

**Dunbarton Board of Selectmen
Meeting Minutes
December 28, 2023**

A meeting of the Dunbarton Board of Selectmen (BoS) was held on Thursday, December 28, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. at the Dunbarton Town Offices.

Board members present:

Mike Kaminski, Chair
Dave Nault, Selectman
Justin Nault, Selectman

Town Officials and Others present:

Line Comeau, Town Administrator
Jon Wiggin, Fire Chief
Patrick “Woody” Bowne, Transfer Station Manager
Jeff Crosby, Road Agent

Members of the Public present:

Robert “Bob” Leonard
Brent Hale
Chandler
Robert Hayden, Standard Power

Lee Martel recorded the meeting for the benefit of citizens that were unable to attend (Linda Nickerson uploads the videos to YouTube).

Board Chair Mike Kaminski called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

OLD BUSINESS

Approve Minutes

Motion: by Justin Nault, seconded by Dave Nault to approve the regular meeting minutes of December 14, 2023 as amended.

Discussion: none.

Vote: (3-0)

Motion: by Justin Nault, seconded by Mike Kaminski to approve the (9:03 p.m.) nonpublic meeting minutes of December 14, 2023 as written.

Discussion: Mike Kaminski noted that these minutes do not need to be sealed..

Vote: (3-0)

Motion: by Dave Nault, seconded by Mike Kaminski to approve the (9:16 p.m.) nonpublic meeting minutes of December 14, 2023 as written.

Discussion: Mike Kaminski noted that these minutes do not need to be sealed.

Vote: (3-0)

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Mailbox Items

Mike Kaminski reviewed the following items of correspondence received since the last meeting:

- Review invoice to pay Tammy Bowne for box dump tarp kit. **Mike Kaminski** requested that this be paid before year end. Town Administrator **Line Comeau** said they can encumber funds to pay this invoice, but they need proper paperwork to back up the purchase. **Dave Nault** explained that Transfer Station Manager Woody Bowne did request to make the purchase for some replacement parts using a credit card in his wife's name. Dave said he will make sure documentation is submitted to support this purchase.
- Quote from Irish Electric for LED lighting upgrade at the transfer station (request from Woody Bowne for 2024 budget). **Dave Nault** suggested they pursue this through the Energy Committee as they may get a better deal. They did this for the Highway Department and the Library, and they were able to save the town a substantial amount of money.
- Agreement for enhanced turnaround signed by resident Mike Guiney. **Line Comeau** recommended that this should be recorded with the Registry of Deeds in addition to the Town Clerk.
 - ***The Board was in consensus with this recommendation.***
- Request from NHMA to write a letter of support in opposition of HB 1479.
 - ***The Board was in consensus that Chair Mike Kaminski will review the bill and sign a letter of support on behalf of the Board.***Mike Kaminski said that he will review and get back to Line Comeau within 7 working days.
- Solid waste inspection report dated 9/6/23.
- Request from attorney Shaughnessy-Allard to allow the Building Inspector to act as a witness in the trial of Kozatek v Bruzga. He has been involved with a number

of the inspections in this case. He could possibly be subpoenaed. The Board was in support of this request.

- RTK request for Woody Bowne is ready for pickup (\$11.50 due for copies).

Transfer Station 2024 Budget Proposal

Transfer Station Manager Woody Bowne presented his proposed budget for 2024. Increases were noted in salaries, subcontracted services, supplies, maintenance (anticipated maintenance on the Mack Truck and the backhoe), MSW, hazardous waste collection and NRRA dues. Total budget requested: \$350,673.

Discussion occurred regarding some areas on the property that need some paving work; he has been trying to get quotes for this, but hasn't had a lot of luck. He is in discussion with the Road Agent who will talk to the paving company he is using. Discussion occurred regarding replacement of the concrete dumpster pad for MSW.

The Board reviewed the estimates Woody presented for anticipated equipment maintenance costs and were in agreement to encumber funds for the backhoe repairs.

Discussion occurred regarding the supply purchase discussed earlier. The purchase was made with cash, and because he can't authorize expenses to be paid to himself, it was in his wife's name instead. He will make sure he gives Line Comeau the backup needed for this purchase.

Fire Department 2024 Budget Proposal

Fire Chief **Jon Wiggin** presented his proposed budget for 2024. Increases were noted in salaries, training costs, Mutual Aid, supplies and radio repair. There was a decrease in dry hydrant repair. The Board was in agreement to keep the dry hydrant repairs budget line at \$5,000. Total budget requested: \$135,078.

Discussion occurred regarding purchase of an ambulance and a fire truck. He has obtained some quotes for each. For the ambulance, they have enough money for the first quote. The second quote is higher than what they are looking to spend, but the vehicle in the cheaper quote will meet their needs.

