

**Haverhill Town Manager's
Report to the Select Board
February 28, 2022**

2019 Town Audit:

The much anticipated and talked about 2019 Town Audit is finally complete. The auditor from Vachon Clukay & Company PC provided draft reports which were provided to the Select Board in preparation of review of the audit with the auditor Tammy Webb and Town Administration.

Auditing of the Town's 2019 financial records was delayed for a variety of reasons; the delay was initially attributable to a lack of staff in the Town Administration office, changes in business processes, changes in the chart of accounts, and unsustainable workloads. However, the delay was further perpetuated by the hiring & training of new staff and the inevitable mistakes that people make when they are new. This all made reconciliation of 2019 more complicated and cumbersome, but the audit was then further delayed due to an unanticipated safety audit, an unanticipated payroll audit, COVID outages, office closures, COVID illnesses, and quarantines throughout 2020 and into early 2021.

We acknowledge and understand the delay has caused concern, and rightfully so. The Town has always achieved its audit responsibilities and we are happy to have this audit behind us. Information for the 2020 audit has already begun to be transmitted to the audit firm and we are assured that the 2020 & 2021 audits will go much quicker. We appreciate the concern and continue to appreciate the understanding and patience residents have offered during this unprecedented time. We are committed to making sure the Town's audits are timely moving forward.

Tax Collector Audit:

The Town is involved at this time in a Tax Collection audit. This type of audit is required when a tax collector leaves the position and before a new tax collector can officially take on the role. The audit is performed on records dated between the date of the last tax warrant and the date the tax collector left the post. This audit must be performed before a new tax warrant can be prepared and signed, which allows the new tax collector to begin formally collecting taxes and entering them into the tax system. This type of unexpected work defers efforts by the Financial Administrator to achieve tasks necessary for the Town's regular audits.

Town Meeting Day 2022:

With COVID subsiding in NH and the USA, Haverhill is able to hold Town Meeting Day in the traditional manner this year. Voting for elected officials will take place on Tuesday March 8th from 8am – 6pm at the James R Morrill Building. The General / Deliberative Session will take place on March 12th from 9am – 12:00pm at the Cooperative Middle School. There are thirty-three (33) Warrant Articles that will be discussed and voted upon at the deliberative session. It is important to note that Warrant Articles 27-32 will be voted upon by paper ballot during the deliberative session.

Woodsville Lawsuit:

The Woodsville Fire District filed a lawsuit against the Town of Haverhill in Grafton Superior Court in 2019, related to Town funding of the Woodsville Highway Department. The Woodsville Fire District filed for Declaratory Judgement in early June. The Town requested that with the passing of SB26 that both parties agree to drop the case, the Woodsville District Commissioners declined. In November the court approved Woodsville's Declaratory Judgment motion. However, the order did not provide the clarity both parties needed to end the case. The trial is still scheduled for February. However, the Town has asked Woodsville's council to agree to a status hearing in hopes of avoiding a trial. The Woodsville District's legal counsel sent to the Town's legal counsel a requested settlement figure of nearly \$800k. The Town performed the calculations per SB75, the Memorandum of Understanding, and the Addendum to the MOU, in exactly the manner used by Glenn English and Jo Lacaillade previously, and determined an amount hundreds of thousands of dollars lower than the one requested by the District. If the two parties can not agree on a number than the issue will need to go to hearing. All court filings are public record.

North Haverhill Cross Walks:

The Town has sent its formal request for approval to install five new pedestrian crossings along Route 10 in North Haverhill Village. The sidewalks will need to be ADA accessible, pedestrian signs and cross walk markings would need to be installed, and possibly street lighting. The locations have tentatively been identified, along Route 10 in North Haverhill. The installation of one cross walk (depending upon elements needed at the location) will range from \$5,000 - \$15,000 each. We are working to get NH DOT approval and design requirements before spring.

Mailbox Relocation Requests:

After concerns were raised about the safety of residents due to the location of their mailboxes along Route 10 in North Haverhill, the Town submitted a request asking for permission from the USPS to work with twenty-four (24) homeowners to relocate their mailboxes to the side of the street their homes sit upon. The Federal United States Postal Service has yet to act on this request. I am coordinating with Janeen Shaheen's office and they have asked for the Town to poll residents along Route 10 to ensure they want their mailboxes moved prior to filing a formal request through Janeen Shaheen's office for assistance. We will be working on this again after Town Meeting.

