

**Dunbarton Board of Selectmen  
Meeting Minutes  
March 10, 2022**

A meeting of the Dunbarton Board of Selectmen (BoS) was held on Thursday, March 10, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. at the Dunbarton Town Offices.

**Board members present:**

Dave Nault, Board Chair  
Mike Kaminski, Selectman  
Bob Martel, Selectman

**Town Officials present:**

Line Comeau, Town Administrator  
Donna White, Planning/Building Dept. Administrator  
Jo-Marie Denoncourt, Town Office Employee  
Hope Arce, Deputy Town Clerk

**Members of the Public present:**

Greg Arce  
Justin Nault  
Don Larsen

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

Dave Nault called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**OLD BUSINESS**

Approve Minutes

**Motion:** by Bob Martel, seconded by Mike Kaminski to approve the public hearing minutes of March 3, 2022 as written.

**Discussion:** none.

**Vote: (3-0).**

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

**Lee Martel** offered his congratulations to Justin Nault on his election win, and thanked John Trottier and the BoS for the work they did at Town Meeting. He felt the Selectmen did a great job of explaining the warrant articles.

**TOWN BUSINESS**

Proper Channels of Communication

Deputy Town Clerk Hope Arce appeared before the Board and read the following statement:

*“Thank you for allowing me to speak this evening.*

*I had a conversation with one of the Selectmen on election night after the meeting in which many things were discussed, suggestions made and promises given. I'm coming this evening to follow up on that conversation and make portions of it public. My desire in doing this is to have it on the record, and I hope it will help the Select Board understand the expectations going forward, holding us all accountable.*

*The greatest thing that has been a concern to me in the last month as I brought things up (needs for this building and the proper tools for doing my job), I was repeatedly told that it was new information and that I must go through the proper channels for getting these things addressed.*

*I'm here tonight to let all of you (new and old) Selectmen and the public know that I did go through the proper channels. This information is not new, therefore, should not be "news" to you. This information was ignored (purposely or not) by this Board. However, that is in the past. With a humble apology on your part and a new understanding, I know that we can move forward in a positive and healthy way.*

*When I began working here in August 2018, the Selectmen were Dave, Mike, and Bob. That first fall/winter season, I would come into work in the morning and find mice droppings on my desk. This problem was brought to the attention of my supervisor and then brought to the Joint Loss Committee, hoping for some action to be taken. I don't know what action, if any, was taken; but I was told that because it's an old building, I should expect to share my space with rodents. Just because this is the reality does not mean that it is good and healthy. Again and again, we have had issues with rodents in this building. Some of the stories are pretty wild! Some time late, there was a milk snake coiled in the cupboard of our office. It came up through the hole in the floor of the cupboard. Mike Cummings kindly removed it and covered the hole.*

*My conversation on Tuesday evening regarding this issue came with a promise that the rodent issue will be taken care of by pest control. I am thankful for that action if it has been or will be taken.*

*The other issues with our building (asbestos, roof/siding, deck, walkway, spongy floors, not enough storage for town records, privacy issues, some sort of allergen in the old cupboards and on old papers from incorrect storage – likely a type of mold, etc.) have been brought to the attention of the Joint Loss Committee time and again with little, no, or very delayed responses/action taken.*

*My understanding is that the Joint Loss Committee is our channel to let the Selectmen and town know of health and safety problems in our workplace. Somewhere in this process, communication has broken down. I'm not here to*

*pick it apart and see where this has happened. I'm here to make the breakdown known and to let you know that the expectation on my part is that this breakdown will be repaired. Going forward, I expect the Select Rep for Joint Loss will bring health and safety problems for each of our buildings/departments to the Select Board and the maintenance budget line will be used to solve all of these problems. I've been told we have plenty of money for these problems, therefore, I expect that these problems will be resolved to the satisfaction of our town employees in a timely manner. Please do not dismiss these problems as they have been dismissed in the past.*

