



Town of
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**Town of Northumberland
Board of Selectmen
Meeting Minutes - Draft
Date: **Monday, February 5, 2024**
Place: **Town Meeting Room – 10 Station Square**
Time: **6:00 P.M.****

Board members present: Jim Tierney, Jim Weagle, Bill Caron
Others present: Tammy Letson, Glenn Cassady, Rick Archer, Shawna Archer, Al Rossetto, Sean Dukin, Jeremy Monahan, Norm Cotter, Judy Fox, Kathy Frechette, John Richard, Liz Ball, Amanda Anderson, Andre Brasseur, Reginald Charron, Melinda Kennett, Rebecca St. Cyr – Minute Taker

1. Chairman Opens the Public Hearing:

B. Caron opened the Public Hearing at 6:01 pm

2. Discussion of a plan to file an application for Federal Assistance for the purchase of a police cruiser with the USDA Rural Development Community Facilities Loan and/or Grant program:

T. Letson – we have applied for a grant for the total cost of the cruiser. We can't guarantee how much the grant will be. This is for the taxpayers to discuss and offer their opinion on this.

A. Anderson commented that unless it's 100% funded by the grant she is 1000% against it. We need to rein in the Police Dept spending. We have other needs like an ambulance that needs to be considered before we keep spending on new cruisers N. Cotter agreed.

J. Monahan said we just got a new cruiser, why are we getting another one? B. Caron said we have two (2) that are in the shop more often than not. Monahan stated that when they are not in the shop, they are sitting in the parking lot. He feels it's a waste of money.

S. Durkin asked what the mileage is on them? B. Daisey addressed – 88,000 on one and the other is approx. 110,000.

A. Anderson said she looked into the mileage on NFPA for fire trucks and looked for ambulances and cruisers. She read it's generally about 100,000 before they are replaced and questioned how old are the cruisers? B. Daisey said one is a 2015 and the other is 2018. B. Caron noted that the 2018 is in repair more than the other one. P. Pelletier said they both took their turns over the last year. P. Pelletier said we haven't had consistent use over the years. The 2015 needed more work this year.

Anderson asked if we know what percentage the grant will cover. T. Letson said we don't know until they have reviewed all the applications received. If there are a lot of applications, they might limit the amount to approx. \$50,000. That would be \$50,000 of "Free Money" to put towards a new cruiser. The new lease / purchase amount was approx. is \$70,000.

T. Letson said the Board has the right to say they don't want to accept it and pass on it. This isn't a lock into a purchase.

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S. Durkin asked about the lease price and why don't we stay with lease agreements? He commented that then we would know every year what the cost would be and it's on a regular rotation. J. Tierney said we tried that, but things were getting tight and the people were complaining. The lease would end, so to keep the budget down, we didn't do it for a couple of years and the vehicles kept getting older.

T. Letson said instead of entering into a lease, the Town has been putting money into a cruiser CRF yearly. She would recommend this to the Board as an offset to a purchase and continue to put money into the CRF. Then at the end of a lease there is money to offset another grant or to outright purchase one. Whatever the responsible decision is. S. Durkin said the responsible decision this year could affect and raise beyond what you would be saving if it stayed consistent.

T. Letson said that's been the logic behind the Capital Reserve Fund. The concept of asking for the grant is to use the Federal Government money, then we can fund the difference. She asked if this was the wiser step for the Town instead of entering into a lease where we make the payments? Durkin commented that it depends what the cost is.

Amanda asked what is in the CRF now and where is the current lease payment coming from? Tammy said she doesn't have a current report from the Trustees of the Trust Funds. The current new lease is not coming out of the Cruiser CRF. Further discussed.

B. Caron said there might not be any grants in four (4) years, so, the taxpayers would have to pay 100%. Sean asked why we are depending on grants, that if we figure the cost and if we get it, we get it. T. Letson said that's what this is about. If we don't get the grant, it's not a guarantee to purchase the cruiser.

J. Monahan asked how we paying for the newest cruiser and is it in service yet? B. Caron said it's not in service yet, it's getting retrofitted. T. Letson said it's a lease/purchase agreement and it was going to be a grant, but the grant company that was working on it missed the deadline.

