



Town of Amherst, NH

BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES

Barbara Landry Meeting Room

2 Main Street

Monday, October 23, 2017

1. Call to Order

Chairman Dwight Brew called the public meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Attendees: Chairman Dwight Brew, Selectmen Mike Akillian, Tom Grella, Peter Lyon, and Reed Panasiti. Also present: Town Administrator, Jim O'Mara, and Suzanne Beauchesne taking minutes.

2. Pledge of Allegiance – Rob Clemens, Chairman of the Conservation Commission, led the pledge.

3. Citizens Forum - None

4. Property Tax Rate Setting

Chairman Brew indicated that at year end revenue received generally exceeds what is projected. He said that while the NH Department of Revenue Administration (NHDRA) recommends maintaining an unassigned fund balance in its General Fund equal to 8-17 percent of the total annual appropriations of the community, the Board has chosen to target an unassigned fund balance equal to 10 percent of the total annual appropriations. This helps minimize the property tax rate and helps avoid large fluctuations in the tax rate. Chairman Brew said that, following policy, each fall the Selectmen will generally apply 50 percent of the unassigned fund balance that exceeds the targeted ten percent to offset property taxes.

Chairman Brew said the current fund balance is \$6,450,047; 50 percent of the 2017 fund balance is \$761,000. Last year's property town tax rate was \$5.10 per 1,000 evaluations. With no monies taken out, the 2017 rate would increase to \$5.68 but would drop to \$5.23 if \$761,000 is retained. If more is retained, 64.50 percent, the tax rate would drop to \$5.10. Chairman Brew said that John D'Angelo, Chair of the Ways and Means Committee, suggested that rather than retain 50 percent, hold back some money and ask voters to repair the bridges which could be addressed with this amount of money; road repair would cost more.

Selectman Lyon said he was concerned about that since it is taxpayer money and he would prefer to stick with the policy and ask voters at a future meeting to use some undesignated funds. Selectman Grella said “it would be nice to have a nest egg” but he had no strong preference either way. Chairman Brew recalled having a voter-approved warrant to address three red-listed bridges. Those funds are restricted. Selectman Panasiti asked what the cost was to repair all bridges. Director of Public Works, Bruce Berry, did not have the estimated cost of repair for all bridges but said the cost for repair of the three red-listed bridges would be approximately \$3.5 million. Chairman Brew asked if work was begun on those three bridges before state funding is available, would the town still be reimbursed. Director Berry said “no”. Selectman Akillian said Mr. D’Angelo’s idea is interesting but he would rather stick with the current plan. He felt the Board should not go below ten percent and may want to consider migrating to 12 percent or more. This could be figured out through the Strategic Planning process and then go to the public.

Selectman Lyon moved, second by Selectman Panasiti, that of the total retained fund balance of \$5,689,047, \$761,000 shall be returned to the taxpayers with one half (over the 10 percent threshold) to be used to offset taxes. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

5. Public Hearing: Pursuant to RSA 41:14-b, the Amherst Board of Selectmen shall hereby give notice and announce the convening of two public hearings for the following proposed ordinances for the purpose of regulating traffic (NH RSA 47:17, VII and VIII).

The following stop signs are currently in place, the process of creating an ordinance is a housekeeping matter. The Board of Selectmen is required by state law to approve, by ordinance, these traffic control signs.

Founder’s Way @ Amherst Street
Potter’s Way @ Founder’s Way
Trask Way @ Founder’s Way
Whiting Farm Road @ Walnut Hill Road
The Flume @ Chestnut Hill Road
Roberge Drive @ Mack Hill Road
Upper Flanders Road @ Mack Hill Road
Stockwell Road @ Route 101
Georgetown Drive @ Old Manchester Road
Old Manchester Road @ Route 101
Old Manchester Road @ Walnut Hill Road
Candlewood Drive @ Lyndeborough Road
Candlewood Drive @ Christian Hill Road
Juniper Drive @ Amherst Street
Chandler Lane @ Monticello Drive
Crickett Hill Road @ Boston Post Road
Wildwood Lane @ Seaverns Bridge Road
Truell Road @ Route 101A
Manhattan Drive @ Caldwell Drive
Columbia Drive @ Northern Boulevard
Hertzka Drive @ Old Nashua Road
Tech Circle @ Old Nashua Road
Ponemah Hill Road @ Ponemah Road
Thoreau Lane @ Ponemah Road

