

New Durham Board of Selectmen
Minutes of Meeting ~ March 4, 2013
Town Hall

Members Present: David Bickford, Theresa Jarvis, Jeffrey Kratovil

Others Present: Town Administrator Jeremy Bourgeois, Police Chief Shawn Bernier, Fire Chief Peter Varney, Road Agent Mike Clarke, Town Clerk/Tax Collector Carole Ingham, Sergeant Reggie Meattley, Moderator Cecile Chase, Krissi Bernier, Leo Lessard, Paul Perry, Kevin Ruel, Don Vachon, Dot Martin Veisel, videographer Jim Ladd, recorder Cathy Allyn

1. Call to Order – Chairperson David Bickford called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. and asked Selectman Jeffrey Kratovil to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Public Forum – Newly elected Strafford County Commissioner Leo Lessard said he never saw a commissioner while he was a Milton selectman. Because of that experience, he decided to visit all 10 towns in the county as a commissioner and make himself available to people. He provided the Board with real estate statistics from 2011 and 2012. During that time period, there has been a 6.5 percent increase in home sales, and a 17.6 percent increase in recording of mortgages, which reflects refinancing.

Foreclosures remain about the same, with 371 for 2012 and 374 in 2011. Mr. Lessard said New Durham's numbers indicated a robust turnaround with a 32.8 per cent increase in deeds and 32.5 per cent increase in mortgages. There were 17 foreclosures in 2012 and 16 in 2011. He said the economy is clearly improving, and New Durham is bucking the trend of increasing foreclosures, common in the hard hit northern part of Strafford County.

He provided the breakdown based on last year's assessment, stating that the county's zero-based budget, up 2.46 percent, reflects increases in Medicaid and retirement costs. New Durham's share is increased \$28,511.

Mr. Lessard extended an invitation to the Board to visit the county's five star nursing home and profitable House of Corrections. Chair Bickford said the House of Corrections makes a profit due to its design. Selectman Kratovil said he would speak with Mr. Lessard about how towns can get together to solve resource problems regarding services. Mr. Lessard said there were lots of possible ways to save towns money, including switching to the county dispatch and considering having the county pick up assessing for small towns.

Kevin Ruel stated he represented the fire department, and read a letter signed by five officers and members urging the Board to reappoint Peter Varney as fire chief. The letter mentioned a reduction of calls requiring mutual aid, cost savings by moving to Strafford County Sheriff's office dispatch, improved morale, and excellent working relationships with neighboring towns and hospitals under Chief Varney's leadership.

The letter also noted that the department's opinion was that a full-time fire chief was not necessary. Chair Bickford said the Board could not vote on the matter tonight, per the two week vetting policy. He said there was interest in searching for candidates, and the Board would take it from there.

Selectperson Terry Jarvis said it was never her intention to have a full-time chief. Selectman Kratovil said he had thrown out the concept as an option. Chair Bickford said the Board had discussed having to determine how many hours are necessary for the chief and the department's needs.

Selectperson Jarvis said Chief Varney is now in a hold-over term. Chair Bickford said nothing formal has been done.

Children's Librarian Cathy Allyn announced a hands-on maple sugaring demonstration at the New Durham Public Library on March 12, 2013 at 3:45 p.m.

Paul Perry said he wanted to speak at the end of the meeting, and meet with the Board in non-public session.

3. Appointments

The Board met with Moderator Cecile Chase to discuss the logistics of Town Meeting. Moderator Chase said she would like the Cub Scouts to lead the Pledge of Allegiance and then Dot Veisel would introduce the Citizen of the Year. She said the Parks and Recreation Department introduces the Volunteer of the Year.

She said she will announce the election results and then the meeting would move on to the Town Warrant. She and the Board discussed who would move, second, and speak to each article. Moderator Chase said she would double check with people other than those present who are assigned those roles this evening.

