

Town of Haverhill
SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
September 23, 2024, 6:00 p.m.
Robert E. Clifford Memorial Building

Zoom link to the recording:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/share/imGxq9UEM9AvqCpLvioyXg5nuIAHKAQBrxoEA1O4Ap-cQj-52AIWm4hUk7DiNma1.vMy5tx1dTWQgK1uS>

Passcode: +5P&qRwS

Select Board Present:

Chair Rod O’Shana, Joe Longacre, Kevin Knapp, Ron Hurlburt, and Theresa Paige. A quorum was met.

Attendees In Person:

Harv Keyes, Darwin Clogston, Vickie Wyman, Gary Hebert, Mark Locke, Ann Maccini, Robert Maccini, Don Vaillancourt, Kathleen Vaillancourt, Margo Longacre, James Bullock, Catherine Bullock, Kevin Shelton, Don Kimball, Jim Graham, Rick Ladd, Marie Bjelobrk, Matthew Bjelobrk, Susie Tann, Amy George, Gary Scruton, Emily Loomis, Dawn Lavoie, Mike Lavoie, Erin Atkinson, Dottie Long, Dick Guy, Melissa Gould, Steve Robbins, Joanne Young, Gordon Harris, Judy Harris, Carolyn Hofmann, Evelyn Elms, Barbara Leete, Janice Scruton, Carol Norcross, Nathan Restelli, Jill Blackstone, Ellen Hurlburt, Lisa Edwards, Alex Nuti-de Biasi (Journal Opinion)

Attendees Online:

Mary Houde, Regis Roy, Mike Preshman, Lorraine Prescott, Jim McKinnon, Jessica Moody, Mike Bonanno, Marilyn Blaisdell, Heather Bryant, Michelle Reagan, Bob Long, Dennis Cunningham, S. Sargent, Jessica Young

CALL TO ORDER

Chair O’Shana called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

ATTENDANCE/ROLL CALL

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

AGENDA APPROVAL

Chair O’Shana added “TAN Agreement” under New Business.

MOTION #1: J. Longacre made a motion to approve the Agenda as amended. K. Knapp seconded the motion.

Voice Vote: A roll call vote was taken. O'Shana – aye, Knapp – aye, Paige – aye, Longacre – aye, Hurlburt – aye. The motion carried unanimously.

LEAVE PUBLIC MEETING AND ENTER PUBLIC HEARING

MOTION #2: K. Knapp made a motion to leave the public meeting and enter a public hearing regarding Warrant Articles 27 and 28. R. O'Shana seconded the motion.

Voice Vote: A roll call vote was taken. O'Shana – aye, Knapp – aye, Paige – aye, Longacre – aye, Hurlburt – aye. The motion carried unanimously.

Select Board Takes Public Comment Regarding Articles 27 and 28

Chair O'Shana said the Town had no actions in this proceeding; it was done by the Department of Revenue Administration (DRA), who decided to file a lawsuit. The lawsuit took two years, and the judge dismissed the case. The Town had to request permission from DRA to expend the funds, as the voters didn't vote to spend the funds on this particular item during the current year.

Matthew Bjelobrk, Haverhill, asked if a bond was provided to the Town. Chair O'Shana said no, the only thing the Town was provided was the 2022 budget. M. Bjelobrk cited a law passed in 2021 regarding the Woodsville Fire District giving the Town a bond to account for money exchanged, and went into detail on this. His understanding is that the DRA disallowed Articles 27 and 28. He said the Board cannot choose which laws to follow, and this one is very specific.

Kevin Shelton said the language Mr. Bjelobrk referred to dates back to 1885, when Woodsville first became a district. The intent of that law was not as Mr. Bjelobrk described. Woodsville's attorney responded in June 2023 to the Town's request for a bond, but the Town never responded. He asked if the Town attorney advised the Board to pay the District of Woodsville, and Chair O'Shana verified this. K. Shelton said when the DRA reinstated the articles to set the tax rate for 2022, this made the articles legal. He noted payment to Woodsville is long overdue.

Kathleen Vaillancourt, Haverhill, asked the Board to explain the 2021 law, as it is difficult to understand. J. Longacre agreed it is difficult. The Town is caught in the middle. The DRA has steered the Town in this direction, but has not helped enforce the directive. He explained the dilemma presented by this situation and said he would like clarification of this law, possibly from the Attorney General.

