



Salisbury Board of Selectmen

Meeting Minutes

September 7, 2022

Approved

Selectmen's Office:

Selectman Brett Walker, Chair	Present
Selectman John W. Herbert	Present
Selectman Jim Hoyt	Present
Town Administrator April Rollins	Present
Municipal Assistant Kimberley Edelmann	Present

Budget Committee:

Jason Hood, Budget Committee, Chair	Present
Marcia Murphy, Budget Committee, Vice Chair	Present
Jeffrey Blanchard, Budget Committee, Member	Present
David Croft, Budget Committee, Member	Present
Jennifer Hoyt, Budget Committee, Member	Present
David Kelly, Budget Committee, Member	Not Present
Kevin O'Neill, Budget Committee, Member	Present
Eric Swendsen, Budget Committee, Member	Present
William MacDuffie; Budget Committee, Member	Not Present

Attendees: Several citizens attended the meeting in person at Academy Hall; four attended via Zoom.

1) Open Meeting

Chairman Walker opened the meeting at 7:00 pm.

2) Meeting Minutes

Chairman Walker made a **motion** to approve the minutes of August 17, 2022 with one correction. Selectman Hoyt **seconded**. The **motion passed**.

3) Signatures

Chairman Walker noted that the Selectboard had reviewed and signed:

- ◆ Accounts Payable & Payroll Registers

- ◆ Right of Interment – Sutherland
- ◆ Pole Petition – Raccoon Hill Road

The documents are available for public inspection.

4) Joint Meeting with the Budget Committee Re: 2023 Budget Recommendations

The joint meeting opened at 7:02 pm. Selectboard Chair Brett Walker stated that the purpose of the joint meeting was to give department heads a sense of what was expected from them in terms of the 2023 budget. He said he believed it would be an extremely difficult year from a budget perspective. A lot of costs were out of the Town's control, including the cost of heating fuel and propane.

Budget Committee Chairman Hood agreed, noted that costs were increasing everywhere. He suggested trying to keep the budget as level funded as possible for 2023.

Selectman Herbert stated that he didn't see how level funding could be achieved in an inflationary economy. He suggested limiting the budget to an 8% increase, matching the inflation rate.

Chairman Walker said he was reluctant to start with a fixed increase as that could become a target. He'd prefer to start with the items which the Town had no control over. He didn't know what to recommend in terms of wages. He didn't want to see the budget increase by 8%.

David Croft felt that in terms of wages, the employees should not suffer from the cost of inflation and be where the Town tries to save money. He noted that at his job, his fuel budget doubled. He said that just because of the cost of fuel, one can't ask the Road Agent to stop plowing. While he didn't want to see taxes increase, he also didn't think the Town should ask employees to bear the cost of what the Town had no control over. Employees would have those unforeseen costs at their homes, too.

Chairman Walker said that some wage adjustments had been made during the year. He felt department heads needed to look at each position and look at the market rates for each. Selectman Herbert suggested department heads look at an 8% increase, not just for wages, but everything. He noted that cost of everything had increased.

Budget Committee member Kevin O'Neill said he agreed with Chairman Walker. He noted that the price of fuel was coming back down. He suggested it was all speculation, that no one really knows what the prices would be in the future. He believed the budget needed to be considered as things change.

Selectman Herbert said that the Budget Committee recommends the budget which gets voted upon at Town Meeting. Then, the Selectboard had to live with that budget. If the cost of fuel jumped back up, or the cost of other goods increased, the Town would have to manage accordingly.

Kevin O'Neill noted that there were some costs the Town could not control, such as paving. However, the Town could decide to not pave. He suggested building "what if scenario" contingencies into the budget. Chairman Walker recognized that paving was only given as an example. He stated that there was a paving schedule and he felt the roads were not being paved fast enough.

Selectman Hoyt stated that he didn't feel a specific increase percentage should be set. Instead, he felt they needed to look at the needs of each department and build the budget on a department by department basis.

Budget Committee member Jeff Blanchard sought clarification on the budgeting process. He stated that his understanding was that Selectboard was responsible for working with department heads to come up with budget

recommendations. Then, those budgets were brought to the Budget Committee for review and approval.

