

**Town of Milton
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING
November 20, 2023**

ATTENDANCE:

Members: Humphrey Williams (Chair), Claudine Burnham, Andy Rawson

Staff: Chris Jacobs- Town Administrator, Pat Smith- Public Works, Chief Richard Krauss- MPD, Chief Nick Marique- MFD, Stephen Duchesneau- Cemetery Sexton.

Public: Bob Carrier – Budget Committee, Katherine Ayers – School Board, Matt Morrill, Tom Gaulin

Humphrey Williams, Chair, opened the public session at 6:00PM.

1.) Pledge of Allegiance: Humphrey Williams, Chair, led the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2.) Public Comment:

Matt Morrill: He asked the BOS if they had any questions about the work he is doing at the cemetery as he has heard comments there might be an issue. He wanted to address any complaints or issues. Mr. Williams asked if there was additional information as he had not heard anything. Ms. Burnham said the BOS had approved one additional mowing at an October meeting. She asked if he had been able to do the mowing. Mr. Morrill said he had not been able to do the final mowing and as there is no snow on the ground, mowing can still be done.

3.) Announcements and Community Calendar:

1. Town Hall will be closed Thursday and Friday, for Thanksgiving Day holiday.
2. Transfer Station will be closed Friday for Thanksgiving Day holiday.
3. The next meeting of the Planning Board is November 21st.
4. The next meeting of the Conservation commission is December 6th.

5. NH Farm Museum is holding its Victorian Christmas and Horse Drawn Carriage Rides on December 2nd from 10-4:00PM. You can tour the farmhouse and help make decorations for the animals and outdoor Christmas Tree.

4.) NEW Business – Discussion and Possible Actions:

a.) Department Head Reports:

Public Works – Pat Smith:

Road grading with compaction has been completed on dirt roads. All roads impacted by the wash-outs have been repaired. Fall clean-up on Silver and Charles Streets have been completed to help keep the drainage systems open.

Solid Waste: Everything is good with the department.

Government Buildings: They finished the renovations at the new Town Hall. They cleaned and waxed all the floors and cleaned carpets. The septic has been pumped.

Winding Bridge – all approaches are now paved with barriers in place. When they met with HEB and the contractor they asked about lighting on the bridge. Mr. Smith said with the pressure treated decking, when it is wet and temperatures are below freezing, the bridge will be very slippery and used caution when using the bridge. Mr. Rawson said this area is very dark and asked if solar lighting could be a possibility. It is also inexpensive and could be a possible solution.

Ms. Burnham said Executive Counselor Kenney, along with the DOT Commission and Administrator were recently in Milton and talked about possible Rt. 125 signage. Mr. Smith said the Commissioner indicated they could use white on blue for the information sign. A sign with reflective arrows could be purchased at a minimal cost.

Mr. Williams thanked Pat and his crew for their great job. Regarding the lighting, Mr. Williams said the grant they will be accepting is more than what they expected. This grant could be used toward the cost.

Mr. Smith specially thanked his staff. The entire Public Works department did a great job and he thanked them for all the work they have done.

Fire Department – Chief Nick Marique:

Town of Middleton did receive his letter about the update to bills and increasing costs. They could possibly look to set up a meeting. He thanked Chief Krauss for presenting his budgetary information at the recent BOS/Budget Committee meeting. Regarding the open full-time position, there could be someone who may be interested in the position. He also stressed there are many communities in New Hampshire with vacancies they are unable to fill.

Police Department – Chief Richard Krauss:

The winter parking ban goes into effect on December 1st; this bans overnight parking from 10:30PM to 7:00AM in public ways and public parking lots. It's important residents adhere to this to allow snow removal and road treatments. He said most residents do follow the policy and said for the first two weeks after the parking ban starts they will receive warnings. He did say most of the problems occur on Charles Street. He questioned if the parking lot at the current Town Hall will be maintained after the move to the new Town Hall? DPW has a lot to do

already.

The speed trailer will be removed for winter storage. However the signs posted at Winding Road Bridge will be removed and can be used elsewhere.

He informed the Board that Secretary Nason has retired as of November 1st – he is working to fill the position.

Officer Matt Cummer has also left the Police Department to work elsewhere. He still has one officer going to academy in January.

