



**Town of Amherst, NH**  
**BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES**  
**Barbara Landry Meeting Room**  
**2 Main Street**  
**Monday, November 24, 2014 at 6:00 PM**

**I. Public Session**

Chairman Dwight Brew called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Attendees: Chairman Dwight Brew, Vice Chairman Mike Akillian, Selectmen John D'Angelo and Tom Grella. Also present: Town Administrator, Jim O'Mara, and Suzanne Beauchesne taking minutes. Selectman Brad Galinson was absent.

**II. Pledge of Allegiance - Dave Saxe, Souhegan High School Boys Soccer Team Coach, led the pledge.**

The Board rose to honor the Souhegan High School Boys Soccer Team for their Division II Championship win on November 8<sup>th</sup>. Selectman Tom Grella read a proclamation which was presented to the team. Coach Saxe introduced the members of the team, each received congratulatory applause.

**III. Citizen Forum – No citizens came forward.**

**IV. MRI – Study of Fire and EMS**

The Municipal Resources, Inc. (MRI) project team – all practitioners in the field of fire safety and emergency medical services -- introduced themselves as follows: Brian Duggan, Project Leader, Lee Douchkoff (fire services), Sue Prentiss (paramedics) and Bob Craig (former Fire Chief in Acton, MA).

Mr. Duggan indicated that a draft report had been delivered to Town Administrator, Jim O'Mara, which is to be edited and returned to MRI where changes will be incorporated into a final report. The report is intended to serve as a useful guide to the Board in shaping a vision for tomorrow. A PowerPoint presentation revealed the following information.

Observations include:

- leadership between EMS and Fire not always smooth
- exceptional on-call fire department; high quality advanced life support (ALS) service
- on-call service should be preserved and supported
- both Fire and EMS are well-respected
- daytime response availability is decreasing (not unique to Amherst – countrywide)
- EMS has become a hybrid career paid organization (three shifts – 24/7)
- per diem staff from outside of Amherst lack ownership
- leadership has created a functional and cultural separation

Challenges include determining an acceptable level of risk, recruiting a leader to transition both departments (including the police department); developing a shared sense of vision/mission; cross-training; and breaking down the cultural roadblocks.

The options were listed as follows:

- 1) Maintaining the status quo.
- 2) Limited Integration (as has been done) – supervisory oversight of both divisions.

- 3) Full Integration (not recommended by MRI due to financial and operational drawbacks).  
4) Privatizing EMS (not the level of service Amherst enjoys).  
5) Regional partnerships (fire departments outside of Amherst are not interested).

MRI's recommendations are:

- a single, visionary leader for one organization with separate divisions; and appoint a leadership team
- preserve on-call; strengthen daytime response
- address service gaps; provide daytime staffing for 2<sup>nd</sup> ambulance (still work per diem)
- fire and EMS cross-trained
- reduce EMS from three to two (reallocate wages)
- increase daytime staffing - provide support when on-call least available
- save \$81,000/year by eliminating the position of EMS Director
- requires co-location of resources and personnel for effective integration and supervision
- finish upstairs renovation of fire station at a cost of \$50,000-\$60,000 depending on the decision of sprinkler system; frees up space at the Fire Department

The MRI team responded to a number of questions posed by Board members. More detail and a proposed organizational chart will be included in the final report due within three weeks. The Board will then decide on an approach and put together an implementation team. There were no questions from the public or from fire/EMS staff in attendance.

## **V. Village Strategic Plan Update**

Vice Chairman Akillian indicated that the Strategic Planning Committee made up of a Steering Committee and Outreach Committee, comprised of 24 residential and business people, have been meeting monthly. The purpose of the committee is twofold: to expand and engage as many citizens as possible in strategic thinking.

With the help of Camille Pattison of the Nashua Regional Planning Commission, progress has been made in getting stakeholders involved. To date, 337 residents have responded to the electronic survey. Vice Chairman Akillian again encouraged everyone to participate in the online survey posted on the website at [www.amherstnh.gov/villageplan](http://www.amherstnh.gov/villageplan). A house meeting was attended by 16 people. Anyone interested in hosting a meeting should contact Vice Chairman Akillian. A public forum is being held on December 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Landry Room from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. and more such forums will be planned if interest exists. A lot of information is included on the website. Vice Chairman Akillian expects to have the results of the committee's outreach efforts categorized in January and presented to the Board along with a cost/benefit analysis of identified initiatives. A full report is expected in May or June. Vice Chairman Akillian will provide information to the media as progress continues.

Chris Buchanan came forward and indicated that he had been working with a company in Massachusetts who provide architectural lighting for historic sites, and suggested providing a free demonstration during the tree lighting event on December 12<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Buchanan proposed lighting up the Town Hall, the Congregational Church, the Brick School and the Library. Selectman Grella stated that the Historical District Commission had approved lighting of the Congregational Church only. This was not Mr. Buchanan's understanding. Vice Chairman Akillian will seek clarification. The cost of lighting one building is approximately \$12,000. Chairman Brew felt that if the demonstration turned out to be positive, the cost would amount to \$48,000 and, at this time, those funds may better be used elsewhere.