Jeff Blanchard commented that this was the first time the Selectboard was meeting with the Budget Committee. He asked if the Selectboard, prior to the first Budget Committee meeting, would usually give department heads direction about the budgets. Selectman Hoyt interjected that the Selectboard had met with the Budget Committee in past years. Selectman Herbert answered they were simultaneous tracks. Department heads were meeting with the Selectboard and the Budget Committee, operating independently, around the same time.

Mr. Blanchard asked about the process going forward. Chairman Walker said he would ask the department heads what they needed to meet their needs for the upcoming year. He said the Road Agent was a very good example. He would ask Bill what budget was needed in order to maintain the level of service on the roads in the Town, as Bill best knows the answer to that. He's not going to tell Bill ahead of time that the budget gets an 8% or 3% increase, because he doesn't know. The costs vary.

Mr. Blanchard pointed out that approach meant not setting a budget target. Chairman Walker said it would not be a surprise to anyone that 2023 was going to be a tough year. They would ask everyone to tighten their belts where they could without undermining critical services. For example, the Town currently had an outstanding manager for the Transfer Station. He wanted to make sure that the Transfer Station Manager's position was adequately compensated and that he wouldn't go anywhere.

Mr. Blanchard noted that the budget would not actually get approved until April, four months into the year. He asked how that worked. Chairman Walker noted that any wage increases would be retroactive to January 1st. The budget operated much as it did during the previous year. However, any new line items would not become active until after Town Meeting.

Mr. Blanchard felt the four month gap between the start of the fiscal year and approval of the fiscal budget for that year was awkward. Selectman Herbert noted that some Towns had moved to the Optional Fiscal Year, the July to June fiscal year, but transitioning to it was a long involved process. (*Ref: RSA 31:94-a Optional Fiscal Year*)

Chairman Walker reiterated that the department heads were aware of the financial situation. He agreed with David Croft that he didn't want Town employees to suffer, but at the same time, he recognized that the taxpayers' costs were increasing.

David Croft said he also understood that taxpayers' costs outside of taxes were increasing. The County was taking that into consideration and they were trying to take care of their employees. He said employees were their biggest asset. Without good employees, they don't amount to crap. Employee's bills were increasing, as well. He said he was totally against not increasing wages just because everything else was going up.

Budget Committee Vice Chair Marcia Murphy said she believed Salisbury had an aging population. She felt that when you have Social Security go up 8% in 2023, for those who have that as their total source of income... David Croft interjected that they didn't know that yet and that Social Security had been going up pretty well. Marcia Murphy noted it hadn't had an 8% raise. David Croft replied that they hadn't been faced with a 9% inflation rate.

Marcia Murphy said she works for the State on a fixed income and hadn't gotten a raise for years until a small increase was given in January. It came out to \$10 per week. She wanted to take that into consideration. She believed there were a lot of people who only lived on Social Security.

Marcia Murphy asked if there would there be a Warrant Article for the Highway Department. Chairman Walker replied, noting that the loan for Pingree Bridge would be paid off soon. The Fire Department's Tanker loan would

also be paid off soon. He said those funds could be put to use elsewhere in the budget. He suggested that the Transfer Station Warrant Article could be dropped from \$10,000 to \$5,000 with \$5,000 going to the future Highway Department.

Chairman Walker stated that a balance between what the Town wanted to do and what could actually be done needed to be found in regards to the future Highway Department, recognizing that that was definitely a train coming down the tracks.

Selectman Herbert said he assumed there would be some sort of Warrant Article for money towards a new Highway Department. Marcia Murphy wanted to know if it would be for \$100,000. Chairman Walker said that to actually fund a Highway Department, yes. But did he see that passing? He still didn't know what would be recommended by the Highway Department Advisory Committee. Once the bottom line of what was needed was known, it could be funded over four years, for example. However, voters could also vote it down. They needed to find something the voters would approve. He added the Town should have started addressing the need for a Highway Department 10 years ago.

