

**Town of Haverhill**  
**SELECTBOARD MEETING**  
**Monday, April 8, 2024, 6:00 p.m.**  
**Robert E. Clifford Memorial Building**

**Select Board Present:**

Interim Chair Rod O'Shana, Joe Longacre, Kevin Knapp, & Theresa Paige. A quorum was met.

**Town Employees Present:**

Brigitte Codling, Town Manager

**Members of the Public Present:**

Susie Tann  
Melissa Gould  
Gary Scruton  
Janice Scruton  
Matthew Bjelobrk  
Mike Adamkowski  
Dottie Long  
Carole Brooks-Broer  
Ron Hurlburt  
Kim Waterhouse  
Darwin Clogston

Lynn Graham  
Margo Longacre  
Mike Lavoie  
Dawn Lavoie  
Marilyn Blaisdell  
Lorraine Prescott  
Mike Bonanno  
Barbara Leete  
Jay Waterhouse  
Kevin Shelton  
Tom Mayo

**Members of the Public Online:**

Howard Hatch  
Carolyn Hofmann  
Joanne Young  
Skip Gadwah  
Shawn Dennis  
Guy Mitchell  
Robert Maccini  
Ann Maccini

Harvey Keyes  
Delcia Vinnacombe  
Vickie Wyman  
Alex Nuti-de Biasi (Journal Opinion)  
Cathy Whittington  
Jeff Doc Brooks  
Roger Newman  
Leslie Ramsay

**CALL TO ORDER**

Interim Chair O'Shana called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

**ATTENDANCE/ROLL CALL**

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Interim Chair O'Shana said that David Scott's presentation would be moved to the beginning of the meeting.

He announced the resignation of Philip Blanchard as Selectboard Chair and Member and read a statement from Mr. Blanchard.

**MOTION #1:** Interim Chair O'Shana regrettably moved to accept the resignation of Philip Blanchard as Selectboard Chair and Member of the Selectboard. The motion was seconded.

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

## **SCHEDULED APPEARANCES**

### **David Scott, NH DOT Route 135 Bridge Project Presentation, Email, and Work Zone Agreement**

David Scott, NH DOT Bridge Design Chief, and Dillan Schmidt, NH DOT Environmental Coordinator, appeared before the Board to present plans for the Route 135 bridge repair. They noted that as the bridge was built in 1998, it does not meet the minimum criteria for eligibility in the National Register of Historic Places.

D. Scott reviewed the proposed repair work to be done on the bridge. Access to the sidewalk will not be affected during the process. The work will be done in two phases and will be signaled. All work will be done within the state right-of-way and there are no environmental concerns. The estimate cost is \$1.5 million, which is all state funded. Construction is scheduled to begin next year during construction season (April through October).

D. Scott requested permission to place signs on Town property during this project. B. Codling explained the District of Woodsville has authority over their roads, so he would need to speak one of the Commissioners and the District Administrator regarding placing signs on their roads.

Interim Chair O'Shana asked for public comment.

Michael Lavoie asked about the life expectancy of the repair. Mr. Scott said their goal is to address each bridge every 20 years.

**MOTION #2:** Interim Chair O'Shana moved to sign the project documentation. J. Longacre seconded the motion.

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

## **AGENDA APPROVAL**

Interim Chair O'Shana noted two abatement requests need to be added to the Agenda. Old Business, Approval of Revisions to Purchasing Policy, is tabled until April 20, 2024.

**MOTION #3:** K. Knapp moved to approve the Agenda as amended. J. Longacre seconded the motion.

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

### **CONSENT AGENDA APPROVAL**

**MOTION #4:** K. Knapp moved 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. The motion passed unanimously.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**MOTION #5:** Interim Chair O'Shana moved to approve the March 25, 2024, SB Meeting Minutes; March 27, 2024, SB Work Session Minutes; March 27, 2024, SB Non-Public Session Minutes; March 29, 2024, SB Work Session Non-Public worksheet; April 1, 2024, SB Work Session Non-Public worksheet; April 3, 2024, SB Work Session Non-Public worksheet; and April 5, 2024, SB Work Session Non-Public worksheet as presented. K. Knapp seconded the motion.

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

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **Credit Card Transfer for Welfare Administrator**

Interim Chair O'Shana noted Jessica Young is the new Welfare Administrator.

**MOTION #6:** Interim Chair O'Shana moved to approve the transfer of the VISA Business Card for Woodsville Savings Bank for the Town of Haverhill to Jessica Young. J. Longacre seconded the motion.

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

#### **Appointment of DMV Municipal Agent**

**MOTION #7:** Interim Chair O'Shana moved to approve the appointment of Carole Brooks-Broer as the DMV Municipal Agent for the Town of Haverhill. K. Knapp seconded the motion.

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

### **Approval to Build on Class IV or Private Road**

Interim Chair O'Shana explained a building permit application to build on a Class IV road has passed the Planning Board and is now before the Selectboard.

**MOTION #8:** J. Longacre moved to allow building at 58 Woodward Road (Map 21 Lot 3). K. Knapp seconded the motion.

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

### **Appoint Mark Maholchic to Airport Zoning Commission**

Mark Maholchic introduced himself and reviewed his qualifications. Interim Chair O'Shana noted he has attended numerous minutes of the Airport Zoning Commission.