B. Caron asked P. Pelletier why we are getting another new cruiser. Peter said we are getting a second cruiser so that 2 new cruisers wouldn't eat up the maintenance budget. He was trying to save money and run the ones we had. If we could get the two (2) new cruisers, he would like to think they wouldn't be shop ridden.

J. Monahan asked if we are going to be paying more in payments than what the cost of the repairs have been. B. Caron said the motor had to be replaced in one of them this year. The budgeted amount for that was \$19,443. S. Durkin asked if all the oil changes, maintenance, etc. are figured into the amount on the lease program. Tammy said no. Sean asked if that can be figured into the yearly budget, so we know how much the cost is and that you need to look at the numbers, is it cheaper to lease or buy? T. Letson said we don't know what the numbers are for maintenance, it has been in our operating budget. S. Durkin said there must be an average.

T. Letson clarified the term lease for a Town. It's just a payment to purchase. We own it at the end of the lease, there is no buy-out. It's not like a lease that a citizen would get. J. Tierney said it's called a Lease/purchase. Sean further discussed the term lease. J. Weagle further explained the lease/purchase concept; if over the five (5) years the Town decides we don't want to pay for it any longer, it goes back to the dealer, and we own nothing.

A. Anderson said this is a purchase but a lease – is there any penalty to turn it in early? The Board said no.

Sean commented the people are going crazy with the numbers going up and down.

B. Caron reviewed the past few years' expenses for the cruisers. In 2022, \$5,000 was budgeted for maintenance. We spent \$3,468. In 2023, we budgeted \$6,500. The actual expense was \$19,443.

P. Pelletier reviewed the repairs. There were front end repairs, brake repairs and heat/air conditioning issues. This is due to both vehicles getting old and being housed outside.

J. Monahan asked who owns the cruisers now? They belong to the Town, we own them. Monahan asked what are we going to do with them? B. Caron and J. Weagle said that we will put them out to bid and sell. We talked about giving one to the Fire Dept., but they could be stuck with costly repairs.

Amanda asked about the cost of the lease for a year. J. Tierney reviewed - \$13,436 is the annual payment.

T. Letson said right now the Town is paying \$13,000/year for one cruiser. The concept of the grant is to take another \$67,000 instead of making it a lease/payment and paying \$26,000/year. Let's apply \$50,000 of "free money" and the cost to the taxpayers is only \$17,000. There is approx. \$53,000 in the CRF for a new cruiser. The idea of the grant is to take the money and apply it to the cost. They could approve us for 100% and cover the whole cost.

M. Kennett asked when the grant has to be in? T. Letson said it's already been submitted. We have asked for the whole amount, but don't know what we will get. Tammy said we are simply asking what the public's opinion is, so the USDA can take into it consideration. If everyone is against it, we would get a low rating.

J. Monahan asked if we get the grant, no matter what the amount is, will it cost the taxpayers any money? T. Letson said it will not affect the taxpayers in 2024, but it might if the Board decides to go into lease for the \$50,000 in future years. She will push the Board to hold a Public Hearing to get input from the public.

No further questions or comments.

3. Adjournment of Public Hearing:

Public Hearing closed at 6:30 pm

4. Chairman Opens the meeting:

B. Caron opened the meeting at 6:30 pm

5. Acceptance of Minutes:

Motion to approve the 01/16/24 minutes by: J. Tierney
2nd by: J. Weagle, All in Favor 3-0

6. Department Head Business: Highway and Water/Sewer

Highway – Glenn Cassady, Road Agent

The weather has made the past month difficult with lots of snow and ice. We used a lot of material. In one particular week, Glenn put over 400 miles just on his truck. For one storm we had to put chains on.

He had to purchase six (6) loads of salt this month and estimates that we went through 3.5 loads of salt over the past month. We put in a lot of overtime. We still have good supplies. Last week was minimal overtime.

Randy has been doing repairs for W/S and some of our own.

In early fall we purchased eight (8) tons of asphalt for cold patching. We have gone through approx. half of it. The rest has been put in the shop to thaw out so it can be used.

