

**Town of Haverhill
Select Board Meeting
MINUTES
Monday, December 6, 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 6:00 PM by Fred Garofalo, Chair.

Select Board Attendance: Matthew Bjelobrk (Present), Steve Robbins (Present), 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

Guy Mitchell

Marilyn Blaisdell

Miguel Vasconcelos

Doug Henson

Senator Bob Giuda (District 2)

Jean Adams

Lynn Wheeler

Frank and Carolyn Hoffman

Tim Robie

Randy Subject (Piermont)

Online

Margo Longacre

Mike Bonanno

Robert Maccini

Joanne Young

Jennifer Chase

Joe Longacre

Tom Mangels

Mary Patridge

Dennis Cunningham

Regis Roy

Kristen May

Doreen Morris

Bob Long

Rick Henson

Aprille Paradise

Ron DeRosia

Bernard Marvin

Susie Tann

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

AGENDA APPROVAL

The members reviewed the Agenda and Garofalo added:

- The declaration of the retirement of Richard Morris.
- A conflict of interest in the caboos bid.
- Review of the Select Board Town Report.

Bjelobrk added a discussion of precinct tax collection under New Business.

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

Roll Call Vote: Matthew Bjelobrk (Aye), Steve Robbins (Aye), Howard Hatch (Aye), 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 **November 8, 2021**, as written.

- Garofalo stated that there was no meeting on November 22 because of Covid.

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

SCHEDULED PUBLIC APPEARANCES:

Retirement of Richard Morris, Haverhill Corner Fire Chief

Senator Giuda presented a declaration for the retirement on October 31, 2021, of Richard Morris to recognize him as an exceptional public servant for 48 years of dedicated work at the Haverhill Corner Fire Department.

“... On behalf of the New Hampshire State Senate, please find the enclosed Senate resolution as a small token of recognizing the time and effort you have put into serving Haverhill’s residents, businesses, and institutions in the past 48 years. Thank you for the countless hours you have given, your readiness to assist, and the example you provided. As your representative, I wish you the very best in the years ahead.

Sincerely,
Bob Giuda, State Senator, District 2”

Giuda presented to Morris a framed resolution from the State Senate, as follows:

“Be it known that the New Hampshire State Senate extends its congratulations to Richard Morris, Fire Chief, in recognition of his retirement after 48 years of dedicated and faithful service to the Haverhill Corner Fire Department and to the Haverhill community. Be it further known that the New Hampshire Senate extends its heartfelt wishes in your retirement.”

(Applause)

Morris offered thanks to everyone he worked with, and how it was a pleasure being at the fire department for 48 years.

Bedell Bridge [Route 10 to Meadow Road]

Senator Giuda discussed the collapsing of the wall of the bridge leading to Meadow Road from Route 10 and that it is now being repaired.

Education Funding

Senator Giuda noted that the senate has passed a bill that will provide extra school funding. Senator Giuda stated that he and Senator Hennessey are sponsoring a bill to establish “extraordinary need school districts,” and he is hoping that Haverhill and Woodsville school districts will be included.

Garofalo asked Senator Giuda if the school funding was general or for specific programs, and the senator replied that it is general funding.

TOWN EMPLOYEE APPEARANCES: None.

PUBLIC WANTING TO ADDRESS THE BOARD:

Doug Henson: Henson stated that he asked for an accounting of the NPIAS (National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems; FAA.gov) funding and was asking about the progress.

Town Manager Codling responded that with the Town budget in process, she has not had time to research NPIAS/AIP (Airport Improvement Program), but will follow up before Town Meeting. TM Codling provided the history of the NPIAS funding.

Susie Tann: Tann wished to address the Vertex Tower public notice in the *Bridge Weekly* and is concerned that many people did not see it. Tann discussed the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106, and the next Public Meeting is a chance for residents to assess the impact of the tower on the historic district and Ladd Street School property. Tann expressed that the tower will be at the entrance of the Town’s rural district and scenic vistas. Tann noted that next week will be a Balloon Test at the tower site on December 17, 18, 19, and 20 during daylight hours, which will give viewers a visual of the height of the tower. Tann expressed the need for improved cell service and stated that she believes that the Town can have reliable cell service without the negative visual impacts.

Hatch noted that he was contact by an individual who lives with 1,000 yards of the new tower in Bath and his service is no better than it was before because only one carrier was installed on the tower. Hatch stated that the Town should insist on more carriers to be confirmed. Boucher noted that now, Vertex has T-Mobile, but is leaving room for multiple carriers.

Tann reminded the Board and audience that there is a Public Hearing for Vertex Towers scheduled for Tuesday, January 4, 2022, at 6:00 PM at the Clifford Memorial Building.

