

**NEW DURHAM BOARD OF SELECTMEN**  
**New Durham Town Hall**  
**Monday, August 4, 2014, 7:00 p.m.**

*DRAFT: These minutes are strictly a draft copy and are awaiting amendment or approval at a subsequent, duly noticed public meeting. Amendments to these minutes will be noted in the minutes of said meeting. The draft will be posted on the website as a draft copy for public informational use only.*

**Present:**

Chairman David Swenson  
Selectman David Bickford  
Selectman Theresa Jarvis

**Also Present:**

Jeremy Bourgeois, Town Administrator  
Corey Mork, Videographer  
Jennifer Riel, Minute Taker  
Laura Zuzgo, Welfare Clerk  
Reggie Meattley, Police Department  
Elizabeth Cantrall, Resident/Reporter from *The Baysider*  
Gregory Anthes, Resident

**Call To Order**

Chair Swenson called the meeting to order at 7:00p.m.

**Appointments/Announcements**

**Welfare Clerk – Comstar Ambulance Service Bills**

Laura Zuzgo, Welfare Clerk, stated that regarding the Comstar Ambulance reconciliation, she sat down with Town Administrator Bourgeois to go over the outstanding bills and past due balances. She stated collection letters have been mailed via certified mail and sent to individuals who have addresses she was able to obtain.

Ms. Zuzgo stated one bill has been paid off, she has received calls saying the individuals will be in contact with Comstar, and others have indicated other responses. She stated there were some that she did not receive a response back from, and the letters were also not returned through the mail. Ms. Zuzgo stated a few individuals are welfare recipients or have just recently paid off other debts to the Town and she recommends writing off those bills. A spreadsheet summary was distributed and reviewed by the Board of Selectmen.

Chair Swenson clarified Ms. Zuzgo has looked at the list recently and the steps taken so far are consistent with the guidelines established six months ago by the Board of Selectmen.

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Selectman Jarvis stated she agrees with most of Ms. Zuzgo's recommendations however there are a few she would like more information on. She would also like the Board of Selectmen communicate to the Fire Chief to be sure to have correct addresses for the services going forward. Ms. Zuzgo suggested obtaining both physical and mailing addresses as well. Selectman Jarvis asked Town Administrator Bourgeois to look into the few individuals who may be members of the Fire Department to check their status at the time of the service.

Selectman Bickford asked Ms. Zuzgo where they are at in the steps of the policy. Ms. Zuzgo explained she sat down with Town Administrator Bourgeois, collection letters were mailed to the individuals with outstanding balances and she stated the Board of Selectmen now needs to make a final decision on how the balances are collected or written off. She clarified some bills have been resolved but some of them do not have any mailing addresses that can be found. Some individuals have since deceased and Selectman Jarvis stated there is nothing specific in the policy addressing collection from an estate.

Selectman Jarvis asked if the Town can put a lien on the property for those individuals who are residents or property owners. Ms. Zuzgo replied she will look into it.

Selectman Jarvis suggested they review the list and come back to Ms. Zuzgo with any questions.

Selectman Bickford asked for explanation on the collections option. Ms. Zuzgo stated a bill would be sent to a collections agency but she is not sure what the percentages are the Town would receive. Ms. Zuzgo noted all the individuals she doesn't have a current address for and has been unable to find or get more information for. She stated the thing she can do now is send a letter certified with return receipt, however that would be an additional expense.

Chair Swenson explained when a patient calls for an ambulance, the ambulance responds and Comstar is the billing service for New Durham Fire Department ambulance. He clarified that when it comes to a write-off, it is written off as a Town expense by the Town.

Gregory Anthes, resident, asked what the total was being considered to be written off. Ms. Zuzgo stated she can't determine that as each case is different. It was explained some calls are charged around \$100 but some up are up to \$3,000.

Selectman Jarvis explained when a call comes in for service, a form is filled out which includes a line for where the incident occurred and separate line for the billing address. All these calls were initiated via 911 calls. Chair Swenson noted the name and address cannot be available to the public due to HIPAA and would be kept in the confidential Town records.

