



**TOWN OF NORTHWOOD
BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

**Town of Northwood 818 First NH Turnpike Northwood, NH 03261
(603) 942-5586**

**Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes
October 24, 2023**

ROLL CALL: Chairman Hal Kreider, Vice-Chairman Tim Colby, Select Board Member James Guzofski, and Select Board Member Pam Sanderson. Select Board Member Beth Boudreau is excused.

STAFF PRESENT: Town Administrator Neil Irvine, Finance Director Cheryl Eastman, and PW Foreman Chris Brown.

6:00 P.M. Chairman Kreider opened the Northwood Board of Selectmen meeting with a roll call and led the pledge of allegiance.

Citizen's Forum:

Jim Hadley, Old Mountain Road, addressed the Board regarding the membership renewal for clean Energy-NH and the upcoming annual conference. The membership is set to expire on December 22, 2023. Jim is recommending the Board renew the membership for \$250.00. Jim also informed the Board that Clean Energy-NH is holding their annual conference on November 2 in Manchester and urged the Town Administrator and one Board member to attend. Jim also informed the Board that he is on the agenda at the October 26 Rockingham County Board of Commissioners meeting asking them to establish a Community Power program for Rockingham County. If they do so, any town in Rockingham County that has not already developed their own plan could join under the County. Chairman Kreider advised Jim to contact Neil Irvine to discuss the Community Power programs.

Approve Minutes: October 10, 2023:

P. Sanderson clarified on line 191 that the Board is waiting for a letter from Ted Wilkinson resigning from his full member position on the Zoning Board and request to be appointed as an alternate member, and a letter from MaryEllen Brown requesting to be appointed a full member instead of her alternate position.

Motion: "To approve the minutes of October 10, 2023, as amended."

Motion: P. Sanderson

Second: T. Colby

Motion carried by vote of 3 - 0 - 1 with J. Guzofski abstaining.

Consent Agenda:

Payroll Manifest dated October 18, 2023, Batch #101823 for \$56,413.42.

43 Accounts Payable Manifest dated October 18, 2023, Batch #135 for \$38,129.55. \$34,134 of the total was
44 a payment to the NH Retirement System.

45 Accounts Payable manifest dated October 25, 2023, Batch #136 for \$174,726.17. There are six items of
46 note on this manifest, including a payment of \$71,521.74 for the cab & chassis for the ambulance remount
47 project, \$6,911 to CMA Engineers, part of which is due from trust funds, \$30,363.44 to HealthTrust for
48 employee insurances, a payment to the IRS for \$12,118.70, \$17,115.52 for C&D hauling & tipping, and
49 \$6,878 for gravel and grader rental.

50 Abatements:

51 Map 224, Lot 9, Spirit of Adventure Council

52 **Motion: "To approve the consent agenda as presented"**

53 **Motion: P. Sanderson**

54 **Second: J. Guzofski**

55 **Motion carried by vote of 4 to 0.**

56

57 **Transfer Station Vacancies:**

58 PW Foreman Brown announced that the Transfer Station has already lost one employee, and another is
59 working out his two-week notice. That means two vacancies on top of the vacant seasonal
60 Highway/Transfer Station position. He is asking the Board for approval to start the hiring process for a
61 potential candidate.

62 **Motion: "To go into a non-public session under RSA 91A:3 II (b) – hiring."**

63 **Motion: P. Sanderson**

64 **Second: T. Colby**

65 **Motion carried by roll call vote 4 – 0.**

66

67 **Motion: "To come out of non-public session."**

68 **Motion: J. Guzofski**

69 **Second: P. Sanderson**

70 **Motion carried by roll call vote 4 – 0.**

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72 **Motion: "To seal the minutes of the non-public session for five years."**

73 **Motion: J. Guzofski**

74 **Second: P. Sanderson**

75 **Motion carried by vote of 4 -0.**

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77 **Volunteer Appointments/Reappointments to Board and Committees:**

78 Zoning Board Appointments: Ted Wilkinson has resigned from his full-member position on the Zoning
79 Board and has requested he be appointed as an alternate member. The Board thanked Ted for the
80 contributions he has made to the town over the years. The ZBA is recommending Alternate member
81 MaryEllen Brown be appointed as a full member. Ms. Brown has indicated a willingness to serve as a
82 regular member. The consensus of the Board was to approve the appointments.

83

84 Conservation Commission Appointment: Priscilla Merrill has requested to be appointed as a full member
85 to the Conservation Commission. Ms. Merrill currently serves on the Commission as an alternate and the
86 move to regular member comes with the support of the Commission. Consensus of the Board was to make
87 the appointment.

88

89 As she is currently an alternate member the term limit expiration will remain unchanged to maintain the
90 staggered expirations.

