selectman Grella noted that the Police Department union contract regarding insurance
62 coverage will need to be included as part of this project.

63
64 Selectman D'Angelo stated that he would prefer to see items of this sort handled by a Human
65 Resources employee for the Town. He stated that he would prefer potentially spending funds
66 on hiring a Human Resources person, than on a consultant for this project. He noted that he
67 would like to hear more about potentially hiring a Human Resources employee during the
68 next budget cycle.

69
70 In response to a question from Selectman Pray, Mr. Halverson explained that his group
71 recommends completing this type of analysis annually for their clients. However,
72 municipalities may be able to push this to a three-year review window.

73
74 In response to a question from Selectman Pray, Mr. Halverson stated that his group deals with
75 small and large companies, with a core group of customers that usually have employee
76 numbers ranging from 40-100.

77
78 In response to a question from Selection Pray, Mr. Halverson explained that municipalities
79 can decide to maintain their general level of coverage, which usually includes high premiums,
80 or make a shift to lower premiums, with potential out-of-pocket costs.

81
82 Selectman Brew stated that he is pleased with this proposal. He explained that the Tier 1
83 quoted cost is less than 1% of the health insurance cost currently in the budget. He noted that
84 a Human Resources employee would be a recurring cost and much more expensive than the

current proposal. He believes the Town is better off hiring experts if it needs assistance in certain areas. He explained that the Town could reach out to the SAU regarding information they may have on health insurance, both for their employees and what other school districts and towns are doing.

A MOTION was made by Selectman Brew and SECONDED by Selectman Pray to waive competitive bidding and award the contract to Granite Group Benefits for a Tier 1 study in the amount of \$10,000.

Voting: 4-0-1; motion carried [J. D'A abstaining].

5. Acceptance of Donation to Conservation Commission

Chairman Lyon noted that the Board received feedback from the Municipal Association that the previously discussed donation to the Conservation Commission does not require a public hearing, but instead consent from the Conservation Commission and the Board.

It was noted that the donors are Bill and Candice Rapf, who live in Town.

A MOTION was made by Selectman Brew and SECONDED by Selectman Grella to accept the recommendation of the Conservation Commission to accept the generous donation of \$15,000 from the Rapfs to the Amherst Conservation Commission Gift Account.

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

6. Administration

6.1 Administrative Updates

Town Administrator Shankle explained that the schools recently updated their information on impact fees. He sent a copy of this to Bruce Mayberry, who previously worked on an impact fee update for the Town. Mr. Mayberry stated that it would cost approximately \$600-\$1000 to update the impact fee figures for the school portion of the fees.

Selectman D'Angelo stated that he would like to wait and see if the proposed school bond passes at Town Meeting before paying to potentially update the impact fees. He also noted that he would like to see this as a future agenda item.

Selectman Brew stated that when the Board previously approved impact fees, it committed to reviewing these annually. This review was delayed in order to receive CIP numbers. He is concerned with continuing to stretch out this review. He noted that the Master Plan update is showing a potential 15% growth over the next 20 years, which is not an insignificant amount. He explained that, if the school bond passes, he believes it would be good for the Town to be in a position to implement revised impact fees instead of waiting to complete the review at that time.

Town Administrator Shankle explained that the original report stated that the School District was working on updating their plans, and when the update was complete, impact fees should be reviewed.

Chairman Lyon stated that he would like for this to be a future agenda item.

Town Administrator Shankle and Bill Stoughton addressed the Board regarding ARPA funds. Mr. Stoughton explained that there are various categories for ARPA funds, with one being lost revenue. This category takes into account that communities may not have received as much revenue during the pandemic, as they would have otherwise. ARPA funds can be used to make up that lost revenue and the Town can spend this money broadly. He explained that he is hoping to present more on this to the Board within 2-4 weeks.

6.2 Budget & Warrant Updates

Town Administrator Shankle explained that he ran the proposed budget numbers by previous finance director for the Town, Cheryl Eastman. He explained that the current proposal shows a 4.3% increase over last year's budget. He noted that the health insurance company previously laid out a not-to-exceed number of 10%, however this has recently been updated to 13.97%, with no final figures yet. He also noted that the previously proposed Souhegan Regional Landfill District (SRLD) budget for the Town will be reduced by \$14,700.

