

Town of Haverhill
SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, January 2, 2024, at 5:00 PM
Robert E. Clifford Memorial Building

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Blanchard called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Select Board Attendance:

Chair Phil Blanchard; Vice Chair Joe Longacre; Rod O’Shana, and Carolyn Hofmann via Zoom.
A quorum was met.

Town Employees Present:

Brigitte Codling, Town Manager
Jennifer Boucher, Assistant Town Manager

Members of the Public Present:

In Person:

Margo Longacre
Matthew Bjelobrk
Marie Bjelobrk
Mike Bonanno
Darwin Clogston
Robert St Pierre
Marilyn Blaisdell
Lorraine Prescott
Howard Hatch
Gordy & Judy Harris
Marilyn Vigneault
Don Vaillancourt
Kathleen Vaillancourt
Dawn Lavoie
Mike Lavoie

Dottie Long
Glen Page
James Duffy
Benjamin Moulton
Ron Hurlburt
Mark Lane
Gary Hebert
Tina Hebert
Don Hammond
Don Kimball
Dick Guy
Dennis Fournier
Shawn Bigelow
Regis Roy
Alex Nuti-de Biasi (*Journal Opinion*)

Members of the Public Present via Zoom:

Melin Boutin
Jim McKinnon
Guy Mitchell
Bob Long
Harvey Keyes
Evelyn Elms
Delcia Vinnacombe
Derek Kline

Joanne Young
Skip Gadwah
Janice Dube
Terry Lambert
R. Maccini
R. Newman
Cassie Moulton
Joshua Aldrich

ATTENDANCE/ROLL CALL

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

AGENDA APPROVAL

Chair Blanchard added two non-public meeting items to the Agenda.

MOTION #1: R. O'Shana moved to accept the Agenda. J. Longacre seconded the motion.

Voice Vote: All approved, none opposed, none abstained. The motion passed unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION #2: R. O'Shana moved to accept the consent agenda. J. Longacre seconded the motion.

Voice Vote: All approved, none opposed, none abstained. The motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

December 4, 2023, Select Board Meeting Minutes

MOTION #3: J. Longacre moved to approve the December 4, 2023, Select Board Meeting Minutes as presented. R. O'Shana seconded the motion.

Voice Vote: All approved, none opposed, none abstained. The motion passed unanimously.

December 4, 2023, Select Board Non-Public Meeting Minutes

MOTION #4: P. Blanchard to approve the December 4, 2023, Select Board Non-Public Meeting Minutes as presented. J. Longacre seconded the motion.

Voice Vote: All approved, none opposed, none abstained. The motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Center Haverhill Armory Easement

MOTION #5: P. Blanchard moved to enter the public hearing regarding the Center Haverhill Armory easement. R. O'Shana seconded the motion.

Voice Vote: All approved, none opposed, none abstained. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Blanchard opened the public hearing.

Chair Blanchard explained a resident currently shares her driveway with the Armory. The Town has recommended granting an easement to put in a new driveway across Town-owned property. This will involve removal of trees and stumps.

Marilyn Blaisdell of the Haverhill Conservation Commission asked if this would go through the Planning Board and the Conservation Commission. B. Codling explained the Select Board has discussed removing all of the trees between the Armory and the property line to avoid damage caused by falling trees. The tree removal is under the purview of the Select Board; the easement request was presented to the Planning Board and the Conservation Commission for their recommendations.

M. Blaisdell said the removal of these trees would remove the buffer for the gravel pit, which the Conservation Commission is not in favor of. B. Codling noted this is not conservation land, so is not under the purview of the Conservation Commission. Chair Blanchard said this will make the land more usable. B. Codling said there is a proposal to relocate the Highway Department to this property, so the trees would need to be removed at some point anyway.

Howard Hatch verified the easement will be for the driveway only, not for buildings. Chair Blanchard said this was correct.

MOTION #6: J. Longacre moved to close the public hearing. R. O'Shana seconded the motion.
Voice Vote: All approved, none opposed, none abstained. The motion passed unanimously.

MOTION #7: P. Blanchard moved to approve the Center Haverhill Armory easement. J. Longacre seconded the motion.
Voice Vote: All approved, none opposed, none abstained. The motion passed unanimously.

HPD & Fire Grant Application

MOTION #8: R. O'Shana moved to enter the public hearing regarding the HPD & Fire Grant application. J. Longacre seconded the motion.
Voice Vote: All approved, none opposed, none abstained. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Blanchard opened the public hearing.

B. Codling and Chair Blanchard explained the Police Department spearheaded this grant for the Police and Fire Departments to buy radios. This vote would be to accept the money, should the grant be awarded. The current radios are 20 years old and need to be replaced. The total amount would be \$135,000 for both departments. Both departments agreed to give up purchasing other equipment to cover the match. The match would be approximately \$60,000, which would come out of their current budgets.