Jeff Blanchard asked about the process around the other Warrant Articles. Chairman Walker explained that the Selectmen and Budget Committee vote to recommend or not recommend Warrant Articles to the voters.

Jeff Blanchard asked if the department heads were being asked to predict what it would cost to maintain the same level of service or improved services. Chairman Walker noted that the Transfer Station might expand services to include a Household Hazardous Waste Day. The budget would have to be adjusted to cover that.

Selectman Herbert stated that normal operating costs go into the operating budget, but extraordinary things that would involve capital reserve funds would be presented as Warrant Articles.

Louise Andrus asked how year-to-date expenditures were trending. Chairman Walker said that the Town was on budget. He noted that an invoice from NRRA from 2021 had to be paid in 2022. Selectman Herbert added that public assistance costs were always a roll of the dice. Chairman Walker said the Town was doing all they could to stay within budget. However, winter expenses were always a gamble.

David Croft noted that the Town did not operate under RSA 33, the Municipal Finance Act, and therefore could overspend on individual budget line items as long as the bottom line was not overspent. He said that, for example, if fuel was overspent in 2023, it could be made up by reduced spending in another area of the budget. The bottom line was what mattered. Even a whole department's budget could be overspent as long as the bottom line of the budget was not. If the Town operating under the Municipal Finance Act, it would only be able to exceed an area of the budget by a certain percentage; it would become an issue.

Chairman Walker noted that there were some line items in the budget which were allocated a single dollar. He said this was because if there wasn't something there, nothing could be spent on that line. If there was a dollar there, they could, as an example, take \$5,000 from the legal budget and move it there during the year.

Eric Swendsen asked what happens if the budget runs out. Selectman Herbert said that if the Town needed to exceed the bottom line, they would have to go to the Department of Revenue Administration (DRA) to get permission for a Special Town Meeting to appropriate additional money. He noted it was a significant process.

Eric Swendsen asked if that had ever happened before. Jason Hood replied that it had happened in Croydon.

Chairman Walker said it was important for Budget Committee members to understand that the budget should not be so tight that it would be possible to overspend. He said if there wasn't some fat on the bone and fuel prices shot up,

the Town would have to go through a lot of processes.

Kevin O'Neill asked what happens to unexpended funds at the end of the year. Chairman Walker and TA Rollins explained that there was a maintained fund, kept between the DRA recommended levels of 5 and 17% of the overall budget. When the tax rate was set at the end of the year, that fund was available to use to apply towards the tax rate.

Selectman Herbert stated that the amount that needs to be raised for taxes was based on what budget the Town approves at Town Meeting, less what the Town gets for revenue from the State, the Federal Government and local revenues from car registrations and more. The surplus from the year before could be used to offset the tax rate.

Chairman Walker made a **motion** to extend the Public Hearing under RSA 31:95-b to 8 pm. Budget Committee Chairman Hood **seconded**. The **motion passed**.

Selectman Herbert clarified that the DRA required Towns to maintain a fund balance of at least 5% of the total budget. He said that anything above that could be used to offset the tax rate. Chairman Walker said that the fund balance helped manage cash flow.

Dora Rapalyea asked if the Selectboard would want to suggest a cap for employee wages. Chairman Walker said he was not necessarily in favor of an arbitrary cap. There were so few employees, it wasn't an issue to look at each employee, the market rate and the worth of the position to the Town.

David Croft restated his view regarding the value of employees. He said people were being paid \$20 per hour to serve coffee at Dunkin Donuts in Warner. The attempt to try to find employees, which was a nightmare no matter what level of work you were in, and keeping a valuable employee was almost impossible to put a price on. For example, to replace the Town Administrator with someone else with her experience, the Town would be hard pressed. And that's just one example. Bill could also be used as an example. There was no workforce available. Keeping employees was critical, especially those with experience. It applied to law enforcement, construction, whatever. He said that Selectman Hoyt had recently commented about the lack of skilled laborers. Mr. Croft felt keeping employees happy was paramount. He stated that we all see it everyday; help wanted and needed everywhere. He said he was a big employee person and he knew the value of having good staff. He said was against setting a cap.