The new Town Hall will have cabling installed on November 27th and he will then schedule both Back Bay and Consolidated Communications to get all their equipment installed.

The Fire and Police Departments are up and running with SIP. All seems to be working and they now have Caller ID. This all means the new Town Hall should be ready to move forward.

Cemetery – Stephen Duchesneau:

He said they are winding down for the year. In October there were five services and three in November. The monument company is still getting caught up. He talked with Jeff from the American Legion about the flags. They will pull all the flags and keep what the good ones for spares.

He recently met with John Katwick to review the end of year paperwork.

Cemeteries will remain open as long as the weather is good.

At the August BOS meeting, the members asked about tree estimates. Mr. Williams said they had been waiting for the third estimate. Mr. Duchesneau said he had given all the information to Mr. Jacobs. With the delay, they will need to hold off until June timeline.

Mr. Rawson asked if all the funeral homes now have his phone number? According to Mr. Duchesneau they have all been given his number. He also said the communication plan is in place to ensure no missed calls will occur.

Ms. Burnham asked who prepares the burial place? For a full burial, Dignified will come in. He also said the funeral homes usually plan all the details. Mr. Rawson asked if Mr. Duchesneau digs the hole, who gets paid for this? Mr. Duchesneau stated he thinks it's the town. Ms. Burnham asked if they have received payments? Mr. Duchesneau is working to setup the schedule to help determine prices, payments, etc.

b.) Moderator – Federal Primary Elections will be held January 23, 2024 at Nute High School Gymnasium: Moderator – Mike Beaulieu:

The primary election is scheduled for January 23, 2024. He did talk with Mr. Rawson since the election will be held at the Nute High School gymnasium.

Mr. Williams said they are not sure where the March election will be held yet. Mr. Jacobs said the September and November, 2024 elections should be held at the school. Mr. Williams said really only the March election could possibly be held at the new Town Hall. Mr. Jacobs said it gets confusing to voters when election locations keep getting bounced around. This leads to voters feeling disenfranchised and unhappy. He noted the NH Secretary of State takes these issues very seriously. Mr. Rawson suggested moving forward the School Superintendent will continue to work with the town regarding elections and as they offer ample parking it is a great

space to hold all elections.

- c.) **Special One Time Highway Payment pursuant to HB2 for the Maintenance, Repair and Construction of Highways – acceptance and assignment:** Mr. Williams said they received notice in November for this one-time payment of \$38,835.05.

Mr. Williams motioned to accept the payment of \$38,835.05. Mr. Rawson seconded the motion. All were in favor; the motion was approved.

Mr. Williams recommended \$9,000 be used to help with sand purchase with the remaining \$27,838 used to help pay off additional items. Mr. Jacobs said it sounds like this should go into the general fund. Mr. Rawson asked if revenue can be used to pay for sand? Mr. Jacobs will ask Joanne if this is considered this year's revenue, can it be spent in this year? Chief Krauss said no. Special monies received and accepted this year, will have to be spent after January 1st, 2024. He will with Joanne to make sure this goes into the appropriate line.

- d.) **Eversource Petition for Pole License Number 61-1640:**

Mr. Williams motioned to move forward with Eversource Petition for Pole License Number 61-1640. Ms. Burnham seconded the motion. All were in favor; the motion was approved.

- e.) **2024 Holiday Schedule – for review and approval:**

Looking forward into 2024, Mr. Jacobs said there are two holidays which need discussion. July 4th will fall on a Thursday and Christmas falls on Wednesday. For July 4th, there could possibly be a number of employees asking for Friday, July 5th off.

Ms. Burnham suggested December 24th either be a half-day or just close.

Chief Krauss said if any additional holidays or closed dates are approved, both the Fire and Police Department will have budget adjustments to make as their personnel do not get paid holidays; they receive payments two times each year in lieu of holidays. He suggested keeping departments open on those days and only allowing a certain number of employees to take the day as currently outlined in the employee handbook. Ms. Burnham said she is OK with December 24th as day off.

Mr. Jacobs pointed out he did not include June 19th on the upcoming schedule. The BOS will issue a Warrant Article for this holiday and let the voters decide.

