



**TOWN OF NORTH HAMPTON, NEW HAMPSHIRE
NORTH HAMPTON SELECT BOARD MEETING**

OCTOBER 23, 2023 7:00 PM

NORTH HAMPTON TOWN HALL

DRAFT MINUTES

SELECT BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Jonathan Pinette, Vice-Chairman James Sununu,
Selectman James Maggiore

ALSO PRESENT: Town Administrator Michael Tully, Police Chief Robert LaBarge

Chairman Pinette welcomed everyone to the Select Board Regular Meeting of October 23, 2023, and called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Motion: To seal the minutes of Non-Public Sessions I and II of October 23, 2023

Motioned: Selectman Maggiore

Seconded: Vice-Chair Sununu

Vote: Motion approved 3-0

First Public Comment Session

Phone: 603-758-1447

Chairman Pinette opened the first Public Comment Session at 7:06 pm; no comments.

Consent Calendar

- 6.1 Payroll Manifest of September 28, 2023 in the amount of \$133,985.34
- 6.3 Accounts Payable Manifest of September 28, 2023 in the amount of \$103,519.76
- 6.4 Payroll Manifest of October 5, 2023 in the amount of \$247,250.46
- 6.5 Payroll Manifest of October 12, 2023 in the amount of \$80,795.56
- 6.6 Accounts Payable Manifest of October 12, 2023 in the amount of \$737,669.20

Disclaimer –These minutes are prepared by the Recording Secretary within five (5) business days as required by NH RSA 91-A:2, II. They will not be finalized until approved by majority vote of the Select Board.

A recording of the meeting can be found at: http://www.townhallstreams.com/towns/north_hampton_nh, and a DVD recording is available at the North Hampton Town Administrative Offices, 233 Atlantic Avenue, North Hampton, New Hampshire 03862.

6.7 Payroll Manifest of October 19, 2023 in the amount of \$81,393.08

6.8 Petition and Pole License 10/375

Motion: To approve Consent Calendar items as presented.

Motioned: Selectman Maggiore

Seconded: Vice-Chair Sununu

Vote: Motion approved 3-0

Correspondence – None

Committee Updates

Selectman Maggiore said there is a *Heritage Commission* item under Public Hearing; historic piece of bridge which will be located on the Rail Trail. *Water Commission* has not met but a meeting is forthcoming.

Vice-Chair Sununu said *Rails to Trails Committee* has not met but there will be an update later in the meeting. *Budget Committee* is beginning its fall season October 30th at 6:30 pm to review Default Budgets and review end-of-year for FY closed on June 30, 2023.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

9.1 To Present Information and Receive Comments About the Proposed North Hampton Electric Aggregation

Chairman Pinette opened the Public Hearing at 7:09 pm.

Vice-Chair Sununu said by State Law in 2021 communities can form an Aggregation Committee and adopt a plan that allows them to go out to and solicit electric rates on behalf of the community, replacing rates provided by default service provider (Eversource). The plan requires a Warrant Article and this is the first of two required Public Hearings.

Stuart Ormsbee of Colonial Power Group said if the Town decides to move forward as a buying group on behalf of residents, customers currently active in the market themselves will not be interrupted and will continue to buy their own power. This plan is an opt-out program where customers will be enrolled unless they actively decide to get out and can opt out at any time without penalty. The current provider buys power for consumers twice yearly whatever the rate; Aggregation can look for lows in the market to provide as low a rate as possible and also provide product options.

Mr. Ormsbee said price stability is a key option with all decisions made locally by the town; Colonial Power is an administering program with all work outsourced to Colonial; Eversource continues to control wires, poles and keeping lights on; billing remains the same with a change in one line-item on the bill for *power supply*. If a customer currently has Budget Billing or emergency assistance, those will continue. Net-metered customers will not be treated on an opt-out basis but will be invited to join if they wish; a dedicated website will be set up by Colonial.

Mr. Ormsbee said under Plan Development and Approval they will be holding public hearings with the next one held in 3-weeks then plan back to Select Board for approval and Warrant; residents vote at Town

Meeting in March; if passed, plan will be filed with PUC for review and approval by May/June 2024 with program launch in 3rd quarter of 2024. The Town is then free to go forward if there is a good opportunity or when rates are below utility service rates; after running competitive RFPs the Town will sign a contract; Colonial has 4-5 suppliers actively bidding and serving on plans throughout New England.

