



# Town of Amherst, NH

## BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES

Barbara Landry Meeting Room

2 Main Street

Monday, January 26, 2015 at 6:30 PM

### I. Public Session

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

### II. Pledge of Allegiance – Bruce Berry, Director of Public Works, led the pledge.

Chairman Brew re-arranged agenda items as follows. The Public Health Emergency Preparedness Plan will be discussed at a future meeting of the Board.

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

### IV. Public Hearing – Stop Sign Ordinance

Pursuant to RSA 41:14-b, Vice Chairman Akillian moved to open the first of two public hearings regarding town ordinances. Seconded by Selectman Grella. Vote 5-0.

Police Chief Mark Reams came forward and indicated that the Amherst Highway Safety Committee recently considered a request from a resident regarding a missing stop sign on Hillside Drive. The Committee unanimously recommends that an ordinance be established in order to allow the replacement of the stop sign on Hillside Drive at the intersection with Broadway. There were no public comments on the matter.

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

### V. Melanson Heath – Town Audit

Frank Biron, Managing Partner at Melanson Heath, and Erica Lussier, Audit Manager, walked through the audit provided for the Town for FY 2014. Ms. Lussier highlighted a number of items on the basic financial statements comprised of governmental activities, business-type activities, each major fund and notes to the financial statements.

Financial highlights include:

- As of the close of the year, the total assets exceeded liabilities by \$23,127,123 – a change of \$2,348,885 in comparison to the prior year.
- As of the close of the year, governmental funds reported combined ending fund balances of \$8,787,097 – a change of \$2,394,887.
- As of the close of the year, unassigned fund balance for the general fund was \$3,726,566 – a change of \$851,829 in comparison to the prior year. Amherst is at 10.4 percent and within the acceptable range (8-17 percent) of the gross budget (town, school, and county).
- Total long-term debt (i.e., bonds payable) at the close of the year was \$6,804,514 – a change of \$2,323,964.

51 The income statement shows changes in Fund Balance at \$957,568, a \$381,000 increase from the prior  
52 year. A budget and actual comparison for year ended June 30, 2014 shows total revenues at \$579,138 and  
53 expenditures of \$175,618 (departmental turn back).  
54

55 Frank Biron went through the auditors' management letter which included eight recommendations  
56 (concerning relatively minor issues) that the town agrees with. The eight recommendations include:  
57

- 58 1. Improve Payroll Processing
- 59 2. Develop Formal Risk Assessment Process
- 60 3. Require Dual Signatures
- 61 4. Develop Comprehensive Departmental Receipt Policies
- 62 5. Improve Computer System Access Controls
- 63 6. Improve Monthly General Ledger Reconciliations
- 64 7. Create a Complete Policies and Procedures Manual
- 65 8. Improve Various Other Internal Controls  
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67 Chairman Brew thanked Mr. Biron and Ms. Lussier for a thorough job. Mr. Biron commended the Town's  
68 personnel who were very helpful throughout the auditing process.  
69

70 Selectman D'Angelo moved to accept the audit report of Melanson Heath for FY14. Seconded by  
71 Selectman Grella. Vote 5-0  
72

## 73 **VI. Public Input on MRI Fire/EMS Report** 74

75 Chairman Brew opened the discussion with a review of the MRI Report goals, key aspects, and  
76 recommendations.  
77

78 MRI report goals include: 1) preserve the viability of the on-call nature of the Amherst Fire Department; 2)  
79 strengthen the ability to provide daytime fire response; and 3) provide daytime staffing for the second  
80 ambulance.  
81

82 The key aspects of the report include:  
83

- 84 • Maintains 24/7 EMS coverage – one paramedic and one EMT
- 85 • Reduces EMS shift staffing from three to two – reallocating wages from third crew member to  
86 provide on-call EMS system and fire staffing
- 87 • Increases Monday-Friday daytime fire staffing by two per diem shifts
- 88 • Strengthen the ability to provide daytime fire response
- 89 • Provide daytime staffing for the second ambulance
- 90 • Allows personnel to serve as firefighters, EMTs or as cross-trained personnel
- 91 • Requires co-location of Fire and EMS personnel
- 92 • Requires finishing the second floor of the Central Fire Station  
93

94 The MRI Report Recommendations are:  
95

- 96 • Integrate the Fire and EMS departments into a single agency with two divisions
- 97 • Create single leadership position with extensive experience in Fire and EMS
- 98 • Reduces EMS shift staffing from three to two – reallocating wages from third crew member to  
99 provide on-call EMS system and fire staffing
- 100 • Increases Monday-Friday daytime fire staffing by two per diem shifts

Eric Swenson thanked the Board for their efforts and indicated that having three Chiefs in the last nine years has taken a toll on staff. Mr. Swenson feels strongly that Acting Chief Matt Conley embodies all of the leadership qualities necessary to hold the position of Chief. Mr. Conley has the expertise necessary and would provide the best service to the Town of Amherst.

