

**Dunbarton Board of Selectmen
Meeting Minutes
February 8, 2024**

A meeting of the Dunbarton Board of Selectmen (BoS) was held on Thursday, February 8, 2024 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
John Trottier, Town Moderator
Christopher Remillard, Police Chief

Members of the Public present:

Bob Martel
Fred Mullen – Town Forest
Christopher Remillard – Police Chief
John Stevens – Energy Committee
Jeff Crosby – Road Agent
Dana Lavoie – Energy Committee – Chair of Community Power Committee
Bob Hayden representative from Standard Power for “Community Power”
Bob Leonard
Jennifer Cormier – Deputy Town Clerk
Linda Landry – Town Clerk
Ron Slocum
John Trottier – Moderator
Brian Watford – Birchview drive – Energy Committee
Jarred Vaughan

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

OLD BUSINESS

Approve Minutes

Motion: by Dave Nault, seconded by Justin Nault to approve the regular meeting minutes of January 25, 2024 as amended.

Discussion: none.

Vote: (3-0)

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Mailbox Items

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

- Letter from Department of Energy acknowledging the Selectmen's' letter of support of the Direct Energy power line project.
- Email response for 3% cola for Volunteer Fire department and election workers.
- Email from Mary Girard re. toilets not flushing. Chicoine construction has been notified. They suspect that snow and ice from the roof may have blocked the overflow vent.
- Police department MOU for Prosecution services.

Mike Kaminski said that this is being reestablished. **Chief Remillard** said this is already in their budget, and they are updating their MOU so that it is current. It is a bargain for the town for the services they receive from this arrangement. .

Motion: by Dave Nault, seconded by Mike Kaminski to approve the MOU as written.

Discussion: none.

Vote: (3-0)

- Cemetery Trustee Appointment

Motion: by Dave Nault, seconded by Mike Kaminski to appoint Michael Lessard to fill the vacancy of a Cemetery Trustee with term ending March 2026.

Discussion: Justin Nault noted that one of the trustees is wishing to step down and be an alternate, and Michael is stepping up from alternate to regular member.

Vote: (3-0)

- Memo from Donna White regarding an update to the CIP for 2025-2030. **Dave Nault stated that he would be interested in being the Selectmen's representative for the CIP.**

- Complaint from Mike Guiney regarding the town truck plowing private property. This complaint has been addressed by the Road Agent.
- Exit interview from former transfer station employee Ray Labarre. Mike Kaminski asked Dave Nault to follow up on this issue.
- Response from DRA regarding proportional tax bills (RSA 80:52-a). The Selectmen will review and follow up with this response. **Mike Kaminski** gave a brief overview regarding the disproportionate tax bills and provided an explanation regarding the contributing factors. **Dave Nault** explained the tax rate setting and billing process, noting that they are looking at options to counteract such a fluctuation, but it may end up complicating the process more. They will continue to investigate this and determine the best way to proceed.

Public Hearing

Mike Kaminski opened the Public Hearing to review the proposed budget and Warrant for 2024 at 7:15 p.m.

Mike Kaminski began the hearing with an overview of how they approached this year's budget. The process begins with reviewing the numbers from the previous year: their initial proposed revenues for 2023 were \$1,179,046. The DRA increased their revenue by \$166,000 above what they projected because it was a good year in Rooms and Meals for the state. This brought their projected revenue to over \$1.3 million. Actual revenues came in \$250,000 higher than that, bringing their revenues to over \$1.6 million. This resulted in net surplus/excess revenues totaling \$483,000. Their total proposed budget for 2024 is \$3,319,729, a \$38,000 increase over 2023 (1.16%). They are seeking to apply some of those funds to items that are on the warrant, and apply over \$145,000 to reduce the tax rate for residents.

Mike Kaminski gave an overview of their anticipated expenses for the upcoming year, noting any significant increases/decreases. An audience member asked about insurance increases. **Mike Kaminski** explained that some employees changed plans (individual to family), which will cost the town more.

Their 2024 tax rate is

\$4.59 tax rate (increase of \$0.17 from last year)

\$0.23 from the Warrant Articles.

