



Salisbury Board of Selectmen

Meeting Minutes

December 16, 2020

Approved

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

Attendees: Several citizens attended the meeting held at Academy Hall including Louise Andrus, Pete Ballou, Rick Chandler, Karen Currier (via Zoom), Mary Heath (via Zoom), Geoff Hodges, Jennifer Hoyt (via Zoom), Joe & Gayle Landry, James Lord, Bill MacDuffie Jr., Sharon & Bill MacDuffie Sr., David MacDuffie, Marcia Murphy, Faith Partridge, Harvey Peters, Dave & Dora Rapalyea, Gene Shaw, Dot Swenson, Steve Walker, and Leann Wesoja

Appointments: SAU #46 Human Resources Manager Kathleen Boucher, SAU #46 Business Administrator Hilary Denoncourt, Salisbury Representative Seelye Longnecker, Salisbury Representative Brad Kulacz (via Zoom)

1. Open Meeting

Chairman John Herbert commented that the meeting was available via Zoom. Town Administrator April Rollins also requested people turn off their cell phones as it seemed they interfered with the microphones / amplifier system the Board was using. The Chair opened the meeting at 6:05 pm.

2. Minutes

Chair Herbert made a **motion** to approve the meeting minutes of December 2nd as written. Selectman Walker **seconded**. The motion **passed** with all in favor.

3. Signatures

Chair Herbert commented that Accounts Payable & Payroll were being reviewed by the Board for signatures. They also approved abatements for "unknown" properties. TA Rollins noted that "unknown" properties were those of record but with no known owners. The total property tax bill for those properties was \$1554 for the year. Tax Collector Gayle Landry added that the three or four properties had been on the books forever.

4. Department Updates

4.1 Fire Department

Fire Chief MacDuffie, Jr. noted things were quiet at the Fire Station.

TA Rollins announced that the Penacook Ambulance Billing had arrived. The amount for 2021 was \$77,250, up 3%. The Budget Committee had already approved the amount. Chair Herbert made a **motion** to approve the \$77,250 budget for the ambulance. Selectman Hoyt **seconded**. The **motion passed** with all in favor.

4.2 Road Agent

Road Agent Bill MacDuffie, Jr. updated the Board stating that work was complete on West Salisbury Road for the year. He added that trees were harvested between Bob Irving's property and the bridge. The road was widened to address drainage issues and some gravel work was done.

4.3 Transfer Station

The generator at the Transfer Station had died making Wednesday nights problematic, requiring the use of vehicle headlights for lighting. Selectman Walker said TS Manager Jerry Williams had informed him that the generator had been out of service for two weeks, prompting a call to Town Administrator Rollins. A replacement generator was purchased for \$769 and was now in use.

The backhoe also needed attention. The battery had drained and a hydraulic hose had been pinched. Repair work was underway earlier that day.

5. New Business

5.1 Resignation

Chair Herbert announced that the ZBA Chairman, Arthur Garvin, had submitted a letter of resignation effective the last day of year. The Chair made a **motion** to accept the letter of resignation with regret. Selectman Hoyt **seconded**. The **motion passed** with all in favor. TA Rollins noted that it was the responsibility of the Zoning Board to recommend to the Board of Selectman a replacement.

5.2 November State Police Log

TA Rollins read the list of calls for November. Assist Motorist - 1, Burglar Alarms - 2, Domestic Past Tense - 1, Hazardous Operator - 3, Missing Person - 1, Motor Vehicle Accident - 1, Operation Game Thief - 1, Repossess Vehicle - 1, Request for Service - 5, Restraining Order - 1, Sex Offender Registration - 3, Suspicious Activity - 1, Suspicious Motor Vehicle - 1, Theft - 1, and Welfare Check - 1. The total number of calls was 24.

5.3 Quote from Huckleberry for the Library

The Library received a quote from Huckleberry to install 2 filter racks on the existing hot air furnace for \$625. The quote covered disconnecting both of the 10" return ducts, cutting holes in the return plenum, mounting both filter racks, reconnecting the 10" inch returns, labor and materials. Selectman Walker made **motion** to table the work until it it looked like the Library would be reopening to the public. Selectman Hoyt **seconded**. The **motion passed**

with all in favor.