James Lockwood came forward and stated that he has served as an on-call EMS volunteer for 25 years and was “underwhelmed” by the MRI report. Mr. Lockwood questioned a number of statements made in the report, particularly related to staffing and EMS training and procedures. Mr. Lockwood also stated that it was not necessary to renovate the second floor of the Fire Station, and advised the Board to seek counsel from the Union if it decides to merge fire and EMS since costs would increase. Mr. Lockwood was advised that the cost of the study was \$28,400.

Brian Disco who has served as Deputy Chief since 1998 stated that the loss of Fire Chiefs has placed a strain on those staff remaining and urged the Board to make a decision as quickly as possible. Mr. Disco stated that the team has developed rapport under the direction of Acting Chief Matt Conley and fully supports his ascension to Chief.

Robert Ratarazzo agreed with Mr. Disco and stated that Matt Conley is the foundation of the department and hopes the Board will make a decision as quickly as possible.

The Board agreed to meet in non-public session at the end of the meeting. Chairman Brew stated that the issue will be placed on the February 9<sup>th</sup> Board meeting agenda.

## **VII. Pipeline Update**

Selectman D’Angelo stated that the Pipeline Task Force’s organizational meeting is scheduled for Wednesday. To date, seven volunteers have come forward to serve on the Task Force. More expertise will be required but Selectman D’Angelo hopes to get to work on a number of fronts, and has learned that there are two different processes – at the Federal level and State level. A project can pass one level and fail the other.

Selectman D’Angelo also stated that the Amherst Conservation Commission has put together a group to look into the conservation piece of the proposal. A very informative, fact-based presentation to the Merrimack Town Council has been placed on the website. The Town has not yet received a response from Governor Hassan on the matter. Selectman Grella said that Kinder Morgan was expected to speak at the Milford Rotary Club luncheon on Wednesday at noontime.

## **VIII. Town Administrator**

Town Administrator O’Mara presented the following items for Board approval.

### **a. Department of Public Works**

#### **i. Bid Approval Sidewalk Machine**

Selectman D’Angelo moved to award a DPW bid for a sidewalk machine in the amount of \$120,700 to Howard P. Fairfield of Pembroke, NH. Seconded by Selectman Grella. Vote 5-0

#### **ii. New Hire Approval**

Vice Chairman Akillian moved to hire Nicholas High as a laborer in the Public Works Department. Seconded by Selectman D’Angelo. Vote 5-0

152                   **b. Recreation – Winter Carnival**

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154                   Recreation Department Director has asked the Board’s approval to close Middle Street as needed  
155                   during the Winter Carnival scheduled for February 7 & 8, 2015. Selectman Grella moved to  
156                   approve the closure of Middle Street during the Winter Carnival activities. Seconded by Selectman  
157                   D’Angelo. Vote 5-0  
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159                   **c. Donation Acceptance – D.A.R.E. Program**

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161                   Selectman D’Angelo moved to accept a \$100 donation from Laura Hunt of Danvers, MA made  
162                   payable to the Amherst D.A.R.E. program. Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian. Vote 5-0  
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164                   **d. Antiques on the Green**

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166                   Selectman D’Angelo moved to allow use of the Town Commons for the Antiques on the Green  
167                   program scheduled to be held on September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015 from 6:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Seconded by  
168                   Vice Chairman Akillian. Vote 5-0  
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170           **IX. Right to Know Request – None to Report**

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172           **X. Old and New Business**

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174                   Vice Chairman Akillian stated that the Village Strategic Planning Committee in February will be forming  
175                   working groups to follow-up on feedback received from the survey and other resident inputs. The survey  
176                   will be open until the end of January. A public forum scheduled for this Wednesday has been postponed  
177                   due to the weather. The work of the committee is expected to go through May or June. Vice Chairman  
178                   Akillian’s term on the Board ends in March, and he offered to continue serving as Chair of the committee,  
179                   or the Board might consider replacing him. Selectman D’Angelo moved to have Vice Chairman Akillian  
180                   continue as Chair of the Village Strategic Planning Committee. Seconded by Selectman Galinson. Vote 4-  
181                   0-1 (Vice Chairman Akillian abstained).  
182