MOTION #9: R. O'Shana moved to close the public hearing. J. Longacre seconded the motion.
Voice Vote: All approved, none opposed, none abstained. The motion passed unanimously.

P. Blanchard recused himself from the vote.

MOTION #10: R. O'Shana moved to accept the grant for the Haverhill Police Department and Fire Department, if it is awarded. J. Longacre seconded the motion.
Voice Vote: All approved, none opposed, P. Blanchard abstained. The motion passed 3-0-1.

North Haverhill Boundary Expansion

MOTION #11: J. Longacre moved to enter the public hearing regarding the North Haverhill boundary expansion. R. O'Shana seconded the motion.

Voice Vote: All approved, none opposed, none abstained. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Blanchard opened the public hearing.

Dennis Fournier explained the reason for this request. Chair Blanchard clarified that the purpose of the request is to expand the boundary line to show that both houses on Airport Road will be included.

Howard Hatch asked when the expansion of the precinct was voted on. The Board did not know the date of this decision.

A member of the public asked if the North Haverhill Commissioners already voted on this issue. B. Codling said they filed a petition. The resident said he believed if a district is created or expanded, it must be ratified by the Town. B. Codling reviewed RSA 52 regarding how to create, expand, and dissolve districts. It does not address sidewalks, street lights, et cetera. Shawn Bigelow, former North Haverhill Commissioner, reviewed the history of the expansion of the water system in North Haverhill and said there were warrant articles voted on at the Town Meeting.

A member of the public said by entering the District, he doesn't get any service he isn't already paying for. Chair Blanchard clarified the petition is to expand the boundaries; the question of taxes paid would have to be addressed by the Commissioners. B. Codling said the RSAs do not isolate individuals outside the District that might be provided services by the District. She said RSA 52 is specific that if an individual would like services provided by the District, they would need to be part of the District. She said anything can be added to bylaws; however, it might not be supported by the RSAs.

MOTION #12: J. Longacre moved to close the public hearing. R. O'Shana seconded the motion.

Voice Vote: All approved, none opposed, none abstained. The motion passed unanimously.

MOTION #13: P. Blanchard moved to accept the petition from the Precinct that will enact a Warrant Article. J. Longacre seconded the motion.

Voice Vote: All approved, none opposed, none abstained. The motion passed unanimously.

SCHEDULED APPEARANCES

Introduction of Marilyn Vigneault – Tax Collector/Bookkeeper

J. Bouchard introduced Marilyn Vigneault and explained her role, including the timeline of her taking over duties. M. Vigneault introduced herself and the Board welcomed her.

Ron Hurlburt – ATV Road Access in Haverhill

Ron Hurlburt addressed the Board regarding opening the Town roads throughout North Haverhill and Haverhill to ATV/OHRV use. He said that last year, they requested opening French Pond Road and Pond Circle, which has been well received and he believes there have been no complaints. He noted roads in adjoining communities have been approved, which helps riders access trail systems and has benefitted Town businesses. He reviewed the state regulations regarding permitted hours and dates of operation.

Chair Blanchard explained the Board can vote to move this to a public hearing. R. O'Shana suggested materials R. Hurlburt could provide to aid the presentation. The Board discussed timing of the public hearing and abutter notification requirements. Terry Lambert explained the requirements for notification.

MOTION #14: P. Blanchard moved to hold a public hearing on this issue. R. O'Shana seconded the motion.

Discussion: J. Longacre asked for clarification regarding the roads that R. Hurlburt would like to include. A resident noted R. Hurlburt said ATVs are safer than motorcycles. He asked if an endorsement is needed to operate an ATV on a road, since one is needed to operate a motorcycle. R. Hurlburt said it only needs to be registered. R. Hurlburt clarified his use of "safer" and the permits needed for riders under 25 years of age.

Voice Vote: All approved, none opposed, none abstained. The motion passed unanimously.

Dick Guy – Regarding Taxes

Dick Guy thanked the Board for the warm reception given to Woodsville last summer, when they reached out to resolve issues. He said if any perspective or history is needed by the Board on issues encountered in the past, he would be willing to provide it. Chair Blanchard said the Board is looking forward to meeting with the Commissioners and beginning to discuss issues.

Robert St. Pierre – Regarding Merchants Lane (Class VI Road)

Robert St. Pierre reviewed the history of Town maintenance and plowing of Merchants Lane. He discussed the status of Merchants Lane and expressed concern that the residents were not given due process when it was changed to a private road and is no longer being maintained or plowed. Another resident expressed the same concern. B. Codling said it was labeled as a private road on the property records map, however, historical review showed it is a Class VI road subject to gates and bars. The bridge failure on Meadow Lane is what triggered her investigation, which uncovered that Meadow Lane is a park road and that Merchants is a Class VI road. She clarified that Merchants Lane was made a Class VI road in 1969, so should not have been maintained by the Town since that article passed at Town Meeting.