*Another issue that I brought through proper channels is the need for the Town Clerk's office to have improved software. I made a request to the Town Administrator and one Selectman before budget season of our need and was told that it is too expensive. You can imagine my shock when I found out during budget season where all that "extra" money was going, yet I was told we didn't have enough money for our office to have the tools we need to do our job efficiently and effectively. What is done is done, whether we agree with it or not. The reality remains that we cannot serve our residents well when we are using an inadequate tool that has 'quirks' too numerous to count that we just have to 'work around.' Other employees in this building often see how long some of our customer stand at our window waiting while our software does not work properly. Within the last week our new Selectman waited for me to process something that should have taken 15 minutes max, but it took 45 minutes, and I wasn't even finished. I took his number and called him when it was finally finished. This is not acceptable. With the amount of taxes that our residents pay and the fact that our office brings in the most revenue second only to the Tax Office, this should be a top priority to remedy rather than be ignored or delayed.*

*I know that there is more that could and should be addressed, but I think this is enough for one night. I trust that you are now aware that I have gone through the proper channels, that you will do your part by giving a humble apology to our employees in this building for ignoring our needs, and that you will move forward to remedy this negligence. It was not my desire for the public to be made aware of the negligence on the part of this Select Board, but I strongly believe that it must be public record to keep us all accountable.*

*Thank you for your consideration.*

*Hope Arce  
Deputy Town Clerk"*

**Mike Kaminski** said that the Town Clerk should be advocating for things for her department like software improvements. **Hope Arce** said that she knows that the Town Clerk did bring it to the Select Board. **Mike Kaminski** responded that the Town Clerk should have better communicated to her what the outcome of that

discussion was. Regarding mouse droppings, it is an old building and there are mouse droppings especially when people leave food stuffs out overnight. He did make a suggestion to use the sticky traps and told it was inhumane.

There are some points Hope made that he did agree with. When the Select Board was made aware of the asbestos issue, it was the first time had had heard about it and they had it mitigated within a month. **Hope Arce** said that was right at the time she started. **Dave Nault** did note that previous Select Boards did not address the issue. **Mike Kaminski** concurred that living with asbestos is a sin and it should never have been allowed. If there is an issue with the workspace then she needs to let the Town Clerk know so that she can communicate it to the Select Board. He is committed to her safety and the safety of the other employees. It may be an old building, but it does need to be a safe building.

**Hope Arce** asked if Joint Loss was not a proper channel. **Bob Martel** noted that he did bring the rodent issue mentioned at Joint Loss to the BoS. **Hope Arce** asked if that is the case then why did **Dave Nault** say at Town Meeting that he had never heard of a rodent problem in the building? **Line Comeau** stated that they did talk about it at a BoS meeting and they decided to address the mouse issue with their handyman and worked to come up with some more humane alternatives. The mouse problem did seem to go away with the change in season, but the problem has returned. They have attempted to seal off entryways into the building. **Dave Nault** stated that they did have a plan in place to ask **Line Comeau** to call a couple of pest control companies to get some quotes to address the rodent problem.

**Mike Kaminski** said that he feels that they are committed to the health of their employees and doesn't feel that they have done anything wrong that is worthy of an apology. He does feel that communication needs to be improved going forward. He does not recall the Town Clerk talking at length about the need for new software, and vaguely recalls hearing about the snake. He has been working in this building for 6 years and mouse droppings have been a regular thing for years. **Hope Arce** countered that that does not make it healthy or right. **Mike Kaminski** answered that in the past something was done, and they will do more. He doesn't need the pushback on suggestions to dispose of the rodents themselves. He is committed to making sure the facility is healthy but feels that communication needs to be improved for that to happen.

**Hope Arce** asked Mike Kaminski to clarify if was saying that she was not allowed to approach the Select Board and if she must go through Linda Landry? **Mike Kaminski** said not for all issues but for things like software, then yes. She really should be going through her supervisor for concerns about her workspace or tools.