91
92 P. Sanderson also announced that Ted Wilkinson has also resigned from the Budget Committee. The
93 Board acknowledged and accepted his resignation.
94

95 **Town Administrator’s Report:**

96 Staffing: The challenges of delivering the expected services to our residents using part-time labor are
97 becoming apparent as the Building Inspector/Code Enforcement position remains vacant, as do the 3
98 vacancies at DPW. The PD vacancy for a full-time Patrol Officer also remains. Not only are we competing
99 with neighboring municipalities, but we are also competing with the private sector in a very tight labor
100 market, and with the increasing costs for childcare, insurances, housing, etc. part-time with no benefits
101 does not position us as an employer of choice.

102 In addition to reviewing and approving payroll and an off-cycle AP, progress was made this past week on:
103 Town Office Sign: Mr. Schroth has made significant progress on the wall around the base of the digital
104 signboard. He anticipates the work being completed by the end of the month.

105 Public Safety Building: I had discussions with the NH Bond Bank regarding interest rates and terms for
106 various bond amounts and will be presenting an analysis of the impact on the municipal tax rate to the
107 Safety Facility Committee at their meeting on the 25th, along with research conducted on a definition for
108 “Response Time” and NFPA standards & National Best Practices.

109 Lagoon & Landfill: Consulted with GZA Environmental, who specialize in these types of projects for a
110 second opinion on scope and cost on closing the septage lagoons in accordance with DES regulations, in
111 addition to input on developing a landfill closure plan which will be acceptable to DES.

112 Abandoned Property: After a conversation amongst other Municipal Managers, TA Irvine located and
113 submitted claims for monies held in the name of the Town being held by the State as abandoned property.
114 Also found money in Vermont under the Town’s name and submitted a claim for that as well.

115 Fire Department: TA Irvine met with Chief Tetreault to discuss the department roster and lack of
116 participation by call members. The Town has significant investment in gear and equipment which needs
117 to be freed up if a member is no longer able to participate. Letters will be sent to each member articulating
118 the Town’s expectations for participation and inviting a dialogue with the Chief about being on the roster
119 going forward.

120 Policy Review: TA Irvine has identified a policy, adopted in 2000, which established a procedure to access
121 legal counsel to control legal expenses. This policy requires updating and will be presented to the Board
122 for their consideration and adoption.

123 Future meetings: TA Irvine recommends the Board meet on October 31 at 6:00 p.m. as a budget workshop.
124 At the regular meeting on November 7 the Board can take up any outstanding budget items. The budget
125 work can conclude on November 14 and 28. The Board agreed.
126

127 **Ambulance Remount Update:**

128 The actual cost of the ambulance remount project exceeded the \$200,000 warrant article voted by the
129 taxpayers. Unfortunately, Autotronics sold the available chassis while we identified funding ability and
130 receiving Board approval to proceed. The fire department found a cab and chassis that will work in Texas.
131 The final quote is \$247,837.44. This was a difference of \$200 in sourcing the chassis ourselves. TA Irvine
132 and FD Eastman worked this week to make sure the funding sources will work within the guidance of the
133 voters. We will be using funds from the operating budget to make up the difference in the estimate and
134 actual bids. The \$47,837.44 cost overage is being applied to the operating budget now. The balance on
135 the cab & chassis will be used from the Ambulance Fund. The balance of the \$75,000 from the Ambulance
136 Fund will cover the first payment on the lease. The four-year lease will start in 2025. Chairman Kreider
137 reminded the Board that the \$47,837 is the amount to front load the buying down of the tax rate this
138 year.

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Boy Scouts of America:

At the last meeting, the Board had discussed the abatement for the Boy Scouts to reinstate their tax-exempt status. The interest refund was in question because why should the town pay for the Boy Scouts error? The Boy Scouts have agreed to forego the interest. An abatement refund will be for the same amount as the taxes they paid.

Motion: “To reinstate the tax-exempt status for the Spirit of America Council BSA, Map 224, Lot 9 and grant an abatement refund in the amount of \$55,514.

Motion: T. Colby

Second: P. Sanderson

Motion carried by vote of 4 – 0.

Letter of Recognition:

Kyle DeGrace started as a Fire Explorer and has now earned his EMT-B certification. TA Irvine has a certificate of recognition for EMT DeGrace. TA Irvine will coordinate giving it to Kyle at a fire department training or at a coming Board of Selectmen meeting.

County Warrant:

The warrant for the county taxes was received for 2023 at \$566,539. This is approximately \$0.61 cents on the tax rate.

Primex Insurance Rates 2024:

Rates for 2024 from Primex were received. Workman’s Compensation insurance went up to \$45,548. Property/Liability insurance went up to \$66,068. Unemployment insurance went down to \$2,354.

Abandoned Property:

The total abandoned property claims that have been submitted to Nh and VT is about \$1,000.

