

**Town of Haverhill
Select Board Meeting
MINUTES
Monday, August 30, 2021, 6:00 PM
R. E. Clifford Memorial Building
65 South Court St.
Woodsville, NH 03785
Or on ZOOM**

The meeting was **CALLED TO ORDER** at 6:00 PM by Fred Garofalo, Chair.

Town Employees Present:

Town Manager: Brigitte Codling

Assistant Town Manager: Jennifer Boucher

Welfare Administrator: Valerie Morse

Members of the Public Present:

In Person

Joe Longacre

Susie Tann

Dick Guy

Darwin Clogston

Bob Clegg

Ralph Crosswell

Mary Patridge

Miguel Vasconcelos

Bob Long

Cliff Batchelder

David Robinson

Patricia Brady

Don and Kathleen Vaillancourt

Janice Dube

Senator Bob Giuda

Lorie Aldrich

R. Subjeck

Online [Participants who do not use their full names online are not included on this list.]

Regis Roy

Mike Bonanno

Kathleen Vasconcelos

Rich Clifford

Sherri Sargent

Alex Nuti-de Biasi (*Journal Opinion*)

Martha C.

Mike Lavoie

Joanne Young

R. Newman

Dave Long

Tim Northcott

Diane Noyes

Guy Mitchell

Patty Hammond

Dorothy Long

Skip Gadwah

Robert Mancini

Delcia Vinnacomb

Dawn Lavoie

Griffin Roberge

ROLL CALL ATTENDANCE: Matthew Bjelobrk (Here), Steve Robbins (Here), Howard Hatch (Here), Mike Graham (Here), Fred Garofalo (Here). A quorum was met.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

AGENDA APPROVAL

MOTION #1: Bjelobrk made the motion and Garofalo seconded the motion to approve the Agenda as amended.

- Garofalo stated that there is a Nonpublic Session following the meeting.
- Garofalo added ARPA funds under Pending Old Business.

Roll Call Vote: Matthew Bjelobrk (Aye), Steve Robbins (Aye), Howard Hatch (Aye), Mike Graham (Aye), Fred Garofalo (Aye). The motion passed unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION #2: Bjelobrk made the motion and Garofalo seconded the motion to approve the Minutes from **August 16, 2021**.

Roll Call Vote: Matthew Bjelobrk (Aye), Steve Robbins (Aye), Howard Hatch (Aye), Mike Graham (Aye), Fred Garofalo (Aye). The motion passed unanimously.

SCHEDULED PUBLIC APPEARANCES

1. Dick Guy (Dean Memorial Airport and the Select Board)

Guy addressed the Dean Memorial Airport Scholarship requirements and asked if there was a residency requirement, and he discovered that there are not. Guy noted “technical problems” related to the airport. He stated that after Community Day in 2019 the Airport Commissioners at the time got a memo from Bjelobrk, Select Board ex officio member, that the Commission is charged with airport zoning issues and that is all, and it is the Town Manager who has the management control over the airport.

Guy stated that he found no authority for Bjelobrk to make that statement, which Guy believes is not correct. Guy quoted from the Airport Master Plan from 1996 and the Commissioners standard procedures signed by the Select Board noting that the Commission “administrates the operations of the Dean Memorial Airport (RSA 424).” Guy summarized that the Commission does have a place in the administration of the airport.

Guy presented a recording by Bjelobrk who stated that the funds coming into the airport are Town funds not Commission money. Guy provided an FAA agreement with the Town states, “all revenues generated by the airport ... will be expended by capital for operating costs” Guy noted that there is airport money that is “tax neutral.”

Guy discussed the Scholarship Fund originally created in 2000. Guy noted the requirements for the Scholarship as residents and high school seniors. Guy noted that the funds also requires that the Airport Scholarship Committee appointment by the Airport Commission manages the Scholarship program. Guy asked how the Commission can award scholarships when there is no Scholarship Committee in place. Guy read from the fund document about dissemination of funds: “4. On a monthly basis, the Commission asked for a breakdown of flight hours and the covered costs, and the Commission shall reimburse them.”