Williamsburg Drive @ Old Manchester Road
Highland Drive @ Old Manchester Road
West Street @ Broadway
Clark Avenue @ Broadway
Lynch Farm Road @ Spring Road
Beaver Brook Circle @ Manchester Road
Beaver Brook Circle @ Narragansett Road
Limbo Lane @ Narragansett Road
Narragansett Road @ Amherst Street
Brimstone Hill Road @ Christian Hill Road
Bloody Brook Road @ Christian Hill Road
Roberts Road @ Ravine Road
Winding Hollow Road @ Lyndeborough Road
Monticello Drive @ Boston Post Road
Chandler Lane @ Town Crier Road
Pinewood Drive @ Ponemah Road
Maple Street @ Boston Post Road
Howe Drive @ North Hollis Road
Columbia Drive @ Caldwell Drive
Bon Terrain Drive @ Northern Boulevard
Eastern Avenue @ Airline Drive
Rocky Hill Road @ Ponemah Road
Farmington Road @ Ponemah Hill Road

84
85 Selectman Grella moved, second by Selectman Panasiti, to open the public hearing at 6:49 p.m.
86 Motion passed unanimously, 5-0. There were no public comments. Selectman Grella moved,
87 second by Selectman Akillian, to close the public hearing at 6:51 p.m. Motion passed
88 unanimously, 5-0.

89
90 **THE BOARD RECESSED**
91

92 The Conservation Commission held a meeting to consider the purchase of property owned by John
93 Arnold who lives in California. The acquisition would be for 12 acres (10 woodland/2 grassland)
94 for \$70,000. The Commission is interested in the property since it represents a wildlife and trail
95 connector. There is no tax impact. Selectman Akillian asked how much land is managed by the
96 Conservation Commission and what categories. A member of the Conservation Commission said
97 2,400 acres of forest land, grasslands, and wetlands.
98

99 Chairman Brew called the Board of Selectmen meeting back into session at 7:05 p.m.
100

101 **6. ACC Public Hearing: Pursuant to RSA 36-A:5, consideration for acquisition of the**
102 **property by the ACC**
103

104 Selectman Panasiti moved, second by Selectman Akillian, to release funds from the Conservation
105 Commission Trust Fund for the purchase of the Sky Meadow property located at Map/Lot 8-9.
106 Motion passed unanimously, 5-0. The Conservation Commission meeting adjourned.
107

108 **7. NRPC – Nashua Region Solid Waste Management District**
109

110 Jay Minkarah, Executive Director, of the Nashua Regional Planning Commission rose to introduce
111 himself. Jill Longval, the Commission's Senior Environmental Planner came forward to provide a
112 PowerPoint presentation on the Nashua Region's Solid Waste Management District [attached]. In
113 addition to Amherst, the District also includes Mont Vernon, Milford, Brookline, Merrimack,
114 Hollis, Litchfield, Nashua, Hudson, Windham, and Pelham. The District is funded by user fees
115 (\$10 per vehicle), grants from the NH Department of Environmental Services (\$45,000-\$50,000
116 each year based on population of the District), and municipal dues which are allocated using a flat
117 fee for each community then based on population. District-wide participation has continually
118 increased over the last six years as has the pounds of materials collected. Ms. Longval said the
119 benefits of participation in the District include:
120

- 121 1) Access to 6-7 collection events
- 122 2) Use of permanent storage facility
- 123 3) Higher grant funding rates because of grouping
- 124 4) Keeps hazardous waste out of landfills and transfer stations
- 125 5) Serves as a Best Management Practice for MS4 compliance
126

127 Ms. Longval responded to a number of questions from the Board. Town Administrator, Jim
128 O'Mara, commented on the benefits of participating in the electric consortium since 2012 and
129 expected the same kind of savings would be garnered from this joint effort. Selectman Lyon
130 moved, second by Selectman Akillian, to authorize the Town Administrator to execute, on behalf
131 of the Board, a Cooperative Agreement for Household Hazardous Waste Collections within the
132 Amherst area. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

133
134 **8. Strategic Plan Presentations** (Members of the Ways and Means Committee arrived. In
135 attendance: John D'Angelo, Chair, David Sullivan, Peter Moustakis, Sarah Bonnoit, April
136 Savino, Elaina Bedio, and Helen Holden Slottje.

