

**Dunbarton Board of Selectmen
Meeting Minutes
January 25, 2024**

A meeting of the Dunbarton Board of Selectmen (BoS) was held on Thursday, January 25, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. at the Dunbarton Town Offices.

Board members present:

Mike Kaminski, Chair

Dave Nault, Selectman

Justin Nault, Selectman attended the meeting via telephone.

Town Officials and Others present:

Line Comeau, Town Administrator

Jeff Crosby, Road Agent

Members of the Public present:

Patricia Murphy

Ron Slocum

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. He noted that Selectman Justin Nault is attending the meeting via telephone. He confirmed that there was no one in the room with Justin and that all votes for this meeting would be done via roll call (as required for remote meeting attendance).

OLD BUSINESS

Approve Minutes

Motion: by Dave Nault, seconded by Mike Kaminski to approve the regular meeting minutes of January 11, 2024 as written.

Discussion: none.

Roll-Call Vote: Kaminski-yes. J. Nault-yes. D. Nault-yes.

Motion: by Justin Nault, seconded by Dave Nault to approve the 8:51 p.m. nonpublic meeting minutes of January 11, 2024 as written.

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

Roll-Call Vote: Kaminski-yes. J. Nault-yes. D. Nault-yes.

Motion: by Justin Nault, seconded by Dave Nault to approve the 9:17 p.m. nonpublic meeting minutes of January 11, 2024 as written.

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

Roll-Call Vote: Kaminski-yes. J. Nault-yes. D. Nault-yes.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Lee Martel commented that the BoS and Library should coordinate their schedules regarding their meetings and library events, as parking this evening was difficult.

Ron Slocum of 55 Tenney Hill Road told the Selectmen that his second tax bill increased by 22%. He asked why they can't take a portion of that anticipated increase determined in March and apply it in July, so they aren't feeling the full tax year impact in one payment at the end of the year. **Dave Nault** said that a lot of it is determined by the DRA setting the rate late in the year; they can't tax earlier than that for something that is not there. **Mike Kaminski** added that the first tax bill is based upon the prior year. **Line Comeau** said that the July bill is 50% of the prior year. She added that a lot of that increase was the school, which they don't have control over.

Discussion occurred over whether or not the DRA will allow them to adjust their billing to allow for a larger July payment. **Line Comeau** stated that there is only an RSA that they can adopt that would allow the Tax Collector to accept payments early. They will look into this further and follow up with the DRA on what steps they can take to equalize the tax payments to better absorb increases.

Jeff Crosby said that the Selectmen do a good job of presenting the budget and explaining the tax impact, so that increase can be anticipated and planned for. **Mike Kaminski** thanked Mr. Slocum for his comments, and said he hopes to see him at the Public Hearing on the budget, appreciating that he presents scenarios for them to consider that make them better prepared for Town Meeting.

Ron Slocum emphasized that he is not complaining about the tax increase itself, but rather the way they are billed for it.

NEW BUSINESS

Patricia Murphy of 14 Stark Highway North, Dunbarton, NH is requesting use of the space on the second floor of the Town Hall for a meeting of a small artist group called DIG IT (Dunbarton Inspiration Group). They used to meet at the Library, but now that the Library is closed in the evening, they are needing a space. The group is open to the public. She suggested they could meet in the smaller space just outside the meeting room. **Dave Nault** said that they can't set up in the hallway, but suggested instead the smaller room nearby. Discussion occurred regarding the ongoing heating concerns pertaining to

the second floor, as well as problems with the windows not being properly closed. The Board suggested that she fill out an application to reserve space and work with Line Comeau to get it submitted.

Pat Murphy asked about the permitted uses of the space and said that she didn't find the information easy to access on the website. The Selectmen explained that they are not allowing purely private functions (baby showers, birthday parties, etc.) at this time and pointed to the section of the policy that explains it. They are trying to make sure that civic and town organizations have the opportunity to use that space, as those are groups that benefit the community and/or are open to all residents. Ms. Murphy doesn't feel that people in town are aware of or completely understand the policy, noting that there appears to be confusion about it around town.

Review Budget and Warrant Articles

The Board discussed the \$10,000 of their encumbered funds they had initially intended to put toward a voting machine. Now that they are not currently pursuing a machine, they are taking that \$10,000 out of the encumbrances, but it had gotten added to the budget, so they would like to remove it from the budget as well. They will revisit the topic at the end of the year and should they decide to move forward, apply money toward that if there are extra funds. There will be no changes to the building maintenance budget line as had been discussed in the past.

Mike Kaminski asked about the increase in legal representation for George Sansoucie's office. **Line Comeau** explained that Mr. Sansoucie had sent a letter advising the municipalities he is representing in the Eversource suit to set aside an additional \$10,000 in anticipation of the outcome of this matter.

Justin Nault asked if they had gotten the corrected number for computer support. **Line Comeau** said they just received the bill this week, and she has updated their budget accordingly.