R. St. Pierre said he was not able to participate in a public hearing that reviewed a list of roads provided by the Road Agent to be discontinued, as Merchants Lane was classified as a private road. B. Codling clarified it was already a Class VI road, so was already discontinued, so it was not appropriate to be included at all for consideration.

B. Codling explained she drafted an MOU in 2022, but a hold was put on it as the Board membership was changing. The MOU is currently with the State AG for her legal review. She said the Town cannot access Merchants Lane without going onto Meadow Lane. The Town does not have the authority to do anything on Meadow Lane, as there is no MOU. The Board discussed St Pierre's ability to petition a Warrant Article and the affect living on a Class VI road has on property values.

NEW BUSINESS

Set Date for Application of Mildred Page Trust Funds

J. Longacre said he wanted information on how applications have been submitted for the Mildred Page Trust Funds in the past, so a standardized application process can be created. B. Codling and J. Boucher explained the current process. H. Hatch noted how the process worked in the past. B. Codling said in 2019 or 2020, the Select Board voted that all non-profits should petition the Town for funds, This happens in February; however, the budget process is over at this point.

A resident from Haverhill Corner said the Town Manager told them to wait to apply for these funds, so they were not prepared and the deadline passed. He noted by using these funds, it saves the taxpayers money by using it on Precinct-owned property. B. Codling clarified that these funds can only be awarded to public buildings in Haverhill Corner. She said she probably suggested waiting if they asked early in the year, as the funds are replenished later in the year. The resident said it is good that the Board is establishing criteria, so this does not happen again.

J. Boucher and B. Codling explained how the interest on these funds is received by the Town.

MOTION #15: P. Blanchard moved to set October 15th as the date for applications to be due for the Mildred Page Trust Funds. J. Longacre seconded the motion.

Voice Vote: All approved, none opposed, none abstained. The motion passed unanimously.

List of Proposed Ordinances & Policies (New & Updated)

B. Codling reviewed the proposed ordinances and the status of each one. P. Blanchard clarified the noise ordinance applies primarily to issues with dogs.

MOTION #16: P. Blanchard moved to press forward with the flood prone, parking/highway, false alarm, short-term rental, junk yard, and special event permit ordinances. J. Longacre seconded the motion.

Discussion: A resident noted that a noise ordinance was brought before the Board a few years ago and it was pushed back to the Precinct level. He urged that it be addressed now. P. Blanchard said that laws exist and if there is an issue, the laws are not able to be applied. He said the ordinance will likely have the same result.

Voice Vote: All approved, none opposed, none abstained. The motion passed unanimously.

Resolution to Officially Adopt the new FEMA Maps and Study

P. Blanchard clarified that only one panel changed for the Town of Haverhill. B. Codling said if this is not officially approved, the Town will lose membership in the flood insurance program.

MOTION #17: P. Blanchard moved to adopt the new FEMA Maps and Study. R. O'Shana seconded the motion.

Voice Vote: All approved, none opposed, none abstained. The motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Voting Machine Decision

Christine Hebert, Town Clerk, reported that she and Gary Hebert, Town Moderator, viewed both of the approved machines in action. She said she preferred the VotingWorks machine, as the Dominion machine screen shows when a voter over-votes or under-votes. So, anyone standing behind the voter can see how they voted. The VotingWorks machine will just show that the voter under-voted or over-voted, and kick the ballot back for the voter to take care of. She also liked that when write-ins and over/under voters are adjudicated at the end, the VotingWorks machine displays that information on a large screen. This way, observers can see what is being looked at and how the determination is being made.

G. Hebert pointed out this machine must be hard-wired; it is not wireless and does not use Wi-Fi. He can physically remove the card from the machine at the end of the day and plug it into a laptop, so all votes will be displayed. He noted both machines have good points.

J. Longacre asked why other Town Clerks did not respond to C. Hebert's request for information on the VotingWorks machine. She said a majority of the state appears to be choosing the Dominion machine, as they are already using Dominion's AccuVote voting machine. She is not aware of anyone in New Hampshire that has used the VotingWorks machine.

G. Hebert said neither machine will be available until March 1, 2024.

O'Shana said there are ten states using VotingWorks machines. He noted the company is a non-profit.

C. Hebert said both machines are about the same price, at approximately \$7,000. G. Hebert reviewed the components that are included for that price. For the backup machine, only the tabulator will be needed, so the price will be approximately \$5,000. C. Hebert reviewed the maintenance contract and what it covers, and the machine coding fee.

C. Hebert recommended purchasing the VotingWorks machine.

MOTION #18: P. Blanchard moved to purchase VotingWorks voting machines. R. O'Shana seconded the motion.