Vertex Cell Tower Permit:

The Planning Board & Zoning Board of Adjustment has been working on a request by Vertex for approval of a building permit, and variances for the permit, to build a cellular tower on Teepee Lane. The effort by both boards is on-going. Interested parties should reach out to either Gary Hebert, Chair of the Planning Board or Michael Bonnanno, Chair of the ZBA, or Jennifer Boucher Assistant Town Manager. The Planning & Zoning Boards will be working to update the Town's Personal Wireless Facilities Ordinance throughout 2022, as it is twenty years old and needs to be made current.

Transcription Assistance:

The Town has retained the occasional help of Zelda Brooks to aide in the transcription of meeting minutes whenever Joanna finds it difficult to get the minutes completed due to either the number of meetings a week or when she is consumed with Planning & Zoning public hearing preparations.

Grafton County Broadband project:

The Grafton County Broadband Committee (GCBC) is successfully moving forward with the county's "middle-mile" broadband project. The "middle-mile" project will bring highspeed broadband into every community within Grafton County. Once the new fiber lines have been established, local broadband committees will be responsible for ushering in local "last-mile" projects to connect homes to the "middle-mile" lines. The GCBC has been partnering with EX2, who has been retained by the County to design and install the "middle-mile" fiber but also to design and produce an estimate for every Town's "last-mile" project. This service by EX2 for local communities will be paid for as part of the County project, not the local municipalities. The GCBC is currently waiting a final decision by NTIA on the 26-million-dollar grant application submitted last fall. This grant would fully fund the "middle-mile" project, however, if that grant is not awarded, or not awarded in full, the County and GCBC have alternate funding plans in place.

Haverhill Broadband Committee:

The Haverhill Broadband Committee was organized to help the Town prepare for a local build-out of the "last-mile" of fiber intended to provide high speed internet to households throughout Haverhill. They have started meeting and planning. The committee has agreed to follow two tracks, one to work in coordination with the GCBC on a local "last-mile" project and another to work on influencing Internet Service Providers (ISP) to work on expansion and improvement of their services here in Haverhill. Below is the committee's Mission Statement.

Mission Statement:

The mission of the Haverhill Broadband Committee is to bring the opportunity for high-speed broadband connection to every resident of Haverhill, and to do it as quickly as possible with as little impact as possible on Haverhill taxpayers.

The Committee will seek the input from interested town residents. The Committee will place a priority on responding to community needs, including those of residents (owners and renters), businesses, health providers, schools and libraries.

The Committee meets at least twice a month and invites the public to observe its meetings in person or over Zoom. The Committee will include a "public comment" segment at every meeting.

Information related to both the Grafton County & Haverhill Broadband Committees and their work can be found on the Town's website.

https://www.haverhill-nh.com/index.asp?SEC=5AC42E47-9D3F-45CF-9E6E-7F3A313651A8&Type=B_BASIC

Haverhill Public WiFi Network:

In September of 2021, the Town of Haverhill deployed a public WiFi network along parts of Central Street in the Village of Woodsville. Currently there are three (3) hosts; Vickie Wyman of The Atlantic Real Estate Network; Robert Welsh of Welsh Reality Apartments; and Mike & Brie Choate of Mike’s Garage in Woodsville Village. We are still seeking a few more hosts along Central Street to complete a contiguous network. With the network active we have been tracking usage and we are pleased to report that we are still seeing robust use of the network.

Unique clients per day



Number of sessions per day



Public Safety Facility:

Through 2022, the Town will be evaluating facilities that currently house the Fire & Police Departments to ensure they are meeting the operational needs of those departments. Included in this evaluation will be a review of spatial needs for things such as, equipment, vehicles, locker rooms, showers, gear extractors, storage, workstations, meeting & training spaces. This project will also include a review of grant funding opportunities and planning for recommended changes. Lorie Aldrich and I will be attending a Public Safety Facilities Planning Seminar this week. Lorie will be attending the Police Facilities track and I will be attending the Fire Facility track during this seminar. We will bring back information to share with the Select Board at the next SB Meeting.

Wastewater Collection in North Haverhill & Treatment in Woodsville:

Through 2022, we will continue our evaluation of the Town’s municipal wastewater system. This evaluation will include all associated processes, the written agreement the Town has with the Woodsville District, sewage being collected and pumped to the Woodsville treatment facility, sewer user fees, sewer hook-up agreements, actual sewer hook-ups, permitting, sewer discharge allocations, Woodsville’s sewer plant capacity limits, developing a new Sewer Ordinance for the out-of-district portion of the system, and the probable need for expanding or the development of a new municipal sewage treatment facility within the Town of Haverhill. This work is necessary so that the Town can make sure it is following all rules, regulations, and laws pertaining to sewer systems; to ensure businesses and residents have a clear process to follow to hook up to the Town’s sewer line; and to open the door to healthy economic development within the Town of Haverhill.