Chair Swenson stated the appropriate process may be for the Board of Selectmen to go through each line and have Ms. Zuzgo compile the recommendations. He stated discussion of the list at that point would be done in non-public. Chair Swenson asked Town Administrator Bourgeois to add this discussion to the next Board of Selectmen meeting.

### **Welfare Reminders**

Ms. Zuzgo stated she has sent out the annual welfare reminders and distributed a spreadsheet outlining the individual cases (names excluded). She stated it listed the dollar amount owed, the last date assistance was received, the date the letter was sent, and indicated whether a response was received. Ms. Zuzgo stated a few were clients who were helped by the Town to move to another community, and that money will not be collected as it was beneficial to both the client and the Town to help them move. These she recommended writing off.

Ms. Zuzgo stated there are some cases on which liens have been placed on their properties. She stated they cannot go after the family if the client is deceased and the only time when the lien may be collected is if the property is sold. However, welfare liens are not a high priority and are not always paid.

Selectman Jarvis asked if they can place liens on property. Ms. Zuzgo stated she would have to look into it and explained the process when properties are foreclosed or sold. She stated in many cases the liens are already null and void but she needs approval to go ahead and discharge the liens.

Ms. Zuzgo stated she heard about possible State legislation regarding welfare liens. They are considered equivalent to a tax lien as it stands now, but are not a high-priority lien.

Chair Swenson stated that for public information, there is roughly \$27,000 that Ms. Zuzgo is asking to have written off.

Selectman Jarvis stated that for public information, the total unpaid balances for services provided by the Town to this point is approximately \$118,902 and goes back to 1990.

Mr. Anthes, asked how the process in New Hampshire works as far as property liens. Ms. Zuzgo replied that it depends on the type of lien. She stated tax liens must be paid off before the property can be sold but other liens (including welfare liens) are at the discretion of the company financing the sale or the title company. Chair Swenson asked Town Administrator Bourgeois to check whether these payments are recorded as receivables.

Selectman Bickford stated it seems appropriate to write-off the liens on the Town owned properties. Chair Swenson stated he wants to be sure to appropriately record in the Town books, any transactions in order to show how the Town obtained the deed.

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Ms. Zuzgo noted they cannot demand payment for welfare assistance, and the Town has no power to collect many of these. It was clarified there is a time limit and if the Town doesn't place a lien within six years, no further action can be taken.

Selectman Jarvis stated she concurs with Ms. Zuzgo's suggestions for write-offs, which would come to approximately \$27,600. She stated her reasons are because the Town owns some properties, the individuals are homeless, homes were foreclosed, or there is no current address. She stated she doesn't necessarily want to write these all off but some of the individuals cannot be found and asked how much is going to be spent trying to find them. Ms. Zuzgo stated she could utilize online people searches but isn't sure how effective those would be.

Selectman Bickford stated there is a difference between pursuing and writing-off. He stated he doesn't understand why there is a problem with keeping a ledger of the money owed to the Town. He stated in his experience, some people do come back. He doesn't want to necessarily actively pursue the outstanding bills but just keep a list. Ms. Zuzgo stated she will need to check the RSA requirements regarding time constraints on collections.

Chair Swenson stated he would like Town Administrator Bourgeois to bring back information on: a) how payments are recorded b) the appropriate process of when write-offs are done and how liens remain in place and c) for the Town owned properties, make sure the amount is not negated in the records. Chair Swenson stated he doesn't want to write-off any properties until it is clear how it is recorded.

Rudy Rosiello, resident, stated that from a business point of view, auditors would look at the receivables and how the aging is handled. He stated there are regulations for accurately reporting the financial statements. Chair Swenson agreed and stated that is why he wants to understand the accounting process for this.

Mr. Anthes stated his opinion is that if they keep these on the books, it will send a strong message that people can't just come to the Town for help. Ms. Zuzgo clarified that it doesn't matter if someone has an outstanding balance, she can never turn them away if they meet the welfare guidelines.

**Public Input**

Rudy Rosiello, resident, stated at a prior Board of Selectmen meeting, Selectman Bickford indicated he had power of attorney for an individual who was suing the Town. He asked if Selectman Bickford saw this as a conflict of interest. Selectman Bickford did not reply.