Ms. Burnham motioned for Tuesday, December 24, 2024 as day off. Mr. Rawson seconded the motion. All were in favor; the motion was approved.

- f.) **FY2024 Budget Review:**

Mr. Williams reported the Budget Committee and BOS held a joint meeting. He said there are a few items they are waiting to get more information. Ann Nute, Library, will attend the next Budget Committee meeting. Chief Krauss said he and Chief Marique will get the additional

numbers regarding the approved additional holiday. Chief Marique said his quick figures indicate an additional \$1,200 for three employees between salary, retirement, and Medicare; Chief Krauss said he will determine the amount for his seven employees for the Police Department. They will finalize those numbers and send to the Budget Committee for their upcoming budget discussion. Mr. Williams said without any additional adjustments, the current projected 2024 budget stands at \$4,320 under the default.

Chief Marique said he is concerned about proposed reductions in two of his line-items; the Uniform line will be very tight with the decrease. The other is vehicle maintenance; he has already expended \$26,000 this year in maintenance; decreasing this line-item could be an issue. He will have more information closer to end of year. Mr. Williams indicated the Vehicle Maintenance line-item was not reduced.

- g.) **Encumbrances being considered:** This will be addressed at the next meeting; it will be very important to ensure nothing is missed.

Chief Marique said there are a few potential options for the expected ambulance purchase in 2025. The total contract is expected to be \$393,492 (\$12,000 under allotted amount); expect \$45,000 first year lease on ambulance. Ambulance delivery will be February, 2025.

Option #1- Take \$200,000 from the revolving account (per warrant article). Encumber \$45,000 from the 2023 budget (with three additional years of \$45,000 before final payment is due). This option would leave \$25,492 due, but requires no lease (could potentially get the \$25,000 from revolving account).

Option #2- Move forward with leasing and encumber \$45,000 in 2023 & 2024, this will mean \$103,000 due in February, 2025; three year lease.

Option #3- \$33,000 from Capital Reserve (approved two years ago) with three-year lease for \$27,000/year.

Chief Marique said it would be best to figure out a way to pay off without incurring lease interest costs. Option #1 is for three years with no interest and no lease required.

Mr. Jacobs asked if this had been approved last year, should this not be included under the debt services of the budget? Mr. Williams said yes, it should be for this year. Mr. Jacobs said it was raised this year as a Warrant Article, so would be under 2024 debt services. As of yet, it has not been included in the debt services line. Chief Marique said if it is encumbered now, next year direct \$90,000 to the sales company; upon ambulance delivery, take \$225,000 from revolving account which leaves one additional year (2025) with zero interest in debt services line so it ultimately is paid off with no interest required.

Mr. Rawson suggested selecting an option that has the least impact on the tax-payers. Mr. Jacobs said is this a decision for the seated Board in December, 2024? Mr. Williams said the current BOS can encumber \$45,000 for this year; however they cannot speak for any future

Board.

- h.) **Senior Tax Abatement – Qualifications:** Mr. Williams said this subject came in very late last year and the BOS was unable to really look at the information at that time. Qualifications are based on income

Katherine Ayers provided information on what surrounding communities are currently offering for low income senior tax abatements (also included Dover and Somersworth, both in Strafford County, and Manchester and Concord – NH two largest cities). The information indicated Wakefield has the lowest income level. Mr. Williams said Milton continues above the state level. Ms. Ayers said every community is able to make the figures higher if they want to.

Ms. Ayers explained she wanted to shine a light on one of Milton's treasures – the senior citizens of Milton. She recently attended a Senior Citizen luncheon held by the Milton Historical Society. She noted many talked about attending one-room school-houses in the town before moving in to Nute High School. They shared their memories about growing up in a small town. Milton's senior citizens are a great asset to the town and are volunteers, service givers and story tellers, helping the town's youth understand how things today are different from when they were growing up. Milton's seniors should be considered.

Ms. Ayers provided information to be used for setting the tax abatements for seniors. One is determining what is low income and what benefit should be offered to those individuals who are considered low income. She recommended the BOS prepare a Warrant Article for March vote using different factors to set new levels. Currently a single senior citizen's income is \$30,000 and low income married is \$40,000. A rule of thumb to help in consideration is no more than 30% of total income should be used toward rent and utilities. Based on today's higher rental costs, it is highly doubtful a low income single individual or married couple could qualify to rent an apartment. Ms. Ayers reported life expectancy has decreased slightly due to COVID.