Total: \$4.82

This rate will be offset by the DRA in the fall. They also have several new homes anticipated to be built in town which would help to increase revenue.

Ron Slocum asked why their telephone expenses are so high? Jeff Crosby said that some buildings have multiple lines (for alarm systems, etc.) which increases their bill.

Jeff Crosby noted that they need to be cautious when they anticipate the new homes in the area, they also need to consider the expenses these homes will add as well (school system, etc.).

Warrant

After waiving a reading of the first sections of the warrant (non-monetary routine items), the Selectmen reviewed the Draft Warrant for 2024, explaining the necessity for each line and explaining how they would like to fund each one:

4. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Three Million Three Hundred Nineteen Thousand Seven Hundred Twenty-Nine Dollars (\$3,319,729) for general municipal operations with One Hundred Forty-Eight Thousand Dollars (\$148,000) to come from the unassigned fund balance surplus. This amount excludes all appropriations contained in special or individual articles addressed separately.

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 to be raised from taxation in 2024. (Majority Vote Required)

The Estimated 2024 tax rate impact is: \$0.04

Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (Vote 0-0)

Resident **Ron Slocum** asked if this is for a partial or full revaluation. **Line Comeau** confirmed that it is for a full **statistical** revaluation.

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 the unassigned fund balance surplus. No amount is to be raised from taxation in 2024. (Majority Vote Required)

The Estimated 2024 tax rate impact is: \$0.00

Dave Nault noted that this is typically higher, but this was lowered to apply funds to more pressing needs.

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 the unassigned fund balance surplus. No amount is to be raised from taxation in 2024. (Majority Vote Required)

The Estimated 2024 tax rate impact is: \$0.00

Dave Nault noted that this line was increased to assist with the purchase of a fire truck.

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 the unassigned fund balance surplus. No amount to be raised from taxation in 2024. (Majority Vote Required)

The Estimated 2024 tax rate impact is: \$0.00

Dave Nault said that the majority of this purchase is coming from the Capital Reserve Fund. **Line Comeau** added that this Article is dependent upon the passage of Article 7.

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 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 taxation in 2024. (Majority Vote Required)

The Estimated 2024 tax rate impact is: \$0.00

Dave Nault noted that the cost of the ambulance itself is less than that amount, but the entire amount was requested. **Ron Slocum** asked about the disposition of the current ambulance. **Mike Kaminski** said it will most likely be sold. **Justin Nault** noted that a new ambulance is at least a year or more out **before we can take ownership**. **Bob Leonard** asked to clarify that this fund will be empty after this purchase. **The Board responded that it would deplete the account, but ambulance fees are deposited into this account monthly.**

10. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$50,000) 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 the unassigned fund balance surplus. No amount to be raised from taxation in 2024. (Majority Vote Required)

The Estimated 2024 tax rate impact is: \$0.00

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 a 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 further to fund One Hundred Thirty-Seven Thousand Dollars (\$137,000) from the unassigned fund balance surplus. No amount is to be raised from taxation in 2024. (Majority Vote Required)

The Estimated 2024 tax rate impact is: \$0.0000

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 is to be raised from taxation in 2024. (Majority Vote Required)

The Estimated 2024 tax rate impact is: \$0.18

Road Agent **Jeff Crosby** stated that the town is growing and evolving, and they have been relying for many years upon the work of subcontractors to round out the services provided by the Highway Department. As many towns are learning, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find that help. He also pointed out that this amount is only for the first year, but this is going to be a recurring expense **going forward**. Also, they don't anticipate filling this position until April, so the amount is going to be higher for their first full year (closer to \$100,000 including benefits and related expenses).

Ron Slocum asked how tightly coupled this is with the new truck. **Mike Kaminski** said they will still pursue the truck purchase regardless of the additional employee.

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 the unassigned fund balance surplus. No amount is to be raised from taxation in 2024. (Majority Vote Required)

The Estimated 2024 tax rate impact is: \$0.00

Dave Nault noted that they did increase this contribution to the CRF because the **lack** of police work details performed last year, which provides much of the funding for this fund. This is the amount the **Board** will likely seek for this fund going forward.