Chair O'Shana said the Town attorneys advised the Board to pay Woodsville because Woodsville would file another lawsuit if they don't. He noted that the legislative body voted to pass Articles 27 and 28. He explained that if a service is provided by a municipality and a Town, the municipality is required to pay for the additional service. He expressed disappointment about the animosity between the governmental agencies involved and his desire that there would be more transparency.

Gary Scruton, Woodsville, asked for a definition of surety bond and said if someone is asking for a bond, they should know what they're asking for. R. Hurlburt said both parties are trying to figure out the definition.

Vickie Wyman, North Haverhill, said the taxpayers voted to appropriate the funds in 2022 and asked why this issue is still being discussed. T. Paige reiterated the Board wants to ensure they are not doing anything wrong by making the payment. R. Hurlburt added that even though the legislative body voted to make the payment, they cannot vote for something to be done that is outside the law. V. Wyman asked why a bond was not mentioned earlier.

There was an extended discussion regarding bonds, what they are, when they are requested, and by whom, with Erin Atkinson and G. Scruton participating.

Steve Robbins clarified this is a reimbursement to Woodsville that the taxpayers voted on.

A resident noted the need for transparency.

Darwin Clogston said the bond was discussed in a highway meeting a month earlier, so it is not a surprise. He expressed concern that if the Board pays Woodsville, other precincts will ask for money in the future.

A Woodsville resident noted that Woodsville residents pay for other towns' budgets.

Harv Keyes, Haverhill Corner, said there has been a lack of transparency that goes back to the '50s, when Woodsville agreed to bond moneys, but hasn't done it. He cited the contents of House Bill 2021 and said there needs to be accountability as to where the money is going.

J. Longacre and R. Hurlburt reiterated the Board wants to do what is legal. T. Paige stressed the Board is trying to find out the requirements for a bond, and they will let the taxpayers know once they do. Discussion continued about the definition of a bond.

LEAVE PUBLIC HEARING AND REENTER PUBLIC MEETING

MOTION #3: K. Knapp made a motion to leave the public hearing and re-enter the public meeting. T. Paige seconded the motion.

Voice Vote: A roll call vote was taken. O'Shana – aye, Knapp – aye, Paige – aye, Longacre – aye, Hurlburt – aye. The motion carried unanimously.

Select Board Vote to Pay Woodsville Fire District Appropriated Funds

MOTION #4: J. Longacre made a motion to table this issue until the Board has guidance from the Attorney General's Office on what a bond is. T. Paige seconded the motion.

Voice Vote: A roll call vote was taken. O'Shana – aye, Knapp – aye, Paige – aye, Longacre – aye, Hurlburt – aye. The motion carried unanimously.

K. Shelton expressed disappointment that this issue has been tabled. He felt that negotiations were not being done in good faith and that Woodsville should become its own town.

CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION #5: R. Hurlburt made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. J. Longacre seconded the motion.

Voice Vote: A roll call vote was taken. O'Shana – aye, Knapp – aye, Paige – aye, Longacre – aye, Hurlburt – aye. The motion carried unanimously.

SCHEDULED APPEARANCES

Kevin Leen – KRT Appraisal

Kevin Leen from KRT Appraisal presented the 2024 revaluation. He reviewed the company's history, the goals and phases of a revaluation, and how values are obtained. He shared the old and new market values for Haverhill. A discussion followed regarding these results and the approach used to obtain them.

A resident asked if the Board has to turn these numbers over to the DRA to set the tax rate. Chair O'Shana said they would have to research this. There was a discussion about commercial properties and their share of the tax burden.

A resident asked about the timing of the revaluation. Chair O'Shana explained it was due to the equalization ratio. A discussion followed about aspects of the revaluation in general and its effect on the tax rate.

Emily Loomis, Woodsville, suggested summary information and an explanation of the methodology should have been provided in the letters that were sent out for clarity.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

There were no minutes to approve.

NEW BUSINESS

Announce New Tax Collector, Melinda Boutin

Chair O'Shana welcomed Melinda Boutin back as the tax collector. He noted that all checks have been deposited and thanked the residents for their patience.

Recommittal Statement

MOTION #6: R. O'Shana made a motion to sign the Recommittal Statement. J. Longacre seconded the motion.

Voice Vote: A roll call vote was taken. O'Shana – aye, Knapp – aye, Paige – aye, Longacre – aye, Hurlburt – aye. The motion carried unanimously.