Selectman Brew explained that the SRLD has an annual budget that begins January 1st. He has a concern that the original proposed budget may be needed for the second half of next year if rates increase.

Selectman Brew stated that at the next meeting he would like to see an estimate for how property taxes will increase based on the proposed budget and warrant articles.

Selectman D'Angelo stated that he is okay with reducing the SRLD budget line item. The Town may need to come up with extra funds if rates increase, but that is true for any line item that has the potential to be increased by inflation. He stated that he is more concerned with the health insurance numbers that are well over the originally proposed not-to-exceed number. He believes this may be grounds for replacing the Town's insurance provider.

Chairman Lyon noted that the next Board meeting will be the last before the public hearing on the budget.

The Board discussed the proposed warrant article for the elderly, blind, and disabled exemption increase. Selectman Brew explained that the estimated tax impact of this warrant article is approximately \$0.03, or a total of \$77,000 on the budget which equates approximately to the drop this year as a result of the revaluation.

The Board discussed the proposed warrant articles for the multimodal capital reserve funds (CRFs).

Diane Leyton, Ways & Means member, noted that many people are financially strapped this year and questioned if this warrant article is an appropriate expenditure in the face of that.

Chris Buchanan, Chair of the Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee, stated that this warrant article is being proposed due to timing with already proposed road reconstruction and grant funding.

Chairman Lyon noted that there may be confusion with the two proposed multimodal CRF warrant articles, as they appear to do the same thing but are for different amounts. He believes that the newly proposed warrant article may need to be written differently, to be specific to the design engineering for that project.

Lisa Eastland, Ways & Means member, questioned why funds for these multimodal projects are not being placed into the actual budget if the Town seems to embrace that it wants safer transportation in Town for pedestrians and bicyclists. Chairman Lyon explained that this is an important enough project that he believes the Town's opinion on this specific item needs to be sought through a vote on a warrant article.

In response to a question from Selectman Brew, Mr. Buchanan explained that the proposed warrant article funds are to pursue a design engineering opportunity that will better allow for the pursuit of a grant. If a grant is received, the \$485,000 currently scheduled for road reconstruction of the Village streets, plus a local match amount, would lead to approximately \$1,940,000 to rebuild several streets in Town in an alternate fashion. The proposed \$98,000 in the warrant article for engineering would give the Town a dramatic benefit when applying to grants.

Selectman Brew noted that he believes engineering on multimodal projects should be done up front in order to better understand what the total cost of the project will be.

In response to a question from Lisa Eastland regarding how the Master Plan folds into this process if the Town shows through the Master plan that it wants more multimodal safe travel. Chairman Lyon explained that boards and commissions in Town are guided by the Master Plan, but it is not a mechanism to say in which direction projects should be funded.

7. Staff Reports

7.1 Swap Shop Shed Inventory Policy

Deputy DPW Director Eric Slosek explained that the current swap shop shed inventory policy allows inventory to be discarded every week. This policy was well-intentioned but is unpopular with residents and the swap shop shed volunteers. He is proposing the policy be changed to allow volunteers to manage the inventory. Items that appear unwanted will be separated into a designated area and discarded by the DPW. Items that are prohibited will also be discarded.

Selectman D'Angelo suggested that this should be posted in writing on the still good shed, Town website, and Facebook. Mr. Slosek explained that a sign has been ordered for the swap shop. He is trying to start an informational campaign to alert the public as to which items are prohibited and should not be brought to the swap shop shed.

Mr. Slosek explained that this proposed policy was shared with the swap shop shed volunteers to create a collaborative approach.

A MOTION was made by Selectman Grella to accept the revised "Swap Shop Shed Operating Policy" dated November 22, 2021.

Discussion:

Town Administrator Shankle explained that Primex, the Town's insurance company, has a concern regarding liability of volunteers for discarding certain items. He believes that the Town should be responsible for this liability.

Mr. Slosek explained that he and the volunteers mutually agreed that they would use their discretion on items that are not prohibited, but that prohibited items would be discarded.

Selectman Pray agreed with Town Administrator Shankle that liability should be explicit in the policy.

Mr. Slosek suggested changing the language of the last bullet of the policy to read:
"Unwanted Swap Shop inventory separated by the volunteers will be discarded on by DPW staff on Wednesdays. Any prohibited inventory will also be discarded by DPW staff."