Northwood Republicans recognizing Veterans:

The Northwood Republican party will be hosting coffee and donuts for Veteran’s Day at the transfer station.

Use of Athletic Fields:

A request has been received to use the athletic fields on October 26th at 6:30 for a vigil.

Budget Discussion:

TA Irvine discussed the calendar for the budget work and expectations for the upcoming meetings. He asked the Board for any questions or requests for information in advance of the work session on Oct 31. He also explained the weakness in the MTS budget module reporting module. The original operating budget in these reports includes the COLA warrant article amounts and throws off the variance amounts when comparing the proposed budget to the prior budget. TA Irvine has met the Budget Committee Chair Ginger Dole to discuss the issue. P. Sanderson asked that there is a clear report given to the Budget Committee to alleviate any possible confusion. Chairman Kreider asked the department heads to go back through their budgets and look for any savings related to facilities. The Safety Facilities Committee is not sure yet what will be proposed, but he would like the budgets to reflect that we are not going to do anything with buildings until a plan is decided. We need to operate only on the bare minimum on facilities until then. Chairman Kreider also said things like the book preservation for the Tax Collector’s office could possibly be held off a year or proposed to do less books in 2024. P. Sanderson talked about the lagoon

187 and transfer station closure expenses and that they should be included in the CIP, or to fund the
188 Expendable Trust Fund. Chairman Kreider stated it is hard because we don't know yet what it will cost.

189

190 **Renewal of NH Clean Energy Membership:**

191 **Motion: "To renew Northwood's membership in Clean Energy NH for \$250."**

192 **Motion: P. Sanderson**

193 **Second: T. Colby**

194 TA Irvine said he wanted to clarify that he does not have experience with implementing a coalition but
195 has been at the table with towns that have. He would use Town Administrators from these towns who
196 have done it already as a resource. He said if the town does set up a program, everyone in town would
197 automatically be included and if someone did not want to utilize it, they would have to opt out of the
198 program. Some people feel this is a government mandate and don't trust it. Also, the utility provider we
199 have now would remain as they are still responsible for the infrastructure and billing. He feels having the
200 County on board could make a big difference by increasing the group negotiating for power. J. Guzofski
201 would like to hear from other towns before he approves renewing the membership.

202 **Motion carried by vote of 3 to 1 with J. Guzofski against.**

203

204 **Post Office Complaints:**

205 P. Sanderson said she has received many complaints from various residents and Board members in town
206 about the post office delivery of local mail. Packets of information for board members are mailed to be
207 delivered at least 10 days prior to the meetings. Town Office staff brings them to the post office and lets
208 them know they are all going to Northwood addresses and to please not send them to Manchester first.
209 Lately packets have been routed through Manchester, which has caused delays in receiving the
210 information. TA Irvine said we have no jurisdiction over the post office, but assured the Board that nothing
211 malicious or spiteful is being done. A recent change in postal procedures requires that all mail be counted
212 to calculate carrier's pay rates and to be counted, the mail must go through the Manchester sorting
213 facility. The Board discussed options, including sending all packets electronically or board members
214 picking up packets at the town hall. These options would also save a considerable amount of money
215 spent on postage. Chairman Kreider asked TA Irvine to contact our federal representatives to see what
216 can be done about this issue.

217

218 **Board Committee Reports:**

219 P. Sanderson said:

220 - The Zoning Board is still seeking two alternate positions. The Board meets once a month on the 3rd
221 Thursday from 6:30 to 9:30 at the latest.

222 - The Budget Committee has a vacancy.

223 - The 250th Committee is holding a trivia night tomorrow at Johnson's from 5:30 to 8.

224

225 Chairman Kreider said the Safety Facilities Committee is meeting tomorrow night.

226

227 P. Sanderson mentioned complaints about speeding on Route 107 North and the dangerous 90-degree
228 corner and "s" turns. Route 107 is a state road, and all concerns must go to the State.

229 **At 7:21:**

230 **Motion: "To go into a non-public session under RSA 91-A:3 II (c) reputation."**

231 **Motion: T. Colby**

232 **Second: P. Sanderson**

233 **Motion carried by roll call vote by 4 – 0.**

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236 **At 7:34:**

237 **Motion: "To come out of non-public session."**

238 **Motion: P. Sanderson**

239 **Second: T. Colby**

240 **Motion carried by roll call vote of 4 -0.**

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242 **Motion: "To seal the non-public minutes for five years."**

243 **Motion: P. Sanderson**

244 **Second: J. Guzofski**

245 **Motion carried by vote of 4 to 0.**

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247 **At 7:35:**

248 **Motion: "Motion to adjourn"**

249 **Motion: P. Sanderson**

250 **Second: T. Colby**

251 **Motion carried by vote of 4 to 0.**

252

253 Minutes respectfully submitted by

254 Cheryl Eastman

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