

NEW DURHAM BOARD OF SELECTMEN
New Durham Town Hall
April 16, 2015, 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:

Chair David Bickford
Selectman David Swenson
Selectman Gregory Anthes

Also Present:

Jeremy Bourgeois, Town Administrator
Corky Mork, Videographer
Peter Varney, Fire Chief
Rudy Rosiello, Resident
Kevin Ruel, Resident
Tony Bonanno, Resident

Call to Order

Chair Bickford called the meeting to order at 7:00p.m. Chair Bickford stated the main purpose of this meeting is to outline the Board of Selectmen Goals for 2015.

Copies of the *2014 Board of Selectmen Goals* were distributed and reviewed.

Selectman Swenson gave a brief summary of the eleven goals along with the achievements and milestones. *See attached.*

Other

Fire Chief Peter Varney stated he has looked over the plans of the Fire Department renovation in the office area. He stated he hasn't found a layout for the fire detectors but will be contacting Northeast Security. Fire Chief Varney stated he has also rearranged how some of the doors open in order to meet fire and building codes.

Fire Chief Varney stated the other big issue is the floor was put down with "sleepers" or joists that were placed on the concrete as a vapor barrier but without insulation. He is concerned with mold developing there as it is below grade. Fire Chief Varney stated he would be reviewing this with the Building Inspector. He stated they should be able to correct the problem. It was clarified this was not in the original proposal.

Fire Chief Varney stated there is conflict between rules and regulations with the Town's payroll policy, SOGs and RSAs. A draft of rules and regulations was distributed for review.

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Selectman Swenson stated he has also reviewed the Town policies, SOGs and RSAs and extracted several of the misalignments. He stated he put the information into a table that can be reviewed. It was agreed to discuss further at workshop at a later date.

Fire Chief Varney stated they did a gas inspection last week and while this is a responsibility of the Fire Department, he had previously given the task over to the Building Inspector because they charge a fee for it. Now the Fire Department is back to doing the inspections. Chair Bickford asked if they would be charging a fee. Fire Chief Varney replied he doesn't have a fee and he needs to discuss it with Town Administrator Bourgeois. He stated most towns do charge. It was agreed to discuss this with Laura Zuzgo and the Town Clerk.

Fire Chief Varney distributed an updated roster/certification list. Selectman Swenson asked about the payscales. Fire Chief Varney replied they are the same as they were in 2010. It was clarified all raises are based on certifications. Selectman Swenson advised Fire Chief Varney to bring any certificates for employees that are not reflected in the current pay levels to the next discussion.

Selectman Anthes commended Fire Chief Varney on the speed of the Fire Department's response to his first fire call since being back. It was noted the house was saved and the residents and their pets were able to move back in.

Board of Selectmen Goals

Selectman Anthes stated his first goal would be to revise the Personnel Policy regarding compensation and benefits. He stated he is going to start working on that with some other people and after it has been revised he will bring it back to the Board of Selectmen for review and approval.

Selectman Anthes stated he also wants to reduce and eliminate contracts for employees.

Chair Bickford stated he also wants to bring the Parks and Recreation Commission back under the direct control of the Board of Selectmen. He stated he is concerned about the spending that is going on over there as they seem to be running out of money. Chair Bickford stated it should be up to the Board of Selectmen if the Commission is going to oversee childcare, renting the ball field, etc. Chair Bickford noted the Commission bylaws require that if someone wants to be a commissioner, they go to the Commission and then the Commission makes a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen. He stated the Commission does not have that authority and it is the duty of the Board of Selectmen to know what is going on.

Selectman Anthes stated he also wants to focus on finding more tax redemptions for residents. He stated if they do the revisions regarding compensation and benefits correctly, they won't take anything away from employees but could still save taxpayers

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money. Selectman Anthes stated this involves eliminating certain contracts with department heads.

Selectman Anthes stated he also wants to continue working on restructuring the Police Department by hiring an Administrator. Selectman Swenson stated he was not expecting this to be made public at this point or be presented as a goal. He clarified Selectman Anthes is talking about a replacement for Katie Woods. Selectman Anthes replied the Police Administrator would be encompassing her position along with the administrative responsibilities of the police chief. He stated this is something they might want to move along with since Ms. Woods is leaving at the end of the month. Selectman Swenson stated he feels it is inappropriate to discuss at this point. Chair Bickford concurred.