This afternoon, the dirt roads started thawing out for the 6th time. It's supposed to rain again over the weekend. It's too early for spring to be here. We've been trying to keep up. It's been an awkward winter.

It's been quiet helping with the W/S Dept. They have handled any of the issues that they've had.

Glenn will be calling contractors for firewood, which we can cut and split in between other jobs.

There are a lot of potholes. A. Rossetto commented on Page Hill.

S. Durkin asked about Lancaster and working with them for grading on Page Hill Rd. Glenn said he hasn't gotten in touch with me yet. For both of us to get together it's been difficult. Durkin said their (Lancaster's) section of Page Hill Rd is fairly good. If they could grade the whole road (Page Hill) it might be beneficial. B. Caron said we might think about it, if they say they will do it, but they don't want to do the backside of the river. The current contractor may say that's not enough. It's worth looking into.

Water/Sewer – Reggie Charron, Supervisor

We had a good January. The 17th we had a 6" cast iron line fracture on Crow Hill. Glenn found it while plowing at 8:30 p.m. and we had it fixed by 11:00 a.m. the next day. Bart did the digging and did a nice job. Up there it's all shale. We had to replace it completely with sand. We found there was a rock underneath the pipe, which caused it to heave.

We had a resident with water coming out of his door. We had to shut off the water and notify the owner. Not sure if they got in touch with him. He will have a mess when he comes back.

We had a fire in Lost Nation. The system is small and can't handle the load. We had to ferry water up to it and used approx. 15,000 gallons of water.

Running water program is in full force. Bypasses are running to maintain. A week ago, we had a catch (water freezing) in Odell Park. This is an instance where W/S lines are no more than 3'-4' deep and with the freezing and thawing, it's driving the frost deeper.

The demand right now is 262,000/day for January. That's 300,000 gallons less than January in 2023. In 2022, we averaged 160,000-170,000 gallons per day. When a leak shows up, we get it right way.

We are starting to get the meters that are left changed out. There are 75-80 left.

We are working on the LCRR for EPA and DES mandates. Reggie has been in constant zoom meetings. We are doing the best we can and we are staying within our mandates.

Lost Nation's water is down 9,500 gallons/month compared to last year at this time. We were at 100% efficiency (we thought), until we found the service (an old, abandoned line) that wasn't known and fixed it. The usage for 27 users has come down to less than 100 gallons/per day per household.

There was a sewer issue on Brooklyn St. today. It's probably a line that's connected to the new lines. We tie into the lines that the property owners has. The individual is looking at it and will probably change it in the Spring. With the big project on the hill, there are a lot of water/sewer lines that need to be replaced. There is grant money offered to the homeowners if the line is galvanized. They are mandating that all the requirements be done within seven (7) years, one way or the other.

Reggie discussed the crew. They are doing a good job together and know they can go to the Highway crew if they need help.

S. Durkin asked if the homeowners could call about the grant or can we send an email to them? Reggie said all the residents all have his phone number and email. They are supposed to be emailing photos of their lines. If there is a known problem, Reggie will reach out to them.

T. Letson commented there is a grant through DES for the lead line service replacement. Homeowners can't do it themselves. The grant has to run through the Towns books. DES is working on the plan to make this work for this year so that next Town Meeting they can tell us how to put it in. The Board will need to decide how they want to handle it. It might not be 100% for the homeowner. The Town would have to pay it and then we would need to figure out how to get the rest of the money back from the homeowners. Some Towns have already implemented this and are giving their users five (5) years of annual payments to pay it back. It's an honor system that taxpayers will pay it back. DES will keep us informed as they make changes.

Reggie said we are in better shape than other local towns. With the Hill project, we are at our limits. The rates have gone up and they will go up more. We need to get businesses in here that will help lessen the burden on the property taxes.

A. Rossetto noted if we look at the current assessments of the major businesses in Town, you will find that the total mill property value is about what he and Sean are paying. \$33,000 for a lot with the property on the market for \$1,000,000. A. Anderson said that people need to understand the warrant information, that it needs to be broken down by the effect on taxes. Last year, no one realized the impact. She further discussed the assessments – they make no sense.