183                   Selectman Galinson reported that the Cemetery Trustees voted to approve warrant article 31: Authorize  
184                   Process Contained in RSA 289:2-a (cemetery lot sales proceeds to town general fund) and have officially  
185                   signed the Memorandum of Understanding. Town Administrator O’Mara said the Town has invoiced the  
186                   Trustees for FY2014 cemetery maintenance.  
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188           **XI. Approvals**

189                   **a. Abatement Recommendations**

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192                   Selectman Galinson moved to approve the abatement recommendation for Map/Lot 007-074-000 located at  
193                   26 Old Mont Vernon Road in the amount of \$3,199. Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian. Vote 5-0  
194

195                   Selectman Galinson moved to approve the abatement recommendation for Map/Lot 004-029-000 located at  
196                   70 Ponemah Road in the amount of \$13,165. Seconded by Selectman Grella. Vote 5-0  
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198                   Selectman Galinson moved to approve the abatement recommendation for Map/Lot 005-111-008 located at  
199                   100 Christian Hill Road in the amount of \$64. Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian. Vote 5-0  
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201                   Selectman Galinson moved to approve the abatement recommendation for Map/Lot 002-089-002, an office  
202                   located at 46 Route 101A in the amount of \$1,533. Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian. Vote 5-0

203  
204 **b. Land Use Change Tax Penalty**  
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206 Selectman Galinson moved to approve the Land Use Tax Penalty for Map/Lot 005-059-039 located at 1  
207 Potter Way in the amount of \$19,500. Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian. Vote 5-0  
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209 **c. Department of Revenue Sales Ratio Survey**  
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211 Selectman Galinson moved to approve the 2014 Equalization Municipal Assessment and provide the data to  
212 the Department of Revenue Administration (DRA). Seconded by Selectman D'Angelo. Vote 5-0  
213

214 **d. Accounts Payables**  
215

216 Selectman D'Angelo moved to approve one (1) FY15 Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of  
217 \$791,780.50 dated January 15, 2015, subject to review and audit. Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian.  
218 Vote 5-0  
219

220 Selectman D'Angelo moved to approve one (1) FY15 Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of  
221 \$3,225.00 dated January 16, 2015, subject to review and audit. Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian. Vote  
222 5-0  
223

224 Selectman D'Angelo moved to approve one (1) FY15 Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of  
225 \$28,881.70 dated January 16, 2015, subject to review and audit. (Town Clerk Transfers to the State of NH).  
226 Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian. Vote 5-0  
227

228 Selectman D'Angelo moved to approve one (1) FY15 Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of  
229 \$5,910.50 dated January 21, 2015, subject to review and audit. Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian. Vote  
230 5-0  
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232 Selectman D'Angelo moved to approve one (1) FY15 Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of  
233 \$2,060,619 dated February 1, 2015, subject to review and audit (Schools). Seconded by Vice Chairman  
234 Akillian. Vote 5-0  
235

236 **e. Payroll**  
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238 Vice Chairman Akillian moved to approve one (1) FY15 Payroll Manifest in the amount of \$184,644.30  
239 dated January 22, 2015, subject to review and audit. Seconded by Selectman D'Angelo. Vote 5-0  
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241 **f. Minutes**  
242

243 Vice Chairman Akillian moved to approve the Board of Selectmen meeting minutes of January 12, 2015.  
244 Seconded by Selectman D'Angelo. Vote 5-0  
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246 **XII. Non-Public Session**  
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248 Selectman Galinson moved to enter non-public session at 8:10 p.m. pursuant to NH RSA 91-A:3 II (a).  
249 Seconded by Vice Chairman Akillian. Roll Call: Akillian-yes, Brew-yes, D'Angelo-yes, Galinson-yes,  
250 Grella-yes. Vote was unanimous, 5-0  
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253 The Board, Town Administrator Jim O'Mara and Acting Chief Mathew Conley discussed a personnel  
254 matter.

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256 Mr. D'Angelo moved to exit non-public session at 9:40pm. Second by Mr. Akillian. The vote was  
257 unanimous, 5-0.

258  
259 The Board exited nonpublic session at 9:40pm.

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

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263 Mr. Akillian moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:40pm. Second by Mr. Grella.

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265 **XIII. Adjourn**

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267 The meeting adjourned at 9:41pm.  
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