Mr. Rosiello stated that when going over budgets and looking at staffing, the Board of Selectmen have talked about many different options. He asked if the Town is being viewed as manufacturing a product or does it provide a service. Mr. Rosiello stated it is his opinion that the Town provides a service and explained the difference between a business providing a service versus manufacturing.

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Mr. Rosiello stated the police department provides a critical service to the Town and he doesn't agree with "cherry-picking" the service. Mr. Rosiello stated he believes that while statistics and data have a place in the decision-making process, without structure it is meaningless and a considerable waste of Town money. He outlined the guidelines and regulations that need to be followed with call logs in order to bring quantitative data. Mr. Rosiello stated that in his experience, presence is the best defense against theft and crime. It keeps employees and customers honest.

Mr. Rosiello stated Canine Officer Fred is highly skilled and trained, and he does a tremendous job. Just his presence is a crime deterrent.

Gregory Anthes, resident, asked the status of promotions in the Fire Department. Chair Swenson replied promotion interviews were conducted on July 30 and on August 1 the Board of Selectmen met to review the results. Decisions were made and announced at that point. The minutes of those meetings will be available shortly.

Mr. Anthes asked if there is a selectmen's policy on promotions. Chair Swenson replied there is a promotion policy for the Town and to the best of his knowledge, they were followed. He stated there are still some things to be completed before the promotions are official. Mr. Anthes asked how many individuals were promoted. Chair Swenson replied four were officially promoted.

Mr. Anthes asked what merit the promotions were based on. Chair Swenson replied they were made on the recommendations of the Interim Fire Chief. Mr. Anthes asked if the Interim Fire Chief was under contract at the time of the promotions. Chair Swenson replied he was, as was addressed at the last meeting.

Mr. Anthes asked what the status is of the investigation by the State. Chair Swenson stated he has no additional information. Selectman Jarvis stated that based on her experience, the timeline for an investigation has expired and stated her only conclusion can be that there was nothing further to investigate.

Chair Swenson stated there is nothing to respond to and Town Administrator Bourgeois confirmed he has not heard anything from the State regarding an investigation, which was labeled as "fact-finding". Mr. Anthes clarified that nothing has been heard regarding the fact-finding. Chair Swenson replied nothing official has been received to his knowledge.

Chair Swenson explained there is a probation period of time with the promotions, and in the event that something should come up from an investigation, the Board of Selectmen can take action.

Mr. Anthes asked what the financial status is of the lawsuit. Chair Swenson replied he is not aware of any additional invoices received since the last one in July that was approximately \$3,000. It was noted the summary judgment is scheduled for August 27,

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2014. Mr. Anthes asked if there is an idea of what the costs will be for that. Chair Swenson replied the Town did not file the lawsuit and is only obligated to respond.

Elizabeth Cantrall, resident, and reporter for *The Baysider*, stated she covers both the New Durham town meetings as well as those of other towns. Mrs. Cantrall stated it is frustrating and embarrassing to see the infighting here. She stated the meetings are longer than any other board of selectmen meetings she attends. Mrs. Cantrall clarified she is not blaming the Board of Selectmen for the length of the meetings but it reflects on the Town as a whole and is counterproductive.

Selectman Jarvis stated she too has looked at the meetings of other communities. She noted New Durham is one of the few communities in the area that allows public input during the course of the Board of Selectmen meetings. Selectman Jarvis stated most towns prohibit any public input during the meeting, and in her time on the Board of Selectmen, they have always encouraged public input.

Mrs. Cantrall stated she looked on the Town website today regarding the reevaluation assessors, and asked if they will be coming into homes. Selectman Jarvis replied they will ask for permission to go into the home, but homeowners do not have to allow them to. She stated that is one of the reasons for the requirements in the contract that stipulates they cannot go into a home unless there is at least one individual 18 years or older present.

Selectman Bickford stated in response to Mr. Rosiello's statements, that as far as validating things, he thinks it is critically important to constantly continue to look for justification for things as technology changes that can affect personnel levels. Selectman Bickford stated that as far as having the fire chief as an at-will employee, yes, he does prefer it that way but the legislature wants it as cause. Legal counsel advised at the time to not have it that way for very long. Selectman Bickford stated at the time if they did do something negative by not appointing a chief, they would not have anyone to replace him. No one came along until it was at a higher cost. Selectman Bickford stated he is in favor of Canine Fred and noted there is also another police dog in Town that is available if necessary, however, most days he is working in Middleton.