J. Monahan asked for clarification on the \$33,000 at the mill property. Al said there are a series of lots that are assessed at \$33,000/lot.

7. Requested Agenda Matters:

- a. Rick Archer – Farmers Market – J. Weagle reviewed the proposed map for the Farmers Markets. There is a fence around a section of the little ball field. Space - 37, 38, 24, 25 and from 1-9 wouldn't work either.

Rick said we are attempting to set up a farmers' market. We have about 13 vendors and the number is growing. Would like to start in June and go through October on Sundays, from 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon, with set up from 8 – 9 and clean up 12 – 1. He's looking for a DJ for music so we would need access to electricity. He's reached out to UNH Coos Extension. They are recruiting other farmers to participate and helping to market it. They will bring in a nutritionist. He has talked with a health care coalition that does health screenings. They have offered to come in as well.

J. Weagle said they wouldn't be able to have any vehicles on the field. He asked about insurance. Rick said they are putting in for \$2,000,000.

T. Letson said we reached out to all the members of the Rec Committee. One member got back to her and they think it's a great idea. The Cal-Ripken baseball usually goes through the middle of June. They do have practices on Sunday's and the fence is usually there until the end of the season, then it's taken down. Rick commented that most won't have produce ready that early. Cal-Ripken is the only conflict they can see. Rick said the schedule is tentative, that he's anticipating it will start slow, but with the traffic, he feels it will be an incentive to bring in more people.

Motion to approve the Granite Guild Farmers Market and Art Walk on the little ballfield with the stipulation of no vehicles on the field and insurance will be provided by the Granite Guild by: J. Weagle, 2nd by: J. Tierney, All in Favor 3-0

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- b. Meeting room application – For the Granite Guild – Feb 13th, March 12th, April 9th, May 14th, and June 11^t for Advisory Board meetings. March 12th is out, that’s election day. T. Letson said there is typically a fee, which can be waived.

Motion to approve the Granite Guild using the meeting room on all the dates requested except March 12th. The fee will be waived for any dates that need to be added or changed by: J Weagle, 2nd by: J. Tierney, All in Favor 3-0

8. Town Administrator Business:

- a. Northern Border Alliance Program Grant - T. Letson – This is a grant that covers the overtime for an officer and for the use of the cruiser to assist border patrol with specific details that are both within and outside of our Town borders. There would be times that our cruiser would be asked to drive to another area. T. Letson supports it as long as there is an officer on duty and in Town. It covers all the associated benefits 100% back to us. It’s paid at the overtime rate and the Federal standard rate for the mileage.

The grant has a zero match. This works similar to the Highway Detail grants. There will be specific details they go out for.

J. Tierney asked if it’s a flat fee or based on mileage? B. Daisey said there will be a lot of driving, looking for specific things. He doesn’t know all the specifics. It’s coordinated by Mike Cote out of Troop F. Tierney further discussed the mileage rate. The IRS mileage allowance is .655. We will be getting that rate, which should help cover the cost and future maintenance. T. Letson said they can’t force us to do any more than they are willing to pay us for.

Motion to approve the Northern Border Alliance Program Grant with the Chairman being the signee by: J. Weagle, 2nd by: J. Tierney, All in Favor 3-0

- b. Volunteer Fire Assistance Fund Grant – T. Letson said the Fire Dept put in for equipment. It’s been granted. It’s to help with the equipment needed for forestry. Shirts, pants, gloves, goggles, helmets, and backpack pumps were all meant for fighting forest fires.

Motion to accept the VFA Fund Grant and assign the Chairman as the signee by: J. Weagle, 2nd by: J. Tierney, All in Favor 3-0

- c. Body Cam and dashboard cam’s – This was applied for. It’s a 50/50 grant. The match will be even payments over five (5) years. The match is \$12,800.