137 138 **8.1 Office of Community Development**

139
140 Gordon Leedy, Director of Community Development, came forward to present his department's
141 FY18-22 Strategic Plan [attached]. The office provides services to include: land development
142 review, master planning/long range planning, building permitting and inspections, health and
143 safety, and economic development. It includes the Building, Code Enforcement, Planning,
144 Zoning and Economic Development Divisions and supports the Zoning and Planning Board, the
145 Historic District, Conservation, and Heritage Commissions.

146
147 Director Leedy went through the Strategic Plan that included an executive summary, historical
148 trends, SWOT analysis, goals, and a budget impact summary. Four goals were identified:

- 149
150 1) Amherst will be well regarded for the transparency, fairness and efficiency of its governance
151 and regulation.
152 2) Amherst will protect and enhance the quality of its environmental resources.
153 3) Amherst will strive to maintain and enhance the quality of life of its residents.
154 4) Amherst will be known as a business friendly community with a clearly articulated strategy
155 for creating high value development in our commercial and industrial areas.
156

157 Selectman Akillian stated that some goals "don't have measurable outcomes", such as, measuring
158 how the department is perceived. He also suggested including "what you are going to do instead
159 of what is achieved". One big goal he would like to see included is "what should our
160 conservation plan be and why". Selectman Akillian said he'd also like to see more articulated
161 outcomes and timing attached to goals and be provided with some idea of the priority order of
162 goals/outcomes.
163

164 Selectman Lyon asked about the scanning, indexing and storage of data and the status of the
165 septic system study. Director Leedy said the study is well underway, mapping is done, and he
166 expects the study to be done at the end of next month. Other Board member questions centered
167 on the Master Plan, open space goals and costs associated with various initiatives. Members of
168 the Ways & Means Committee asked similar questions. Chairman of the Ways & Means
169 Committee, John D'Angelo, suggested explaining what the trade offs are of projects so that
170 everyone knows what the options are. He also said not digitizing data makes him uncomfortable,
171 though he agrees with prioritizing data storage.
172

173 **8.2 Administration**

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175 Jim O'Mara, Town Administrator, went over the Administration Department's FY19-21 Strategic
176 Plan [attached]. The plan included mission and vision statements, a public service model, and
177 staffing comparison with other similarly sized communities. The Administration Department
178 encompasses oversight of town government operations, human resources, public relations, website
179 management, public assistance/social service agencies, finance, and risk management.
180 Administrator O'Mara talked about improved communications and promoting sound personnel

administration as two overarching goals for his department. Another goal is to improve the town's financial system and to continue to work on the goals the Board has established for itself.

Selectman Panasiti asked if many complaints are received from veterans regarding any public assistance they may require. Administrator O'Mara said "not a lot". Other comments included developing a dashboard, and contemplating an internal customer survey. A sample of an external survey was provided in the Board packet. Mr. D'Angelo also suggested looking into hiring a part-time Human Resources staff.

9. Budget Discussion

The Board reviewed a revised budget summary. Chairman Brew said there was no need to make any cuts or decisions tonight.

