



Town of Amherst, NH
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES
Barbara Landry Meeting Room
2 Main Street
Monday, October 27, 2014

I. Non-Public Session

II. Public Session

Chairman Dwight Brew called the meeting to order at 6:37 p.m. Attendees: Chairman Dwight Brew, Vice Chairman Mike Akillian, Selectmen John D'Angelo, Brad Galinson, and Tom Grella. Also present: Town Administrator, Jim O'Mara, and Suzanne Beauchesne taking minutes.

III. Pledge of Allegiance - Russ Thomas, Co-Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, led the pledge.

IV. Citizen Forum - All citizen input was taken during the public hearing.

V. Public Hearing

Town Administrator, Jim O'Mara, indicated that pursuant to RSA 41:14-b two public hearings must be held prior to the Board enacting the proposed ordinances for the purpose of regulating traffic.

The erection of four signs is proposed as follows:

- a) Amherst Street at Main Street – Trucks/Buses No Right Turn
- b) Manchester Road (eastbound at Mack Hill Road) – Stop Sign
- c) Main Street at Middle Street (eastbound) – Stop Sign
- d) Main Street at Middle Street (westbound) – Stop Sign.

Vice Chairman Akillian moved to open the first of two public hearings regarding the aforementioned signs. Seconded by Selectman Galinson. Vote 5-0

Alice Handwerk rose to express her support for erecting the proposed signs because it enhances the safety of the community including her two young children and other children who walk to school, bicyclists, and all walkers.

Will Ludt who lives at 3 School Street next to the brick school stated that he was in favor of erecting the signs because the signs help to slow the traffic in the village. Mr. Ludt also indicated that he would prefer a three-way stop at Mack Hill Road rather than a two-way, and hopes this issue will be taken up by the Village Strategic Planning Committee.

Rick Buchanan indicated that he does not like stop signs, and feels that the 56 stop signs throughout town are excessive and becoming cluttered. Mr. Buchanan has done much research on the issue and has found that drivers do not obey stop signs. Mr. Buchanan referenced a book entitled Traffic and encouraged everyone to read through in particular Chapters 7 & 8. Data provided in this book indicates that stop signs decrease a driver's independent thought, were made for blind intersections, and that over time the signs lose their original value and do not slow traffic. Mr. Buchanan indicated that he, too, is interested in a safer community and safe roads but more stop signs make for a more dangerous environment.

Amily Moore came forward in support of more stop signs, and mentioned that the use of cell phones be taken into consideration.

Andy Ouellette stated his opposition to erecting more stop signs because they are not effective, aggravate people, and adding to the 56 signs already in place seems to be overkill.

Jay Dinkel also expressed his opposition to erecting the four signs. Mr. Dinkel's wife is a "frequent" walker and his children do walk to school and he hopes the issue will be addressed as part of the Village Strategic Planning process.

One resident, in favor of erecting the signs, felt that public safety should be the most important factor when considering this issue, not aesthetics.

Joe Baggart of 13 Church Street stated his support for stop signs as a way of slowing people down even though stop signs are more often treated as yield signs. Mr. Baggart asked that consideration be given on how the 56 signs could be made more effective.

Chairman Brew suggested that Police Chief Reams who heads up the Safety Committee plan to attend the next public hearing in order to give the Board more input. Administrator O'Mara will arrange for the Chief's attendance.

Vice Chairman Akillian moved to close the public hearing. Seconded by Selectman D'Angelo. Vote 5-0

VI. Hazard Mitigation Plan Update – NRPC

Jill Longval and Ryan Freeman of the Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) distributed and reviewed a draft Hazard Mitigation Plan which must be updated every five years. The last update was made in 2007. The update was delayed while waiting for Fluvial Erosion data from the NH Geological Survey. The final data for the Souhegan Watershed was received on September 8th and has been incorporated into the mitigation plan update. The NRPC representatives provided a map noting the most vulnerable zones along with sensitivity ratings. Administrator O'Mara stated that the update is useful for planning purposes and especially important with getting reimbursements from the federal government if necessary. There is no requirement on the part of the town to expend funds.

Comments must be sent to Ms. Longval by November 24th, 2014. Once the plan accurately reflects the needs of the town, it will be submitted to NH Homeland Security & Emergency Management (HSEM) for their review and final submission to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The process could take several months. Ms. Longval will keep the Board informed of progress.