Motion to accept the Body worn and dashboard cam grant and appoint the Chairman as the signee by: J. Weagle, 2nd by: J. Tierney, All in Favor 3-0

- d. Retail Dealer and License Registration – L. Ball told T. Letson this is for the owner’s son to be able to sell reliable used vehicles at D&S Auto. It will be retail sales only. L. Ball said his intent is more or less a tinkering type thing for his son to make money. J. Weagle said retail opens up the opportunity to have several vehicles there. Reggie said it’s a watershed area. Liz said they might do some light maintenance in the shop. He will need to get approval through DES also.

Motion to approve by: J. Weagle, 2nd by: J. Tierney, All in Favor 3-0

- e. Running Water Application – Fire Station – It went out in December with the name as Precinct. L. Ball said it went out when it was the Precinct, so we are going to leave it and change it for next year. T. Letson suggested adding /Town of Northumberland to correct the name on the application.

Motion to approve by: J. Weagle, 2nd by: J. Tierney, All in Favor 3-0

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- f. Other – the Methodist Church would like permission to hold Easter sunrise service on the Covered Bridge – March 31, 2024.

Motion to approve by: J. Weagle, 2nd by: J. Tierney, All in Favor 3-0

9. Applications/Permits and Warrants:

a. Building Permits (2)-

- 1. Map/Lot 247-002-04 – John Ackerly, 49 Chelle Lane; site prep for 2 park model rv’s. Site preparation includes power, DES approval of septic, and getting estimates for Earth Works. A. Rossetto said we initially had some miscommunication issues. Basically, he’s creating a campground for his family. We required him to put in a septic big enough and designed for the max use of the 4 campsites and also have an electrician sign off on the wiring. He’s paid the permit fee and the penalty for not pulling a permit initially. This will give him the OK to put in the septic system. The cease-and-desist Order won’t be lifted until the septic is in and inspected by the State. Al has signed it and recommended the Board sign.

Motion to sign by: J. Tierney, 2nd by: J. Weagle, All in Favor 3-0

- 2. Map/Lot 104-072 – Mahi, 12 Main St. Small grab and go window in the front and small bar in the dining room area. Knock down walls in a small room, working on apt upstairs. Liz said he’s changing the inter floor plan of the restaurant. He’s putting in the grab and go window, a bar and redoing the apartment upstairs. Liz believes the bar is just for beer. J. Weagle asked if Al had seen the plans? Al said he hasn’t. J. Weagle is concerned if he changes the bathroom, then ADA compliance has to be considered. Al asked Liz if it would push him over the edge for ADA? Liz commented that she didn’t think so. The owner explained the plan to Liz for the bar. It won’t affect the bathroom. Al has signed it.

Motion to approve by: J. Tierney, 2nd by: J. Weagle, All in Favor 3-0

b. Abatements (7) –

- 1. Map/Lot 104-238
- 2. Map/Lot 246-002
- 3. Map/Lot 104-220
- 4. Map/Lot 102-025
- 5. Map/Lot 104-064
- 6. Map/Lot 229-025-MH-27
- 7. Map/Lot 220-001

Motion to send the 7 abatements above to the assessors by: J. Weagle
2nd by: J. Tierney, All in Favor 3-0

c. Veteran Tax Credit (4) – The applications are all new and the applicants all qualify.

Motion to approve 4 Veteran Tax Credit applications by: J. Weagle
2nd by: J. Tierney, All in Favor 3-0

10. **Public Comment:

N. Cotter asked about the parking in front of the high school and has anything been done? There was a game last week and cars had to park down to the Methodist church. Glenn said it snowed the day before the game and we didn’t have time to get it all cleaned up. Glenn said this was a tournament over a weekend. It started snowing during the games. N. Cotter didn’t think using the field for parking would hurt it. Glenn said there was an accident and Route 110 was closed – traffic was diverted down the backside. There was ice, slush and salt that fell off the cars, which created a

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lot of potholes. If they drive on the fields, we will have the same there. He said the only time we've plowed it off was a year when there was a lot of ice. The school reaches out when there is a big game. There is a bigger issue with the bad lighting. J. Weagle and B. Caron are not in favor of opening the field to parking, it's just not worth it. Judy Fox said the middle school uses the field for recess every day; it's for recreation.

Amanda – when we are talking about leases or buying, have we considered buying 10 Station Square? J. Weagle said they want too much for it. Amanda further discussed how it could be remodeled/used.