Selectman Anthes stated he would also like to reduce the Highway Department personnel. He stated if they do something like that it should be done through attrition.

Selectman Anthes stated they should look into reducing the school tax rate. He noted they seem to be the highest rate of the five schools in the Wentworth school district. Selectman Swenson noted the school's budget is 1 ¾ to 2 times that of the Town's operating budget.

Tony Bonanno, resident, stated he has done an analysis of what it costs per student for the towns in the regional schools. He stated they are paying less per student.

Rudy Rosiello, resident, stated there has been a steady increase of the school tax rate.

Chair Bickford stated the Town voted to enter into a 30-year bond 5 years ago and those are fixed costs.

Mr. Bonanno stated he has looked at other towns to see what can be done to save money for New Durham taxpayers. He stated it starts with the Highway and Police departments because between those two they make up almost 50% of the total Town tax. Mr. Bonanno stated the goal is to get the same services for less money. He stated there are two ways of incorporating best practices. One is to go to the department head with the budget and tell them they need to reduce the total operating budget by 20% and leaving it up to the department head how it is done. Selectman Swenson suggested the discussion of "how to" should be reserved for a later date.

Mr. Bonanno distributed a copy of Gilmanston's model and outlined the main difference in the Highway Department being that they only have four full time employees and contract five plow trucks. He stated New Durham's per road mile cost is \$17,000 and in Gilmanston it is less than \$10,000. Mr. Bonanno stated it could save the Town \$500,000.

Selectman Swenson stated he wants to keep the discussion to goals.

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Mr. Bonanno stated he has also done a comparison of the Police Department with other towns. He noted Gilmanton and Strafford have one officer for 800 people and New Durham has one officer for less than 500 and suggested they could get away with three full time officers. Selectman Swenson reiterated tonight's discussion is more for goal-setting.

Mr. Bonanno stated it irritates him they have a grader for maintaining eleven miles of gravel roads and suggested paving the eleven miles to save money. He distributed a cost analysis he developed, noting there are a lot of benefits to having paved roads. Mr. Bonanno stated Road Agent Clarke indicated it costs \$6,000 more per mile per year to maintain gravel roads than paved roads.

Mr. Bonanno stated that administratively, they also have a lot more people in the Town Hall and suggested a goal of reducing the number of employees by 15 to 20%. He stated a lot of work that is done, no body cares about or uses.

Mr. Rosiello stated he knows it is cheaper to maintain paved roads versus gravel but there are also some rules and regulations in terms of widths of roads. Chair Bickford stated there are regulations on building roads but they don't necessarily have to follow them. Selectman Swenson stated there is a difference between existing and new roads and they don't have enough information at this point. He also pointed out that the cost analysis does not take into account the cost of paving and Mr. Bonanno did not calculate the payback analysis. Mr. Rosiello stated it is a good goal but they need to look at the initial costs and time it takes to payback. Chair Bickford stated again that they aren't held to regulations with building roads but if they are going to stick with the 25 mph roads they wouldn't need to widen them.

Selectman Swenson stated one of his goals is to continue actively pursuing the sale of properties taken by the Town due to nonpayment of taxes and complete the auction process. Chair Bickford stated he is not interested in pursuing the sales of the Copple Crown Village District at this time. Selectman Anthes stated he has gone through all the pieces of property and discussed this again with the district commissioners and it is their opinion not to sell. He stated he also has a list of properties he thinks selling would cause more harm than good. Selectman Anthes stated of all the properties that were offered to abutters, only one purchased the property. Selectman Swenson clarified that the original goal was to get the properties back on the tax rolls. If the Town owns the property, they aren't generating tax revenues. Selectman Swenson stated the process was intended to be fair to all abutters. Selectman Anthes stated he agrees they have an obligation to sell the properties but they also have to maintain the property values of the residents of Copple Crown district. He stated he has talked with many residents there and they are worried the Town is going to "dump" the properties. Chair Bickford stated he owns a lot of property up there and understands where property owners are coming from. Selectman Swenson stated that at the last meeting of the Planning Board, they stand behind their original recommendations on the properties.

