



Salisbury Board of Selectmen

Meeting Minutes

February 6, 2023

Approved

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

Attendees: Several citizens attended the meeting in person at Academy Hall. No one attended via Zoom.

1) Open Meeting

Chairman Walker opened the meeting at 6:16 p.m.

2) Old Business

- a. Petition Warrant Article: The Board reviewed the petition warrant article as presented last week:
“We, the undersigned registered voters of the Town of Salisbury request you to insert in the warrant for the 2023 Town Meeting, the following article:
‘To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Thirty-Three Thousand Dollars (\$33,000) for the purpose of increasing police patrol coverage from 8 hours a week to 16 hours a week to ensure the safety of the motoring public and the safety of the residents of Salisbury.’”

Chairman Walker suggests that the BoS not recommend this warrant article because the State Police are not currently able to fulfill the 8 hours already budgeted because they are short staffed. He doesn’t feel it makes sense to raise that money when they aren’t expending what is already budgeted.

Selectman Herbert concurs, stating that this is not going to accomplish what they are intending to do.

Selectman Hoyt also agrees that 16 hours a week is more than they can handle right now.

Chairman Walker **motioned** that the Board of Selectmen **does not** recommend the petition warrant article.

Selectman Herbert **seconded** the motion which passed successfully

The BoS reviewed an email from Louise Andrus outlining her questions and concerns regarding the proposed budget:

February 5, 2023

*Board of Selectmen
Town of Salisbury
Academy Hall*

9 Old Coach Road
PO Box 214
Salisbury, NH 03268

Re: Salisbury Proposed Budget

Dear Board of Selectmen,

Am unable to attend the meeting on the budget for February 6th as I have a conflict in meetings. I have been following and attended some meetings of the Salisbury Highway Advisory Committee and want to thank each of them for all the hard work in compiling the information for the citizens of Salisbury. The following are my submission of my opinions and questions on the budget, and request it be entered as a matter of record for the meeting to be held on February 6, 2023.

1. Why is the proposal for the future Salisbury Highway Department taking away the rights of "we the people" in Salisbury in that we will not be permitted to vote for our choice for road agent? We have always voted for our road agent, and we should continue to do so as that is our right. In the proposal this right is being taken away from us. Why?
2. Why does the Salisbury Highway Department proposal include the hiring of a "Highway Commissioner?" And then that person will hire someone to take care of the roads. It is unnecessary in my opinion and will be nothing more than another layer in administration of the town that is going to cost us more money.
3. Why are we not utilizing the land at the "transfer station" for a highway department home base? The transfer station location is really not out of the way. If the current location of the transfer station is good enough for the citizens of Salisbury to drive to each week, it should be good enough for a highway department, and I believe we could make the location workable. It would save us taxpayers much money. If land is purchased on route 127 or route 4, that land would not be taxable and would take away the possibility of someone purchasing the land and bringing in a business to the Town.
4. I believe we should take a step back for another year and fully assess the report for a highway department, instead of rushing into something that we might regret. How do we know in a few years that there will not be someone with equipment to be a great candidate for road agent elected by the people and that person will take care of our roads as is currently happening? I do not believe our highway department should be turned over to a handful of people. Rather it should all be controlled by "we the people."
5. **I am requesting that the Town of Salisbury cut the current proposed budget to last year's level of spending.** We are in an unusual period of time. Inflation is high and it looks very likely we will have some type of recession this year. There are layoffs occurring. Many people are trying to figure out how to pay their mortgage or rent, buy gas to go to work, put food on the table and to pay for heat for their home and pay their property taxes. The **12 Month Percent Price Change from (Dec 2022) is 10.4% for food;** Gas is on the rise again the last few weeks. Let me give you a closer look at inflation: Recently my husband and I needed diesel for our tractor so that we could plow our dooryard. We paid 4.999 per gallon for 16.901 gallons or 84.49. A year ago average was 3.67.

Let's discuss proposed budgets, Town, School and County: Currently the

Merrimack County budget is proposing a 2.9% increase in property taxes, or \$1,352,553 increase. As you know the **MVSD** is proposing for the 2023-2024 budget an additional 1,015,632 over the 2022-2023 budget or a 2.28% increase. **This does not include the Warrant Article IV** to raise and appropriate the sum of \$493,613 for the 2023-2024 fiscal year, such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in salaries and benefits required by the new agreement over those that would be paid at current staffing levels. And the **Town of Salisbury** is requesting more monies in the proposed budget.

The taxpayers are not endless credit cards. I feel this year we are at a point that we need to ascertain **“What is a want and what is a need and cut the budgets!** And please do not say the State needs to do more. At the State level we are all still taxpayers and monies that come from the State to the schools, towns and county comes out of the taxpayers pockets. What is overall total increase of the Town budget dollar wise and percentage over last years budget?

Respectfully,

Louise Andrus
406 Raccoon Hill Rd
Salisbury NH 03268

Chairman Walker responded to each point of the letter as below:

1. This is a misunderstanding. No proposal was made to take the choice away from the voters in terms of choosing a Road Agent. It was mentioned in the report that they may eventually choose to go to a hired rather than an elected Road Agent.
2. There is no proposal to hire a Highway Commissioner.
3. The question regarding the land at the transfer station has been addressed at a couple of Selectmen and Budget Committee meetings. Both Bill MacDuffie Jr. and Bill MacDuffie Sr. have said that that land is not suitable for a highway department due to its size and accessibility.
4. The Highway Advisory Committee has no decision-making power. They prepared a report to assist the Selectmen as they move forward in beginning to develop a plan. Going forward, anything resulting from this is going to be voted upon by the voters. The only proposal that has been made is the setting aside of money for land acquisition. Selectman Herbert added that as far as taking a step back and reviewing everything before proceeding on anything regarding the Highway Department, this was the purpose of the Highway Committee. They did that work and study, and these were the recommendations that were made. They need to be ready to move forward when the time comes.
5. This item (cutting the budget to last year’s level) will be passed along to the Budget Committee for their review. While they do recognize the monetary and inflationary pressures facing taxpayers, they too are victims of inflation and are facing the same pressures as a town.

3) **Adjournment**

Chairman Walker **motioned** that they adjourn the meeting.
Selectman Hoyt **seconded** the motion which passed successfully

The meeting adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer King, Recording Secretary