Voice Vote: All approved, none opposed, none abstained. The motion passed unanimously.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Chair Blanchard read a request for a municipal land use tax change, which was signed by the Board.

Chair Blanchard read a request for an adjustment to the assessed value.

MOTION #19: P. Blanchard moved to approve the 2023 abatement for Map 104, Lot 22 in the amount of \$903.86.

J. Bouchard recommended the motion be made to reduce the assessed value.

P. Blanchard amended his motion to change the assessed value from \$261,200 to \$234,000, based on the assessor's recommendation. J. Longacre seconded the motion.

Voice Vote: All approved, none opposed, none abstained. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Blanchard read a request for an adjustment to the assessed value.

MOTION #20: J. Longacre moved to follow the assessor's advice and change the assessed value from \$92,000 to \$80,000. O'Shana seconded the motion.

Voice Vote: All approved, none opposed, none abstained. The motion passed unanimously.

COMMISSION/COMMITTEE EX-OFFICIO REPORTS

Carolyn Hofmann – Conservation Commission

C. Hofmann reported Woodsville Cross Country wants to donate to the Conservation Commission to maintain trails. The Commission is considering a land use change tax, with a percentage of the tax going to the Conservation Fund. They will be updating the Mission Statement. They are going to participate in an educational event with the Connecticut River Conservancy in 2024. They discussed the tree removal at Center Haverhill and including the Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) in the Master Plan.

Kevin Knapp – Planning Board

K. Knapp was not present to provide a report.

Joe Longacre – Parks & Recreation Commission

J. Longacre reviewed the holiday events held in December. The next meeting is January 3, 2024.

Rod O'Shana – Airport Zoning Commission

R. O'Shana reported they are working on the revision of the scholarship application. They corresponded with the current recipient and indicated the intent to finish up with her award in

August 2024. He shouted out for Cliff Batchelder for 15 years on the Airport Zoning Commission, as he resigned as of the last meeting.

Phil Blanchard – Zoning Board

Chair Blanchard had no report for the Zoning Board.

Phil Blanchard – Public Safety Facility Planning Committee

Chair Blanchard reported the Public Safety Facility Planning Committee is in limbo.

CORRESPONDENCE

NHDOT Letter Regarding 2023 One-Time Bridge Aid

Chair Blanchard reported the Town has been awarded \$31,070.95 as a one-time bridge payment by the NHDOT and explained the stipulations of the award.

PUBLIC WANTING TO ADDRESS THE SELECT BOARD REGARDING ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

Ms. Roy asked for clarification regarding the Airport Zoning Commission scholarship recipient.

R. Hurlburt said residents are upset over the drastic increase in property taxes. He suggested it might be beneficial to move the next reevaluation a year earlier. Chair Blanchard said the Board is weighing this. R. Hurlburt asked if the Town receives any taxes from Airbnb rentals. Chair Blanchard said they are reviewing that policy and working on an ordinance. B. Codling said the state taxes short-term rentals and those taxes come back to the Town through Rooms and Meals. A resident asked for a definition of short-term rental and B. Codling provided this.

R. Hurlburt asked if homesteading is a county-wide option. Chair Blanchard said this is decided at the state level. R. Hurlburt said he assumes the assessor evaluates and gives a tax benefit for residents on Class VI roads. J. Boucher said she has been told there is usually something that is factored into the land value, but she suggested consulting the assessor.

SELECT BOARD SHOUT OUT

J. Longacre gave a shout out to the Road Department for how they have cared for the roads in the recent weather. He said the potholes at the entrance to the main building are horrendous and asked for cold patch to be applied.

B. Codling said there was almost \$100,000 in damages from the 2022 winter storm, which has taken months to repair. The 2023 winter storm was a repeat, with more trees down. She agreed the Highway Department deserves kudos for the round-the-clock work done to repair the damage. She and the Road Agent will be touring with FEMA on January 3rd to assess the damage from the

recent storm, then a PDA meeting will be held to develop projects for debris removal, road repair, and so on.

J. Boucher thanked the Haverhill taxpayers for their graciousness in how they responded to the answers they received to their questions on the tax rate.

NON-PUBLIC SESSION

MOTION #21: P. Blanchard moved to close the public portion of the Select Board meeting and enter a non-public session per RSA 91-A:3, II(1) Consideration of legal advice provided by legal counsel, either in writing or orally, to one or more members of the public body, even where legal counsel is not present. R. O'Shana seconded the motion.

Voice Vote: A roll call vote was taken. O'Shana – aye, Hofmann – aye, Blanchard – aye, Longacre – aye. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting room was closed at 7:49 p.m.

The meeting room was reopened at 8:55 p.m.

RETURN TO PUBLIC SESSION

ADJOURN MEETING

MOTION #6: J. Longacre made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:56 p.m. R. O'Shana seconded the motion.

Voice Vote: All approved, none opposed, none abstained. The motion passed unanimously.