Janet Larsen of 121 Post Road asked what local decisions the town would be making once the contract has been signed and program running. Mr. Ormsbee said Colonial will issue a competitive RFP to suppliers and prices collected will be shared with Town Administrator, acting as point person on behalf of the Select Board. After review with the Town Administrator, if pricing is attractive, a binding bid will be provided to Town Administrator/Select Board; this is a Town program with Colonial acting as administrators.

Vice-Chair Sununu said eventually our agreement with Colonial Power will be reviewed after a term of 5 years and to consider other companies. He said sometimes there is a short window to agree or not agree and the Town Administrator can make sure we get in before market changes; the draft aggregation plan is on the Town's website and this presentation will also be posted; the second Public Hearing will be held November 13, 2023.

Mr. Ormsbee added that the document describes the structure of the program with products always changing and Colonial does not want to restrict or limit options the Town can take advantage of.

Chairman Pinette closed the Public Hearing.

9.2 To Consider the Unanticipated Revenue in the Amount of \$10,000 Awarded to the North Hampton Heritage Commission from the Josephine A. Lamprey Revocable Trust of 1999 for its Unrestricted Uses and Purposes

Selectman Maggiore spoke for the Chair of the Heritage Commission Donna Etela, whose husband recently passed away and expressed the Board's condolences. He said a letter was received in September from Attorney Casassa stating that the North Hampton Heritage Commission was the recipient of \$10,000 from the Josephine A. Lamprey Revocable Trust for its unrestricted use and purposes.

Chairman Pinette opened the Public Hearing at 7:36 pm; no comments; closed Public Hearing.

Motion: To accept unanticipated revenue in the amount of \$10,000 awarded to the North Hampton Heritage Commission from the Josephine A. Lamprey Revocable Trust of 1999 for its unrestricted uses and purposes.

Motioned: Vice-Chair Sununu

Seconded: Selectman Maggiore

Vote: Motion approved 3-0

9.3 To Consider the Unanticipated Revenue in the Amount of \$11,822.44 Awarded to the Town of North Hampton from the United States Postal Inspection Service Investigations Asset Forfeiture Unit

Police Chief Robert LaBarge said on March 3, 2020, North Hampton Police and the US Postal Inspectors conducted a joint investigation which led to a conviction regarding seized assets and received shared money in the amount of \$11,822.44, with funds to be used for Law Enforcement purposes.

Janet Larsen of 121 Post Road asked for details on the cause of the investigation. Chief LaBarge said it was a narcotics investigation with defendant convicted in Federal Court and sentenced to 18 months in a plea deal and the money is part of seized assets with drugs shipped through the mail.

Victor Rivera of Walnut Avenue asked if this was a simple forfeiture and if the Town could eventually be held responsible if conviction overturned. Police Chief LaBarge said the defendant had to agree to forfeiture as part of the plea deal and said he did not foresee that happening. Vice-Chair Sununu said this is not a case where someone's assets were seized because he was arrested; he was tried, convicted, and had to surrender the criminal proceeds as part of sentencing.

Police Chief LaBarge said the case is concluded and if the defendant were to go back to Federal Court and reject his plea deal, he would potentially face a up to 10 years in prison. He said the money came in through the Federal Government and they will keep it if f the Town does not take it, and the money will be put into North Hampton for legitimate community services. Ms. Larsen suggested using the money for community education around the use of Fentanyl and how to resuscitate with Narcan.

Chairman Pinette closed the Public Hearing at 7:48 pm.

Motion: To accept unanticipated revenue in the amount of \$11,822.44 awarded to the Town of North Hampton from the US Postal Inspection Service Investigations Asset Forfeiture Unit.

Motioned: Vice-Chair Sununu

Seconded: Selectman Maggiore

Vote: Motion approved 3-0

Report of the Town Administrator

Report September 26 – October 20, 2023: Finance: 71% of Budget remaining with 37 weeks left in FY; Police: Deputy Chief position advertised and resume period closed, candidate identified for open officer position; Fire: interviews for Deputy Chief concluded and candidate identified, participated in Seabrook Power Plant drill; REC: Golf Tournament at Sagamore a great success; Highway: completed drainage project on town campus; PFAS work continues on easement with DES requesting a different avenue for water line, landowner contacted; Vertex Tower returning to Board November 7th; Coakley Landfill meeting October 31st; Mr. Savastano continuing work with Comcast on HDTV channel.

Vice-chair Sununu said North Hampton Trick or Treat will be held October 30th 4:00 to 7:00 pm; Selectman Maggiore said there will be a Turkey Bowl at Dearborn Park with flag football Sunday November 19, 2023.