VII. Strategic Plan Presentations

a. Administration

Town Administrator Jim O'Mara presented a FY16-FY19 strategic plan update that included the town administration, town clerk, and finance offices (attached). The update provided a staffing comparison with comparable communities noting an average administrative staff of 4.75 employees to Amherst's 2 full time employees (FTEs). The town clerk's office handles motor vehicle and boat registrations, dog registration and licensing, transfer station decals, elections, census data, retention of public records, and provides notary public services. Last fiscal year, the town clerk's office netted \$2,221,435 in revenues; expenses totaled \$133,166. The FY15 budget reflects a slight increase of 1.5 percent. One new initiative includes increasing one part-time employee's hours from 14 to 40 hours in the FY16 budget. Administrator O'Mara noted the

need to develop a transition plan for the town clerk's position in particular, especially since the services provided by the Town Clerk's office require certification.

Town administration includes oversight of town operations, human resource management, public relations, website management, support services/welfare and budget development. Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) were identified. Initiatives on attaining goals continue relative to improving communications with the town and among department heads and staff, and promoting sound personnel administration. Administrator O'Mara reviewed a prepared FY16 budget impact summary.

b. EMS Division

Administrator O'Mara presented the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) strategic plan update (attached), and thanked a number of EMS staff and Torrey Demanche in preparing the document. Amherst EMS is an "Advanced Life Support" ambulance service that is staffed by 22 EMTs, 11 EMT-Intermediates/Advanced EMTs, 14 Paramedics, and 13 cross-trained fire/EMS. Administrator O'Mara noted that the paramedics are not on duty 24/7. The make up of the coverage is an area in need of Board direction and is being reviewed by MRI. In the meantime, in an effort to help with staff retention and quality of service, the Board has authorized a \$75,000 increase in wages.

FY14 service calls numbered 727, up from 699 in FY13. Revenues totaled \$336,987. Administrator O'Mara pointed out that EMS is the second largest generator of revenue (the town clerk's office being the largest) and expects revenue to increase once a new policy on collections is fully developed and approved.

The plan included benchmarks and strategic initiatives for maintaining high quality service and infrastructure sustainability. Questions centered on staffing and employee wage adjustments. Administrator O'Mara noted that Municipal Resources (MRI) is looking at different models which will be presented to the Board at its November 24th meeting.

c. Fire Department

Acting Fire Chief, Matthew Conley, provided an updated strategic plan (attached) that included a historical perspective, operating plans, budgets, and the pros and cons of staffing options. A SWOT analysis listed grant opportunities for staffing, second floor renovations to the fire station, and apparatus replacement. The division is currently working on the acquisition of a pumper through grant funding. Selectman D'Angelo recalled that the CIP Committee created a budget line item to ensure that renovations to the fire station be ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant.

A number of questions raised by Board members and Ways and Means Committee members related to staffing, the cross-training and retention of staff, and budgeting. Further discussion is anticipated pending the results and findings of the MRI study.

VIII. Town Administrator

a. Undesignated Fund Balance

Town Administrator, Jim O'Mara, referenced a communication from the NH Department of Revenue Administration (DRA) dated October 23, 2014 proposing a 2 percent increase in the Amherst tax rate from \$5.20 per thousand to \$5.32 per thousand. The undesignated fund balance totals \$3,690.834. The amount voted from "surplus" (contingency fund) is \$100,000.

Selectman Grella motioned to move \$185,000 of the undesignated fund balance and apply the funds to the tax base. Since the town underspent its FY14 budget by \$191,000, the FY15 tax rate for Amherst residents will not increase. Selectman Galinson seconded. Vote 5-0

b. Hillsborough County Annual Tax Assessment

Administrator O'Mara mentioned that the town had received notification from Hillsborough County that Amherst is required to assess, collect, and pay its share of taxes in the amount of \$1,930,899 before the 17th day of December 2014. Unpaid taxes after this date will be charged 10 percent interest.

c. Municipal Lease – First Colebrook Bank

Administrator O'Mara recommended a lease/purchase agreement be awarded to First Colebrook Bank. Selectman Galinson read through a Lessee Resolution and moved to award bid number F-1 to finance a DPW truck to First Colebrook Bank in the amount of \$151,545 over 5 years at 1.75 percent, and authorize execution of the lease agreement effective October 28, 2014. Selectman Grella seconded. Vote 5-0

d. Annual Equitable Sharing Agreement and Certification – Police Department

Town Administrator O'Mara presented an equitable sharing agreement between the Amherst Police Department and the Federal government. This is an annual agreement associated with the equitable distribution of federally forfeited cash, property, and proceeds.