**Line Comeau** suggested that they bring their concerns forward via email, noting that Transfer Station Manager Woody Bowne brings his maintenance concerns

forward via email, all of which get printed and added to the box of items for the Board to address. She suggested that the Town Office employees do the same. **Dave Nault** agrees that emails are effective for getting issues in front of the Board.

**Dave Nault** He said that they do have quotes on roof replacements that were obtained last June. Because the quotes that they did receive that were above \$10,000 it was a project they shied away from at the time. The issue remains as several shingles have blown off of the roof, and he was recently made aware that there was water leaking into the safe. They will create an RFP to obtain some current quotes.

**Mike Kaminski** noted that he is disappointed in the some of the supervisors and their attention to maintenance items that are being brought forward after the budget process has been completed. **Hope Arce** noted that they brought this to their attention in October, before budget season started. **Mike Kaminski** asked that if this software was a critical need, then why did the Town Clerk not insist upon the need for it when it was initially turned down?

Discussion occurred regarding the program in question (Avatar) and whether it was compatible with their office needs and how well it works with other programs they currently use in other departments. **Dave Nault** asked to review the costs that Hope has for the program. **Mike Kaminski** said he isn't interested in making decisions without the Town Clerk being present. **Dave Nault** suggested that they speak with the Town Clerk and look at what room they have in their budget for a software upgrade. If they don't then they can begin to make a plan for next budget season. **Hope Arce** suggested they have a representative for the software company do a presentation as well. **Line Comeau** noted that some companies will offer contracts or arrangements on payments. **Mike Kaminski** said that he commends Hope for coming here tonight, but he feels that the Town Clerk needs to be leading the discussion. **Hope Arce** said that she attended the meeting to follow up on a discussion that she had with a Selectman.

**Line Comeau** asked if the problem with the software had recently gotten worse. **Hope Arce** stated that it has gotten worse within the past year. **Line Comeau** wondered if perhaps it was related to an update from the state. She suggested they review the budget to come up with a plan and see if the software company offers a two-year contract to split up the payments.

**Dave Nault** said that there have been some sometimes-heated discussions occurring in the town offices regarding how the vote went at Town Meeting. These discussions cannot be happening on town property. The legislative body, the voters, have made their decisions on the warrant articles. Those decisions are done and over with. Whether we like them or not, they can be discussed in private, but when you are taking time out of your office hours to discuss them,

that is not ok. He noted that people have told him that some of the discussion of this went on prior to the votes being taken, which could be perceived as a form of electioneering. He would like a letter to go out to the town employees of this building to communicate that these discussions can be held in private and on their own time but should not be held during office hours on town property.

**Line Comeau** said that the complaints made were in reference to her. She said that she did speak to one person in the office, but that that person spoke with three other people. **Dave Nault** noted that the comments in question made were made loudly enough to be heard in other areas of the building by multiple people.

**Bob Martel** added that sending concerns via email is another way of getting the discussion started on the record.

**Dave Nault** thanked Hope for coming forward and that they will be working to address her areas of concern. **Hope Arce** said that she hopes that it will be addressed as it was brought forward before and shot down. **Mike Kaminski** feels it was more a matter of the urgency not being communicated by the Town Clerk. As an elected official, she really should be the one to bring these items forward and advocate for them as being important.

**Line Comeau** said that for the past 5-10 years, it has been a request of the Selectmen that departments submit budgets for level services. This leaves the department managers trying to toe the line, make do with what they have and not add additional budget items. Sometimes they need to address the needs of the town, even if it is going to affect the tax rate.

**Hope Arce** asked why she was told in the fall that they did not have the funds for the software, but they had the ARPA grant. **Dave Nault** explained that the requirements and rules regarding the ARPA grants changed and were relaxed this winter.

**Bob Martel** noted that even though they request level funding, it doesn't mean that they can't make allowances for items that are needed.