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 to be raised from taxation in 2024. (Majority Vote Required)

The Estimated 2024 tax rate impact is \$0.01

Dave Nault said this is more of a placeholder, as he would like to increase the amount they contribute to this fund in the future. He noted that funds cannot be spent from this fund without taxpayer approval.

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 for One Thousand Two Hundred Dollars (\$1,200) known as the Variable Milfoil Control Grant. No amount to be raised from taxation in 2024. (Majority Vote Required)

The Estimated 2024 tax rate impact is: \$0.00

Mike Kaminski said they found some milfoil in the Fire Pond, but other than that, it was a good year in terms of milfoil control **in our ponds**. They continue to fund this need to remain current in the queue with the State DES. **Bob Leonard** added that they are one of 40 towns that the State partners with.

16: 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, using unrestricted funds now at the Committee's disposal, and dedicate the same as a Town Forest, and furthermore, to convert to a Town Forest; lots **I2-02-03** containing 39 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. No amount to be raised from taxation in 2024. (Majority Vote Required)

The Estimated 2024 tax rate impact is: \$0.00

Mike Kaminski explained that they found some lots intended as Town Forest property that were never officially recognized by the legislative body as such.

Line Comeau added that this vote will allow the committee to manage and maintain the properties, as well as to purchase additional properties.

17. 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. (Majority Vote required).

Estimated 2024 tax rate impact: \$0.00

To be discussed further in upcoming Public Hearing. **Fred Mullen** asked how this program would affect the lines and wires owned by Eversource. **Mike Kaminski** and **Dave Nault** explained that it doesn't involve the equipment, it's just the purchase of the electricity itself. Eversource still handles the delivery cost.

John Trottier feels that the extra information pertaining to salaries provided under Article 4 is potentially confusing because it is not relevant to the budget changes. **Line Comeau** explained that this was a request of a past Selectboard because they have one full-time salaried elected official. Because of the way they chose to fund that position they decided it was more transparent to list the salaries for all elected officials. **Dave Nault** asked if they could remove this information from the warrant, since it is listed in the town report **on a separate page**. **Line Comeau** said they can do that, but it is important that the Selectmen speak to this at Town Meeting so that it is clear.

John Stevens asked to clarify the numbers for the Old Home Day and Memorial Day events. **Mike Kaminski** confirmed that they acted according to the wishes of the Old Home Day Committee.

Motion: by Dave Nault, seconded by Mike Kaminski to vote in favor of recommending the Draft Warrant Articles 3 through 17.

Discussion: none.

Vote: (3-0).

Mike Kaminski closed the Public Hearing at 8:16 p.m.

The Board reviewed the list of Draft Warrant Articles and chose speakers for each item:

4. Mike Kaminski
5. Justin Nault
6. Dave Nault / Woody Bowne
7. Dave Nault / Jon Wiggin
8. Dave Nault/ Jon Wiggin
9. Dave Nault/ Jon Wiggin
10. Jeff Crosby / Mike Kaminski
11. Jeff Crosby / Mike Kaminski
12. Justin Nault
13. Dave Nault
14. Dave Nault
15. Bob Leonard / Justin Nault
16. Dave Nault / Fred Mullen
17. Robert Hayden / Dave Nault

Public Hearing

Mike Kaminski called the Public Hearing to order at 8:19 p.m.

Mike Kaminski noted that this is the second public hearing on this matter. There will also be an opportunity for discussion at Town Meeting.

Robert Hayden from Standard Power presented the Dunbarton Community Power Program.

He said that this program is based on NH RSA 53-E. He offered a brief history of their existence in the state, explaining the 3-year approval process and noted several other towns in New Hampshire that have chosen to participate.

They can purchase power more often than the utility companies, and can offer more versatility in energy sources, including renewable energy and can offer more rate stability. The program helps to educate residents about how and where they get their power from. He demonstrated where the supply cost will be documented on the electric bill. He explained that residents will need to opt out of this program if they are not interested in participating.

Lee Martel asked about how easy it would be to opt in after the fact. **Mr. Hayden** said he just has to contact them.