**MOTION #9:** Interim Chair O'Shana moved to appoint Mark Maholchic to the Airport Zoning Commission. K. Knapp seconded the motion.

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

### **APPROVAL OF ABATEMENTS**

**MOTION #10:** K. Knapp moved to approve the recommendation of the Town Assessor for Map 15, Lot 224. J. Longacre seconded the motion.

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

**MOTION #11:** K. Knapp moved to approve the recommendation of the Town Assessor for Map 102, Lot 31. Interim Chair O'Shana seconded the motion.

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

### **TOWN MANAGER/ASSISTANT TOWN MANAGER REPORT**

There was no Town Manager report.

### **COMMISSION/COMMITTEE EX-OFFICIO REPORTS**

#### **Conservation Commission: Theresa Paige**

There was no Conservation Meeting.

#### **Planning Board: Joe Longacre**

J. Longacre reported the Board approved a lot line adjustment. The next meeting will be organizational, to appoint a Chair and Vice Chair. They will also review the Rules of Procedure. They also thanked Gary Hebert for his work as Chair and wished him well on his retirement.

**Parks & Recreation Commission: Kevin Knapp**

K. Knapp reported on upcoming events, including sites to pick up bags for Clean Up Haverhill. The next meeting is May 1, 2024.

**Airport Zoning Commission: Rod O'Shana**

R. O'Shana reported there was no meeting.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

There was no correspondence.

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

A member of the public asked who Committee and Commission Chairs report to under the new form of Town government. Interim Chair O'Shana said they would report to the respective Board member at large. He noted they are continuing to work on the organizational chart as a result of the recent change in the form of Town government.

**SELECT BOARD MEMBER FINAL COMMENTS**

T. Paige read a statement written by P. Blanchard:

*It is time for closure. It is time for the town to move forward. It is time for residents to place emotions aside, understanding that it will take each one of us working together. I wanted to take some time and explain the process that has taken place over the last couple of weeks that led to the hiring of the Town Administrator.*

*I ask that each of us keeps an open mind and try to understand how we got here today.*

*This year the town voted, by 42 votes, to change our government form from the Town Manager form to the Town Administrator. I personally think this will be a great change moving forward. This change ensures that the Selectboard will now make the final decisions on all aspects of town governance. The board will now bear a lot more responsibility and accountability to the taxpayer. The town administrator can't sign any contracts, have the final say on any legal matters and is not responsible for hiring or terminating employees.*

*The workload for the Town Administrator will not change. The TA will prepare the same amount of work for the board's review. The TA, per contract and job description, will work at the pleasure of the selectboard.*

*Unfortunately, there are some misconceptions as to what this vote really means. The board has been told that the "intent" of this article was to remove Brigitte Codling from her position with the town. It removed her from the Town Manager position but did not disqualify her from working for the Town. The town has a policy that any positions are recruited from within. That is what this board did.*

*Before contract negotiations began, the board investigated the ramifications to the town if we posted this position. We checked with surrounding municipalities and quickly realized the lack of qualified candidates to fill roles. Several communities have extended months long searches for candidates. Most average at least 3 to 4 months, some up to 18 months (about 1 and a half years) before hiring. Having an in-house, qualified and experienced manager, it made no sense to risk the town with the position vacant for any time.*

*The next step was to meet with Brigitte Codling to see if she would even be interested. She stated that she would entertain employment with the Town. The next several meetings consisted of the board setting a job description and negotiating a contract for review. After several reviews, the board voted in favor of a one year contract. This would allow the board, the community and Ms. Codling the opportunity to determine if this would be a good fit for all involved. Much of the contract language was changed from prior contracts. Brigitte agreed that one the insurance plans change in July for all employees, she would also have the same options on plans. This is a large change from previous contracts that provided full family coverage to the TM.*

*I know there has been much talk about salary. A lot of residents incorrectly assumed that the salary would automatically decrease. As I stated before, the TA will perform the same functions as a TM would. She will continue at the same salary based on several factors. A wage analysis on other managerial roles in municipal government as well as jobs that require a bachelor's degree show our TA is on the lower part of the pay scale. I have almost zero confidence the board would be able to recruit a qualified candidate, with a one-year contract, for this salary. We would have been in the position, if we found a candidate, to extend a multiyear contract. There has been much talk about the town switching back to the TM form of government next year. It makes no sense to extend anyone in this position for more than a year and open the town to more financial liability.*

*The change puts an immense amount of work on the board. The board's work has increased, and it has been assigned individual departments within the town to serve as liaisons to be used as a conduit back to town administration and the taxpayer. This increase in workload was not expected and could not be prepared for. The board is not seeking any salary increases for the extra responsibilities. If the current time spent on town business were to continue, the salary per board member would roughly equal \$1.50 per hour worked at the end of the year. I commend the board for not once mentioning the fact the board should be paid much more for the work performed. These savings should offset any decrease in the TA salary some residents expected.*