**Hope Arce** wanted to know when they discovered they had the surplus: **Line Comeau** said January 3<sup>rd</sup>. She wanted to know why she was told that there weren't enough funds in October, but there were during the budget process. **Mike Kaminski** said that the Town Clerk should have been a stronger advocate for the software so that they would have considered it during the budget process.

**Bob Martel** added that she mentioned that she approached one Selectman, but no one Selectman can make a decision on anything. One may say it is too expensive, but the other two may say it isn't. If it is brought before the three Selectmen, you may find a better resolution than bringing it before one.

**Line Comeau** said that as your Town Administrator, she works extremely hard, they all work very hard with minimal staff. She doesn't want to get to a point where she is burnt out. She tries her very best to assist and answer questions from other departments, committee members, volunteers, and the public. Many are questions that would typically be answered by outside entities. They do a lot of internal support for the town so that it keeps their expenses to a minimum. As they grow in population, that is going to have to stop. In towns larger than them they have assessors, and an assessing department. They try to cross-train as many individuals within the department as she can, but they get so many questions that they can still get very overwhelmed. She apologizes if she loses her cool every now and again, but there has not been any politicking occurring within the office.

#### Accept Grant

**Motion:** by Mike Kaminski, seconded by Bob Martel, to accept per RSA 31:95-b III (b) the amount of (\$2,918) in a Grant received from New Hampshire the Beautiful.

**Discussion:** Mike Kaminski offers kudos to Woody Bowne for applying for the grant.

**Vote: (3-0).**

The BoS noted that these funds will go into the **unassigned fund surplus**. **Line Comeau** said if they decide to apply it toward something specific in the future, they can do **so within the same calendar year**.

#### Library Addition Bid Proposal

**Line Comeau** would like the BoS award of the contract by April 1, but where **Bob Martel** has been instrumental in this process, she feels that it would be helpful for the two board members that will act on the proposal to review the bid that came in. **Mike Kaminski** said that the body has voted on it, so he would like to just move on it. **Line Comeau** said she took the pages she wanted to bring to their attention. If the Board is going to consider accepting the bid tonight, then she would like to see a Bond Certificate naming the town as the insured party in the amount of 1 million dollars.

**Dave Nault** said that Gary Chicoine was at the meeting and asked what they need from them to move forward. He is going to draw up the API contract, which architect Dennis Myers said is fine. This is a bid proposal and not the exact contract. They made sure that they reached out to bondable construction companies, but they did not require a bond, but they do need general liability insurance and builders risk insurance. This bid proposal is \$697,485. Chicoine is reaching out to the subcontractors involved in the bid to ensure nothing has changed. **Dave Nault** also noted the addendums: walkway for egress around the side of the building for \$5,050 and the ERV air recovery unit \$57,400. The lift mechanism is

being donated, so they will not act on that item for \$2,100, but the other items will be on a separate contract that the contractor will be responsible for, but those items will come out of their maintenance fund.

**Motion:** Mike Kaminski, seconded by Bob Martel, to accept the bid proposal from Chicoine Construction dated 2/2/22 in the amount of \$697,485 as funded by the legislated body on warrant article 6.

**Discussion:** none.

**Vote:** (2-0-1, *Nault abstained*)

**Motion:** by Mike Kaminski, seconded by Bob Martel to fund the work to be done on the walkway (\$5,050) and the ERV air recovery unit (\$57,400) as alternates to the bid. This funding is to come from their maintenance line for a total of \$62,450.

**Discussion:** Mike Kaminski said he originally felt the walkway is not needed, but he does now agree that it is needed for egress.

Line Comeau added that they will need to have a public hearing to accept the funds **from the Town Hall Restoration Committee.**

**Vote:** (2-0-1, *Nault abstained*)

**Line Comeau** noted that the contractor will need to provide a payment scale for the BoS to approve.

**Mike Kaminski** noted that related to Dave Nault's voting recusal, he would like Line Comeau to request a letter from the president of Belletetes stating that should this contractor use Belletetes as a source for hardware and supplies, that Dave Nault will not in any way benefit financially.