Selectman D'Angelo motioned to continue participation in the Federal Equitable Sharing Program and authorize execution of the agreement by Chairman Brew on behalf of the town. Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian. Vote 5-0

e. Accept the Gift of a Wal-Mart Police Substation

Administrator O'Mara indicated that statutorily the town must hold a public hearing to accept gifts over a \$5,000 value. The Wal-Mart Police Substation has an ascribed value exceeding \$5,000 for furnishings, labor/construction, and 300 feet of office space. A short discussion ensued on the town's obligations relative to accepting gifts. Administrator O'Mara will schedule a public hearing on the matter.

f. Parking Ordinance for Election Day

Selectman Galinson moved the following parking ordinance: "Resolved, in order to facilitate easy access to the polls on Election Day, Tuesday, November 4, 2014, for voters, parking in the Souhegan High School Annex Parking Lot (the lot with the Main Building on its west side, the Annex building on its north side, and the stadium on its east side) at 412 Boston Post Road will be restricted to 45 minutes." Selectman Grella seconded. Vote 5-0

IX. Old and New Business

a. Vice Chairman Akillian reported that minutes of the first Strategic Planning Steering Committee meeting will be posted on the town's website. Alex Tracy hosted a house meeting which was attended by 14 people. Many house meetings are currently being planned. Vice Chairman Akillian encouraged everyone to participate in an online survey which takes about five minutes to complete. The next meeting of the Steering Committee will be held on November 12th at the Red Brick Building. All are welcomed to attend.

b. Town Administrator O'Mara reminded Board members to be available at the polls on election day, November 4th, 2014.

c. Administrator O'Mara reported that in July 2007, the town had contributed \$22,310.02 to a road improvement project. The real cost of the project turned out to be \$18,037.46 and the balance of \$4,272.56 has been reimbursed to the town. Selectman Galinson moved to accept unanticipated revenue in the amount of \$4,272.56 and returned to the General Fund. Seconded by Selectman D'Angelo. Vote 5-0

d. Administrator O'Mara stated that DPW Director Bruce Berry is in the bidding and construction phase of the Manchester Road Bridge project and has requested the help of Hoyle Tanner at a cost of \$5,877 for bidding assistance and \$81,874 for construction. Selectman D'Angelo motioned to engage Hoyle Tanner to help with the bidding and construction oversight at a cost not to exceed \$87,751 and subject to DOT approval. Seconded by Selectman Grella. Vote 5-0

e. Administrator O'Mara indicated that Director Berry -- after consultation with Continental Paving, and after milling and filling on Merrimack Road -- can improve traffic safety on Merrimack Road and would like to engage the engineering services of T.F. Moran to excavate the area next Spring. Selectman D'Angelo moved to engage the services of T.F. Moran at a cost not to exceed \$13,000. Seconded by Selectman Grella. Vote 5-0

X. Right-to-Know Request

Town Administrator O'Mara indicated that one outstanding request had been satisfied.

XI. Approvals

a. Accounts Payable

Selectman D'Angelo moved to approve one (1) FY15 Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of \$187,950.11 dated October 23, 2014, subject to review and audit. Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian. Vote 5-0

Selectman D'Angelo moved to approve one (1) FY15 Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of \$2,831,523.00 dated October 27, 2014, subject to review and audit. (Schools). Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian. Vote 5-0

Selectman D'Angelo moved to approve one (1) FY15 Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of \$34,201.98 dated October 27, 2014, subject to review and audit (Town Clerk Transfers to the State of NH). Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian. Vote 5-0

b. Payroll

Vice Chairman Akillian moved to approve one (1) FY15 Payroll Manifest in the amount of \$170,824.44 dated October 30, 2014, subject to review and audit. Seconded by Selectman D'Angelo. Vote 5-0

c. Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes

Vice Chairman Akillian moved to approve the Board of Selectmen meeting minutes of October 14, 2014. Seconded by Selectman D'Angelo. Vote 4-0-1 (Selectman Galinson abstained).

XII. Adjourn

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Selectman D'Angelo moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian. Vote 5-0

The meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.