

**Town of New Hartford
Board of Selectmen
Special Meeting
Minutes
November 30, 2023**

Present: First Selectman Dan Jerram, Selectman Alesia Kennerson, Selectman Laura Garay, Selectman-elect Mary Beth Greenwood, Executive Assistant Christine Hayward.

Others in attendance: Jay Bailey, Bud Butler, Wes Marsh and several attendees virtually

First Selectman Jerram called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM.

Establish Charge for Sewer Extension Building Committee:

First Selectman Jerram introduced Bud Butler and Wes Marsh, two members of the Water Pollution Control Authority who are willing to be appointed to serve as members of the Pine Meadow Sewer Extension Building Committee.

Bud has been an active member of several building committees and has the experience to guide this committee. Mr. Butler distributed copies of a Draft Charge for the Building Committee along with the charge of the Post Sale Transition Team and the question that was taken to Referendum regarding the sale of the water and sewer assets.

Bud stated that the draft charge was written to address the approved referendum question. He felt it was necessary to spell it out so that it matched what the voters approved.

Mr. Butler commented that the Pine Meadow Sewer Project may include a request for bidders, meaning that the committee may reach out to certain vendors to see if there is interest in bidding on the project as well as an invitation to bid that will be advertised.

Selectman Greenwood felt that the charge was well written and expressed her thanks to Mr. Butler and Mr. Marsh for the time they spent creating this document. The Selectmen reviewed the Charge and agreed that they would like to have some time to think about it before making any formal recommendations.

Appointment to Sewer Extension Building Committee:

The Selectman discussed establishing the Pine Meadow Sewer Extension Building Committee. They commented that the draft charge will be reviewed and finalized at the next meeting of the Board of Selectmen; however, they want to establish the committee so that they can begin to meet as soon as they wish.

MOTION: by Garay to establish the Pine Meadow Sewer Extension Building Committee, seconded by Kennerson.

Unanimous.

Mr. Jerram informed the Board that he would like to recommend that Denton (Bud) Butler, Wes Marsh and Scott Goff be appointed to serve as members of the Committee. They have all expressed an interest and willingness to be appointed to serve.

MOTION: by Kennerson to appoint Denton (Bud) Butler, Wes Marsh and Scott Goff to serve as members of the Pine Meadow Sewer Extension Building Committee.

Unanimous.

Appointments to Boards and Commissions:

The Selectmen discussed the status of the Conservation Commission, noting that this Commission has been inactive for a couple of years. The Selectmen agreed that 11 members on a commission is a large number and it is difficult to find volunteers to serve on Boards and Commissions. They felt that it might be wise to amend the Ordinance to require fewer members. This will be investigated. Selectman Garay asked if there is a need for both a Conservation Commission and an Open Space Commission and wondered if the duties of the two Commissions could be combined. She noted that the Open Space Commission is very active and meets regularly. Jerram agreed that since the Open Space Commission was formed, the Conservation Commission was not as active. He stated that the Open Space Commission has more latitude to make recommendations and take specific action whereas the Conservation Commission was more advisory. He will discuss with the current Chairman.

Selectman Jerram stated that Evelyn Bushy was referred by Economic Development Chairman Brian Watson as a candidate for the EDC. Ms. Bushy owns the newly opened Village Market and Café in Bakerville and is interested in being a member of this Commission.

MOTION: by Garay to appoint Evelyn Bushy as a member to the Economic Development Commission to a term that expires December 31, 2024; seconded by Kennerson.

Selectman Garay commented that Ms. Bushy will be a great addition to the Board, noting that she has lengthy business experience.

Unanimous.

MOTION: by Kennerson to reappoint Catherine (Cat) Kinne as a member of the Historic District Commission; term to expire December 31, 2028; seconded by Garay.

Mr. Jerram expressed thanks to Cat for her service and willingness to continue to serve as the Chairman.

Unanimous.

First Selectman Jerram informed the Board members that Jamie Hall has resigned from the Inland Wetlands Commission. Dan expressed his thanks to Mr. Hall for his many years of service.

MOTION: by Garay to reappoint Ira Kline to serve as a member of the Inland Wetlands Commission, term to expire December 31, 2026; seconded by Kennerson.

Unanimous.