Chairman Walker said 2020 was a good example. Had they set a cap in January, it would have become a problem. It would have negatively affected wages at the Transfer Station. Hourly wages before then seemed reasonable. But later in the year, they were not.

Marcia Murphy asked if wages at the Transfer Station had been increased. TA Rollins said that one of the employees received a \$2 increase after completing certification. Ms. Murphy said she hadn't seen anything in the minutes about it. Chairman Walker noted that the discussion about it would have been in nonpublic session and announced afterwards.

Jeff Blanchard asked if the increase had been planned in the budget. Chairman Walker said the Transfer Station budget was set for three attendants, but only two were on staff, so there was money in the budget.

David Croft added that the Selectboard were the stewards of the budget. They have the authority to expend it. Selectman Herbert noted that there was money in that line of the budget.

Chairman Walker made a **motion** to adjourn the Budget Committee meeting. Budget Committee Chairman Hood **seconded**.

Selectman Herbert asked if the Selectboard wanted to make a recommendation regarding budgets. TA Rollins said the letter sent last year requested the recommendations of each department head. The same would be the case this year. TA Rollins said the letter and meeting schedule would be emailed to everyone the following day. Kevin O'Neill asked if the letter could recommend maintaining level services. Chairman Walker said he would like to hear the recommendations of the department heads first. Selectman Herbert said sometimes the State dictates changes to services and department heads need to budget accordingly.

Chairman Hood requested a voice vote. The **motion passed** with all in favor. The joint meeting of the Board of Selectmen and the Budget Committee adjourned at 7:41 pm. The Board of Selectmen continued their meeting.

5) Department / Board / Committee Reports

a. Fire Chief / Road Agent

Road Agent Bill MacDuffie Jr reported that all was going well. He still hadn't been told the date when work would start on Raccoon Hill Road.

Fire Chief MacDuffie Jr reported that there had been an issue with the air conditioning at the Safety Complex / Fire Station. Water was leaking from a unit into the bathroom.

b. Highway Department Advisory Committee

Dave Rapalyea said the Highway Department Advisory Committee was talking about how to fund the new department. They spoke about the Pingree Bridge money. He noted that everyone was working and it was a challenge to get in touch with everyone. He also noted that response rates from other Towns was slow.

Chairman Walker noted that there was a meeting conflict with the Budget Committee. He felt it would be easier to reschedule the HDAC than the Budget Committee. TA Rollins noted that the second Wednesday of the month was open for meetings.

c. Transfer Station

TS Manager Bert LaFlamme reported that all was going well. He was still working on tonnage calculations. He recently got about 13 tons in the compactor over the past two days.

Chairman Walker said tonnage was up. It used to be about 10 tons. Chairman Walker said that 15 tons was the legal load limit for the truck. It was looking like they would be running a closed container every two weeks; the open one wouldn't be needed.

Manager LaFlamme commented that the increase in tonnage was possibly due to Transfer Station use by seasonal summer residents at Tucker Pond. He expected that during winter it would take three days to fill the compactor.

Chairman Walker said he expected significant savings in hauling, but it depended on the rates. Manager LaFlamme said the Town had received notification that the hauling rates were increasing \$5 per load for the next five years.

Chairman Walker, Manager LaFlamme and Bill MacDuffie Jr discussed moving a concrete block to a better location.

Eric Swendsen asked if the increased tonnage was possibly due to non-residents using the Transfer Station. Manager LaFlamme said they check stickers and have requested IDs at times.

Mr. Swendsen also commented that he really appreciated the hours that the Transfer Station was open.

Chairman Walker commented that some people show up just as the Transfer Station is closing. He was supportive of the Transfer Station staff closing the gate on time. Manager LaFlamme added that with the compactor, there was a new longer shutdown process.

Selectman Jim Hoyt praised the recent work of Dan Philbrook. He felt the work looked fantastic.

6) New Business

a. Tucker Pond Support Letter – NH DES 319 Grant

Chairman Walker reported that a letter from residents of Tucker Pond Improvement Association (TPIA) had been received. The Conservation Commission also received a letter. It requested a letter of support from the Town. Chairman Walker said he didn't have a problem with sending a general letter of support as long it did not imply any financial support.