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Mr. Rosiello stated the Planning Board's meeting minutes indicate they feel it would be appropriate to sell parcels in order to increase conformance of the lots to zoning. He stated the Planning Board may not want to build there but the State did grandfather it there and if a legal septic can be installed on a lot, it can be built on.

There was further discussion on the Copple Crown Village District lots and whether pursuing auction of them was an agreeable goal.

Selectman Swenson stated he also has the goal of developing employee and asset security processes consistent with the Town's needs.

Chair Bickford stated he is in favor of going back over and further reviewing policies and ordinances. He stated he also agrees with Selectman Swenson that they need to review the amount of money the Town gets from TTL work. Chair Bickford stated he would like to specifically review the weather closing policy. He stated he also wants to look into contracting out the payroll duties.

Specific wording of the goals were reviewed and discussed.

Chair Bickford stated that in regards to the Voter Guide, he wants to communicate with the public better and wants the budget as it is being developed to be available online. Mr. Rosiello stated that is good for transparency but they need to take into consideration the amount of administrative work involved with making it happen.

The costs and benefits involved with moving towards a more paperless system were discussed. It was noted there would be a lot involved to get a system up and running.

Selectman Anthes gave a statement regarding amendments to the Policy on Appointed Boards, Committees and Commissions Appointed by the Board of Selectmen. Copies were distributed and reviewed.

Chair Bickford stated he previously brought up the two week vetting part of the policy because it gives them a chance to find out who people are. Selectman Anthes stated that with his revisions to the policy, when the Board of Selectmen receive the candidate applications they first go into non-public session to discuss each individual. If the majority of the Board of Selectmen do not want to accept the individual, a letter is sent and they are not appointed. He stated this would eliminate a lot of the embarrassment they've had at the last few meetings. Selectman Swenson replied he doesn't see where there was embarrassment. Selectman Anthes stated he thinks it embarrasses individuals when they are turned down. He stated that if individuals are accepted by the Board of Selectmen, they will be identified at the next public meeting and then officially appointed two weeks later. Chair Bickford stated they don't need a policy to do that now as they can always go into non-public on these issues.

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Mr. Rosiello stated that if the Board of Selectmen goes into non-public regarding a resident/non-employee, don't they have the right to be there? The Board of Selectmen can't arbitrarily go into non-public to discuss someone. Selectman Swenson agreed there is a difference between employee and non-employee. Selectman Swenson suggested asking Town Counsel what the conditions are. Mr. Rosiello stated his concern is about there being discussion of an individual who is not present. Town Administrator Bourgeois stated they have a right to know even if they aren't present and have the right to request the discussion be done in public.

It was agreed the policy would be discussed further at a future public meeting.

Selectman Swenson stated he has a major concern that in 2014 the Board of Selectmen reduced non-public sessions by 25+% and by having this policy they are increasing non-public and making the process much less transparent. He recognizes there are instances where they need to go into non-public but they shouldn't unnecessarily increase the amount of non-public sessions.

Mr. Rosiello stated that as a note of caution, the Board of Selectmen just appointed a new director of Emergency Management but towns are moving away from having people who are in charge of departments being actively involved in Emergency Management. The concept is they need to focus on their responsible area to the town. It should be an independent person who is not already involved in a department so they can have the time to work through the processes the State of New Hampshire has established for emergencies. Selectman Swenson and Chair Bickford agreed that Mr. Rosiello raised valid points.

Chair Bickford made a motion to enter non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A: 3 II (a) – the dismissal, promotion or compensation of any public employee or the disciplining of such employee; and (c)- matter which, if discussed in public would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person, other than a member of the public body itself, unless such person requests an open meeting. Selectman Swenson seconded the motion. Motion passed, 3-0.

Roll Call: Selectman Anthes, Aye; Selectman Swenson, Aye; Chair Bickford- Aye.

The Board of Selectmen entered non-public session at 8:50 P.M.

Chair Bickford made a motion to seal the minutes. Seconded by Selectman Anthes. Motion passed, 3-0.

Selectman Swenson made a motion to leave nonpublic session. Selectman Anthes seconded the motion. Motion passed, 3-0.

The Board left non-public session at 9:38 P.M.

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While in non-public session the Board of Selectmen discussed various Town positions and potential organizational opportunities.

Selectman Swenson made a motion to adjourn. Selectman Anthes seconded the motion. Motion passed 3-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer Riel, Recording Secretary