

**Town of Haverhill
SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
December 16, 2024, 6:00 p.m.
Robert E. Clifford Memorial Building**

Approved

Zoom link to the recording:

https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/share/Yhm5XoiWgIzdrU72Ue8zYSOANXgTqLxC1zR-401GqSnOzxUQzTVJ3lpFREMyFqXX.-nap_P1sIOn785uw?startTime=1734389125000
Passcode: =gCq6sx.

Select Board Present:

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

Attendees In Person: *Need to Add Foster*

Attendees Online:

Jim McKinnon, Harvey Keyes, Skip Gadwah, Mary Houde

CALL TO ORDER

Chair O'Shana called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

ATTENDANCE/ROLL CALL

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

AGENDA APPROVAL

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

Voice Vote: A roll call vote was taken. O'Shana – aye, Knapp – aye, Longacre – aye, Paige – aye, Hurlburt – aye. The motion carried 5-0-0.

CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION #2: J. Longacre made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as amended. K. Knapp seconded the motion.

Voice Vote: A roll call vote was taken. O'Shana – aye, Knapp – aye, Longacre – aye, Paige – aye, Hurlburt – aye. The motion carried 5-0-0.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

There were no minutes to approve.

SCHEDULED APPEARANCES

Phil Blanchard, Fire Chief

Fire Chief Phil Blanchard appeared before the Board to discuss a warrant article to sell the fire truck currently in Haverhill Corner and a warrant article to purchase a new truck. He reviewed the background of this request, noting that a new truck will take three years minimum to build.

Conway is interested in purchasing the Haverhill Corner truck at almost-new pricing. The cost of a new truck will continue to increase, if the Board decides not to move forward with the purchase at this time. Even if the Town does not approve the purchase of a new truck, the truck at Haverhill Corner should be sold at this time.

MOTION #3: R. O'Shana made a motion that the Board create a warrant article to approve the sale of the fire truck post-Town Meeting for no less than \$450,000, with the revenue generated moved into the capital reserve fund for the purchase of a new fire truck for the Town of Haverhill, and the current fire truck be moved to the Haverhill Corner station as a reserve.

R. O'Shana rescinded his motion.

MOTION #4: R. O'Shana made a motion to authorize the Fire Chief to sell the Haverhill Corner fire truck post-Town Meeting, with the revenue generated moved into a fire apparatus capital reserve fund. R. Hurlburt seconded the motion.

Discussion: R. Hurlburt verified the truck would be sold shortly after the warrant article is approved by the voters, assuming it is approved. Chief Blanchard said he believes Conway is in a good position with their capital reserves and their chief has access to the full sum. Conway offered to put down a deposit, but the chief did not want to accept it without a warrant article to sell the truck.

R. Hurlburt asked if the Town would be placed in jeopardy if the truck is sold and Chief Blanchard explained why this would not be the case.

R. Hurlburt asked what would happen if the purchase of the new truck is pushed out. Chief Blanchard explained there are guidelines for replacing apparatus and the current truck is out of compliance with those guidelines. He noted the truck is starting to show signs of wear. He reiterated the cost of a new truck will continue to increase.

K. Knapp asked if the purchase of the new truck is contingent on the sale of the Haverhill Corner truck and Chief Blanchard said it would be, as it is not financially feasible to purchase a new truck without those funds.

Voice Vote: A roll call vote was taken. O'Shana – abstain, Knapp – aye, Longacre – aye, Paige – aye, Hurlburt – aye. The motion carried 4-0-1, with R. O'Shana abstaining.

The Board discussed ways the new truck could be paid for.

MOTION #5: R. Hurlburt made a motion to prepare a warrant article to purchase a new fire apparatus, with numbers coming based upon the net being the sale of the existing engine. J. Longacre seconded the motion.

Voice Vote: A roll call vote was taken. O'Shana – abstain, Knapp – nay, Longacre – aye, Paige – aye, Hurlburt – aye. The motion carried 3-1-1, with K. Knapp voting in the negative and R. O'Shana abstaining.

Ron Willoughby

Ron Willoughby asked if the Town is still looking for a Town Administrator. Chair O'Shana said there has been a conditional offer and the Town is waiting for a response. This information was posted to Facebook the morning of this meeting. Chair O'Shana reviewed the process that was followed to fill this position.

Mr. Willoughby said the public should be able to comment on any issue, not just items on the Agenda, in the interest of transparency. Chair O'Shana explained the previous Board made this change in order to streamline the meetings. He noted anyone can request to be added to the Agenda as a scheduled appearance; the Board will ask what it is in reference to, to be prepared to answer questions.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

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

Melissa Gould concurred with Mr. Willoughby's suggestion that public comment can be on any issue, not just ones on the Agenda. More people would come to meetings, if they were open and transparent. She asked why the Agenda was not posted earlier and Chair O'Shana apologized, explaining they were preparing budget materials. Chair O'Shana noted three of the Board positions will be open in March and encouraged anyone to run who wants to see changes.

A member of the public asked if there is a deadline for the Town Administrator candidate to respond. Chair O'Shana said they followed up with the individual today.

A member of the public asked how funds would be raised for the new fire truck. He asked if it would be in the form of a bond and asked for the details, but the Board does not have those at this time.

SELECTBOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

T. Paige explained the practicality of limiting comments to three minutes during the meeting, but reiterated that Board members are willing to listen to everybody. The other Board members agreed with this. K. Knapp said a previous Board suggested individuals who want to speak at the meeting email the Board with questions the week before, so the Board can prepare answers.

Chair O'Shana explained Melinda Boutin is the tax collector, not the tax negotiator. She does not set the tax rate, she just collects payments. He asked that citizens be courteous and kind to her.

He shared information on how the tax rate is set. He explained the challenge involved in the Town operating while waiting to receive taxes designed to pay for the operation of the Town. He noted the need to obtain a Tax Anticipation Note sometimes to temporarily bridge the gap. He also explained why tax bills increase. He referenced the MS-535 form, which shows the Town's revenues and expenses, and urged citizens to check it out.

Chair O'Shana said the budget meetings are going well. Finance Administrator Bridget Lanctot has done a really good job putting together the budget.

Kevin Shelton, Administrator of the Woodsville Fire District, explained that the valuations are just a piece of the pie regarding increased taxes. Inflation, overestimated anticipated revenues, and the loss of federal funding also play a part.

A member of the public spoke on the impact assessment has on monies received by the School District. He explained the June tax bill is an estimate and the second round of bills has to make up any shortfall.

Aaron Palm (sp) said the assessments are not accurate and urged the Board to adjust them. She questioned if important information is being disseminated to the citizens via Facebook. Chair O'Shana explained information was shared as a comment on Facebook, it was not an official notification. Ms. Palm said such information should be shared in a proper manner.

Chair O'Shana explained that taxes are directly related to the budgets passed by the voters. R. Hurlburt clarified that residents should involve themselves in the budgeting process, if they are concerned about taxes. There was an extended discussion on the budget and the need to balance providing services and controlling taxes.

NON-PUBLIC MEETING

A non-public session was held per RSA 91-A:3, II (e) Consideration or negotiation of pending claims or litigation which has been threatened in writing or filed by or against this board or any subdivision thereof, or by or against any member thereof because of his or her membership therein, until the claim or litigation has been fully adjudicated or otherwise settled.

The public meeting was closed at 7:10 p.m.

The Board returned to public meeting.

ADJOURN MEETING

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Haggeli