6. Old Business

6.1 Cemetery Maintenance / Mowing Contract & Billing

JJ, James Lord of JJ's Miscellaneous Home Services, explained that his wife was submitting an updated invoice with more information as requested by the Selectboard, probably via email like the original one. TA Rollins said she hadn't received it yet. JJ added that they normally only send one invoice per year. JJ asked if the Town would prefer invoices to be sent monthly or annually. Selectman Walker said more frequent would be preferred. Chair Herbert added that the Town wanted to get the updated invoice quickly so that the Town could pay in 2020 instead of 2021.

JJ commented that he was not done working at Congregational Cemetery due to access. Rick Chandler said Selectman Walker showed him and Geof Hodges where JJ could get in via the back; it just hadn't happened yet. Gate and posts that would be installed in the Spring were at Rick Chandler's home.

Chair Herbert thanked JJ for coming to the meeting.

6.2 Sebright Gas Powered Compactor

Selectman Walker provided the Board with a brochure about the Sebright Model CP 7460-HD Portable Self-Contained Compactor. He also provided a break even analysis on the costs. The compactor itself was just over \$47,000 including a hopper into which residents would toss their trash. Total cost to purchase the propane powered trash compactor, a 40 cubic yard box, shipping, installation, and training came to \$70,920. The break even point would be in the fifth year of ownership. Assumptions included tonnage / number of loads increasing 2% each year as the Town grows and a continuing trend of 9.36% annual increases in hauling charges.

Selectman Walker fielded a few questions about the analysis. In summary, the conclusion was that the Town would save \$130,000 over 10 years by making an initial capital outlay which would reduce hauling costs.

Selectman Walker said he also did a break even analysis for the possible purchase of 3 phase propane generator and rental of an electric compactor. He estimated the initial capital outlay at \$50,000. The break even point would be in the fifth year. Accumulative savings after 10 years would be over \$144,000.

The question of whether the Transfer Station should be located somewhere closer to civilization was posed. Selectman Walker answered that getting electricity to the transfer station could be quite costly. He added that if an option to use land elsewhere in Town came up, it should be considered. Selectman Walker added that if the Transfer Station had electricity, baling paper could be done providing a new source of revenue.

Selectman Walker noted that renting a compactor, instead of purchasing it, did have the advantage of not having to repair it when it broke down.

Mary Heath asked if the charges would be higher for hauling out heavier compacted trash. Selectman Walker confirmed that would be the case and that he'd received a quote for the new hauling fees which he used in his break even analysis.

Discussion shifted to presentation of a Warrant Article at the next Town Meeting. Selectman Walker would support

changing the purpose of the "Land Acquisition" fund and using the funds to support the compactor project. Joe Landry commented that if a new site might be needed some day for the Transfer Station, it didn't make sense to re-purpose the fund to purchase a compactor. Selectman Walker noted it was for the citizens to decide.

7. Selectmen's Reports

Selectman Hoyt said he got the okay from TDS to install a Wi-Fi connection at the Town Hall, free of charge until June. That would provide a location for people to go to who don't have Internet at home. It would be a 1gb system. He added that his pursuit of getting support for North Road was ongoing; Wi-Fi at the Town Hall was one short term solution.

Selectman Walker added that with Wi-Fi at the Town Hall, notifications could be programmed to alert the Town when there were drops in temperature and other alarms of concern.

8. Town Administrator's Report

8.1 Hot Water Heater Burst

In Academy Hall, a seal on the hot water heater burst causing water to shoot up onto the ceiling. It was replaced on Monday. All the pipes were replaced. Selectman Hoyt gave TA Rollins the name of a plumber who was able to come out on the emergency call and swiftly make repairs.

8.2 Waive Fee for Blood Drive

The American Red Cross was scheduled to hold a blood drive at the Town Hall on December 31. Selectman Hoyt made a **motion** to waive the Town Hall rental fee for the blood drive. Chair Herbert seconded. The **motion passed** with all in favor.

8.3 Holiday Food Basket Program

Administrative Assistant Kimberley Edelmann provided an update about the Holiday Food Basket Program. The baskets were being delivered to the Boscawen Police Department at 6 am on Tuesday December 22nd. Due to Covid-19, the baskets were being pre-assembled; no assembly work was needed this year.