Vice Chairman Akillian moved to authorize a free demonstration of architectural lighting of the four town buildings on December 12, weather permitting, and upon consensus of the Historic District Commission. Seconded by Selectman D'Angelo. Vote 3-1 (Selectman Grella opposed)

#### **Report by Dr. Mary Katherine Lockwood**

In response to questions raised at the previous BOS meeting, Dr. Mary Katherine Lockwood, Health Officer for Amherst, came forward to report on actions related to mosquito control. Dr. Lockwood indicated that the risk of West Nile is low; the risk of EEE (Eastern Equine Encephalitis) much greater. This year, three cases of EEE were reported in NH causing two deaths. Amherst currently contracts with Dragon to do sampling and treat areas if necessary. The sampling is done with a biologic agent that presents little environmental risk and is of no risk to other animals, except bees. In addition, Amherst puts out public service announcements (PSAs).

Dr. Lockwood provided information taken from the website of Alan Eaton, a professor and specialist in entomology at the UNH Cooperative Extension.

Dr. Lockwood indicated on a small map that the heaviest risk exists along the Seacoast. The towns bordering Amherst with moderate risk include Nashua, Merrimack, Bedford, and Goffstown. Dr. Lockwood acknowledged that Amherst is outside the lowest risk area; yet, the risk becomes greater every year, and the budgeted amount of \$40,000 per year is used primarily for testing. Dr. Lockwood recommends continuing the program, and while she is "satisfied with Dragon" will prepare a proposal for bid and report back to the Board on whether the market is competitive in this area.

### **VI. FY16 Budget Discussion**

#### **a) Ways & Means – Funding Options for Vehicles and Equipment**

Russ Thomas, Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee provided overhead charts (attached) demonstrating the benefits of a Lease/Purchase (L/P) financing mechanism for the Department of Public Works (DPW) fleet. The chart listed all vehicles and equipment including current age, condition, trade-in value and replacement cost. The chart shows an ideal annual budget of just below \$300,000. Surpluses would begin in FY31.

According to members of the Ways and Means Committee, the L/P financing alternative provides more flexibility and levels out large expenses so that there are fewer big swings from one year to another. Over time, L/P financing will build equity and eliminate the need for Warrant Articles. A number of Board members felt that it would make sense to utilize the L/P method of financing for the DPW budget.

Department of Public Works Director, Bruce Berry, came forward and in response to a question by Selectman Grella, indicated that Truck 1 does not work. Chairman Brew suggested that a discussion of the make-up of the fleet might better be done when determining the DPW budget.

At its next meeting, the Board will decide whether to expand the L/P financing approach to the police undercover vehicle and will hear more from Administrator O'Mara on financing for the Recreation Department.

Town Administrator O'Mara went over a prepared spreadsheet that provided departmental budgets along with priority rankings as determined by department heads. The board will meet on December 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> and be prepared to present a draft budget to the Ways and Means Committee by December 15<sup>th</sup>.

153 **VII. Old and New Business**

154  
155 Chairman Brew stated that a gift of real estate consisting of three parcels of property and 240 acres of land  
156 located on the east side of Chestnut Hill Road was extended so long as the town agreed to pay any and all  
157 related legal expenses by year's end. The acceptance of the property requires a public hearing. Selectman  
158 Grella moved to hold a public hearing on December 8, 2014 pursuant to RSA 36-A 5(II) and in conjunction  
159 with the Amherst Conservation Commission regarding acquisition of the subject property. Seconded by  
160 Selectman D'Angelo. Vote 4-0

161  
162 Chairman Brew reported that the Board received a letter from Kinder Morgan indicating a revised plan on  
163 the proposed natural gas pipeline which is now expected to go through Amherst via a three-foot pipe which  
164 will be buried and follow the power lines between AMS and Souhegan. The project is likely to last at least  
165 a year. The issue is not yet approved at the federal level and could change yet again. The Board will  
166 continue to seek information regarding this pipeline and its impacts on Amherst.

167  
168 Town Administrator O'Mara sought approval to hire four fire fighters as recommended by Acting Chief  
169 Matt Conley and to fill two vacancies, pending background checks, in the Department of Public Works.  
170 Selectman Grella moved to approve the hiring of Karen Lindquist, James Waller, Calvin Weichert and John  
171 Turner to the Fire Department and Jeffrey Caswell, Thomas Lones as full-time Labor/Driver and Michael  
172 Lott as a part-time on call Labor/Driver to the Department of Public Works. Seconded by Selectman  
173 D'Angelo. Vote 4-0

174  
175 Selectman Grella moved to approve the quarterly Maintenance Warrants for the Baboosic Lake Community  
176 septic bill due on January 2, 2015: Phase I = \$4,472.36; Phase 2 = \$5,244.08; Phase III = \$5,529.97; and  
177 Phase IV = \$4,082.53. Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian. Vote 4-0