Discussion:

- Bjelobrk addressed Guy's contention that he made a "ruling" and that Guy felt he did not have the authority to make a "rule". Bjelobrk noted that he was giving his impression of the Commission's purview based upon the legal opinion provided to the Town on the matter. Bjelobrk stated that a Town-wide vote was needed for the creation of a commission. Bjelobrk noted that the Town owns the airport as a whole and, with a Town Manager form of government, the Town Manager manages the airport not any commission.
- Town Manager (TM) Codling stated that the warrant article created an Airport Zoning Commission (AZC). In 2019, the Town worked to clarify the roles of all the committees and commissions, and the AZC was found to be working outside of their legal purview based on the warrant articles that created them. Discussion ensued. TM Codling noted that in a Town Manager form of government and that TM appoints a Dept Manager, commissions become advisory in nature. TM Codling noted that the Town works with Charter Trust for all the trust documents. TM Codling continued that the Airport Zoning Commission, serving as members of the Airport Scholarship Committee, suggested modifications to the scholarship funding model because of a lack of applicants for the scholarship. TM Codling continued that the Town's legal group and Charter Trust have both looked over the Airport Scholarship fund carefully. TM Codling further stated that the Airport is a Town owned enterprise and airport funds are kept separate from the general funds of the Town as required. She clarified that to use Guy's term, the funds could be called "airport money".
- Miguel Vasconcelos stated that the airport "sponsor" is the Town and that the Airport Manager appointed by the Town, is responsible for the affairs of the airport, which is required by FAA regulations. The airport revenues are restricted to be used for the airport operation exclusively.
- Guy stated that he believes there is \$7,500 meant for the airport that cannot be found, and the trust fund should be used as a tax deduction for pilots and not used by the Town.
- TM Codling stated that pre-2019 the Airport Commission was selling the Town's AIP grant money every year to other NH NPIAS airports for 5% of its value. The \$7,500 Guy is referring to, was a partial payment for some of that money, which had been sold to Nashua in early 2019. The Airport Improvement Program (AIP) grant money of \$150,000/year for capital improvements at the Dean Memorial Airport is no longer being sold, but rather invested into the Town's public use airport for necessary maintenance and to relieve safety obstructions that currently still exist at the airport.
- Susie Tann, AZC, Chair, read from the current Scholarship document to include the expanded residency requirements for applicants to include surrounding towns. Discussion continued about the reimbursement system for awarding grant money through the Airport Scholarship Committee, who are also members of the Airport Zoning Commission.

2. David Robinson (Go-Fund-Me)

Robinson stated that he was attempting to raise money for nonprofits, so he is setting up a Go-Fund-Me account at a bank and local donation drop-boxes to raise money (\$74,000) for the Town of Haverhill nonprofit organizations, which Robinson listed.

Discussion:

- Boucher noted that she would be willing to take one of the drop-boxes to display at the Town Administration offices.
- Discussion ensued about the locations for placing drop-boxes in Town and the pick-up process. [Applause]

TOWN EMPLOYEE APPEARANCES**Valerie Morse, Welfare Administrator**

Morse brought up the huge homeless problem in Haverhill caused by the moratorium on evictions so there are no apartments. Morse works with 25 agencies to place homeless people who are now in motels.

Discussion:

- Robins asked about those who do not have Haverhill addresses. Robins asked if there is a requirement for clients to become legal residents of the Town.
- Boucher replied that if someone comes into Haverhill and they need assistance, it does not matter where they live.
- Senator Giuda explained that the Town is required to care for homeless people, and that the welfare rules for each town may vary.
- Morse stated that she is working on revising the Town's welfare guidelines vs. the NH State guidelines. TM Codling noted that the State guidelines go by the RSA and the Town cannot be any stricter than the State.
- TM Codling stated that they are working on trying to help only those who truly need help. TM Codling showed the Board the multiple-page application form for assistance. TM Codling noted that if a person is staying in the Town for 30 days, they are considered a resident. Discussion continued.
- Hatch asked what is done when the Welfare office is closed. Morse responded that the clients call 211, which goes to the Tri-County Community Action Program (CAP) homeless shelter, and CAP gives Morse a call. Hatch asked why Haverhill is such a magnet for the homeless. TM Codling stated that there are so many motels, transportation, and jobs in Haverhill that are in walking distance from motels.
- Morse continued that many of the clients are impacted by mental illness or substance abuse.
- Graham asked who oversees the State guidelines. Senator Giuda stated the NH Department of Health and Human Services, but he would like to hear ways to make this better.
- Garofalo asked what will happen when the moratorium on evictions ends. Morse noted that when the Town pays for apartments is about one-quarter the cost of motel housing. Morse continued that there are three shelters in the area: Bethlehem for women and children only, Lancaster, and Plymouth. TM Codling continued that the shelters may not take individuals with felony convictions.
- TM Codling offered suggestions for refining the local Welfare regulations:
 - Having Morse work more hours for follow-up and verifications.
 - Have applicants come in for a weekly face-to-face interview.
 - Improve the job search & housing search requirements.