MOTION: by Garay to reappoint Charles Blow to serve as a member of the Inland Wetlands Commission, term to expire December 31, 2026; seconded by Kennerson.

Unanimous

MOTION: by Kennerson to reappoint Steve Unger to serve as a member of the Inland Wetlands Commission, term to expire December 31, 2026; seconded by Garay.

Unanimous

MOTION: by Garay to reappoint Madeline McClave to serve as a member of the Open Space Commission, term to expire December 31, 2026; seconded by Kennerson.

Unanimous.

MOTION: by Kennerson to reappoint Douglas Roth to serve as a member of the Open Space Commission, term to expire December 31, 2026; seconded by Garay.

Unanimous.

MOTION: by Garay to reappoint Sam Arvidson to serve as a member of the Board of Regional Refuse Disposal District #1; term to expire December 31, 2026 seconded by Kennerson.

Unanimous.

MOTION: by Garay to reappoint Joe Toro to serve as a member of the WPCA, seconded by Kennerson; term to expire December 31, 2026.

Unanimous.

Board of Selectmen 2024 Meeting Schedule:

First Selectman Jerram stated that the regular meeting schedule is usually one meeting per month, with the exception of the budget season, when meetings are called more frequently. The proposed schedule was distributed to the Board for review. Regular meetings are generally held on the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 7:00 PM at Town Hall. There are a few exceptions due to holidays as noted on the schedule of meeting dates.

MOTION: by Garay to approve the 2024 Board of Selectmen meeting schedule; seconded by Kennerson.

It was noted that special meetings will be called and posted as needed.

Unanimous

2024 Holiday Schedule:

First Selectman Jerram informed the Selectmen that Juneteenth has been added to the Official Holiday Schedule as required by law. Good Friday was removed to accommodate this addition to the schedule. The Discretionary day has been discussed with the union. Town Hall will be closed on December 29. If anyone has waited until then to pay taxes, they can have their envelope hand stamped as proof of being mailed prior to the deadline so as not to incur any penalty for late payment.

MOTION: by Garay to approve the 2024 Holiday Schedule; seconded by Kennerson.

Unanimous.

Operations Updates:

First Selectman Jerram stated that the last Board of Selectman meeting held in October was mostly a public safety forum regarding the South End Fire District. There was correspondence received before and after the meeting. Those comments are available for the Selectmen to review.

Registrars of Voters:

Saquanna Seltzer, the new Democratic Registrar of Voters did a great job with the election. She is a welcome addition to the staff. Republican Registrar of Voters Robbin Goodskey has retired and there will be a recommendation coming for her replacement. Mr. Jerram thanked Robbin for her service to the Town as a Registrar.

Town Events:

Mr. Jerram stated that Trick or Treat on Main for Halloween was a nice celebration. Things started slowly, but it got very busy and was well attended.

The tree for Light New Hartford this year was purchased from Homegrown Farms in Barkhamsted. It is getting harder and harder to find nice, big trees for this event. Sunday night is the annual Light New Hartford celebration downtown.

Revaluation:

The “talk of the town” is revaluation. There is a lot of concern and discussion online and on social media

regarding revaluation. Jerram stated that 30% increase is the average of the increase in values. This does not equate to the tax increase. The Grand List is not complete and there has been no setting of the mill rate. The Mill rate will be set when the expenditures side of the budget is known. There are avenues for disputing an assessment if property owners feel that there is an error.

Budget:

Jerram encouraged residents to ask questions and pay attention to the budget process. Once the budget is passed, there is nothing that can be done about it. Residents need to get involved and voice concerns during the process, not after the vote.

The First Selectman stated that he attended a health insurance meeting where the consortium was informed that the initial estimate for health care increase is 11%. This could change, but there has been a high than average experience rating in the overall pool. Claims were high this past year.

Animal Control:

There is currently a “dog issue” in town. A dog has been involved in three separate attacks under varying circumstances. A disposal order was issued for this dog; however, the owners have appealed this order and the dog is now being held at the kennel until there is resolution. Mediation is ongoing.

Composting/RRDD

The funding for food composting at RRDD has been approved. This program will begin soon and will hopefully have a positive impact on the tonnage of waste that is transported out of RRDD.

Pass throughs for Revenues:

Selectman Jerram suggested that the proceeds from the “nips revenues” and the opioid funds be treated as pass throughs in the annual budget. This will require town meeting approval.