➤ *The BoS were in consensus for the Town Administrator to request this letter from Belletetes.*

#### Mailbox Items

**Dave Nault** reviewed the following pieces of correspondence received since the last meeting:

- Notice of School District Meeting Saturday March 12, 2022 at 4 p.m.
- Notice of Merrimack County Zoom Meeting on proposed 2022 budget. 10 a.m. Friday March 11, 2022.
- Election and Town Meeting Results.
- Complaint from Mike Guiney regarding large rock in travel way of Kelsea Road (Road Agent has been notified). Dave Nault noted that from the pictures it is not in the travel way, and is considered a non-issue

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

**Lee Martel** asked about the proposed town use for the second floor of the Town Hall/Library that the Town Hall Restoration Committee is writing up and said that he would like to see a copy.

Lee Martel thanked Bob Martel for 6 years of great service to the community during his time serving on the Board.

## BOARD MEMBER ISSUES

**Dave Nault** shared that he has a bill from Eric Hodgeman for the ballot boxes. The original bid of \$1,338 was for the two boxes. After that bid was submitted, they asked him to make the boxes 30% larger, so he has submitted additional expenses and hardware for \$504.90.

- **Motion:** by Dave Nault, seconded by Bob Martel to accept the two price packages from Eric Hodgeman for the creation of ballot boxes for the town for a total of \$1,842.90.

**Discussion:** Mike Kaminski said that the boxes came out great, noting they were made with Dunbarton oak.

**Vote: (3-0).**

**Dave Nault** welcomed the newly elected selectman Justin Nault and thanked him for attending the meeting tonight to see how it is run. **Justin Nault** said that he is ready for the challenge.

After some discussion, it was determined that Wednesday March 16<sup>th</sup> at 8:15 p.m. is the next Joint Loss Committee Meeting. The BoS asked Justin Nault if he is available to attend on behalf of the BoS.

**Motion:** by Dave Nault, seconded by Mike Kaminski for Justin Nault to attend the Joint Loss Committee meeting on March 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Discussion:** none.

**Vote: (2-0-1 Martel abstained)**

The Town Clerk will swear Justin Nault in as a Selectman prior to that Joint Loss meeting.

**Dave Nault** asked Line Comeau to repost their transfer station attendant position on Indeed.

**Mike Kaminski** said that they have a proposal from Waste Management to do their trash hauling. It is something they can discuss next week.

**Line Comeau** said she received communication from the Transfer Station Manager that the lights have been fixed.

**Line Comeau** is working on the bond application and has been in touch with the bond bank. She ordered Justin's nameplate. **Line Comeau** said that the auditing process will be starting in April.

Discussion occurred regarding Town Report distribution.

**Mike Kaminski** shared that a department head approached him with an issue that is a potential civil lawsuit for the town. He directed them to meet with the town attorney which they have done, and they feel that the town is in a good position going forward.

**Bob Martel** commended Hope Arce for attending the meeting and sharing her concerns and he hopes that she did not feel dismissed.

He thanked the other members of the Select Board, the residents. He enjoyed doing this job, and he thanks the residents for electing him twice to this position. He also thanks the town office employees for the card he received. He welcomed Justin to the Board.

**Dave Nault** shared a thank you card received from Don and Enid Larsen: “We want to let you three know what a pleasure it has been working with you and to tell you once again how much we appreciate all you did to make the renovation project happen. We could have never done it without all the support you put behind it.”

**Dave Nault** thanked Bob Martel for his 6 years of service on the Board.

ADJOURNMENT

**Motion:** by Bob Martel, seconded by Dave Nault to adjourn the meeting.

**Vote: (3-0).**

Meeting adjourned at 8:54 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Jennifer King, Recording Secretary

Signed:

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David Nault, Chair

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Michael Kaminski, Selectman

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Robert Martel, Selectman