

**Town of Haverhill Budget Hearing
Meeting Minutes
February 12, 2020**

Draft Subject to Review by the Board

Board Members Present: Chair Darwin Clogston, Howard Hatch, Matt Bjelobrk, Tom Friel, Fred Garofalo

Town Employees Present:

Town Manager: Brigitte Codling

Finance Officer: Jennifer Boucher

Members of the Town Present: Mary Ann Aldrich, Jay Holden, John Hobbs, Elizabeth Bayne, Don Hammond, Rich Clifford, Barbara Warren, Roger Warren, Joe Kirkpatrick, Mary Ellen Kirkpatrick, Phil Blanchard, Dave Robinson

The meeting was started at 6: 45 PM

Business: Chair Clogston explained some of the rules to be followed for this hearing.

Chair Clogston also outlined that the budget committees proposed budget results in an estimated tax increase of \$0.57 for every \$1000 of assessed value. The Town Managers proposed budget results in an estimated tax decrease of \$0.10 for every \$1000. The Selectboard proposed budget results in an estimated tax increase of \$0.02 for every thousand.

Jay Holden was recognized by the Selectboard and spoke about the advertisement of the meeting. It was his understanding that there had to be notice of the meeting seven days prior and the only place he saw any advertisement was on the town Facebook page. TM Codling explained that there was something sent to the Journal Opinion, but it never made it into the Journal Opinion. Jay explained that he wanted to know why the Town was suddenly relying only on computers to spread the word. He explained that it seemed like someone was trying to hide something. Chair Clogston spoke to that matter and said that no one was trying to hide anything and there might have been some oversight, but that was it. TM Codling explained that other people had come to the office on occasion asking for printed flyers to be put up because they did not have access to internet or Facebook, so, the Town is aware that there is a necessity for flyers to be put up. Further discussion took place on this topic, and it was decided that the meeting would continue as planned.

It was stated that after the Budget Hearing and final decision by the board, nothing can be added to the budget. The budget will remain how it is, and it will go to print for the Town report.

Warrant Articles provide Town residents some choice on the budget for things such as non-profits. Mary Ann Aldrich said that she wanted to know exactly how each line item was affecting the taxes for the Town.

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Mary Ellen Kirkpatrick was recognized and stated that she felt the meeting should stop if this is an illegal meeting. This goes back to Jay Holden's point that he was making. Mary Ellen Kirkpatrick stated that if the Chair does not know exactly how the Town should advertise this meeting then the meeting should stop. Chair Clogston explained that there is a proper process for correction per the DRA and that the meeting is not an illegal meeting.

John Hobbs wanted to know the difference between the three budgets. Chair Clogston reiterated what he said at the beginning about the difference in the effect of the taxes. John continued to speak about the total amount the warrant articles and the value of them which adds to the budget. John stated he did not think it was fair of the Board to announce what the Budget Committee's suggests would do to the taxes. Further stating that without the warrant articles being voted on, the Town cannot get an accurate idea of what the actual increase or decrease will be on the taxes.

Jay asked what the exact impact on the tax dollar. Finance officer Boucher said for every \$345,000 that the budget increases, the taxes will increase a dollar. According to Mr. Hobbs there is about \$20,000 difference between the Selectboard recommended budget and the Budget Committee recommended budget if you exclude the warrant articles.

A member of the public wanted to know why the Selectboard recommended a budget cut to the Woodsville Fire Department by \$18,000. The board stated they cut \$5,000 for building maintenance, some money cut because they were not participating in the town-wide fuel bid, and \$10,000 was cut off of the Chief's salary because the Board did not feel that he was doing his job. Specifically, he did not attend the Emergency Management Kick-off Meeting and he failed to raze the King Street house for the SAU because he was at a race. Additionally, he refused to allow No. Haverhill Fire Department to raze the house as a training burn in the Woodsville Fire Departments absence. Chair Clogston explained that there would be a lot of changes to this budget, and that just because something had previously been done one way did not mean it would be that way again.

Fire Chief Blanchard asked why they would cut money that was to be used for the fire house. In the past the Mildred Paige Fund was used to help with renovations and is still being used for that, and that was taxpayer money. The Board explained that money in the Mildred Page Fund was not taxpayer money, but yes, the Board decides where it is spent. Fire Chief Blanchard also said that cutting the Woodsville Chief's salary seemed like a personal attack and the Board may want to look more into his duties and what he is doing. The Board does not see everything a Chief is doing. Fire Chief Blanchard said that they may want to have a meeting to communicate which buildings belong to the precincts and which ones belong to the Town. This way the precincts know which ones they fund and have control over. The Town may also want to hold any meetings, like the Emergency Management meetings, at a later time so that the participants do not have to leave their other jobs early. Fire Chief Blanchard also said that the Board does not have control over the Chief's so the Selectboard cannot really evaluate the Chiefs. The Selectboard shouldn't even determine the Chief's pay because they do not manage them. Mr. Hobbs added that it is hard for the Selectmen to determine if the Chief is doing his duty because there are not very clear job descriptions put in place and that job description is not put in place by the Board.

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Even though the Town budget reflects \$30,000 for fire certification training, the fire chiefs will determine who attends and will oversee attendance. This will not be the responsibility of the Town; however, management of the program and expenditure of the monies will be through the Town Administration Office.