For the fire truck, they found a suitable model for \$499,000. They are about \$100,000 short in their reserve fund for that. Discussion occurred about the best way to fund that remaining amount. Dave Nault asked Chief Wiggin to put together a detailed proposal for the Board to use during their budget deliberations.

They discussed creating a warrant article for \$499,000 (\$399,000 to come out of their fund, and the remaining amount to come from taxation or unassigned fund balance).

Public Hearing

A Public Hearing was held to discuss the adoption of an Election Ballot Counting Device.

Mike Kaminski opened the hearing at 7:55 p.m.

Mike Kaminski explained that they are looking into obtaining an Election Ballot Counting Device. The cost will be approximately \$9000. Each election will cost approximately \$500 for software and paper. They are looking at two vendors that were approved by the state.

State Rep and Dunbarton resident JR Hoell wrote a letter to the Selectboard that was read by Mike Kaminski. Representative Hoell has concerns about the machines. This is new technology not yet tested in NH. They have races in multiple districts, with a large number of candidates in some of them. He feels it would be wise to wait an election or two to see how they work in our state, and doesn't feel that their town should be the test town. He referred to the problems encountered in Windham and Bow with other machines in previous elections. He stressed the historical accuracy of hand counting ballots in Dunbarton and he urges the selectboard to vote no on any question of purchasing a machine at this time.

Dave Nault said that both their Town Clerk and Moderator feel that this is the direction they should be heading. Election day is an extremely long day for everyone involved, and the count is done at the close of Town Meeting by people that have already been working over 12 hours. He feels it is highly unlikely that they would receive the machine by the 2024 general election anyway.

Jeff Crosby of 17 Stark Highway asked about maintenance. **Mike Kaminski** said that reprogramming and calibration is performed for each election and is included in the per-election cost.

Jeff Crosby asked how much time it would really save. **Mike Kaminski** said it would save them hours. He acknowledged that there will still be some counting needed in terms of write-ins, etc.

Resident **Bob Leonard** of Holiday Shore Drive stated that he used to live in Windham and said that their experience with the machine was a nightmare, and he

feels they need to proceed with caution. The test done before the election was simply a math test. It is overall a good thing, but it's like an iceberg, you only see part of it at first, and there are a lot of other issues that you don't expect may arise once you start using them. There is still extra counting work to be done in the event of errors, malfunctions or write-ins. He is in support of staying on the sidelines and observing how other towns fare for now.

Lee Martel of Tenney Hill Road isn't advocating for the purchase of one, but people should remember that while they are cozy at home in bed that [Election] night, there are a lot of people still out there working and it's the same people every year that do it. It's important to keep an open mind about it.

Jon Wiggin asked to clarify that this machine is different than what towns have been using in the past. **Mike Kaminski** explained that these machines are different, and one is from a different company. Some towns have already ordered theirs and are getting ready to use them in upcoming elections, so this would be a good year to see how those towns fare.

Brent Hale of Black Brook Road asked who the vendors are and who would ultimately choose which vendor they go with. **Dave Nault** said that they asked their Town Clerk to look into this through her contacts at the State to get information on them to help determine which would be the best to go with.

Jeff Crosby asked why they would go with a newer model when there are already proven models that have been in use. **Mike Kaminski** said that these are the only two models currently authorized for purchase by the state.

Brent Hale asked what led them to decide to look into changing their process. **Dave Nault** answered that the state sent notification to the Town Clerk that they have approved new ballot machines and she mentioned it to **the Board**. It's something that they've briefly considered in the past. He spoke to the demands and challenges of staying late to accurately count ballots after already putting in several hours during the course of the day.

Chandler of Black Brook Road: he is more in favor of paper ballots. They've had this technology for decades now. They come out with new ones all the time that can still potentially result in errors that can be costly to the town. He would be in favor of waiting for more than one election cycle to see results. **Michael Kaminski stated that if worst come to worst, we could encumber funds based**

on the quotes received and not move forward with the purchase until we are able to see how other towns do.

Mike Kaminski closed the hearing at 8:17 p.m.

Public Hearing

A Public Hearing was held to discuss the Adoption of a Community Power Plan.

Mike Kaminski opened the hearing at 8:17 p.m.

Mike Kaminski introduced Robert Hayden of Standard Power to present information regarding the Community Power Plan which would provide residents the option for lower electricity costs and access to renewable energy sources. **Mr. Hayden** explained that they are working with multiple towns that are in different stages of the process of town discussion and implementation. Transmission and distribution still come from the current electric supplier. The only thing that changes on the bill is the supplier name.

Robert Hayden further explained that the program gives price stability to the community, provides consumer protection, allows access to different sources of energy the community may want and provides a lot of communication. The town's committee would be the ones to approve a plan and present it to the PUC (Public Utilities Commission).