She asked the BOS to consider what other communities are offering to their seniors and agree to what is low income and what can be offered. In the 2022 Town Report, the median value of house/property was \$225,100. Many of Milton's seniors live in much smaller homes. In additional expenses, like medical, rents, etc. have all increased.

Ms. Ayers applauded the seniors who continue to share their stories. The Women's Club and Historical Society need new volunteers. Mr. Williams said he looks forward to further discussions and appreciated Ms. Ayers for providing all of the information.

5.) EVENT PERMITS

- a.) There were none.

6.) OLD BUSINESS

- a.) 2022.02.04.00- 549 White Mountain Highway – status of building: Chief Krauss said there are no additional updates to report. The contractor tried to do a work-around from the agreement with the BOS; Chief Krauss has had no contact with the contractor since one of the original meetings. Mr. Williams said it's time to review the agreement and move forward with imposing a fine for every day the work is not completed. Chief Krauss will ask Brian Boyers to pull the cease & desist order given to them. Mr. Jacobs said the Fire Department will need to post the building as a hazard; upon doing that the town can start the \$275 per day fine process. They have tried to work with the owner and had warned them of consequences if not completed. Mr. Williams said they had agreed to completing this by Columbus Day weekend.
- b.) 2023.05.22 Townhouse Road Bridge Update: **A public hearing to present the plans for the Townhouse Road Bridge replacement will be held on December 9 at the Nute High School Cafeteria from 11-1:00PM.** Mr. Williams reported DOT is planning on attending the meeting to answer questions about the plan. There should be a very good showing since Lebanon, ME residents are invited to attend as well. Chief Krauss recommended as there will be a large number attending, Chief Marique should have one of his staff available to assist in case it gets close to or surpasses capacity in attendance.

Mr. Williams said they have been advised to move forward with getting \$330,000 specifically for this project. After that will be Church Street Bridge in Milton Mills. Chief Krauss said, depending on outcome of Item #B and December 9th meeting, he would suggest putting forth a Warrant Article to move funds out of that account and move it to Item #B. This way money has already been raised and appropriated. Winding Bridge is more important and has more direct impact on residents. If the BOS is going to write the Warrant Article, he recommended having a secondary public hearing to explain to the residents the reason for this.

- c.) Long-Term Goal – website functionality improvements: website functionality improvements: vendor solicitation Revise. Select date for workshop.
- d.) **New Town Hall, 55 Industrial Way- status update:** Ms. Burnham said they quoted blinds (not including the rec area) through Home Depot to cost \$1,235. There are ARPA fund monies available to cover this purchase. To all of the rec and chamber areas would cost an additional \$800-\$900. Their plan is to get the offices done first. She said to do all blinds would cost ~\$2,100.
She is also looking to purchase a refrigerator specifically for employee use. She estimates this cost to be \$1,400-\$2,000. She hopes to get \$1,500 for the existing fridge. She stressed there will be many items that will not be moved from the current Town Hall to new Town Hall. There will also be lots of cleanup to happen at the current Town Hall.
- e.) 2023.11.06.01 Winding Road Bridge – status update: Mr. Smith provided this update as part of his Department head report.
- f.) 2023.11.06.02 Charles Street Pumping Station – status update: Completed.

- g.) **2023.09.25 Town Beach Boat Ramp – follow-up:** Mr. Williams showed photos recently taken of the current boat ramp. Photos showed broken concrete, areas where the tar drops 3 to 4 inches and is now gravel, and other hazards. He said there might be a temporary option for next season which would include grading and adding reinforced concrete.

Mr. Rawson said this option could hold them over until next Fall. He stressed they have to do something. Mr. Williams said purchasing materials like concrete can be covered through town funds, possibly using the Beauty and Betterment of Town Fund. Mr. Rawson reminded everyone they did accept the Boat Ramp Grant.

7.) Communications Received:

- a.) Funding letter from NHDOT for new business item 4.