Justin Nault proposed that they reduce the Building Maintenance line to \$150,000. Upon further discussion about anticipated repairs during the upcoming year, the Board decided that \$150,000 for the Building Maintenance line is a comfortable number.

These changes bring the total proposed budget to **\$3,319,729** (*increase of \$37,919 or 1.1% increase from the 2023 budget*).

The Board reviewed the current Warrant Articles to determine how they would like to apply their surplus.

5. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Fifteen Thousand Dollars (\$15,000) to be added to the Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund established in 2003 for this purpose, and as summarized in the Capital Improvement Plan. This sum is to come from _____ in 2024 (Majority Vote Required). Request for 2023 was \$14,000. Increasing due to upcoming Reval.
12/31/23 CRF balance: \$95,109.44
Estimated 2024 tax rate impact: \$0.0365
The Board determined that this \$15,000 will come from taxation.
6. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Five Thousand Dollars (\$5,000) to be added to the Transfer Station Vehicle or Equipment Capital Reserve Fund established in 2014 for this purpose and as summarized in the Capital Improvement Plan. This sum is to come from _____ in 2024 (Majority Vote Required).
12/31/23 CRF Balance: \$44,952.11
The Board agreed to fund \$5,000 from surplus.
7. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Seventy-Five Thousand Dollars (\$75,000) to be added to the Fire Department Emergency Vehicle Capital Reserve Fund established in 2014 for this purpose and as summarized in the Capital Improvement Plan. This sum is to come from _____ in 2024 (Majority Vote Required).
12/31/23 CRF Balance: 368,239.13
The Board agreed to fund \$75,000 from surplus.
8. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Four Hundred Ninety-Nine Thousand Seven Hundred Forty dollars (\$499,740) to purchase a new fire engine and to authorize the withdrawal of Four Hundred Forty Three Thousand Dollars (\$443,000) from the Fire Department Emergency Vehicle Capital Reserve Fund established in 2014 and further to fund the sum of Fifty-Six Thousand Seven Hundred Forty dollars (\$56,740) from _____. No amount to be raised from taxes in 2024 (Majority Vote Required).
The Board agreed to fund this \$56,740 from surplus.

9. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Two Hundred Ninety-Three Thousand, Five Hundred Fifty-Four dollars (\$293,554) to purchase and equip a new ambulance and to authorize the withdrawal of said funds from the Fire Department Equipment non-lapsing Special Revenue Fund established in 2001 for this purpose. No amount to be raised from taxes in 2024 (Majority Vote Required).
12/31/23 balance: \$293,554.58
Estimated 2024 tax rate impact: \$0.00
The Board agreed to leave this as is with no changes.
10. To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Forty Thousand Dollars (\$40,000) to be added to the Highway Vehicle Capital Reserve Fund established in 2012 for this purpose, and as summarized in the Capital Improvement Plan. This sum is to come from _____ in 2024 (Majority Vote Required).
12/31/23 CRF Balance: \$68,196
The Board agreed to increase this item to \$50,000 and fund it from surplus.
11. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Two Hundred Forty-Five Thousand Dollars (\$245,000) to fund the purchase of a six-wheeled dump truck with equipment and installation, and to fund this appropriation by withdrawing One Hundred Eight Thousand Dollars (\$108,000) from the Highway Vehicle Capital Reserve fund established in 2012 and to further fund One Hundred Thirty-Seven Thousand Dollars (\$137,000) from _____. No amount to be raised from taxes in 2024 (Majority Vote Required)
(If Article 10 passes, the CRF balance will be \$108,196)
The Board agreed to fund \$137,000 from surplus.
12. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Seventy-Five Thousand dollars (\$75,000) to hire a full-time highway employee. Said amount reflects funds for this position starting April 1, 2024. This sum to be raised from taxation in 2024 (Majority Vote Required).
Estimated 2024 tax rate impact: \$0.1827
After some discussion regarding the potential future tax impact, the Board agreed to leave the article with no changes and fund this from taxation.

13. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Fifteen Thousand Dollars (\$15,000) to be added to the Police Vehicle & Equipment Capital Reserve Fund established in 2020 for this purpose. This sum is to come from _____ in 2024 (Majority Vote Required).
12/31/23 CRF Balance: \$11,862.34
The Board agreed to fund \$15,000 from surplus.
14. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Five Thousand Dollars (\$5,000) to be added to the Land Purchase Capital Reserve Fund established in 1997 for this purpose. This sum is to come from _____ in 2024 (Majority Vote Required).
12/31/23 CRF balance: \$55,140.59
Estimated 2024 tax rate impact: \$0.01218
The Board agreed to fund \$5,000 from taxation.
15. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Two Thousand Four Hundred dollars (\$2,400) for the milfoil control at Gorham Pond and to authorize the withdrawal of One Thousand Two Hundred Dollars (1,200) from the Invasive Plant Species Capital Reserve Fund established in 2018, and to authorize the Selectmen to accept a grant from the State of New Hampshire DES in the amount of One Thousand Two Hundred Dollars (\$1,200) known as the Variable Milfoil Control grant. No amount to come from taxation in 2024 (Majority Vote Required).
Estimated 2024 tax rate impact: \$0.00
The Board agreed to leave this as is with no changes.