- Hatch suggested drug testing, and TM Codling responded she did not think that was possible, but she would look into it. Morse mentioned that an issue with the CAP program is that they have no help. TM Codling discussed the impact of disability determinations and costs to the Town.
- An audience member discussed her experiences with her family in rent-assisted housing, and further discussed the current availability of housing in Town. Discussion continued.
- TM Codling noted that the next step is to redraft the Welfare guidelines / regulations and send them to the legal group for approval or revision.
- Senator Giuda and Boucher discussed the release of inmates from the correctional facility and resources they need once entering the community. TM Codling stated that she would like to again try to work with the correctional facility to create a transportation program that would transport released inmates to their town of origin.
- An audience member complimented Morse on her work.
- An audience member asked if there are rules and regulations that are causing the problem. The group discussed the money received by people on unemployment. Morse noted that currently there are many programs people are taking advantage of and so not returning to work.

[Applause]

PUBLIC WANTING TO ADDRESS THE BOARD: None.

PENDING OLD BUSINESS

ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Funds

Garofalo stated that the Board voted to allow the districts to share the ARPA funds, and he stated that he wishes to review that discussion. Garofalo noted that he spent time recently reviewing the budget with the Town Manager, Assistant Town Manager, and the previous and current Welfare Administrators, and Garofalo asked to rescind the vote from the last meeting.

MOTION #3: Garofalo made the motion and Bjelobrk seconded the motion to rescind the vote from the Select Board meeting of **August 16, 2021**, shown as follows:

From August 16, 2021, Select Board meeting:

***MOTION #7:** Robbins made the motion to support the districts' plans to distribute ARPA funds according to the plan presented [See slide #25 in American Rescue Plan presentation], and money allocated to projects that are found to be ineligible will revert back to the Town. Graham seconded the motion.*

***Roll Call Vote:** Mike Graham (Aye), Steve Robbins (Aye), Matthew Bjelobrk (No), Howard Hatch (No), Fred Garofalo (Aye). The motion passed with three Ayes and two Nos.*

- Garofalo stated that the Welfare budget by year's end will be approximately \$200,000, and he discuss more items in the budget, including septic system charges, computer systems, and Police Department cruiser and equipment needs, which indicate a significant deficit. Garofalo noted that it is imperative to use the ARPA funding for the Town's budget deficit and not add this deficit to the 2022 taxes.
- Bjelobrk stated that he agrees with Garofalo and that the Board worked had to get the fund balance to 8% and, if the fund balance goes down, the municipality is more at risk.
- Audience member stated that some of the district projects may not be eligible for ARPA funding, but some of the projects are eligible and ready to be completed, so she stated why can we not let the process play out. Garofalo replied that the Town will not find out about the funding eligibility until late in the year and, in the meantime, all projects in the Town are on hold. Graham stated that the Town will probably have to go to the fund balance. Bob Long noted that it was infrastructure projects that were proposed, and he stated that he came to a meeting with the district commissioners and the proposals were accurate.
- Bjelobrk noted that the Select Board did not have all the facts until the Town Manager presented. An audience member stated that the meeting of August 10, 2021, had an adverse tone, and she stated that the vote was illegal. Discussion continued. An audience member stated that it is not the role of the Town to subsidize the districts' infrastructure projects.
[Applause]
- TM Codling followed up by reiterating, the wording states, "you may" and that relates to the non-entitlement units (the Town) passing money to the Sub-recipients (the districts). TM Codling addressed one section of ARPA, the State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund, that emphasized the strain of local governments under the COVID-19 economic slowdown and that the plan will provide economic relief to aid fiscal recovery for state and local governments.

MOTION #4: Upon further study of the allocation of ARPA funds to the districts, Garofalo made the motion to reconsider the vote from the Select Board meeting of August 16, 2021.

- Bjelobrk stated that the because the Town has fiscal needs, and this funding should be used to benefit all taxpayers equally.