8.) Other Business That May Come Before the Board:

- a) Liner repair project: The final bill was paid; certificate needs to be signed.
- b) Wright Pierce: They were asked how much it would cost to do a sewer rate study. The cost for a full study would be \$26,500; this includes work already completed. The adjusted cost is ~\$20,000. This will be added to next meeting agenda.
- c) John at the Farm Museum: Mr. Rawson said John would like to attend a meeting and discuss moving the old schoolhouse located at Plummer's Ridge to the Farm Museum. This is one of the last remaining one-room schoolhouses left in Milton. This will be added to the next meeting agenda.
- d) Karen Golab had previously requested space at the new Town Hall for memorable pictures to hang.
- e) Ms. Burnham reported she will have a mock directory and signage to bring to the next meeting.

9.) Approval of Minutes:

Non-Public Minutes: **None**

Public Minutes:

November 16, 2023 – Mr. Williams motioned **to accept 11/16/2023 public minutes**. Ms. Burnham seconded the motion. All were in favor; the motion was accepted.

10.) Public Comments Relative to Topics Previously Discussed:

Katherine Ayers – It sounds like the move to new Town Hall is getting close. Would the BOS share any thoughts on what the plans are for the current building and lot. Mr. Williams said they have talked with Strafford Regional Planning. One possible option is senior housing, along with many other things. They will need to speak with County Assistance to help figure out what to do with the building. Ms. Burnham recommends privatization. Mr. Williams said they would hold a public

hearing before any decision was made.

Bob Carrier: As a resident on Winding Road, the contractor did a great job. As work was underway, there was little interference for the public. There are reflectors on both sides of the bridge; however, drivers still need to be careful. A light would also be good.

11.) Expenditure Reports:

12.) Town Administrator:

1. The next public meeting of the Board will be December 6, 2023.
2. The Board expects to set the tax rate later this month. Date and time to be determined. Chief Krauss said the state has all the required documents; the town can move forward with completing the tax rate.

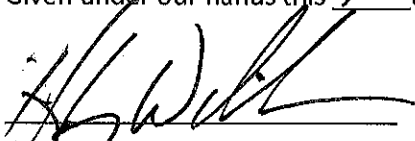
13.) Selectmen Comments:

1. Ms. Burnham: They recently got notice of plans to build a luxury nursing home – estimated cost \$170M. The cost could actually go as high as \$230M. This will cause a huge increase in county tax and have a detrimental impact to tax-payers. The Strafford County Commissioners are holding a public meeting on Thursday, December 7th at 6:00PM (CAFÉ CONFERENCE ROOM 259 COUNTY FARM ROAD, LOWER LEVEL, DOVER or via Zoom) to address concerns about the overall costs to individual tax-payer. Ms. Burnham stressed it is important to have people attend this meeting. Mr. Williams said this information will be made available to the public on the town's website.
2. Mr. Rawson: Regarding 24 Silver Street – the town can legally take it now as a tax deed (as of October). It has been three years for this property. There are a number of tax-deeded properties – the town should get moving on them. Mr. Jacobs said there is also 15 Porter Lane, and a house on Dawson. He will ask the BOS to look into moving 24 Silver Street. This process will start with sending a 90-day letter to the owner (or family members); they have an additional 90-days to respond back to that letter indicating if they plan to redeem the property or not. Once this has expired, the town can do the tax-deed. This should be resolved in 2024.
3. Mr. Rawson: A special thanks to Matt Cumber. He really touched a lot of people in town. He touched a lot of children at the school. A thank you to Matt for his service. He will be missed.
4. Mr. Williams: The next Planning Board meeting will hold a public hearing on the town ordinance changes to the wetlands.
5. Mr. Williams wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

14.) Adjournment:

Mr. Williams motioned to adjourn the public meeting. Mr. Rawson seconded the motion. All were in favor; the motion passed. The public meeting adjourned at 8:30PM.

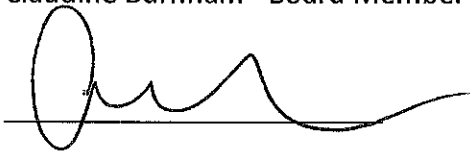
Given under our hands this 4TH day of December, 2023.



Humphrey Williams – Chairman BOS



Claudine Burnham - Board Member



Andrew Rawson - Board Member

END OF MINUTES – November 20, 2023