TPIA Representative Doug Darling stated that the pond had for the past four years been on the cyanobacteria advisory list on the NH Department of Environmental Services (DES) website. The advisories state the water should not be used for swimming, bathing or drinking.

Mr. Darling said the TPIA had put together a pre-proposal leading to an application for a State grant to fix the problem sites in the watershed management plan. The watershed management plan identified some sites on Warner Road. Therefore, they were looking for a letter of support stating that the Town would work with them on those sites. Work needed to be done on Warner Road was already planned for 2026 according to the Capital Improvements Plan. If successful in getting the grant, there would be no cost to the Town for materials, thus saving the Town money. Mr. Darling noted it was a pre-proposal. That had to be approved before they could submit the full application. The grant would pay for an engineer to do sketches and plans. Then they would discuss options and actions.

Selectman Hoyt asked if Tucker Pond was a private community. Mr. Darling noted there was public access.

Selectman Hoyt asked if the cyanobacteria problem was across the State of New Hampshire. Mr. Darling confirmed that to be the case and noted that the Blackwater River also recently had a cyanobacteria alert. More and more ponds were experiencing it. Tucker Pond's bloom was one of the worse in the State. It was caused by an excess of phosphorous and nitrogen in the water, allowing the ever present bacteria to thrive and take over.

Doug Darling said that \$40,000 of local funds had already been invested in a watershed management plan. They learned that 62% of the phosphorous was coming from storm water runoff from Warner Road, culverts and erosion.

Selectman Herbert asked if the grant required matching funds. Mr. Darling noted that the Town would not be matching the fund. However, the Tucker Pond community would have to match the grant it by 66%. The grant being sought was for \$100,000. The Tucker Pond community would have to match it with \$66,000. Mr. Darling noted that the match could be covered by equipment hours and volunteer hours.

Selectman Hoyt asked what the TPIA needed from the Town. Mr. Darling said he was looking for a letter of support. Chairman Walker said that was not an issue as long as the wording noted that no financial commitment had been made yet. He added that the grant could help the Town if it covered materials.

Selectman Herbert asked what the scope of the work needed on Warner Road. Was it \$100,000 worth of work?

Road Agent Bill MacDuffie Jr replied that it would be way more than that. He added that he didn't know how much of the road would need to be addressed. Doug Darling said he knew of three culverts that needed to be addressed. One of the tributaries was washing out a culvert, but was also eroding.

Chairman Walker made a **motion** to write a letter of support for Tucker Pond to NH DES. Selectman Herbert **seconded**. The **motion passed** with all in favor.

Dave Rapalyea said he recalled that when he was a Selectman in the early 1980's, the Selectboard was told specifically from the association that no house at Tucker Pond would be sold to the Town to create an area for the public. He hoped things had changed in the past 40 years.

Selectman Hoyt said he under the understanding that the public did not have access to the pond. Doug Darling said he understood that the State requires public access and there was an area on First Road for that.

A member of the public asked if they could swim in Tucker Pond assuming there was no active cyanobacteria bloom. Doug Darling said they could, but there was no beach. Another asked if they could put in a kayak. Mr. Darling confirmed they could.

TA Rollins said she would draft a letter of support for the Selectboard to review.

Louise Andrus asked about support of Tucker Pond. She wanted to make sure the Selectboard was not committing to any costs. Chairman Walker confirmed they were not. He added that road work was needed on Warner Road and the grant would help reduce costs. Three culverts on Warner Road needed to be maintained. The grant would not cover labor, but would cover materials. It was a win-win for the Town.

Bill MacDuffie Jr stated that the Tucker Pond project plans would need to be reviewed to understand the scope of the work recommended before making further commitments.

7) Public Hearing - Senate Bill 401: Special One Time Highway Block Grant

At 8:02 pm, Chairman Walker made a **motion** to open the Public Hearing under RSA 31:95-b relative to the appropriation of funds made available under Senate Bill 401, SB 401: Payment for Maintenance, Construction and Reconstruction of Class IV and V Highways. Selectman Herbert **seconded**. The **motion passed** with all in favor.