PENDING/OLD BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS

Review and Discussion of Town Manager’s Public Opinion Survey

The complete 2021 Survey results are available on the Town’s website at https://www.haverhill-nh.com/vertical/sites/%7B7B636F77-2058-47A7-A817-81AAD9EE8E62%7D/uploads/2021_TM_Public_Opinion_Survey.pdf

TM Codling discussed the third Public Opinion Survey that she has provided to the residents of Haverhill. TM Codling noted that she tries to use similar questions each year to gauge changes year over year. TM Codling offered a few major results:

- Community-wide challenges – Cell phone coverage was #1 and access to high-speed internet was #2. TM Codling noted that Grafton County is working on middle-mile broadband, and the Town is working on a last-mile broadband project.

TM Codling noted that the Survey provides a section for comments and open-ended feedback, which can be used to set goals for next year.

- Communication – What was used most was found to be Facebook and the Town’s website.
- How residents feel about the community – The results were open ended and deserve a look.
- Community awareness of Town facilities, including the Blackmount Trail.
- Highway infrastructure, including bonding a large infrastructure project – 55% of respondents approved of a bond for highway infrastructure.
- Merging of the two highway departments of Haverhill and Woodsville – 65% of respondents indicated they would support merging of the highway departments.
- Whether the residents are receiving enough factual information about Town activities – 70% of respondents indicated they did not hear enough information.
- Creation of the Town Fire Department – Most people indicated that they feel the same about their fire departments.
- Respondents were asked to rate the Town departments.
- Respondents were asked to rate the Town government.

TM Codling noted that over 170 residents responded to the Survey.

Select Board comments:

- Robbins stated that he was disappointed with the ratings for the Select Board and the Administration. Discussion ensued. TM Codling noted that what was encouraging was the ratings of the departments who provide the customer service. Robbins noted that the comments are important.

COVID Status in the Community

TM Codling stated that the Town departments had 9 of 28 employees out with Covid. In the community, TM Codling stated that cases were spiking. TM Codling noted that visitors are recommended to wear masks in the Town offices, but it is a personal choice.

TM Codling noted that the Governor put together a Booster Blitz with pop-up sites around the state and a walk-in site at the Morrill Building on December 11 from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM with three lines for booster vaccinations by manufacturer.

COVID Relief Programs

Garofalo read the following letter from Senator Giuda:

“November 22, 2021

The joint Legislative Fiscal Committee unanimously approved a request from the Governor’s Office of Emergency Relief and Recovery to reallocate \$39.5 million in federal funds received by New Hampshire under the CARES Act. These funds are not used for authorized programs otherwise available. The funding available to towns and local organizations includes \$3.2 million for food security programs under the Food Distribution Storage and Site Improvement Program, \$4 million for Senior Centers, \$6 million for Homeless Shelters, and \$11 million for long-term care. All funds must be encumbered by December 21, 2021. The Fiscal Committee also approved a \$12.5 million matching grant program called the Locality Equipment Purchase Program, which is a 90/10 matching program for qualified safety and emergency equipment purchases up to \$50,000 for each municipality. Every town in New Hampshire is qualified to receive a matching grant and provide 10% of the overall costs.”

TM Codling noted that she received a notice of wastewater and water systems infrastructure money, which she will be forwarded to the districts.

“There are several programs to help New Hampshire residents from the Covid pandemic and the rising costs this winter. The Fiscal Committee unanimously approved \$3.1 million to assist low-income families for water and wastewater bills, \$35 million in LIHEAP (Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program), and \$3.35 million for rental assistance.”

“Throughout this pandemic, the Legislature has been working hard to ensure our communities are receiving the help they need, and we are leveraging the federal assistance to best serve the needs of the residents. Businesses, and institutions of New Hampshire.”

Garofalo noted that Senator Giuda may be contacted for further information. TM Codling discussed the emergency equipment, which could be used for police vehicles, and the homeless shelter money, which will be diverted from our Welfare Department to the CAPS program. TM Codling noted that 2022 highway projects could access the infrastructure funding.

Tax Rate Discussion

Boucher noted that one precinct’s tax rate is outstanding and that has to come in before the Town can set their rate. Michelle Clark is our Department of Revenue Administration municipal advisor. Boucher noted that the goal is to have the tax bills out in two weeks. Discussion continued relating to the delay of North Haverhill District in submitting their financials to the NH Department of Revenue Administration. TM Codling stated that the Town may have to take out a note to pay bills until the tax revenues come in. Hatch stated that the district needs to complete their work or, otherwise, the commissioners could be recalled. Hatch called it an “embarrassment.” Discussion continued. TM Codling stated that Boucher and Noyes have worked out the tax rate and expect the tax rate to drop over \$1.00.