The following assignments were decided: Article 3, the Budget Committee; Article 4, Chair Bickford to move, Selectmen Kratovil to second, and both Chair Bickford and Selectman Kratovil to speak to the article; Article 5, Don Vachon, Road Agent Mike Clarke, and RA Clarke; Article 6, Mr. Vachon, RA Clarke, and RA Clarke; Article 7, the Milfoil Committee; Article 8, Mr. Vachon, RA Clarke, and RA Clarke; Article 9, Highway Department/Solid Waste Facility Office Manager Cathy Orlowicz, Town Clerk Carole Ingham, and Ms. Orlowicz; Article 10, Ms. Orlowicz, Ms. Ingham, and Ms. Orlowicz; Article 11, Selectperson Jarvis or the Budget Committee; Article 12, the Budget Committee; Article 13, Selectperson Jarvis, Selectman Kratovil, Selectperson Jarvis; Article 14, Selectperson Jarvis, Selectman Kratovil, and Selectperson Jarvis; and Article 15, Selectman Kratovil, Selectperson Jarvis, and Selectman Kratovil.

4. Agenda Review

There were no modifications. Selectperson Jarvis asked about the reimbursement for training matter and Chair Bickford replied that TA Bourgeois was to do research first.

5. Department Reports

Police – Police Chief Shawn Bernier reported that the third radio received through a Homeland Defense grant has arrived.

He provided the Board with cards from the public thanking the police department. He presented a series of letters from the county attorney regarding the recent child abuse case in town, as well as a sexual assault case from 20 years ago. He read excerpts from the county attorney, who indicated the good outcome from that earlier case was due to the efforts of Sgt. Reggie Meattley, who operates with professionalism.

Chief Bernier cited an email from the prosecutor on the Christine Thomas child abuse case, stating that the New Durham officers were good investigators. He asked Selectman

Kratovil to read a letter which Selectman Kratovil had written citing Sgt. Meattley as going beyond the call of duty when rendering aid to the Kratovil family.

Chief Bernier asked if the Board received his email regarding Chair Bickford's recent letter to the editor in the Baysider. Selectperson Jarvis said she did. Chief Bernier said he wanted to get an answer, as he was unaware of any investigations regarding three citizens coming forward accusing police officers of stealing. Chair Bickford said he saw files concerning the matter.

Chief Bernier asked him in what capacity he conducted this investigation. Chief Bernier noted that the Sheriff's Department investigated allegations in 2007 and the individual pled guilty to obstructing government administration. Chair Bickford said this meeting was not the forum for this discussion. He said he inserted himself and was looking for a common person.

Selectperson Jarvis asked Chair Bickford if he referred the three citizens anywhere. Selectman Kratovil said following protocol was not the issue. He said Chief Bernier was asking if there is an official investigation.

Chief Bernier said it would be an allegation from the three people. He wanted to know if it was the Board or Chair Bickford as a citizen who got involved. Chair Bickford said the Board was not involved. Chief Bernier said it was Chair Bickford, then, as a citizen.

Selectperson Jarvis said she was concerned about the status of the information. She asked if the information had been turned over to any agency for investigation, or if it has been determined if the allegation is untrue. Chair Bickford said his understanding was that the information was turned over to the New Durham Police Department. Chief Bernier said anyone who said they came to the NDPD, except related to the 2007 case, would be incorrect.

Highway - RA Clarke said his department has the 2012 truck back with a new motor, after going a month without it. He noted that the seller would not extend the warranty. He told the Board that grading could start later this week.

Town Clerk - Ms. Ingham said Town Reports will be out tomorrow and that a PDF will be available on the web site at some future point. Selectperson Jarvis said it represented a lot of work.

6. New Business

Non-public Minutes - RA Clarke asked if the non-public meeting of February 22, 2013 and the non-public meeting scheduled for this evening had to do with him. He said the minutes were sealed and the employee wanted to read them. He made a formal request that the Board unseal the non-public minutes of February 22, 2013.

