

**Town of Haverhill
Select Board Meeting
MINUTES
Monday, September 27, 2021, 6:00 PM
R. E. Clifford Memorial Building
65 South Court St.
Woodsville, NH 03785
Or on ZOOM**

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:15 PM by Fred Garofalo, Chair.

Select Board Attendance: Matthew Bjelobrk (Here), Steve Robbins (Here), Howard Hatch (Here), Mike Graham (Here), Fred Garofalo (Here). A quorum was met.

Town Employees Present:

Town Manager: Brigitte Codling

Assistant Town Manager: Jennifer Boucher

Members of the Public Present:

In Person

Miguel Vasconcelos
Dan Freeto
Winston Currier
Doug Henson
Justin Henson
Martha Cunningham
Dennis Cunningham
Ezra Mann

John Nelepovitz
Ralph Crosswell
Alex Nuti-de Biasi
Melissa Roy
Regis Roy
Greg Mathieson
Abby T.
Wes Chapman

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

Carol Niewola (NHDOT)
Mike Bonanno
Sherri Sargent
Joanne Young

Mary Patridge
Janice Dube
Robert Maccini
Dave Long

Pledge of Allegiance

AGENDA APPROVAL

MOTION #1: Graham made the motion and Robbins seconded the motion to approve the Agenda as written.

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 Robbins seconded the motion to approve the minutes from **September 13, 2021**, as written.

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

MOTION #3: Garofalo made the motion and Graham seconded the motion to suspend the Select Board meeting and go into the **Public Hearing** at 6:20 PM.

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

PUBLIC HEARING opened at 6:20 PM

Airport Runway Safety Study Results with Guy Rouelle from Dubois & King

Rouelle noted that this meeting is the third in the set of meetings for the public on the Dean Memorial Airport Runway Safety Study. Rouelle explained that the study evaluated the runway feasibility analysis and provided alternatives and solutions for the FAA's concerns. Rouelle noted that the runway option ultimately selected will be approved by the Select Board and the townspeople.

Rouelle noted that the Town's website has the report (Chapters 1, 2, and 3; https://www.haverhill-nh.com/index.asp?SEC=775EE069-765A-4632-8CFD-86C8EB09712D&DE=D30D2DDA-D2DC-44EB-ABDB-57CB5A5722F0&Type=B_PR) on the Airport Feasibility Study. Rouelle provided an overview of the project for the attendees, including the federal funds used for the study, the overall purpose of the study, existing conditions at the airport, five alternatives or options for correcting the safety concerns, public access to the study process and results, NH DOT and FAA classification and design criteria for the airport, and aquifer and wetlands analyses. Rouelle noted that the layout plan for the airport is currently conditionally approved by the FAA.

Rouelle noted that the June and July public meetings provided valuable input from the public, which helped Rouelle revise the report.

Rouelle provided a detailed background of the initial evaluation and airspace validation processes. Rouelle explained the objects of the study based on instrument approach procedures for the runways are to: 1) improve safety by providing unencumbered runway and approach surfaces, 2) provide runway layouts that are approved by the FAA, 3) provide landing length on Runway 1-19 for design aircraft, 4) protect airspace from current and future obstructions, and 5) improve all-weather safety of the airport.

Rouelle highlighted the current runway layout with property lines, obstructions, FAA airspace, roadways, and an aquifer boundary. Rouelle provided discussion of the airport from the south with the roadway too close to the runway and to the north with buildings within the approach surface.

Rouelle provided detailed discussion on the alternatives for correcting the airport safety issues:

- *Alternative 1.* No build, and the airport remains as is, which will make the airport out of compliance.

- *Alternative 2.* Displace Runway 1.
- *Alternative 3.* Property acquisition for runway safety area and Runway 1 extension.
- *Alternative 4.* Property acquisition for runway safety area and no Runway 1 extension.
- *Alternative 5.* Acquire easements for runway safety area and remove 1,100 feet of Airport Road.

Rouelle summarized by stating that once the option is decided upon, the remainder of the report can be completed, and the airport layout plan can be updated.