ARPA Updates:

The Selectmen and Board of Finance had approved use of ARPA funding to be used for New Hartford Elementary School (NHES) roof (187,500 – some for roof and some for HVAC). There has since been a professional opinion that it is a \$500,000 or \$600,000 job and the current funding level is not sufficient. It was removed from consideration at budget time. The Superintendent of Schools, Highway Superintendent and Dan inspected the schools. There are some things that need to be addressed at NHES such as soffit repair, repaving of the parking area and some HAZMAT investigation.

Antolini School was also looked at. Some water is entering the school and is causing tile to pop up. There are oil tanks that need to be removed. Overall, the school is in very good condition.

A walk through was also done at Bakerville School. The school shows some wear and tear; some trim work and some siding may need some minor repairs. Most of the interior of the school looks good. First Selectman Jerram commented that the schools all look good. There could be a small bonding initiative to cover these repairs. This is something to keep in mind.

Mr. Jerram mentioned that perhaps some road work could also be bonded. Acquisition of land for a future town garage site might also be an option.

Miscellaneous:

Dan informed the Selectmen that the new bookkeeper is doing very well. Annie is working with her every day.

Jerram mentioned to the Selectmen that the tax abatement for the proposed housing development should be reviewed. The original verbal agreement for the property was based on the fact that the

development would be senior housing. There has been a change in that proposal. The developer wants to include market rate and work force housing as well as the Senior Housing.

Proposed ordinance discussion – Abandoned dwellings, Food Trucks, Air BnB:

Dan stated that the proposed ordinances are not up for approval tonight -just a reminder that these ordinances need to move forward.

Mr. Jerram stated that there are several residences in Town that are continuing to decline and there needs to be a mechanism in place to be able to address these. He cited the building across from Town Hall, 2 residences up in the West Hill area (one on Arrowhead and one on Burwell) and a parcel in Bakerville as examples of properties that need to be considered.

The First Selectman commented that the food truck ordinance has not been pursued. It was discussed and then COVID put a stop to it and now that businesses are up and running again, it is time to think about what should be done. – need to think about how we may want to proceed.

With respect to Air BnB's, the Selectmen need to discuss how they might want to regulate this type of rental. Selectman Kennerson stated that she attended the short term rental workshop that was offered at the Ct Council of Municipalities convention held recently. Selectman Greenwood commented that blight was a common topic of concern when she had been campaigning. Selectman Jerram noted that enforcement actions have been taken with regards to some properties that are 'blighted.' There have been 2 successes with recent requests for compliance; one on Cottage Street and one on Ratlum road.

There is also some unfinished business with deeds and acceptance of Open Space on Evergreen Crossing and Barella Road. There is also some unfinished business with a final as-built for Flanders Crossing that needs to be completed. These items have been "hanging out there" for years and First Selectman Jerram wants them to be resolved. He has been speaking with the developers to get these completed.

Discussion of longevity pay and health care options for First Selectman position:

Alesia noted that other forms of compensation should be considered for the position of First Selectman to augment the salary that is approved for this position. This position requires 24/7 dedication and should receive additional benefits in addition to the approved wage which is only based on an average work week. Full time employees receive Longevity pay as an added incentive for commitment to their positions. This "bonus" begins after 5 years of continuous service.

There should be some type of extra benefit to the individual who serves as a First Selectman for a certain period of time. There should be a benefit to the commitment in order to retain qualified individuals in the position. Selectman Kennerson noted that the Board recently approved the waiving of health insurance premium shares for the Executive Assistant position and suggested that the position of First Selectman be afforded this same benefit after serving a certain number of years in office. Re-election to this office would serve as the approval of the residents that the individual is worthy of incentives. The Selectmen discussed that this is as a benefit that would be applied after a certain number of years of service. They agreed that 4 years of service would be the benchmark.

MOTION: by Kennerson that Effective December 1, 2023; the following policy shall be in effect: Upon completion of 4 years of continuous service, the position of First Selectman shall not be required to pay the premium share cost share of health care benefits (includes dental, vision and life); seconded by Garay.

Selectman Garay acknowledged that the First Selectman works very hard; always there, attends events and makes himself available.