10. Town Administrator

10.1 Heritage Commission Resignation

Selectman Grella moved, second by Selectman Mike Akillian, to accept, with regret, the resignation of Andy Ouellette from the Heritage Commission since he no longer resides in Amherst. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

10.2 New Hires - AFR

Selectman Akillian moved, second by Selectman Panasiti, to approve the Fire Rescue hiring of Francis Gavin as an EMT Paramedic at a salary of \$21.50/hour effective October 11, 2017, and Sarah Winslow as an EMT Basic at a salary of \$16.75/hour effective October 19, 2017. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

10.3 Truck Bid – DPW

Selectman Lyon moved, second by Selectman Panasiti, to award the truck bid to Liberty International, being the lowest bidder, at a total cost of \$129,764, and to authorize the Town Administrator to sign all related documents on behalf of the Board of Selectmen. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

10.4 Guardrail Bid – DPW

Selectman Grella moved, second by Selectman Akillian, to award the Guardrail bid to CWS Fence, being the lowest qualified bidder, at a total cost of \$8,525, and to authorize the Town Administrator to sign all related documents on behalf of the Board of Selectmen. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0. In response to Board member questions, Director Berry said the fence and guardrail work must be done this fall, that the town has worked with CWS Fence in the past and he believes their cost estimate is reasonable, and the fence and guardrails will meet the NH Department of Transportation standards.

10.5 Budget Transfer

Selectman Lyon moved, second by Selectman Grella, to authorize Budget Transfer Number 2018-02 transferring \$11,922.20 from Public Works, Highways and Streets (01-4312) to Public Works, DPW Admin (01-4311) and Landfill (01-4324). Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

11. Approvals

11.1 Hawkers & Vendors Application Renewal

Selectman Grella moved, second by Selectman Akillian, to grant a permit to Louis Trottier to sell residential/commercial building improvements in the town for the period 10-23-17 to 10-02-18 and restricting said activity to 9:00 to 5:00 Monday through Friday; no weekends or holidays. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

11.2 Intent to Cut

Selectman Lyon moved, second by Selectman Akillian, to approve and sign the 2017 Intent to Cut for Map 10, Lots 6 & 9, located off Brook Road, owned by the town and managed by the Conservation Commission. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

11.3 Assessing

Selectman Lyon moved, second by Selectman Grella, to approve the Current Use Abatement for property located at 7 Victoria Ridge, Map/Lot 4-147-13 in the amount of \$2,000 and provided no appeal is filed if such amount is lowered as the property no longer is qualified for current use. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

11.4 Payroll

Selectman Panasiti moved, second by Selectman Lyon, to approve one (1) FY18 Payroll Manifest in the amount of \$222.28 dated October 6, 2017, subject to review and audit. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

Selectman Panasiti moved, second by Selectman Lyon, to approve one (1) FY18 Payroll Manifest in the amount of \$199,027.24 dated October 12, 2017, subject to review and audit. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

11.5 Accounts Payable

Selectman Panasiti moved, second by Selectman Lyon, to approve one (1) FY18 Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of \$27,143.82 dated October 15, 2017, subject to review and audit (Town Clerk Transfers to the State of NH). Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

Selectman Panasiti moved, second by Selectman Lyon, to approve one (1) FY18 Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of \$830.02 dated October 6, 2017, subject to review and audit. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

Selectman Panasiti moved, second by Selectman Akillian, to approve one (1) FY18 Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of \$522,842.24 dated October 17, 2017, subject to review and audit. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

Selectman Panasiti moved, second by Selectman Lyon, to approve one (1) FY18 Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of \$2,788,070.00 dated November 1, 2017, subject to review and audit. (School Disbursements). Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

11.6 Concentration Account

Selectman Panasiti moved, second by Selectman Lyon, to approve one (1) FY18 Concentration Account Manifest in the amount of \$8,895.22 dated October 16, 2017, subject to review and audit. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

11.7 Previous Meeting Minutes – October 10, 2017

Selectman Panasiti moved, second by Selectman Grella, to approve the Board of Selectmen public meeting minutes of October 10, 2017, as amended. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

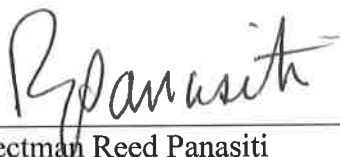
12. New/Old Business

Selectman Akillian said the wetland rules will consume another portion of the cemetery, making an area usable. The section will be re-designed and construction will begin in the spring.

13. Adjournment

Selectman Grella moved, second by Selectman Akillian, to adjourn the meeting at 10:40 p.m. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

NEXT MEETINGS: November 6th and 27th, 2017



Selectman Reed Panasiti

Clerk, Board of Selectmen

11/6/17

Date