Selectman Pray stated that she would like the language to be more explicit but was also okay with moving this forward at this time, with future review possible, if needed.

Chairman Lyon asked that Mr. Slosek's proposed language be added to the policy, and that future addendums can be reviewed by the Board.

Seconded by Selectman D'Angelo.

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

7.2 Boston Post Road Culvert Update

Mr. Slosek stated that both culverts have now been removed from the Boston Post Road project area and new pipes have been installed. A third 24" pipe was installed to help with the flood level of the Brook. The project is moving faster than anticipated. He is cautiously optimistic that the road may be paved by the end of next week and guardrails installed. It is possible that the road may be open to thru traffic after this time. He noted that the project estimate from Continental Paving has been updated to reflect a construction estimate cost of \$296,000, much lower than originally anticipated.

7.3 Amherst Street Side Path project update

Mr. Slosek noted that the western portion of the Amherst Street sidepath project is considered to be from Boston Post Road to the Milford town line. The eastern portion of this project is from Boston Post Road to Courthouse Road. He noted that the western portion of the sidepath has been completed, aside from minor cleanup work that will be done in the spring. The western portion of the project cost approximately \$341,000. Part of the increase to the originally proposed cost is due to the fact that the DPW made a decision during construction to physically separate the section of the sidepath from Founder's Way to Juniper Drive with curbing, instead of simply delineating it with paint markings. The installed granite curbing is a more preferred best management method for a safe side path. This curbing caused an increase of \$35,000 to the project.

Mr. Slosek noted that completing the eastern portion of the project will cost approximately \$75,000. This estimate does not include work required by the State for a pedestrian crosswalk and signal.

The Board agreed that the decisions made by the DPW during the project were the correct ones, even though they increased the budget.

Selectman Pray voiced concern regarding the estimated cost to complete the eastern portion of the project. She stated that she would like for voters to decide if they want to spend \$75,000 on this portion of the project.

Mr. Slosek noted that if the design engineering had been completed prior to the start of this project, a more accurate estimated cost would have been known. The cost for the crosswalk and signal for the eastern portion is yet unknown.

Selectman Brew made a brief statement: "As a Board, we were approached by the Bike-Ped committee a couple of years about a bike-ped side path from the intersection of Courthouse Road and Amherst Street to the Milford town line on Amherst Street. The Amherst DPW and the Bike-Ped Committee had come up with a rough estimate of \$287,000 for this project after looking at a number of key elements. This project was put before the voters in March of 2020 and the project was approved.

Because the engineering work and survey work for this project was not done in advance but was included as a part of the warrant article, the engineering work and survey led to a number of changes that had cost impacts. The sidepath needed to be constructed primarily on the north side of Amherst Street, as it was not practical to work around the utility poles on the south side of the street as initially planned. Only minimal granite curbing was initially envisioned, and the project could have been built with minimal granite curbing. However, for safety reasons, it was decided to add granite curbing whenever the side path was less than five feet from the roadway. While not absolutely required, this additional granite curbing added \$37,000 to the project cost.

While an overrun is not desirable, I think the decisions made during construction were reasonable and have resulted in a safe and useful side path. Although not a topic for tonight's meeting, my preference would be to complete this project to Courthouse Road as initially planned.

In retrospect, we should have put this before the voters in two phases where the first phase would have performed the initial engineering and survey work. Once this work was done, we would have had fairly accurate numbers to present to the voters for the construction of this project."

Selectman Grella noted that the total cost for the western portion of the project is approximately \$55,000 more than what was approved at Town Meeting. There is also the request to add an additional \$75,000 to complete the eastern portion of the project. He believes this needs to go back to the taxpayers for their approval.

Chairman Lyon noted that he believes the right decisions were made during the project and that this is an important lesson in completing design engineering up front to get a reliable projected cost.

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318 **7.4 Sale of un-needed, used equipment from Buck Meadow Conservation &**
319 **Recreation Area**

320 Craig Fraley, Recreation Department Director, stated that there are three pieces of equipment
321 unused by the Department that he is looking to sell. These include one hydroinjector, one
322 greens aerator, and one greens mower, commonly used on putting greens.