**Agenda Review**

Selectman Jarvis asked to add under New Business: security at Town Hall; location of the Financial Officer; Town Hall coverage on Wednesdays; and an update from the Town Administrator regarding who is taking over the assessing duties done by the previous Financial Officer including current use, timber tax, etc.

Selectman Bickford asked to discuss under Old Business: the hiring policy; appointment applications; and under New Business part time police officers pay.

Chair Swenson would like to add under New Business: follow-up for the Lions Pride Camp road and follow-up on the noise complaint.

**Department Reports/Issues**

No department heads present.

Selectman Bickford stated he checked out the area of 5 Beavermill Road where a gully was put in by the Town. A resident in the area voiced concerns that it doesn't work. Selectman Bickford stated he went there recently during a heavy rain and it turns out she was correct. The water goes down the side of the road and will eventually wash it out. Chair Swenson asked Town Administrator Bourgeois to have the Road Agent take a look at it.

**Town Administrator's Report**

Town Administrator Bourgeois stated he clarified with CAI Technologies that the contract amount for the GIS Map System is the annual amount. He put in a request for an updated contract, has not received that yet but contacted them today. The contract for the GIS Map System contract with CAI Technologies was signed by the Board of Selectmen.

Town Administrator Bourgeois stated the assessing duties have continued as of the last update and at this point in time he doesn't see a need to change that unless the Board of Selectmen does. Selectman Jarvis stated the last Financial Officer handled the timber tax duties and she wants to make sure that someone is designated as being responsible for that income to the Town.

Selectman Jarvis stated that both the Land Use Assistant and Welfare Officer are off on Wednesdays, leaving only three people available at Town Hall. She suggested Town Administrator Bourgeois speak with the individuals to see what could be changed to have four people instead of three available in the Town offices on Wednesdays.

Selectman Jarvis stated that in 2010, Municipal Resources, Inc. came in and looked at the financial activities. At that time Municipal Resources, Inc. suggested the Financial Officer be moved to the second floor due to constant interruptions. She stated that because the Financial Officer at the time worked well with the Town Clerk/Tax Collector, they did not make any changes. However, with a new Financial Officer coming in the near future, she asked if the Board of Selectmen wanted to follow up with the 2010 recommendations and move the Financial Officer/Benefits Administrator upstairs and move the Land Use Assistant down to the first floor where the files she uses are already located. The concerns by Municipal Resources, Inc. were regarding the interruptions to the Financial Officer when doing a variety of different tasks and decreasing the potential for errors. It was agreed to have Town Administrator Bourgeois check the comments and recommendations from Municipal Resources, Inc. and address the issue.

**Old Business**

**IT Policy**

Chair Swenson suggested postponing discussion in order to have time to review the comments, as the recommendations from legal counsel were received late today.

**Audit Note #19**

Town Administrator Bourgeois stated he has been working on this and has contacted an actuary but is still in the process of collecting the information needed. He expects to have everything by the next Board of Selectmen meeting for discussion.

### **Tax Deeded Properties Status**

Chair Swenson stated Ms. Ingham, Town Clerk/Tax Collector is still in the process of generating additional information. He stated she has made available some information including tax card information and suggested the Board of Selectmen review those for discussion at the next meeting. Chair Swenson clarified Town Administrator Bourgeois has communicated with both the Planning Board and Conservation Commission to review the listing of properties. The Land Use Assistant has provided a listing to the Planning Board members for discussion at their next meeting. Chair Swenson stated he expects comments back from the boards by the next Board of Selectmen meeting.

### **Lions Pride Camp Follow-up**

Chair Swenson gave a brief background on a request for the Town to look at the road. He stated a response has been received from both the Fire Chief and Road Agent. Both reviews confirm the road is passable. There is one exception noted by the Road Agent but it is not part of Lions Camp Road.