Motion: by Dave Nault, seconded by Mike Kaminski to strike Article 16 from the warrant per a request from the Board of Assessors.

Discussion: none.

Roll-Call Vote: D. Nault-yes. J-Nault-yes. Kaminski-yes.

17. In accordance with RSA 31:113 to see if the Town will vote to authorize the Town Forest Committee to negotiate the purchase for the Town: Lot J2-01-07 containing 44 acres more or less, Lot E3-02-01 known as the School Lot containing 10.50 acres, and Lot E3-02-52 containing 11.34 acres to be added as a Town Forest.
Estimated 2024 tax rate impact: \$0.00
The Board agreed to leave this as is with no changes.

18. To see if the Town will vote to adopt the Dunbarton Community Power Electric Aggregation Plan, which authorizes the Board of Selectmen to develop and implement Dunbarton Community Power as described therein pursuant to RSA 53-E:7).

The program would provide a new default electric supply and new renewable energy supply options for customers in Dunbarton. There is no cost to the Town budget, and no obligation to participate. Customers can opt out at any time and return to utility default service on their next available monthly meter read date. The Board of Selectmen recommends this article.

(Majority vote required).

Estimated 2024 tax rate impact: \$0.00

The Board reviewed and agreed upon the wording for this newly-created Warrant Article.

Line Comeau reported that the lapsing surplus with these changes is **\$145,000 (rounded)**. The Board was in agreement that this amount should be returned to the taxpayers.

Projected tax rate for the operating budget is \$4.59, which is a \$0.17 increase over last year's municipal tax rate. The warrant articles add \$0.23.

Motion: Mike Kaminski, seconded by Dave Nault that they accept all changes to the warrant as discussed.

Discussion: none.

Roll-Call Vote: J. Nault-yes. D. Nault-yes. Kaminski-yes.

Mailbox Items

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

- Email from Woody Bowne requesting that the Board adopt a policy which would allow the town to collect the certification training fee from employees that enroll in certification training but quit before they attend the class.

Motion: by Mike Kaminski, seconded by Dave Nault to adopt a policy allowing them to collect the certification training fee from the employee should they quit before they attend the training.

Discussion: Line Comeau said that this will be included in the new hire plan.

Roll-Call Vote: D. Nault-yes. J-Nault-yes. Kaminski-yes.

- Email from Chief Remillard; he agreed to remove the article for another officer, but would like to request the article for the PD Vehicle CRF deposit be increased to \$15,000.
- Email from Library Trustee Karen Lessard regarding a discrepancy related to a budget line resulting in lapsing funds. 2024 budget request decreased \$7,194 to \$113,372.
- The Board reviewed options and selected a photo for the 2023 Town Report.
- Email from Mary Girard regarding a window that keeps opening. **Dave Nault** said there is nothing wrong with the window, but he will address the issue. He feels they may need to screw it shut.
- Second floor use policy.
- Abutter notice from ZBA regarding owner of E3-05-06 (1007 School Street); requesting special exception to allow equipment rental on the existing property. Special meeting to be held on 2/12/24. Mike Kaminski said that he will attend.
- Notice for Budget Hearing 2/8/24 with snow date of 2/15/24.
- Request from the Energy Committee to hold their second public hearing on the community power adoption on either February 8 or 22.
The Board decided that the Public Hearing for this as well as the budget will be held on February 8, 2024.

Dave Nault said he got some more information from Energy Committee chair Dana Lavoie regarding the Community Power Program:

- ❖ Until customers in the eastern part of town will benefit from this new program, as they currently pay higher rates than Eversource customers.
- ❖ This will also not affect their equipment maintenance or any of their other programs with Eversource.
- ❖ The opt-out feature was set up that way by the state government because they wanted to ensure that all residents had the opportunity to benefit from the program if adopted by the town.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Lee Martel cautioned the Board about coordinating their scheduling with whatever activities may be happening at the library, as parking will be very tight. **Line Comeau** said that she will make sure that February 8th is blocked out on the calendar, so they know it is not available.

Lee Martel asked why they keep the town's rainy day fund in such a small-bearing account? **Dave Nault** said that the Treasurer moved away from CDs to money market accounts so that access to the money wouldn't be so restricted as they were in the CDs.

Jeff Crosby commends the Board for their efforts on the budget.

BOARD MEMBER ISSUES

Mike Kaminski commented that the recent election went very well. He thanks all the people that helped, and he commends their Town Moderator for his handling of issues throughout the day as they came up.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: by Dave Nault, seconded by Mike Kaminski to adjourn the meeting.

By roll-call vote: D. Nault-yes. J. Nault-yes. Kaminski-yes.

The Board adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer King, Recording Secretary

Signed:

Michael Kaminski, Chair

Dave Nault, Selectman

Justin Nault, Selectman