178  
179 **VIII. Right to Know Requests – None**

180  
181 **IX. Approvals**

182  
183 **a. Accounts Payable**

184  
185 Selectman D'Angelo moved to approve one (1) FY15 Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of  
186 \$752,176.00 dated November 18, 2014, subject to review and audit. Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian.  
187 Vote 4-0

188  
189 Selectman D'Angelo moved to approve one (1) FY15 Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of  
190 \$25,685.45 dated November 6, 2014, subject to review and audit (Town Clerk Transfers to the State of  
191 NH). Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian. Vote 4-0

192  
193 **b. Abatement Recommendation**

194  
195 Selectman D'Angelo moved to approve the recommended abatement for the property located at 85  
196 Christian Hill Road, Map 005, Lot 171-001 in the amount of \$86. Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian.  
197 Vote 4-0

198  
199 Selectman D'Angelo moved to approve the recommended abatement for the property located at 467 Boston  
200 Post Road, Map 002, Lot 163-044 in the amount of \$56. Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian. Vote 4-0

201  
202 Selectman D'Angelo moved to approve the recommended abatement for the property located at 32 Cross  
203 Road, Map 002, Lot 146-018 in the amount of \$504. Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian. Vote 4-0

204  
205 **c. Veteran Tax Credit Recommendation**  
206

207 In accord with RSA 72:28, Vice Chairman Akillian moved to approve the Veteran Tax Credit for the  
208 property located at 14 Standish Way, Map 001, Lot 035-030, in the amount of \$500. Seconded by  
209 Selectman Grella. Vote 4-0  
210

211 In accord with RSA 72:28, Vice Chairman Akillian moved to approve the Veteran Tax Credit for the  
212 property located at 27 Pond Parish Road, Map 006, Lot 027-002, in the amount of \$500. Seconded by  
213 Selectman D'Angelo. Vote 4-0  
214

215 In accord with RSA 72:28, Vice Chairman Akillian moved to approve the Veteran Tax Credit for the  
216 property located at 37 Thornton Ferry Road I, Map 006, Lot 110-000, in the amount of \$500. Seconded by  
217 Selectman D'Angelo. Vote 4-0  
218

219 In accord with RSA 72:28, Vice Chairman Akillian moved to approve the Veteran Tax Credit for the  
220 property located at 4 Fox Run Road, Map 003, Lot 067-001-008, in the amount of \$500. Seconded by  
221 Selectman D'Angelo. Vote 4-0  
222

223 In accord with RSA 72:28, Vice Chairman Akillian moved to approve the Veteran Tax Credit for the  
224 property located at 14 Williamsburg Drive, Map 008, Lot 077-017, in the amount of \$500. Seconded by  
225 Selectman D'Angelo. Vote 4-0  
226

227 **d. Conservation Restriction Assessment Recommendation**  
228

229 Selectman D'Angelo moved to grant the application for the Conservation Restriction Assessment  
230 recommendation for the property located at New Boston Road, Map 007, Lot 080-001. Seconded by Vice  
231 Chairman Akillian. Vote 4-0  
232

233 **e. Levy of Timber Yield Tax**  
234

235 Selectman D'Angelo moved to approve the Levy of Timber Yield Tax for the property located at Austin  
236 Road, Map 008, Lot 008-001 in the amount of \$425.13. Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian. Vote 4-0  
237

238 **f. Payroll**  
239

240 Selectman D'Angelo moved to approve one (1) FY15 Payroll Manifest in the amount of \$173,096.52 dated  
241 November 26, 2014, subject to review and audit. Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian. Vote 4-0  
242

243 **g. Board of Selectmen Minutes**  
244

245 Selectman D'Angelo moved to approve the Board of Selectmen meeting minutes of Monday, November 10,  
246 2014. Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian. Vote 4-0  
247

248 **X. Non-Public Session 91-A:3 II (c)**  
249

250 Vice Chairman Akillian moved to enter into non-public session at 9:00 p.m. pursuant to NH RSA 91-A:3 II  
251 (c). Seconded by Selectman D'Angelo. Roll Call: Akillian-yes, Brew-yes, D'Angelo-yes, Grella-yes.  
252 Vote was unanimous.  
253  
254

Nonpublic Session Minutes

Mr. Akillian moved to enter non-public session at 9:00pm pursuant to  
NH RSA 91-A: 3 II (c). Second by Mr. D'Angelo.

Roll Call: D'Angelo -yes, Brew-yes, Grella-yes, Akillian-yes. Vote was unanimous, 4-0.

The Board and Town Administrator Jim O'Mara discussed a matter which, if discussed in public, may  
adversely affect the reputation of someone other than a member of the body.

Mr. D'Angelo moved to exit non-public session at 9:15pm. Second by Mr. Akillian. The vote was  
unanimous, 4-0.

The Board exited nonpublic session at 9:15pm.

Chairman Brew stated that in nonpublic session no motions were made and no votes were taken.

Mr. Akillian moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:16pm. Second by Mr. Grella.

The meeting adjourned at 9:16pm.

**XI. Adjourn**