Selectman Jarvis stated that while she can sympathize with the residents of the Merrymeeting Lake Eastern Shores Association as they have been picking up the costs of maintaining the private road, it is a civil issue. She stated that while there may be some work that needs to be done, based on the comments from the department heads, she doesn't see a role for the Town. Selectman Bickford and Chair Swenson concurred.

Chair Swenson asked Town Administrator Bourgeois to draft a response to the individual summarizing the inspections by the department heads and the end result of this discussion.

### **Noise Complaint Follow-up**

Town Administrator Bourgeois distributed a copy of the RSA regarding shooting ranges and stated he finalized a letter of response to the individual to be sent tomorrow.

Selectman Jarvis stated that for public information, the RSA prohibits the Town from curtailing the Farmington Fish and Game Club for noise as it preexists legislation, etc.

### **New Business**

#### **Town Hall Copier Lease**

Town Administrator Bourgeois stated the current copier lease was signed in 2010 for forty-eight months. He noted it was an evergreen contract which he terminated in March 2014. Town Administrator Bourgeois stated he has spoken with a couple different companies to gather quotes for a new lease. The quotes were reviewed and discussed. The deadline for a contract is in about three weeks.

Town Administrator Bourgeois stated his recommendation is to go with Seacoast Business Machines, which will be a similar machine to the current model. They come



highly recommended. He stated he would work with them to get a higher image number as he believes they will surpass the quoted numbers. It was agreed by consensus to have Town Administrator Bourgeois move forward on this with negotiating the proposals.

### **NH DOT – Curve Signing Project**

Chair Swenson stated a letter has been received from New Hampshire Department of Transportation indicating a proposal for next year regarding signage improvements along specified State roads including Route 11, Merrymeeting Road, Depot Road and Main Street. He stated there is no cost to the Town but the State is requesting written support from the Town. Selectman Jarvis suggested Town Administrator Bourgeois draft a letter of written support.

Town Administrator Bourgeois indicated he has spoken with the Road Agent and he supports the signage improvements. Town Administrator Bourgeois stated they would be having additional discussion to address improving signage in Town as well.

Selectman Jarvis suggested Town Administrator Bourgeois sign the letter to the State on behalf of the Board of Selectmen. It was agreed by consensus to have Town Administrator Bourgeois sign the letter.

### **Hiring Policy**

Selectman Bickford stated that in the hiring policy, it states internal postings are to be posted for five days before posting externally. He suggested removing that and just sending it out to everyone at the same time, posting both internally and externally concurrently. Selectman Jarvis and Chair Swenson concurred.

**Selectman Jarvis made a motion to change the current hiring and current promotion and transfer policies so internal and external postings are posted simultaneously. Selectman Bickford seconded the motion. Motion passed, 3-0.**

### **Appointment Application**

Selectman Bickford stated that in the future he would like to be able to look at the appointments to review ahead of time, for any given board. He clarified this includes reappointments.

Chair Swenson agreed with having the information available to review however he doesn't believe incumbents should be required to fill out applications. Selectman Bickford stated he doesn't think Town Administrator Bourgeois should have to track people down and an application demonstrates sincerity of interest by the individual.

Selectman Jarvis stated she disagrees and currently Town Administrator Bourgeois follows up with the sitting individuals via email and she doesn't see a need to create additional applications. She sees it as throwing government bureaucracy and paperwork at a situation that is not broken.

Selectman Bickford asked how long applications are kept on file. It was discussed and determined to be unknown. Selectman Jarvis noted there are individuals who have been on a board or commission since before applications were even in existence.

Selectman Bickford stated there needs to be a formal process to at least know where someone lives and to show an individual's interest being on a particular board or commission.

Chair Swenson reiterated the Board of Selectmen has an obligation to consider all individuals that are interested in serving in the Town but how that information is being conveyed is the issue. He stated he is interested in having Town Administrator Bourgeois contact New Hampshire Municipal Association and other communities to see what their processes are relative to this issue. Chair Swenson stated it is important to fairly allow all individuals who are interested an opportunity. Selectman Jarvis stated that so often there are openings on the boards and they can't get regular members, never mind alternates, and she doesn't want to put bureaucracy in the way of people who simply want to serve their town.