Discussion:

- Greg Mathieson asked to hear about negotiations going on with the Henson's, and what about the other 18 property owners, relating to the easements along the airport runway safety area. Town Manager Codling stated that there is nothing yet to negotiate and so no negotiations had begun yet. There would be no need to negotiate until the SB decides on a final Alternative. Mathieson noted that with taxes going up every year, the taxpayers do not need the added costs of the airport expansion. TM explained that there are no plans for expanding the airport, the viable alternatives are for removing safety obstructions only. TM further explained that the airport is a Town owned enterprise and that funding for the airport is through revenue generated by the airport and grant funding.
- Greg Mathieson asked where the airport funding was going to come from and what happens if we do not get the funding. TM Codling stated that the Dean Memorial Airport has \$560,000 for projects on its CIP. Rouelle stated that the NHDOT has a 5-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for airports in NH, and CIP has already "programmed" the funding for the Haverhill airport improvements – 95% funded by the FAA and the NHDOT.
- John Nelepovitz asked what the airport generates for the Town, and he commented that with the salaries and maintenance costs, the Town loses revenue. He continued that he does not want more airplanes flying around, and if that happens, he will have to move. TM Codling responded that the feasibility study was voted on by the voters, and she stated that AIP (Airport Improvement Program) grant money is available for the study and subsequent work related to it. TM Codling explained the current use of the airport is by private pilots who either house their airplanes at Dean Memorial or who fly into Dean Memorial for fuel. The Town has also had occasionally have medical staff going to local hospitals fly in.
- Greg Mathieson complained that he believed the notice of the Public Hearing was not posted; however, TM Codling noted that warned meetings are on the Town's website, put out on Facebook, over the Vital Communities List Serve, and fliers posted in local stores. She further stated that usually the notice will also go in local newspapers.
- Ezra Mann commented about recycling in Newbury, VT, and then asked the Town Manager why the notice was not in the *Bridge Weekly*. Mann asked why the Town did not vote on this airport study. Rouelle responded that there is no expansion to the airport planned and there is only remediation of safety concerns.

- Miguel Vasconcelos stated that the project is an enhancement of the safety of the airport. Vasconcelos stated that if people have concerns about the airport, then they should read the report, and that the airport is a valuable Town and state asset.
- Howard Hatch stated that he lives next to the airport, and he asked, “How we got here?” Hatch discussed the past records of the buildings and properties surrounding the airport, and he expressed how he does not like how the airport is run.
- Greg Mathieson asked if Dubois & King benefits in any way from the airport study. TM Codling stated that Dubois & King was selected from a competitive recruitment process for a 5-year contract.
- Greg Mathieson then stated that on the slides there is a taxiway shown; then asked, wasn’t the construction of a taxiway considered an expansion? Rouelle responded that the taxiway will be added because back-taxiing on an active runway is dangerous. Rouelle explained that planned enhancements, not expansion, to the airport included: constructing a taxiway, adding an instrument approach procedure, and the addition of hangers.
- Susie Tann addressed Alternative 4 by stating that it is grounded in common sense and allows for the least amount of disruption for abutting landowners.
- Miguel Vasconcelos stated that the residents of Haverhill should put aside the frustrations of the past and do what is best for the Town and the airport now through improving airport safety.
- Doug Hanson stated that this was a feasibility study and wonders why there are not better numbers for airport operation from the engineers. He continued to comment that the study should have included a list of advantages and the economics of job creation. He felt the report lacked depth.
- Winston Currier asked about taxes and the general fund.

MOTION #4: Garofalo made the motion and Bjelobrck seconded the motion to leave the **Public Hearing** at 8:00 PM.

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

NEW BUSINESS:

Airport Runway Safety Study Select Board Discussion and Vote

- Graham asked to hear from Bjelobrck who is the ex officio member of the Airport Zoning Commission. Bjelobrck stated that it breaks down to two alternatives, either 4 or 5 that are the viable options. Bjelobrck stated that if we shorten the runway, it will hurt the airport and make it more unsafe for pilots to land and take off. He further explained that if we were to lengthen the runway, it would not get us another class of airplane to use the airport so there is no point in even considering the idea of lengthening the runway. Keeping the runway at its current length is the only option. Bjelobrck stated that the roadway at the end of the runway is in “danger zone”.