7. Old Business

Fire Chief - Selectperson Jarvis suggested March 18, 2013 for a work session with the fire chief. Chair Bickford said Chief Varney had requested a non-public session this evening.

8. Approval of Minutes

Motion by Chair Bickford to approve the minutes of January 3, 2013, as amended; second by Selectperson Jarvis. Selectman Kratovil abstained. 2-0.
Motion by Selectman Kratovil to approve the minutes of January 7, 2013, as amended; second by Selectperson Jarvis. 3-0.

Motion by Selectman Kratovil to approve the minutes of January 14, 2013, as amended; second by Selectperson Jarvis. 3-0.

Motion by Chair Bickford to approve the minutes of February 4, 2013, as amended; second by Selectperson Jarvis. 3-0.

Motion by Selectman Kratovil to approve the minutes of February 22, 2013, as amended; second by Selectperson Jarvis. 3-0.

9. Any Other Business

Taxes - Chair Bickford indicated the school tax has increased 57 cents and it looked as though the county would increase 2.46 percent.

Volunteers - Selectperson Jarvis asked TA Bourgeois to track down those volunteers whose terms will be up.

10. Schedule Next Meeting

The Board's next meeting is March 18, 2013 at 1:00 p.m. at the fire station community room.

11. Town Survey

Paul Perry told the Board the results of the survey will be out before or on Monday. He said he wanted to send PDFs to the Board, and needed their email addresses. Any emails directed to Selectman Kratovil are to go to TA Bourgeois.

Mr. Perry said the Board's investment in letting him speak with Town Counsel regarding an issue that came up during survey data collection, was well spent. He said there would be quantitative analysis of the survey with bar charts and a qualitative analysis, reviewing the comments made. He suggested a committee of himself, Selectperson Jarvis, and TA Bourgeois be established to review the data and recommend direction to the Board on points covered in the survey.

Motion by Selectperson Jarvis to establish a committee made up of the Town Administrator, Selectperson Jarvis and citizen Paul Perry to review the town survey results; second by Chair Bickford. 3-0.

Mr. Perry requested a non-public session regarding a specific town employee.

12. Non-public Session

Motion by Selectman Kratovil at 8:40 p.m. to enter nonpublic session under RSA 91-A:3 II (c); second by Chair Bickford. A roll call vote was taken: Bickford – aye, Jarvis – aye, Kratovil – aye.

Respectfully submitted,
Cathy L. Allyn

The Board spoke with resident Paul Perry in regards to the Town survey. Some of the comments regarded town employee(s), which he needed to discuss with the Board.

Motion by Selectman Kratovil to seal the nonpublic minutes; second by Chair Bickford. Bickford-Aye, Jarvis-Opposed, Kratovil-Aye. 2-1.

Motion by Selectman Kratovil to return to public session; second by Selectperson Jarvis. 3-0.

The Board returned to public session at 9:34 P.M.

Motion by Selectman Kratovil at 9:36 P.M. to enter nonpublic session under RSA 91-A:3 II (a); second by Chair Bickford. Bickford-Aye, Jarvis-Aye, Kratovil-Aye. 3-0.

The Board met with Fire Chief Peter Varney to discuss the appointment posting of the Fire Chief position.

Motion by Selectperson Jarvis at 10:56 P.M. to return to public session; second by Chair Bickford. 3-0.

Motion by Selectperson Jarvis to authorize Fire Chief Peter Varney to pay Cameron Quigley for his training course taken last year; second by Chair Bickford. 3-0.

Fire Chief Varney stated that he didn't believe 32 hours would be need for the Deputy Chief position. He told the Board that computer programs have made it much easier to log data and that less administrative time is needed.

Adjournment

Motion by Selectman Kratovil to adjourn; second by Chair Bickford. 3-0.

Meeting adjourned at 11:05 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeremy Bourgeois

An electronic record of the meeting is on file with the Office of Town Clerk, and some meetings can be viewed on the Town's web site on demand.