Roll Call Vote: Matthew Bjelobrk (Aye), Steve Robbins (No), Howard Hatch (Yes), Mike Graham (No), Fred Garofalo (Aye). The motion passed with three votes in favor and two votes opposed.

MOTION #5: Garofalo made the motion to have the Town retain and use all the ARPA Recovery Funds for the purpose of covering all allowable Town expenses. Bjelobrk seconded the motion.

- Graham asked to research the information Garofalo presented. Graham stated that the Board had an opportunity to rebuild this community.

Roll Call Vote: Matt Bjelobrk (Aye), Steve Robbins (No), Howard Hatch (Aye), Mike Graham (No), Fred Garofalo (Aye). The motion passed with three votes in favor and two votes opposed.

- TM Codling noted that she has a long list of funding opportunities as direct grants for the districts specific to wastewater projects.
- Robbins stated that we missed the opportunity to work together on these projects.

- Garofalo stated that this was not an opportunity to work together if it caused the Town to go broke.

NEW BUSINESS:

Town Property Re-evaluation Review

Tim Northcott presented new re-evaluation information on the preliminary values updated from 5 years ago.

- Garofalo asked how the re-evaluation was done considering the high prices in the real estate market. Northcott responded that he looked at 184 house sales over the last 2 years, and the outcomes are based on those data.
- Northcott stated that the previous value of the Town's property was \$400,410,353, and the new preliminary assessed value is \$464,334,792, which shows a 16% overall value increase since 2016. Boucher noted that when the valuation goes up, the tax rate should go down a small amount. Boucher stated that once the Board accepts the re-evaluation values, letters will go out to the property owners, and a Public Hearings at the Clifford Building are scheduled for September 16, 17, and 18 at different times. Northcott announced a phone day on Wednesday, September 22. Boucher stated that any property owner can review their assessment with Northcott on those days before the final valuation is approved.
- TM Codling sent to the Select Board and distributed elsewhere a NH Property Taxes Guide.

MOTION #6: Robbins made the motion to accept the re-evaluation values prepared by Tim Northcott, Assessor. Garofalo seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote: Matt Bjelobrk (Nay), Steve Robbins (Aye), Howard Hatch (Nay), Mike Graham (Aye), Fred Garofalo (Aye). The motion passed with three votes in favor and two opposed.

- An audience member asked if the new re-evaluation would make people homeless because their taxes will go up too much. Boucher responded with a discussion related to the Town of Haverhill's process of tax delinquency. Discussion continued.
- Garofalo noted that a few years ago, the Town had millions of dollars in back taxes due, and that is when the Town started to work on the issue.
- It was explained that because everyone's assessed value went up the tax rate should go down and the overall tax burden will be equally distributed across all properties so the result should be that resident tax bills will not look a lot different. Of course, some property improvements were picked up so as would be expected those properties should see a slight increase in their tax responsibility.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

TM Codling presented her report, as follows:

- Dean Memorial Airport Safety Study – The Town is planning to speak with the NH Bureau of Aviation (BOA)/FAA and with the airport manager, Ralph Crosswell, tomorrow. TM Codling noted that the BOA/FAA will determine which option from the consultant's report they will be willing to fund. TM Codling noted that a final report will be available before the Public Hearing. TM Codling stated that once comments are received and the SB chooses the desired option, the Town will begin working on development of a construction project plan. TM Codling noted that

100% of the cost of the study and design for construction will be paid by the Airport Improvement Project (AIP) grant funds already allocated to the Dean Memorial Airport.

- Grafton County Broadband Committee – TM Codling announced that the Committee selected Ex² Technology (<https://www.ex2technology.com/>) to design and implement the middle-mile Grafton County broadband 1-year project. TM Codling noted that information session will be held:
 - September 7, Clifford Memorial Building, Woodsville, at 7 PM.
- Public Wi-Fi Woodsville – TM Codling noted that three hosts now have antennae installed: Atlantic Real Estate, Welch Family Realty Apartments, and Mike’s Garage. TM Codling stated that the system is now active for beta testing.
- Woodsville Lawsuit – TM Codling noted that the hearing date is scheduled for the end of September.
- District Projects – TM Codling stated that the Administration has been working on accepting district projects for funding, and after tonight’s vote, that work will cease.
- Crosswalks on Route 10 -- TM Codling is working with the NH DOT to obtain approval for the crosswalks.
- White Mountain Drive – TM Codling noted that with the vote tonight, she will reassessing timing for the project with the Road Agent, Colton Grant.
- Dean Memorial Airport Awareness Day – TM Codling announced that Airport Awareness Day is scheduled for September 25 and the public is welcome.
- Maintenance Department and Highway Department – TM Codling stated that their projects were on hold due to the previous vote related to ARPA funds, but with tonight’s reconsideration and vote this is no longer going to be an issue.
- Welfare Department – Previously discussed.
- Emergency Management – TM Codling noted that recent meetings focused on heavy rains and other weather related events.
- Parks & Recreation – TM Codling announced a Corn Hole Tournament on Sunday, September 19 at 10:00 AM at Railroad Park.
- Fire Department – TM Codling announced the annual Fire Service raffle and dinner was held, and **Renzo Chumbes, Captain of Training, was voted Firefighter of the Year.**
- Police Department – TM Codling reported officers had firearms training, CRASE active shooter training for Town employees, and two certified police officers have been hired.