#### **Part-Time Police Officer Pay**

Selectman Bickford stated this is something he wants to look into and thinks they should be paid more. He stated he has suggested this in the past but the Police Chief did not want to go forward with it. Selectman Bickford stated benefits are a very high cost, particularly with police officers, and thinks that part time employees should be paid more to compensate for the lack of benefits. Selectman Bickford stated it has been discussed in other departments and it was agreed to be reasonable. He stated he sees it as something that holds back the department from getting part timers and he would like to add it to a future agenda for discussion.

Selectman Jarvis stated she is not opposed to increasing the part time officer salaries and thinks they need to also look at the pay of the full time officers. She stated that in the past, the Police Chief's concerns were with raising the part time salaries too high and creating management and leadership issues within the department.

Chair Swenson stated that when an employee is paid, what they often times don't see is the costs of the benefits. He stated it is important to communicate to the employees, what the total costs are to the Town. He stated he is not opposed to a larger pool of part time officers, but wants to ensure it is well managed to be fair to all employees.

Selectman Bickford stated he would like to get through the discussion before working on the budget. Chair Swenson stated he would like additional information on the part time pay market from Municipal Resources, Inc., surveys of surrounding towns and the Sherriff's Departments, etc.

Selectman Jarvis stated she would like to get new data on what is being paid to full time officers. She stated the last time this was looked at was in 2008. Selectman Jarvis stated she has the Local Government Center 2012 Salary review and will get that information to

Town Administrator Bourgeois. Selectman Jarvis noted that some communities do not even hire part time police officers.

### **Security at Town Hall**

Selectman Jarvis stated that up until this past Saturday, when the Town Clerk/Tax Collector was present on Saturday mornings, the building inspector was also present. She stated that going forward the individual is concerned about being in the building on their own with no one else is in the building. Selectman Jarvis stated they need to address how they are going to provide for the physical safety as well as emotional well-being of employees.

Chair Swenson stated he would like Selectman Jarvis and the Police Chief along with a couple of the Town Hall employees who may be impacted by the hours of when the building is open, to discuss some options and develop a proposal.

Mr. Rosiello stated he would like the Board of Selectmen to also remember their responsibility to protecting the citizens as well.

Mr. Anthes clarified that the Town Hall is not a gun-free zone. Chair Swenson confirmed that is correct. Mr. Anthes asked about the option of auxiliary police officers i.e. people from Town with military or police experience who are willing to be present voluntarily during the open hours on Saturday mornings. Chair Swenson replied that is not something that has been done and suggested Mr. Anthes discuss it with Police Chief Bernier. Mr. Anthes stated he thinks it is good that the Board of Selectmen is moving in the direction of doing what it takes to protect the Town employees. Chair Swenson stated the timing is good for this with budget season coming.

Chair Swenson stated if possible, he would like some proposals for the next Board of Selectmen meeting.

### **Code Enforcement/Building Inspector Laptop**

Selectman Bickford asked what had been determined to done with Mr. Capello's computer. Chair Swenson replied he wants to wait until there is a new Code Enforcement/Building Inspector to go over what is on the computer for software, files, etc. Town Administrator Bourgeois stated the new Code Enforcement/Building Inspector is currently using the laptop and wants to give him some time to see what is needed going forward.

### **Reserve Levels**

Chair Swenson stated this has been discussed extensively over the last eighteen months and he is looking for what the Board of Selectmen would like to establish as a reserve level. He stated he would like to have this established before budget season.

Selectman Jarvis stated she has always felt they should have a reserve level between 9 and 10% of total liability available in that particular fund. She stated that any monies above that level from the unexpended fund balance should be utilized to pay for the cost

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of items on the Warrant. This has been done the last few years, while maintaining what she feels is an acceptable level in the bank account.

Selectman Bickford stated he wants to be in the area of 8% or less.

Chair Swenson stated he thinks they should be in the 7 to 8% range. He stated he is in favor of using the money for the costs of warrant items but is also in favor of further reducing the tax rate. He stated he would like to have the fund balance as of June 30, 2014 available for the next Board of Selectmen meeting. Selectman Jarvis noted when DRA came in November 2013, there was a balance of \$980,000 and by the end of the year, the amount had risen to \$1,091,000.