Streetlights – Amanda said at the last meeting the streetlights were discussed. Did anyone check for those that are out? R. Charron said yes, he checked while he was doing other checks.

The budget - Amanda presented the Board with 11 petitioned warrant articles with all the signatures. M. Kennett said she validated the names. If all the proposed changes were made, we would save \$169,181 for the year. We would also have \$50,000 set aside for the Fire Dept and \$50,000 for the Ambulance.

She did a lot of research into how other Towns/municipalities do things, how things work with public safety.

Her goal is to save the taxpayers as much money as possible but to ensure that the community has what it needs to survive. We've done some pretty serious spending in the past few years. We need to buckle down before Northumberland becomes too expensive for its residents. Right now, she is looking at the small picture as well as the big picture for the future. At Town meeting last year, the people wanted to keep the Ambulance service. Ambulances need to be replaced every 5-6 years. Ours are 10+ years old. If we set aside \$50,000 for 5-6 years, we will have the \$250,000 - \$300,00 for a new ambulance.

Fire Dept - NFPA recommends retiring Fire trucks that are 25 years old. We have one engine that's a 1990, a rescue truck that's a 2004 and an engine that's a 2002. We do have a 2021 tanker. One of our engines is overdue for retirement.

The Police Dept needs to rein in the spending. We should be able to have the coverage we have for \$500,000. She looked at our coverage compared to other towns, looking what they have for coverage, the amount of coverage, population, etc. Gorham, Lancaster, and Colebrook.

She is suggesting/requesting the Ambulance re-negotiate contracts with surrounding towns. Re-Negotiate with private insurance companies to get them to pay more.

Town Administration – reduce wages to \$40,000; plus 20,000 for the accounting. For comparison, our Town Clerk/Tax Collector of 19 years never saw this much.

The Board reviewed her recommendations. B. Caron asked where she proposed the cuts on the Police Dept. Amanda didn't have a breakdown with her.

Looking at previous years, Marcel was Chief and we were at \$370,000 for a budget. We are overspending everywhere and further discussed. \$17,000 just for ammo. There was an increase in training.

She isn't looking at any one department if it's a public service – we need it. She feels we need to be more frugal, at a minimum the budget should be flat lined. Look at necessities, not what we want but what do we need.

J. Weagle explained what happened with the Fire Department funds. When their check book was closed, it was all rolled into the General Fund. The voters approve or not putting it into the CRF at Town Meeting. There is approx. \$177,000.

She is looking at the big picture, she cares about this Town and the people in it.

11. Announcements: The Town Offices will be closed on Monday, February 19, 2024, in observance of Presidents Day.

12. Next Board Meeting Date: Tuesday, February 20, 2024 – 6 pm

13. Non-Public Session: (Pursuant to RSA'S 91-A:3, II (b):

Motion to go into Non-Public Session by: J. Weagle
2nd by: J. Tierney, All in Favor 3-0
Roll Call – J. Tierney – Yes; B. Caron – Yes; J. Weagle - Yes

Into Non-Public Session at 8:03 pm

Motion to adjourn the Non-Public Session by: J. Tierney
2nd by: J. Weagle, All in Favor 3-0

Non-Public Session adjourned at 9:25

Into Regular Session at 9:25

Motion to "SEAL" the Non-Public Session minutes for sections:
a.-2 and a.-3 by: J. Tierney, 2nd by: J. Weagle, All in Favor 3-0

Roll Call – J. Tierney – Yes; J. Weagle – Yes; B. Caron – Yes

14. Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn by: J. Tierney
2nd by: J. Weagle, All in Favor 3-0

Meeting adjourned at 9:27 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca St. Cyr – Minute Taker

*Agenda is subject to change

**Deadline for Agenda items is 12:00 noon on the Friday before scheduled business meeting

(By vote of Board of Selectmen at 7/11/2005 meeting)

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Minutes approved by Northumberland Select Board Members on _____

X _____

William Caron
Northumberland Select Board Chair

X _____

Jim Tierney
Northumberland Select Board Member

X _____

Jim Weagle
Northumberland Select Board Member