Discussion:

- Robbins asked why the Town is paying for North Haverhill crosswalks. TM Codling noted that North Haverhill pays for sidewalks, but the roads are not theirs. The Town does the marking of crosswalks on the roadways. Discussion continued.
- Hatch noted that there used to be Yield to Pedestrian signs. Hatch also discussed the placement of mailboxes (on the opposite side of the road from the houses) on Dartmouth College Hwy. through Town. Hatch noted that the Town Manager could approach the USPS. TM Codling stated that she will check into it.

FINANCIAL REPORT / COMMENTS: None.

COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- **Conservation Commission** -- Garofalo announced that the Commission is trying to get the Scholarship going forward, and the Commission is seeking membership in the NH Conservation Commission Association, so they will be asked for funds.
- **Planning and Zoning** – Hatch commented that the Planning Board had an early meeting in August.
- **Parks & Recreation** – Meeting held on August 4.
- **Airport Zoning Commission** – Bjelobrk stated that the Commission did not meet in August because of a lack of a quorum. Bjelobrk stated there will be a regularly scheduled meeting in September, and September 25 is the Airport Awareness event.
- **Fire Committee** – Graham stated no meeting was held.

CORRESPONDENCE:

- Garofalo received a letter from the Town of Littleton relating to an excavation permit for work near the river. Boucher stated that she forwarded the letter to Kevin Shelton, Administrator, Woodville, as a downstream community.

COMMENTS BY BOARD MEMBERS:

- Senator Giuda stated that this is the best budget he has seen in years, and he continued a discussion of the State budget, which was good news for the towns. Senator Giuda stated that more money will be coming for education. Senator Giuda discussed the state of housing and broadband in NH and the Upper Valley. Senator Giuda discussed the work that is being done in the legislature on healthcare, including addressing pay rates for residential care workers.
- Boucher asked Senator Giuda about a tax form for Moderate Income Homeowners for Property Tax Relief (Form DP-8).
- Darwin Clogston asked the status of the Woodsville audits.
- Senator Giuda responded that one of the outcomes of the audit related to the under-reporting of earnings to the NH Retirement System for 11 years. The result being that the employee will need to repay almost \$300,000 as well as fines totaling around \$67,000 and that the Woodsville Village District also will need to pay around \$125,000 in fines for mis-classifying the employee and for not withholding retirement for the employee they knew was not truly retired. Senator Giuda discussed other issues related to the audits.
- The Board thanked Senator Giuda for attending.

NONPUBLIC SESSION:

MOTION #7: Bjelobrk made the motion and Robbins seconded the motion to adjourn the public meeting and reconvene in a Nonpublic Session according to RSA 91-A:3, II(c) at 8:37 PM.

Roll Call Vote: Mike Graham (Aye), Matthew Bjelobrk (Aye), Steve Robbins (Aye), Howard Hatch (Aye), Fred Garofalo (Aye). The motion passed unanimously.

The Board came out of NONPUBLIC SESSION at 9:31 PM.

MOTION #8: Robbins made a motion and Bjelobrk seconded the motion to seal the Minutes of the Nonpublic Session because it is determined that divulgence of this information would affect adversely the reputation of any person other than a member of this Board.

Roll Call Vote: Mike Graham (Aye), Steve Robbins (Aye), Matthew Bjelobrck (Aye), Howard Hatch (Aye), Fred Garofalo (Aye). The motion passed unanimously.

Transcribed by Joanna Bligh