Chairman Walker reported that the Town had received a check from NH DOT in the amount of \$58,163.44. SB 401 also described funds towards bridges, but it was not clear yet whether the Town would receive additional funds.

Chairman Walker and TA Rollins noted it was a one time payment separate from the regular quarterly payments. The funds could only be used for a new project, not something that was already in the plans. It also could not be used to offset the budget. The funds could be encumbered through 2023. Any unused funds would have to be returned to the State.

Jennifer Hoyt asked for examples of how the funds could be used. Road Agent Bill MacDuffie Jr said he believed it would most likely be used to purchase gravel.

There were no additional questions or comments.

At 8:07 pm, Chairman Walker made a **motion** to close the Public Hearing under RSA 31:95-b. Selectman Herbert **seconded**. The **motion passed** with all in favor.

Chairman Walker made a **motion** to accept the \$58,163.44 from SB 401. Selectman Hoyt **seconded**. The **motion**

passed with all in favor.

8) New Business (continued)

a. **Holiday Food Basket Program -Voucher System**

TA Rollins reported that the Town had been notified that the Capital Region Food Program was going to pilot a new approach to the Holiday Food Basket Program. For 2022, they would be providing food vouchers from Market Basket. The values of the vouchers would be based on the number of people in each family.

TA Rollins shared that the Town Office staff discussed this change and provided feedback to the program contact.

David Croft said that he was recently appointed the director of the program. He was excited about the pilot. It would address the waste observed in the past. It would address complaints. The vouchers would be paper during the first year. The vouchers could be used at any Market Basket in Merrimack County. If a person was not able to do the shopping, they could provide a name of a shopper. Even the Town could do the shopping, if that was what the Town wanted to do. He suggested reaching out directly to him with any questions.

Vouchers would be available at the beginning of December. Also, it was noted that given enough advance warning, Market Basket would be willing to prepare meals.

b. **Flood Control Reimbursement**

Chairman Walker reported that the flood control reimbursement check was received. It was for \$53,071.34. That was \$4,000 less than in 2021.

9) Old Business

a. **Chair Donations**

Chairman Walker reported that another two dollars in donations were received. Chairman Walker made a **motion** to accept the donation. Selectman Hoyt **seconded**. The **motion passed** with all in favor.

10) Selectmen's Reports

Nothing to report.

11) Public Comments

Marcia Murphy asked what a pole petition was. TA Rollins answered that it was required for the new utility poles. Ms. Murphy asked if there was anything new about North Road. Selectman Hoyt reported there was not.

12) Town Administrator's Report

a. **Invoice for Driver Feedback Signs – Hollis Police Department**

TA April Rollins reported that the two driver feedback signs were going to be sold to the Town of Hollis Police Department for a total of \$3,000.

b. Wetlands Violation – 15 Bay Road

TA Rollins reported that a resident in Andover had observed that fill was being dumped onto the property at 15 Bay Road to extend the yard. David Kelly, Chair of the Conservation Commission, observed the wetlands violation. It was reported to the NH Department of Environmental Services as a Shoreland Protection Act violation.

c. State Primary

TA Rollins noted that the upcoming State Primary was scheduled for Tuesday, September 13, 2022 from 8 am to 7 pm at the Town Hall. The Town Clerk's Office would be closed on that day.

Gayle Landry noted that meals and coffee would be provided at the Town Hall for those working during the event.

d. Fuel for the School

TA Rollins reported that she spoke with Hilary Denoncourt from the school district.

The cost of heating oil had recently been locked in with Huckleberry at \$3.89 per gallon, up from last year's \$2.275 per gallon. Propane would be \$1.97.

13) Next Meeting

Chairman Walker made a **motion** to adjourn the meeting at 8:28 pm. Selectman Hoyt **seconded**. The **motion passed**. The next scheduled meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, September 21, at 7 pm at Academy Hall.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kimberley Brown Edelman

Recording Secretary

These minutes were approved at the Board of Selectmen's meeting of September 21, 2022.