323
324 *A MOTION was made by Selectman Brew and SECONDED by Selectman D'Angelo to*
325 *approve the sale of the three used pieces of equipment through auction at*
326 *www.municibid.com.*

327 *Voting: 5-0-0; motion carried unanimously.*
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329 **8. Approvals**

330 **8.1 AP, Payroll, Minutes**

331 ***Payroll***

332 *A MOTION was made by Selectman D'Angelo and SECONDED by Selectman Pray to*
333 *approve one (1) FY21 Payroll Manifest in the amount of \$1,412.91 dated November 30, 2021,*
334 *subject to review and audit.*

335 *Voting: 5-0-0; motion carried unanimously.*
336

337 *A MOTION was made by Selectman D'Angelo and SECONDED by Selectman Pray to*
338 *approve one (1) FY21 Payroll Manifest in the amount of \$255,250.27 dated December 2,*
339 *2021, subject to review and audit.*

340 *Voting: 5-0-0; motion carried unanimously.*
341

342 ***Accounts Payable***

343 *A MOTION was made by Selectman D'Angelo and SECONDED by Selectman Pray to*
344 *approve one (1) FY21 Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of \$30,334.79 dated*
345 *December 1, 2021, subject to review and audit. (NH DMV)*

346 *Voting: 5-0-0; motion carried unanimously.*
347

348 *A MOTION was made by Selectman D'Angelo and SECONDED by Selectman Pray to*
349 *approve one (1) FY21 Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of \$3,176,201.00 dated*
350 *December 1, 2021, subject to review and audit. (Schools)*

351 *Voting: 5-0-0; motion carried unanimously.*
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353 *A MOTION was made by Selectman D'Angelo and SECONDED by Selectman Pray to*
354 *approve one (1) FY21 Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of \$717,159.18 dated*
355 *November 24, 2021, subject to review and audit. (Vendors)*

356 *Voting: 5-0-0; motion carried unanimously.*
357

358 *A MOTION was made by Selectman Pray and SECONDED by Selectman D'Angelo to*
359 *approve the Board of Selectmen meeting minutes of November 22, 2021, as amended.*

360 *Voting: 5-0-0; motion carried unanimously.*
361

362 **8.2 Assessing**

363 ***Abatement Request***

A. The subject property is a conventional style single-family home on a 1.4-acre parcel. The reason for the abatement application is that an unfinished half story was mistakenly added to the area above the garage. This area is completely open and does not have an attic or half story. After removing the unfinished half story from the area above the garage, the assessment is reduced by \$7,400 from \$638,000 to \$630,600. This would result in an abatement in the amount of \$157.69.

*A MOTION was made by Selectman Brew and SECONDED by Selectman Grella to approve the 2021 abatement in the amount of \$157.69 for Map 017 Lot 070-000.
Voting: 5-0-0; motion carried unanimously.*

Veteran Tax Credit

B. The assessor reviewed the attached Veteran Tax Credit Application provided and recommends granting this credit.

*A MOTION was made by Selectman Brew and SECONDED by Selectman D'Angelo to approve the Veteran Tax Credit for tax year 2022 in the amount of \$500 for Map 003, Lot 086-015.
Voting: 5-0-0; motion carried unanimously.*

Land Use Change Tax

C. The lot was purchased on 11/15/2021 and is less than 10 acres. The Land Use Change Tax in the amount of \$29,000 represents 10% of the full and true market value of \$290,000.

*A MOTION was made by Selectman Brew and SECONDED by Selectman D'Angelo to approve the Land Use Change Tax in the amount of \$29,000 for Tax Map 005 Lot 059-027.
Voting: 5-0-0; motion carried unanimously.*

8. Action Items

The Board reviewed its action items.

9. Old/New Business

Town Administrator Shankle explained that MRI has sent over a resume for a potential Finance Director. If this applicant does not work out, the position will need to be readvertised for.

Selectman Brew stated that the Master Plan Steering Committee will meet on next Monday. The Planning Board will meet next Wednesday.

Selectman D'Angelo stated that the Amherst School Board was meeting concurrently with this meeting.

Selectman Pray stated that the Recreation Commission will be meeting tomorrow.

409 A MOTION was made by Selectman D'Angelo and SECONDED by Selectman Grella to
410 adjourn the meeting at 8:47pm.
411 Voting: 5-0-0; motion carried unanimously.

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413 **NEXT MEETING: Monday, December 20, 2021**

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418

Selectman Danielle Pray

Date