Bob Leonard noted that the pricing seems to be comparable to their current supplier, so why should they go with Standard Power? **Robert Hayden** answered that is the cost for their first launch group, the second will be lower and so forth. The reason that the pricing is low at the moment is due to decreased natural gas usage and warmer weather.

Jon Wiggin said that they have a good rapport with Eversource in terms of emergency response, etc. If they stop purchasing power from them, how do they know they won't be placed lower in priority in the event of an emergency than a town that purchases directly from them? **Robert Hayden** replied that the utility companies make their revenue through transmission and distribution, not sale of power, so he wouldn't see that as making a difference in the service they receive.

Jeff Crosby asked about why the town seal is on the documentation presented. He feels that that makes a statement that there has already been agreement which he doesn't feel is accurate. **Robert Hayden** responded that he is not sure who made the decision to use the seal, but noted that the town signed a Memorandum of Understanding to move forward with exploring participation in the program.

Jeff Crosby heard that if the town agrees to go with this, then they have to switch to Dunbarton Community Power. **Mike Kaminski** stated that residents will need to opt out. **Robert Hayden** added that the existence of this program and its operation has been codified into law (RSA 53-E, enabled by HB 315) and went on to detail eligibility for the program as well as the opt out process. Residents will receive notifications about the program and may mail, call, email or visit their website to opt out.

Bob Leonard asked about the benefits of going with Standard Power because Eversource seems stable, but Standard Power seems to be gambling for power. **Mr. Hayden** explained that Eversource can purchase power only 2 times a year (they have a 3-day window to bid every 6 months). Standard Power is able to bid on power at any day of the year when prices are good, including when rates are good, so they have more flexibility in the rates they can offer.

Lee Martel shared his experience with his current third party supplier that he is very happy with. He is saving money on his electric bill, is not hassled by the company at all, and is free to leave at any time.

Line Comeau asked for an explanation of how they package towns together in groups to reach a certain volume of kilowatt hours.

Robert Hayden explained that they put towns into ‘groups’ that they approach the market with so that they have enough kilowatt hours to negotiate on their behalf.

Dave Nault pointed out that a customer could end up paying what they are paying now but have the option to choose ‘green’ power, which is important to some people.

Robert Hayden said they encourage customers with solar panels to give them a call so that they can work with them and determine suitability of their programs for their needs. **Jeff Crosby** asked where that would leave their town now that they just recently purchased a solar array. **Mike Kaminski** said that they will need to consult with Standard Power to discuss that.

Mike Kaminski asked how Mr. Hayden earns his money from this. **Mr. Hayden** stated that he earns 1/10 percent for each kilowatt hour Standard Power delivers.

Mr. Hayden said that there will be two more public hearings prior to town meeting: one at the discretion of the Energy Committee, and another on the week of January 22.

Dave Nault explained that the Memorandum of Understanding that was signed by the Selectboard was to allow them to start this conversation.

Bob Leonard stated that he does not like this process that they follow of requiring people to opt out of participation. **Mike Kaminski** said he didn't like that portion either, but reiterated that this is something that was approved by state legislators.

Mike Kaminski asked if they have ever been defeated at Town Meeting. **Mr. Hayden** said that they have not. Their required percentage of the vote needs to be 51% and they average over 86%.

Mike Kaminski closed the hearing at 8:57 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jeff Crosby said that there is a growing problem on Gile Hill Road pertaining to some damage that is being caused by some development work. He has spoken to the developer, and he is not issuing any further driveway permits until he gets this problem under control. He would like to see if they can put a \$10,000 bond in place on future building permits for the contractor causing the problem to cover potential damage. The Board and Town Administrator will consult legal counsel on this matter and determine how to proceed in getting the current damage repaired and to protect themselves in the future. **Dave Nault** would like to pose this question to NHMA as well to see what responses they get.

Brief discussion occurred regarding a truck purchase for the Highway Department. The matter will be discussed in further detail at a future meeting.

BOARD MEMBER ISSUES

Line Comeau said that she reached out to the solar panel company who responded by saying that they will send out a crew to inspect the damage to the solar array at the Transfer Station. She will follow up with Woody Bowne to see if he has seen them come out.

Dave Nault said that the crushed stone has been placed around the drip lines of the Library/Town Hall and Town Office buildings and they did a fantastic job.

Dave Nault said that they are losing an employee at the Transfer Station, but he will be reviewing applications with Woody next week.

ADJOURNMENT

Justin Nault **motioned** that they adjourn the meeting.

Dave Nault **seconded** the motion and the Board adjourned at 9:14 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer King, Recording Secretary

Signed:

Michael Kaminski, Chair

Dave Nault, Selectman

Justin Nault, Selectman