Items Left on the Table

NEW BUSINESS

12.1 Building Update from Marc Jobin

Clerk of the Works Marc Jobin said base paving is in and curbing around site; temporary striping has been done; loam and seed out front and in landscaping areas; overhead doors in back and in sally port installed; front overhead doors next week; main building tile in all bathrooms and final flooring/carpet; finished mechanical, electrical and plumbing continuing; on target for end of November with furniture ordered to be delivered around Thanksgiving; departments should be able to move in December.

Town Administrator Tully said the striping is temporary with base coat, waiting on topcoat for next spring. Selectman Maggiore said the walkway in front of the Town Clerk/Tax Collector's office was designed by Laurie Etela (husband of Donna Etela), with costs for cobblestone walkway funded by residents.

12.2 Discussion of FY2025 Health Insurance Renewal Rates

Town Administrator Tully said he and Ms. Janet Facella went to Health Trust for explanation of healthcare rates coming up for budgeting and the drivers behind those rates. He said the increase for North Hampton is 25% driven by claims history, which will be in the Budget taken to the Budget Committee. For 2 years the Town got reimbursed funds during COVID and people are now going back to doctors. Health Trust likes to keep their Reserves at \$90 Million but it is now at \$23 Million, and a 5% increase was added on top of the rate to continue to pay claims.

Town Administrator Tully said 1% of medications Health Trust insures made up 55% of yearly medication budget, and 1% of insured people used up over 35% of the budget; 95% of New Hampshire communities use Health Trust.. Change of Health Insurance Plans saved the Town a quarter of a Million dollars; North Hampton received a rate of 20% increase with 5% added on.

Vice-Chair Sununu said premiums on the most expensive plan at Health Trust are now approximately \$76,000/year for a family plan, with North Hampton's plan about half that; Healthcare Budget will still be going up significantly. Selectman Maggiore said the Board had lengthy discussions in Workshop Meetings, but the costs are unavoidable and have to be accounted for.

12.3 Discussion of Trail Head for Ongoing Rail Trail Project

Vice-Chair Sununu said technically the Rail Trail corridor remains closed while being worked on but is getting some use. The committee met with DOT Commission Bill Cass who checked out the progress firsthand and discussed the timeframe and use of the DOT lot, with long-term plan to build a new shed on South Road property. DOT was amenable to providing access to that property as soon as possible to use end of lot for parking, and once trail is completed will assist in prepping that property to make more room.

He said all piled up pavement will be removed and brush cleared from either side of the lot; small fence will be erected to keep public from DOT work areas and DOT will help put in a graded entry to the trails. The lot will hold about 30 vehicles once brush cleared out and will provide a main trailhead already available for the Town.

MINUTES OF PRIOR MEETINGS

13.1 Approval of Minutes of Regular Meeting of September 25, 2023

Motion: To approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of September 25, 2023, as presented.

Motioned: Vice-Chair Sununu

Seconded: Selectman Maggiore

Vote: Motion approved 3-0

13.2 Approval of Minutes of Non-Public Meeting of September 25, 2023

Motion: To approve the Non-Public Meeting Minutes of September 25, 2023, as presented.

Motioned: Vice-Chair Sununu

Seconded: Selectman Maggiore

Vote: Motion approved 3-0

13.3 Approval of Workshop Minutes of October 11, 2023

Motion: To approve the Workshop Minutes of October 11, 2023 as presented.

Motioned: Vice-Chair Sununu

Seconded: Selectman Maggiore

Vote: Motion approved 3-0

13.4 Approval of Workshop Minutes of October 17, 2023

Motion: To approve the Workshop Minutes of October 17, 2023 as presented.

Motioned: Vice-Chair Sununu

Seconded: Selectman Maggiore

Vote: Motion approved 3-0

Any Other Item that may legally come before the Board

Second Public Comment Session

Phone: 603-758-1447

Chairman Pinette opened Public Comment at 8:13 pm.

Victor Rivera commented that the information for Rail Trail parking was fantastic and said it would be good to have a rendering showing demarcation. He said there is an access way at the airport where you can walk through which could possibly be shared with a private owner. He asked about a possible pedestrian bridge at the south end of town on Route 1. Vice-Chair Sununu said he spoke about that with Commissioner Cass and the bridge is scheduled for replacement in 2027-2028; road would be returned to grade and a pedestrian bridge added.

Chairman Pinette closed Public Comment at 8:18 pm and adjourned the meeting.

Next Regular Meeting: November 13, 2023

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Pinette adjourned the meeting at 8:18 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Denmark, Recording Secretary