Parks and Rec Positions

Chair O'Shana explained Recreation Director Sherri Sargent is having a difficult time filling the Recreation Assistant position. She has asked for two part-time positions to fill the one full-time position that has already been approved.

MOTION #7: K. Knapp made a motion to fill the one full-time Recreation Assistant position with two part-time positions. J. Longacre seconded the motion.

Voice Vote: A roll call vote was taken. O'Shana – aye, Knapp – aye, Paige – aye, Longacre – aye, Hurlburt – aye. The motion carried unanimously.

Private Well Testing Update

Chair O'Shana reviewed the process to obtain a private well test. He encouraged residents to register by October 18th.

Raffle Applications

Raffle applications were approved for the Grafton County Senior Center and American Legion Auxiliary. Chair O'Shana encouraged residents to buy raffle tickets to support these organizations.

TAN Agreement

Chair O'Shana explained the Town normally obtains a TAN (Tax Anticipated Note) through Woodsville Savings Bank. The Board is still working on the budget, so they do not know what amount will be needed.

MOTION #8: K. Knapp made a motion to start the TAN process. J. Longacre seconded the motion.

Voice Vote: A roll call vote was taken. O'Shana – aye, Knapp – aye, Paige – aye, Longacre – aye, Hurlburt – aye. The motion carried unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Hub66 Update Reimbursement 19 September 2024

Chair O'Shana reported Hub66 was supposed to reimburse the Town \$208,000 on September 17th. This has not yet happened, so he will continue to follow up.

Town Administrator Position Update

Chair O'Shana said there were 18 applications for the Town Administrator position. Identifying information on applications was redacted before they were reviewed. The hiring committee submitted two candidates; however, they were not pleased with the pool of candidates and suggested using a recruiting company to obtain more qualified applicants. Chair O'Shana reviewed the interview process, moving forward.

The Board discussed finding out what the cost would be for MRI or Primex to conduct this process. They also discussed having the committee interview the two candidates.

MOTION #9: J. Longacre made a motion that the hiring committee interview the two candidates and report back to the Board. K. Knapp seconded the motion.

Voice Vote: A roll call vote was taken. O'Shana – aye, Knapp – aye, Paige – aye, Longacre – aye, Hurlburt – aye. The motion carried unanimously.

CORRESPONDENCE

Police Department Earned Time Pay

R. Hurlburt reported the Police Chief explained that officers have not been able to take any time off due to the need to provide coverage. The Chief asked if they could be paid for their accrued time, in spite of the employee manual not allowing this.

MOTION #10: R. O'Shana made a motion that the Board pay the officers their earned time as an exception. R. Hurlburt seconded the motion.

Voice Vote: A roll call vote was taken. O'Shana – aye, Knapp – aye, Paige – aye, Longacre – aye, Hurlburt – aye. The motion carried unanimously.

COMMISSION / COMMITTEE EX-OFFICIO REPORTS:

Ron Hurlburt – Conservation Commission

R. Hurlburt reported on issues discussed during the September 17th meeting.

Joe Longacre – Planning Board

J. Longacre gave an update on projects being presented to the Planning Board.

Kevin Knapp – Parks & Recreation Commission

K. Knapp reported on past and planned events. He noted they are looking for part-time employees and volunteers.

Rod O'Shana – Airport Zoning Commission

Chair O'Shana reported the next meeting will be in October.

Joe Longacre - Zoning Board

J. Longacre said the Zoning Board had no reason to meet.

PUBLIC WANTING TO ADDRESS THE SELECT BOARD REGARDING ITEMS ON THE AGENDA (3 minutes maximum)

A representative from the School Board said he would like to present a School Board report to the Select Board. He encouraged residents to attend School Board meetings.

SELECT BOARD MEMBER FINAL COMMENTS

J. Longacre said members of the Board feel they should have better contact with the media to get information out about what the Board is doing. He thanked the representatives from the media for attending the meeting.

Chair O'Shana thanked the members of the public for attending the meeting and for voicing their opinions.

NON-PUBLIC MEETING

MOTION #11: A motion was made and seconded to close the public session and enter into a non-public session.

Voice Vote: A roll call vote was taken. O'Shana – aye, Knapp – aye, Paige – aye, Longacre – aye, Hurlburt – aye. The motion carried unanimously.

The public meeting was closed at 8:33 p.m.

The Board returned to public meeting.

ADJOURN MEETING

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Haggeli