Precinct Tax Collection

Bjelobrk discussed the pending lawsuit filed by Woodville precinct, and, in the process of the lawsuit, many documents were discovered, and some require discussion, as follows:

- 1990 expansion of the Woodsville Precinct. Bjelobrk noted two ways a municipality can expand: 1) by the state legislature and 2) by Chapter 52 voted on by a Town Meeting. Bjelobrk noted that neither of these have taken place. Bjelobrk stated that if this was done unlawfully, then collecting taxes could be problematic. Bjelobrk stated that the Board has to follow a course of action on this issue.

TM Codling responded that research was done focusing on the valuation of the Woodville District in relation to the formula and the expansion of the boundaries as discussed in the MOU. TM Codling stated that in research it was found that the act was never ratified and never went to a Town vote. Discussion continued. Garofalo stated that Woodsville can fix the illegal expansion by a Town vote. Robbins read that the vote needs to be from the district voters and not from a Town vote. TM Codling noted that the Town has to vote to give the property to the district. Hatch noted that the same type of expansion occurred in North Haverhill. TM Codling suggested from her input from the Town lawyers that the Town should put an article on the warrant to ratify these votes. TM Codling explained an issue with the Woodsville elementary school, which is not in the district. In regard to taxes, Boucher stated that tax collection should continue as in the past, and with the Board on record that there is a potential issue with the district expansions and that they show continuing work toward ratification, there will not be any issues.

TM Codling noted three components: the Board's knowledge of the issue, the public being aware of a question with the expansion, and finding a path forward. Boucher stated that the Town could present the tax map at Town Meeting and have the attendees vote on the existing boundaries. TM Codling noted that it is important to correct the tax map oddities. Bob Long discussed the need for legal opinion. Blaisdell asked about voting at Town Meeting. TM Codling suggested a Public Meeting for each district and a warrant article for voting.

MOTION #3: Robbins made the motion and Bjelobrk seconded the motion to direct the Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager to outline the map with the district commissioners of the existing districts and present that to the lawyers that it is OK to vote and ratify at Town Meeting.
Roll Call Vote: Matthew Bjelobrk (Aye), Steve Robbins (Aye), Howard Hatch (Aye), Graham (Aye), Fred Garofalo (Aye). The motion passed unanimously.

Caboose Bid

Garofalo noted there are bidders to complete repairs (interior renovations and roof repairs) on the Railroad Park caboose. The Members reviewed the bids. TM Codling noted that the caboose project will be under the direction of Jim McKinnon, Maintenance Director, and Sherri Sargent, Parks & Recreation Director.

Hatch mentioned adding a budget item for refurbishing of the rail bed for biking and walking. TM Codling noted that using grant money resurfacing and lighting are planned for the Blackmount Trail.

Hatch mentioned the twenty-six mailboxes on the wrong side of the road in North Haverhill.

MOTION #4: Hatch made the motion and Graham seconded the motion to table the bids. Motion died.

MOTION #4A: Hatch made the motion and Graham seconded the motion to reject the existing bid.

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

Garofalo stated that the request for bids will be resent and accepted with dollar values. TM Codling stated that she will itemize the work either as a lump sum or time and materials. Garofalo asked to include a rate limit.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

To view the Town Manager's Report for December 6, 2021, go to:

https://www.haverhill-nh.com/vertical/sites/%7B7B636F77-2058-47A7-A817-81AAD9EE8E62%7D/uploads/Town_Manager_Report_12-6-2021.pdf

FINANCIAL REPORT / COMMENTS:

- Boucher stated that we have already had the tax rate discussion earlier.
- Boucher sent notice to the occupants at 42 Railroad Street related to a Health Officer's case. Boucher will be discussing with the Town Manager and the Maintenance Director about evictions from tax seized properties.

COMMISSION AND COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Fred Garofalo (Conservation Commission): Nothing now. They meet at the end of the month.

Howard Hatch (Planning Board): Hatch asked the Town staff about the meeting with Kevin Shelton, Woodsville Administrator. Boucher stated she will reach out to Shelton to find out about the Mine Safety issues with the Woodsville pit. Graham asked about revising the Ordinance for the cell tower. Boucher noted that the Planning Board has to draft the revision and then a Public Hearing is then held.

Steve Robbins (Parks & Recreation Commission): None.

Matthew Bjelobrk (Airport Zoning Commission): A meeting is coming up.

Matthew Bjelobrk (Zoning Board of Adjustment): Bjelobrk stated that the ZBA selected a chair and vice chair, and Vertex Towers will redo the Balloon Test for 4 days during daylight hours from Friday through Monday, December 17, 18, 19, and 20.

Michael Graham (Fire Department): None.

CORRESPONDENCE:

Garofalo noted an invoice from PRIMEX with a \$1,000 deductible.

TOWN REPORT from the Select Board

Garofalo asked for any revisions to what he sent to the members. Robbins suggested removing the section of the sewer hook-ups. The members agreed to the revision.