- Garofalo stated that he has done a lot of research [discussion garbled].
- Carol Niewola (NH DOT, Bureau of Aeronautics) offered discussion on future funding availability for projects at Dean Memorial Airport. Niewola noted that the State of NH gets \$800,000, beyond the already allocated AIP grant money, to share among NIPIAS airports in the state, so eligible projects may have additional funding for any of the safety projects discussed tonight. It was further explained there is also discretionary funding that can be made available for the NH NIPIAS airport projects. TM Codling stated that there has been a lack of maintenance at the airport over time, and the safety issues had not been addressed either. She further explained that the Town entered NIPIAS around 13 years ago, however, most of the \$150,000 grant money awarded annually to the Dean Memorial Airport was being sold for 5% of its value to other NH NIPIAS airports rather than it being used to maintain and improve the airport. That practice was halted here in Haverhill in 2019 and since then the State has stopped allowing it. The Town will be using its AIP grant money rather than giving it away.
- Robbins stated that he believes from the public safety standpoint, closing Airport Road could cause a problem for the police and emergency vehicles because Airport Road is the shortest way to the middle school. Garofalo noted that if the road is not closed, the runway has an that as an obstruction. Discussion continued.
- Graham discussed Alternative 4 and Alternative 5 relating to the land acquisition differences. Doug Henson spoke about his family's plans for the lands surrounding the airport and the property acquisitions outlined in Alternatives 4 and 5. Discussion continued about land values.
- TM Codling addressed one of the property owners who would be affected by the closing of Airport Road in Alternative 5 and how the Town would assist them in creating a driveway entrance to the proposed house lot on their property.
- TM Codling addressed a question about the revised location of Airport Road in Alternative 4. Garofalo discussed the impact to the school if closing Airport Road and stated that there are three other entrances and exits from the school. Discussion ensued.
- TM Codling noted that any match money from the Town would have to go through a Town vote as a warrant article at Town Meeting.

MOTION #5: Bjelobrk made the motion and Robbins seconded the motion to select two options, Alternative 4 and Alternative 5, for further consideration and eliminate Alternative 1, 2, and 3.

- [Unknown speaker] asked why the Board is voting to keep an alternate that would shut the road down. TM Codling noted that the school had already agreed, years earlier, to have buses avoid the use Airport Road. Discussion continued.

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: None.

PUBLIC WANTING TO ADDRESS THE BOARD:

Wes Chapman (NH Constitutional Republicans)

Chapman stated that his organization is a nonprofit committed to the education of the NH and US Constitutions. Chapman requested the use of the Clifford Building for a Grafton County educational, social, and nonpartisan meeting open to the public (estimated 30 to 100 attendees) and a waiving of the building rental fee. Discussion continued.

MOTION #6: Bjelobrk made the motion and Robbins seconded the motion to approve the waiving of the building rental fee for one meeting per month at the Clifford Building for the NH Constitutional Republicans for a 6-month trial with the condition of proof of insurance and coordinating the room availability with Diane in the Town Administration office. Understanding that revenue generating events would take precedence.

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

PENDING OLD BUSINESS:

Veterans' Credit Decision on Recommendation

Boucher, Assistant Town Manager, stated that the SB had been briefed at length at the last meeting regarding the credits and that the only change was the one for Mr. Page who does qualify as his trust is irrevocable. She asked the SB to vote to move forward with the changes, after which she would prepare a letter to be set to any veteran who was determined to be ineligible for the credit. Garofalo stated that the document sent out to the public must be simple and easy to understand. TM asked if the SB would like to see the letter before it was sent to impacted residents. The SB collectively agreed they wanted to see the letter first and give input.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT / COMMENTS:

TM Codling stated she had visited with Dylan Farr and has a long discussed with him regarding the Town's Facebook presence and how the Town as a governmental entity, can not edit, delete, hide, manage, curb, or in any way moderate comments on a public page; and so when speech gets nasty, distasteful, threatening, inappropriate, personal, or hateful the Town cannot do anything about it. To address this the Town sought legal counsel, and like many other Towns were advised to move to an "Informational" group page with no commenting at all. That the Town can either allow "all" comments or "none"; there is no, in between. The discussion then moved to ways we might provide a social media forum for public discussion on topics related to Town government. It was agreed that a resident-led page would be the best option, because a resident could fully moderate such a page and if needed curb behaviors. The page was subsequently created by Dylan and will be moderated by him and whomever else he chooses to make admins on the page.