Motion 1: Matt made a motion to let Joe Kirkpatrick, an out of Town resident, speak. Tom seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Joe is the President of the Haverhill Library association. The library requested \$15,000 and the Selectboard and the Town Manager were looking to give the library only a little over \$13,000. Joe would like to know why this is. Currently, the way it stands, the Towns overall spending on its Libraries is the lowest in the entire surrounding area. There is also an inequity between what the three Libraries are receiving. Joe proceeded to explain what the money they asked for would be going to and why they had specifically requested the amount they did. Joe also explained that they needed to replenish the Libraries reserves and how necessary the reserves were. Chair Clogston explained that the Library also has access to the Mildred Paige Trust Fund already and could come to the Board for additional monies from that fund if they needed to.

Mary-Ann Aldrich wanted to know why the Town didn't petition their Warrant Articles. The Board explained that they feel many should be, and they all can be. Mary-Ann also wanted to know why the Board took out a chunk of the budget for Court Street Arts when the Town Manager and the Budget Committee recommended it. It was explained that one of the reasons was because the agency benefits many of the surrounding communities, so they should expand their funding request to the surrounding communities. The other reason is that Court Street Arts was supposed to become self-funding over the years and are pulling in money from other places already, so the Board decided it was time to cut their funding.

A member of the Town wanted to know about the discrepancy in the funding for the Fire Trucks. The board stated that they are not aware of a collective (3 Fire Station) rotation plan for the purchase of fire trucks and so the amount needed, and the intended date of purchase is not known.

There was also a question about why the money was going directly to French Pond Road and not the Capitol Reserve Fund. TM Codling explained that it was easier to maneuver because the money would go in only to come directly back out, which would cost the Town fees upon withdrawal. There may still be money going into the Capitol Reserve Fund. The amount just won't be as much because of the money going directly to French Pond Road.

There was another question about the annual stipend for the Selectboard. It is currently set at \$1,500. The rationale of increasing that to \$3,000 is how much extra work the Selectmen have been putting in with facilities tours and work sessions to try and help the community. This is because this work has been put off for a while and this Board has had to pick that all back up. Some residents in attendance stated they did not agree with the increase.

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A new loader was bought for the Highway Department in 2019 because the loader had gotten to the point where they were paying more money to fix it than the actual loader was worth. In the future the goal is to have all vehicles on a realistic and planned rotation schedule; including fire vehicles.

Elizabeth Bane spoke to the board about the Wentworth Brown House. That house was purchased through private donations and grant money. None of the money is available to Court Street Arts because the money is restricted to the WBHouse. There was a question about why the warrant article isn't being endorsed. Currently, if the Select Board's budget is approved as is on Town Meeting day then there would be no money allocated for Court Street Arts; because nothing can be brought to the floor. Chair Clogston explained that there are other priorities for budget money to go to. Another member of the Town spoke on behalf of Haverhill Heritage Inc. and spoke to what they have accomplished to make the Town a better place. Court Street Arts is a part of HHI and also does important work. There was a question of whether or not they are going to have to start charging people to rent their buildings.

Mr. Holden questioned why the HEEC budget item was cut in half. TM Codling explained that she was working with HEEC on a grant that would cover the feasibility study and once that was done the group could come back and ask residents for a more specific amount for what they need to actually do the work.

There was lengthy discussion about whether or not the Town meeting should be held on a Saturday or a Tuesday as planned. Some residents have said that there will be larger turn out on a Saturday morning, but there were others saying that they work Saturday morning. There was also question about the legislation and whether or not it said that the meeting had to be held on a Tuesday.

Motion 2: Tom made a motion to close the public hearing at 9:15 PM. Chair Clogston seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Tom spoke, stating that because the Precinct Commissioners have not provided the Select Board with an evaluation for the Woodsville Fire Chief and because they do not have direct oversight of the position, he believes the Board should reinstate the amount previously cut.

Motion 3: Fred made a motion to reduce the budget by only \$8,000 of the \$18,000 previously cut by the Board. Tom seconded the motion, but after further discussion ensued about the money previously cut, Tom withdrew the second.

Motion 4: Howard made a motion to reinstate \$10,000 of the \$18,000 originally cut by the Board, to the Woodsville Fire Department budget. Tom seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Motion 5: Fred made a motion to approve the Library's \$1,500 request for the Town to vote on, with the statement saying the Selectboard doesn't favor this. In order to accomplish this, the Selectboard would have to remove this line item from the operating budget and make it a warrant article. They would have to do this because otherwise they are saying that they don't agree with the operating budget they made. There was no second to the motion, so the motion failed.

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Fred, following the same thought process, stated he thought they should reinstate the Court Street Arts money as a warrant article.

Motion 6: Fred made a motion to reinstate the \$8,500 to Court Street Arts. There was no second to the motion and the motion failed.

Motion 7: Matt made a motion to put \$1 in the budget for the Court Street Arts Warrant Article. With a dollar in the budget, the Towns people can bring the article to the floor with amendments to how much money they want to give Court Street Arts. Tom seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

\$10,001 has been added to the Select Board's budget. The total budget currently sits at \$5,906,312.

Motion 8: Matt made a motion to accept the new budget. Tom seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Motion 9: Chair Clogston made a motion to adjourn at 9:45 PM. Tom seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.