Discussion occurred regarding recent supply charge fluctuations.

Mr. Hayden said that their town committee will present their options, stressing the fact that the townspeople are the ultimate arbiters. The Board of Selectmen

will select which level will be the default rate, but the individual consumer can decide what level they would like.

Fred Mullen asked about what happens in the event of a cold snap and if there is a burden on the electric grid. **Mr. Hayden** explained that if something happens to the grid, it affects everyone, regardless of supplier.

Discussion occurred regarding the timeline for when they will start seeing this on their bill. It takes about 60 days from when the plan is submitted to the PUC (ultimately in about 4 months from now).

Dave Nault noted that the opt-out setup is something that is required in the RSA, the rationale being that they want everyone to have the same opportunity for access to the program.

Mike Kaminski asked about net metering and how this program will affect households already using renewable energy. Mr. Hayden said if you make more power with your system than you use, you are better off opting out. They offer individual counseling for households interested in renewables.

A resident asked if they have small business accounts. **Mr. Hayden** said that as long as the account isn't with a 3rd party supplier, they will be eligible at launch. **Dave Nault** said that Unitil customers in town will see a savings because everyone would pay the same.

Fred Mullen asked where the Selectmen are leaning in terms of the default rate. **Mike Kaminski** said that he feels that the default rate should be the lowest rate possible, but that is something they will discuss.

John Stevens asked about a mailer he received from a company out of TX and wondered if he would be able to switch easily. **Mr. Hayden** said they can opt in or out of the program any time they want.

A resident asked about time-of-day use plans. **Mr. Hayden** said that doesn't exist yet, but that is currently being decided by the legislature.

John Stevens asked about the Community Power Committee going forward. **Mr. Hayden** said that it will be up to the committee if they wish to create a sub-committee.

Bob Leonard asked about the process going forward. **Mike Kaminski** said that it will be discussed again at town meeting. **Dave Nault** said that they will not be

choosing rates or sources until well after this is voted on at Town Meeting. They will be making their decisions with input and recommendation from the committee. Dana Lavoie said that the utilities will be changing their rates again on August 1.

A resident asked if the town is “married” to Community Power. **Mr. Hayden** said that he operates under a Memorandum of Understanding, and either party can exit at any time.

Mr. Hayden provided information regarding their local competitors and stated that Standard Power works to help create the laws at the legislative level. **Dana Lavoie** said that if this does not pass at Town Meeting, they have to wait another year to propose it again, and who knows where energy rates will be at that time.

Mr. Hayden said they require 50% approval in terms of the vote, and their approval rate for most towns is 86%.

Mike Kaminski closed the public hearing at 9:08 p.m.

Additional Mailbox Item

The Board reviewed an email response for the 3% COLA increase for Volunteer Fire Department and Election Workers. The Board was in agreement to follow their attorney’s recommendation and wait until after Town Meeting before distributing the checks for those groups.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Bob Martel expressed his thoughts regarding the effect that the new homes have on the tax rate.

BOARD MEMBER ISSUES

None.

NONPUBLIC SESSION

Motion: by Mike Kaminski to enter nonpublic session per RSA 91-A:3, II (a) at the request of the Town Administrator at 9:24 p.m.

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

The Board exited the nonpublic at 9:47 p.m. there were no motions made during this nonpublic meeting.

GENERAL DISCUSSION:

Dave Nault asked Line Comeau to provide the Board with a comparison of Health care cost from 2023 to 2024 for the Board to review at a later date. Michael stated that this could be included in a discussion at a personnel plan workshop.

NONPUBLIC SESSION

Motion: by David Nault to enter nonpublic session per RSA 91-A:3, II (b) , seconded by Michael Kaminski.

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

The Board exited the nonpublic at 10:20 p.m.

Motion: by Dave Nault, seconded by Mike Kaminski to hire Nolan Konikowski as a part-time Transfer Station Attendant at Step I \$17.85. Vote 3-0

ADJOURNMENT

The Board adjourned the regular meeting at 10:24 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer King, Recording Secretary

Signed:

Michael Kaminski, Chair

Dave Nault, Selectman

Justin Nault, Selectman