- Regis Roy stated that she totally agrees with TM Codling about the public forum and that she believes some of her comments on her newsfeed were being erased, which is why she shared the TM survey three times. TM Codling explained that anyone can share posts to their own page, from Town's group page. She further explained that there was no way for anyone to erase her comments on her own newsfeed. Regis Roy stated the TM had tried to troubleshoot that with her in a private message and appreciated that.

FINANCIAL REPORT / COMMENTS:

- Boucher addressed a recent conference that she and the Town Manager attended.
- TM Codling added that the conference had been very helpful, and that networking with other NH Municipal Managers about day-to-day challenges revealed that most are going through the same sorts of things that Haverhill is. We are not alone in our challenges, which was reassuring and a bit depressing.
- Boucher addressed the setting of the tax rate process and finalizing valuations. Boucher noted that Tim Northcott, Assessor, had open phone days to speak with residents who had property assessing questions that he said went well.
- TM Codling noted that with a larger assessment, residents believe the taxes will increase, but because the tax burden is spread out over the entire Town, the tax rate is expected to go down and spread over the Town equally so tax bills should be close to the same due to the assessment. However, she followed by stating that due to deep cuts to the 2021 budget, no paving, no non-profit payments, no lease payments, etc., that the tax rate will be artificially low for 2022; residents will get a sort of “tax reprieve”. She then warned that the tax rate will then go back up for the fall 2022 tax bill to reflect a normal budget that includes these things. With that the goal is to keep reducing Haverhill’s tax rate, in a fiscally and operationally responsible way; which is the focus of the TM and her staff.

COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- **Conservation Commission** -- Garofalo passed. Hatch noted that State Conservation Commission organization is providing money for the State’s local conservation commissions. TM Codling noted that the Town’s Conservation Commission asked for an increase in their budget, which will be coming to the Select Board.
- **Parks & Recreation** – Robbins noted that the first annual Corn Hole tournament went off without a hitch, with 13 +/- teams signed up and competed.
- **Airport Zoning Commission** – Bjelobrk stated that September 25 Airport Awareness event was very successful with lots of folks in attendance.
- **Fire Committee** – Graham stated that there was no meeting.

CORRESPONDENCE: None.

COMMENTS BY BOARD MEMBERS:

- Hatch expressed concern over how the airport had been managed over time and that it was not good for the Town. TM Codling asked him to clarify that it was past management of the Town and the Airport that was of concern. Hatch agreed and stated that how things have gone over the past few years was much better.
- TM Codling stated that the Town’s Public Opinion Survey is out with the same questions as two years and had just under 140 responses so far, which was all the responses we got last year total. So, thought it was going really well, with lots of very useful feedback.
- TM Codling reminded the Select Board that on Saturday, October 16, at 2:00 PM is the Open Public Discussion with the Town Administration, the Select Board, and the public.
- Graham stated he would not be able to attend due to a surgery that was scheduled to take place just after that and he would need to quarantine prior. Steve Robbins stated he would not be able to make it because he thought he might have a funeral to attend in South

Carolina. Garofalo stated that he felt it was important that they all were present at the Open Public Discussion. TM Codling asked if they felt it best to reschedule. Discussion ensued and the decision was made to reschedule to Saturday November 13, 2021 at 2:00pm in the same location. TM Codling said she would pull all the advertising and republish the meeting.

ADJOURN

MOTION #6: Garofalo made a motion and Bjelobrk seconded the motion adjourn the meeting at 9:10 PM.

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

The meeting ADJOURNED at 9:10 PM.

Transcribed by Joanna Bligh