Selectman Jarvis stated she has a copy of the last version of the fund reserve policy and will get that to Town Administrator Bourgeois to distribute to the Board of Selectmen for review. She noted everything had been approved in the policy except for the percentage.

Mr. Anthes thanked the Board of Selectmen for working to reduce the tax rate.

Mr. Rosiello suggested the Board of Selectmen take into consideration keeping the tax rate reduction sustainable.

Selectman Jarvis stated there was discussion earlier in the year about using some of the impact fee money to help reduce the school tax rate and asked Town Administrator Bourgeois to get the information for the next meeting. She noted the school tax rate was reduced by \$0.05 last year. Chair Swenson concurred and stated that is a permissible use for the impact fees but it will depend on what the school sets for their rates.

Mrs. Cantrall stated that while considering selling her house this summer, she found that New Durham's tax rate was the lowest for Strafford County but are much higher than Carroll and Belknap counties. She asked what is specifically the reason for this. Chair Swenson referred her to look at her tax bill which is broken down into 4 categories including the Town rate, which is controlled by the Board of Selectmen. The Board of Selectmen has no input on the school rate nor the county and state portions.

Selectman Bickford stated that when comparing just the Town portion, they are higher than others. Chair Swenson stated that when he mentions the largest tax rate reduction in over a decade, that is only in reference to the Town portion of the tax rate. He stated that unfortunately can be offset by any increases the state, county or school may have.

Mrs. Cantrall stated there are towns that use the same schools as New Durham, yet they don't have nearly the same taxes. Selectman Bickford replied towns like Alton and Wolfeboro have a tremendous amount of waterfront which brings the property values up and those places are empty most of the year without children in the school system. He stated in Rochester there are a lot of mobile home parks which impacted their schools and they had to bring in a lot of business to raise revenues.

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Mrs. Cantrall asked what needs to be done to change things in Town. Selectman Jarvis stated every year, in getting ready for Town Meeting, the school sends out an informational flyer and one thing that is listed is the tax rate in each of the communities based on the school's rate. She stated there are other communities that pay more or less but it comes down to the taxable properties in town. Selectman Bickford stated it is an old tax problem in New Hampshire and explained that in some states incomes are taxed but that is a volatile situation with being based on the economy. He stated property taxes are relatively stable.

Mrs. Cantrall stated it seems New Durham is not very business friendly. Chair Swenson replied: a) a new business was recently approved to come in on Route 11, b) he is doing everything he can to improve the image of the Town to businesses and c) when looking at tax rates, you have to look at the individual line items.

Chair Swenson reiterated the Town only has authority to manage the Town portion of the rate and suggested residents have a responsibility to put pressure on the schools to make sure they are appropriately managed.

Selectman Bickford stated that in regards to being business-friendly, the State highway is limited access and there are some geographic restrictions along with that. He explained the different opportunities other towns have with regards to access on State roads.

Mr. Anthes indicated there is a group of citizens working to see what they can do to reduce the school tax burden.

**Approval of Minutes**

July 7, 2014 – Non-Public Meeting: **Selectman Jarvis made a motion to approve as presented. Selectman Bickford seconded the motion.** Discussion: Selectman Bickford stated he questioned the wording of the nominations. **Selectman Jarvis rescinded her motion.** Edits were made. **Selectman Bickford made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Selectman Jarvis seconded the motion. Motion passed, 3-0.**

July 28, 2014 – Non-Public Meeting: Edits were made to the sealed portion of the minutes. Chair Swenson stated final approval of the minutes will come when more information has been received.

July 28, 2014 – Public Meeting: Edits were made. **Selectman Jarvis made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Selectman Bickford seconded the motion. Motion passed, 3-0.**

**Future Meetings**

SB2 Meeting with Budget Committee – Wednesday, August 6, 2014, 7:00p.m. at the Library.

Board of Selectmen – Monday, August 18, 2014, 1:00p.m. at the Fire Department Community Room.

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**Adjourn**

**Selectman Jarvis made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Selectman Bickford seconded the motion. Motion passed 3-0. The meeting was adjourned at 10:35p.m.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer Riel, Minute Taker