Abstain: Jerram

AYE: Garay and Kennerson

MOTION PASSES

Correspondence:

A few Emails were received regarding the concerns of the South End Fire Department and the issue of consolidation that was being recommended by some members of the district. The conversation has died down since the October Board of Selectmen meeting. First Selectman Jerram stated that we appreciate all of our firefighters.

After mentioning this correspondence, it reminded Mr. Jerram to inform selectmen that a committee consisting of members and support team of the Village fire department met to discuss the possibility of offering a tax abatement to volunteer fire fighters. John Ryan, Jen Worsman, John Wabrek and Frank Galliher came to town hall for an initial meeting to present their proposal. First Selectman Jerram stated that there are many towns that do offer abatements, but the majority of those towns have fire departments that are fully funded by the Town budget. This is a little different because the New Hartford Volunteer Firemen are governed by the Fire District, which is a taxing entity in its own right. Jerram expressed concern that the proposal seems to be a payment for service, rather than a tax abatement. This is in its early stages and there needs to be more discussion of the matter. Jerram stated that the Town is in need of volunteers and this could be a good incentive.

Minutes – October 23, 2023:

Mr. Jerram noted that at the end of the public safety discussion on October 23, a resident came up to him to express his disappointment that he (a first district resident) was not allowed to speak during the meeting. Mr. Jerram stated that he replied to him that he did offer that the floor was open to all and no one took advantage of the opportunity. This resident apparently did not hear that offer and was upset that he was not able to share his thoughts. The Selectmen agreed that the opportunity to speak was, in fact, given and that this resident was mistaken in his belief that it was not.

Selectman Garay mentioned that she saw a posting that a local homeowner in the South End District had offered the use of his home for training purposes for the fire department. She was pleased to see how many firefighters were on scene and that they took advantage of the generosity of this homeowner.

Kennerson stated that the issue of consolidation needs to be based on facts and figures by gathering data and offering potential solutions. It should not be a matter that is hastily put to any kind of vote for action.

MOTION: by Garay to approve the October 23, 2023, minutes as presented; seconded by Kennerson.

Unanimous.

Tax Refunds:

Matthew Alfano	89.17
Ally Financial	383.15
Acar Leasing	488.62
John or Georgia Austiin	55.31
Joseph H Bieluch	7.58
Adam Ferretti	30.35
Floyd or Kelly Harrison	23.81
Jaclyn Kostak	13.78
Richard Lindboe	32.48
Richard Lindboe	137.02
Wilma Long	84.81
Nissan Infiniti	176.90
Precision Tree Experts	377.78
Kelly Rigby	29.04
Patricia Sok	6.96
The Center for You	181.84
VCFS Auto Leasing	273.26
Michael Zordan	61.35

MOTION: by Kennerson to approve the tax refunds as presented by the Tax Collector; seconded by Garay.

Unanimous.

Executive Session re real estate negotiations re proposed trail:

MOTION: by Kennerson to enter into Executive Session at 9:47 PM for the purpose of discussion related to real estate negotiations related to the proposed multi use trail along the old railroad bed; seconded by Garay.

First Selectman Jerram invited Selectman Elect Greenwood into Executive Session since she will be an active member of the Board in November and will be actively involved in any future decisions regarding this trail project.

Unanimous.

Executive Session ended at 10:40 PM; with no action taken.

To close the meeting, Dan expressed his thanks to Selectman Laura Garay for her service as member of the Board of Selectmen. He stated that she served the community well and appreciated her involvement at the meetings.

Selectman Kennerson echoed those sentiments, stated that she, too, appreciated Laura's presence on the Board and commented that Laura was easy to work with and was not contentious even with disagreements. She said that she considered Laura a friend and stated they usually agreed with more things than they disagreed.

Laura thanked the residents of town for affording her the opportunity to be part of this process. She stated that she had their best interests at heart. Laura commented that she enjoyed "working with the two of you." She stated that she is taking a step back right now to tend to other things in her life and "maybe I'll be back someday."

MOTION: by Kennerson to adjourn at 10:40 PM; seconded by Garay.

Unanimous.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Christine Hayward, Executive Assistant*

Attachments filed with the Town Clerk and available upon request:

2024 Board of Selectmen Meeting dates
2024 Holiday Schedule
Email from Jennifer Worsman
Email from Ben Marcus
Email from Justin Meyers
Email from Stefanie Meyers