*As to the severance package. This was part of her original contract. The town is bound by the contract. The board did discuss the severance package and ultimately there was nothing we could change.*

*The board came with due diligence to the realization the best option for the entire town was to fill the position with someone we all know to be more than capable. Not risk having day to day operations fail because having an open position.*

*In closing, I would like to bring everyone's attention back to a few matters of business conducted by a prior board. I am going to highlight a few issues that it seems most have chosen to overlook.*

*In January of 2023, the Town was faced with several issues that led to the tax rate not being set. On the onset, this looked like it could be a terrible situation for all. The board then decided to find a law firm they felt could help them with this issue.*

*If you recall, at the January 17th board meeting a statement was read by the acting chair, citing the reasons the board took action. That statement was prepared by lawyers at the law firm, DTC, the firm the board stated they had hired.*

*Little did we know at the time, there was much communication with DTC and the Haverhill Board, prior to any tax rate issues.*

*There is documentation proving that in May of 2022 communication had started with DTC and the BOS.*

*Again, in September and November of the same year. From the communication provided by DTC, it was evident the board of 2022 was exploring options to terminate the Town Manager and questioned the withholding of monies from Articles 27 & 28.*

*Members of the next elected selectboard were told that DTC was hired for the tax rate issue, the town manager was not going to be fired, and this had nothing to do with the district of Woodsville.*

*So, a few points.*

*One email states, that all but one board member is on board with hiring your firm to terminate the town manager.*

*The attorney that was hired had previously litigated against the TOH. He was representing the district of Woodsville during this legal bout. In an email to another lawyer that works for DTC, this lawyer states he believes the board reached out to him because of his past litigation for the district of Woodsville.*

*In May of 2022, the same attorney wrote to a board member explaining that he would need to check with the Woodsville district to ensure they had no conflicts with him now representing the TOH.*

*Again in 2023, DTC mentions several times they needed to work through the possibility of conflicts being present, undoubtable because the TOH BOS was working with the attorney who sued the TOH.*



*DTC was provided the Town Managers contract and information from warrant articles 27 and 28, which were articles to fund Woodsville operations.*

*I understand with personnel issues the board could not discuss this publicly. However, no evidence of any wrongdoing was documented.*

*I believe this process was mishandled and got very messy. I also believe this created as much division in town, as the board is now being accused of creating, by hiring a qualified manager.*

*I don't bring this up to create more hate and animosity. I don't bring it up to rub egg in the faces of prior board members.*

*I raise this issue again because we just offered the TA position to an employee that was never fired. For months it's clear based on communication from the past BOS and DTC there was a concerted effort to remove the TM. After all the communication and meetings with lawyers, Brigitte Codling wasn't removed. It appears the board had the votes needed if that is what they wished.*

*The town would still be on the hook for the severance package, that would be paid out the same way it will now.*

*If this employee was as bad as some say she is, why wasn't she terminated. Why didn't we have residents calling for her removal? Why did the board simply not fire her?*

*The fact remains, there is no documentation of wrongdoing by Ms. Codling. There was zero supporting documentation left for the new board to review to support any claims that she must be removed.*

*Ms. Codling now reports to a board of five. She acts under the discretion of the board. She understands this community needs to heal and move forward. She is ready to settle any open lawsuits and find common ground for the funding debate that has loomed over this community for several years.*

*If you are left questioning why she was chosen, don't forget the actions of the past board. If there was a reason strong enough to terminate, we had faith in the past board to do what was right. Have faith in this board to do the same.*

*Today marks a new start for the Town. Today the opportunity presents itself to come together and move forward.*

*It will not always be easy, nor do I believe everyone will fully commit, but starting today the Town will see who is willing to set differences aside and create a better town.*

J. Longacre said the last two weeks were very stressful for the Board and they are trying to move forward.



A member of the public asked how this statement will be conveyed to the rest of the Town. Interim Chair O'Shana said it will be included in the minutes.

Interim Chair O'Shana said it is discouraging that P. Blanchard left the Board. It is disappointing that the former Board has worked to remove the Town Manager position in an attempt to remove B. Codling from employment with the Town. He hopes the Town can begin to use evidence-based decision-making. He said the keyboard warriors are not helping the situation or the Town. He said the residents should work to make the Town better.

A resident asked how the Selectboard will select a new member. Interim Chair O'Shana said they will entertain letters of intent until the close of business on April 25th, then hold public interviews. A resident asked if interested parties will need to submit background information and was told no, this is not a requirement. The term will be to complete the current one-year term.

A resident thanked B. Codling for her work as Town Manager.

A resident asked about J. Boucher and was told she has returned to her financial role.

**MOTION #12:** Interim Chair O'Shana moved to accept letters of intent to fill the Select Board member position vacated by P. Blanchard, and that public interviews will be held for interested candidates. K. Knapp seconded the motion.

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

### **NON-PUBLIC MEETING**

**MOTION #13:** K. Knapp moved to close the public hearing and enter into a non-public meeting. J. Longacre seconded the motion.

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

The meeting room was closed at 6:55 p.m.

The Board returned to public meeting.

### **ADJOURN MEETING**

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Beth Hanggeli