Central / Forest Intersection:

After Town Meeting, the Town will refocus its efforts to prepare for work at the Central Street / Forest Street Intersection. In 2021, the NHDOT verbally approved the Town's excavation permit for Phase one (1) of this project. Phase one (1) is to remove the wide turning lane in front of McDonalds in an effort to narrow the intersection and eliminate cross-traffic issues. Work will include the removal of pavement, installation of loam and seed. The Town will provide the NHDOT with an updated schedule and estimate for the project, post the necessary bond, and get final approval on the excavation permit. We intend to complete this work in the spring or summer of 2022. Temporary signs to warn motorists of a change in the traffic pattern will also be installed.

Blackmount Trail Upgrades:

Through 2022, the Town will be performing upgrades to the section of the Blackmount Trail that runs from North Haverhill to Woodsville. Upgrades will include widening the trail, leveling, and applying a stay mat surface, installing benches, and if funding allows, installing solar lighting. The Parks & Recreation Department will be working with NCIC to identify, apply for, and hopefully obtain grant funding to offset the cost of this work.

Bath-Haverhill Covered Bridge:

In 2022, the Town will be removing the pavement on the approaches to the covered bridge and adding fines and gravel to the approaches to fill the voids that have developed at the abutments and under the approaches. These areas will not be repaved, but rather be covered in a stay mat surface to allow for proper even drainage at the approaches and through the stone abutments.

Department Head Reports:

- ❖ Tax Collector – The Town is actively recruiting for a new Tax Collector, Christina Hebert is serving as the Interim Tax Collector, and Brittany Grant is serving as the Assistant to the Tax Collector. Once a new Tax Collector is hired, Brittany will become the Deputy Tax Collector.
- ❖ Dean Memorial Airport – The Town has been engaged in scope of work development and project kick-off meetings in preparation for work at the airport this spring and summer to relieve safety obstructions. All project work will be Airport Improvement Program (AIP) grant funded. The airport has also been awarded \$110,000 in additional grant funding for construction. The Town is looking at the possibility of replacing the old Airport House with a small “arrivals” building at no cost to taxpayers.
- ❖ Highway Dept – The highway crew has been busy with recent weather events, to include regular plowing, sanding, and salting. Also, due to the extreme temperature changes over the past few weeks, the highway crew has been struggling to keep culverts open, thawing a large number of culverts throughout Town. The crew also has been smoothing ruts and laying gravel to keep dirt roads passable. Please NOTE some roads have been posted already.

- ❖ Maintenance Dept – The Town is actively working with the Head of Maintenance to recruit a Maintenance Assistant; interviews are planned for this week. Maintenance has been working on the construction of shelving in the basement of the JRM building as the next step toward fully reviewing, sorting, disposing of, and organizing the extensive volume of records that has been collected and housed in the basement over the many decades.
- ❖ Emergency Management – Monitoring updates to COVID guidelines and coordinating with the State and others on weather events.
- ❖ Parks & Recreation Dept – Winterfest was well attended at the Mountain Lakes Lodge. Regular recreation programming is on-going.
- ❖ Welfare Dept – Finalizing updates to the Welfare Guidelines, these will be presented to the Select Board for review and approval soon. Also, monitoring, tracking, and managing active cases.
- ❖ Public Health – Following up on issues reported at a property on Central Street, planning for hazard mitigation and disposal of 42 Railroad Street, and focusing on unlicensed junk yards in Haverhill.
- ❖ Town Fire Department – There have been a higher number of calls so far this season. The fire service team participated in an “escape system” demonstration. Also, Kaycee Reagan spearheaded an effort to provide free smoke detectors to Haverhill residents, paid for through a grant she applied for on behalf of the Town Fire Department.
- ❖ Police Department – In 2022, the HPD will be focused on the following list of goals:
 1. Updated strategy for working with Haverhill schools
 2. Numerous grant endeavors
 3. Change of strategy on motor vehicle and criminal patrol
 4. Addition of speed and DWI detail patrols
 5. Addition of 2022 Thanksgiving food collection
 6. Addition of part-time Animal Control officer
 7. Addition of two new officers