Pete Ballou volunteered to pick up the boxes using his daughter's SUV and deliver them to the Salisbury Safety Complex. Chair Herbert and Selectman Walker volunteered to help with the effort.

9. Merrimack Valley School District

Chair Herbert welcomed Salisbury MVSD Representative Seelye Longnecker and the board members. Ms. Longnecker introduced SAU #46 Human Resources Manager Kathleen Boucher and SAU #46 Business Administrator Hilary Denoncourt who were seated next to her. Salisbury MVSD Representative Brad Kulacz was also present via Zoom.

Chair Herbert noted that the Town sent out tax bills due in December which reflected the increased cost of the

school district. This resulted in citizens asking why the costs were going up. Selectman Hoyt added that some citizens had requested that the school reps to come to the Selectboard meeting.

Representative Longnecker shared that cost to Salisbury was based on the number of children from Salisbury in the district, the average daily membership or ADM, from two years ago. In 2019 / 2020, the local tax rate was \$13.44. To calculate this, it was the average daily membership divided by the net assessed valuation of the town's property. It was a revaluation that year which also resulted in it going down. In the 2017 / 2018 school year, there were 186.6 students or approximately 7.64% of the district's total student enrollment. In 2020 / 2021, the tax rate was \$14.93. In the 2018 / 2019 school year, the ADM was 182.26 students. That made up 8.12% of the district's total student enrollment. The district's ADM had actually decreased, making Salisbury's percentage higher.

Rep. Longnecker said that in 2016, the tax rate was \$14.88. In 2017, it was \$15.06. In 2018, it was \$15.11. In 2019, it decreased to \$13.44, some of which was because of the revaluation. It was an anomaly. This year, it was back up to \$14.93 which was only 5 cents more than in 2016. Being a smaller Town, even a small change in the number of students makes a difference.

Selectman Hoyt asked if the population of the Elementary School had decreased. Rep. Longnecker said it was lower this year. However, that would not be reflected in the tax rate until two years later. And even then, it would depend on the percentage of the whole district.

Gayle Landry thanked the MVSD team for coming to the meeting. Mrs. Landry acknowledged that the Town valuation was part of the formula. Next, she commented that she had received an email from the district that there may be \$500,000 reduction in financial support for free and reduced cost lunches and that families needed to send in their paperwork. The \$500,000 loss in revenue could potentially result in a 27 cent per \$1000 in the tax rate. Mrs. Landry wanted to know if families were signing up. None of the reps had that figure with them.

Gayle Landry shared that the amount of taxes collected in December so far was the lowest she had ever seen in her 30+ years as the Tax Collector. She asked the MVSD reps, on behalf of the taxpayers of Salisbury, to do whatever they could to keep the tax rate down. Rep. Longnecker replied that the Board was committed to keeping it as long as they could. They were working on the budget and wanted to limit the increase to the cost of living rate of 1.3%. Doing that while providing the best education they could for the children was a difficult balancing act. Chair Herbert said he heard a rumor that Salisbury children would be going to a 4 day week. Rep. Longnecker confirmed this. The 5th grade class was recently combined with Webster as the 5th grade teacher from Salisbury needed to take a leave of absence.

Chair Herbert asked what impact Covid-19 had on costs for the district. SAU #46 Business Administrator Hilary Denoncourt explained that there were increased costs, but the district had received CARES funds and two more rounds of funds from the Federal Government to offset costs. Air purifying filters, cleaning materials, Chrome Books for remote students, and more had been purchased. Many children were using Zoom for classes.

It was noted that in response to Covid-19 some families had pulled their children from school for homeschooling. Transportation costs had decreased due to less bus days.

Marcia Murphy asked TA Rollins how often payments were made to the school. TA Rollins noted it was monthly. Ms. Murphy asked if tax revenues were not coming in, would payments to the schools be met. TA Rollins noted that escrow payments were expected in the next few days.

Tax Collector Gayle Landry gave the question more perspective. On Dec 11, 2019, there was \$152,000 in unpaid taxes. On December 16, 2020, there was \$835,000 in taxes outstanding.

Ms. Murphy asked what MVSD could do to help taxpayers who were on fixed incomes. The 1.3% cost of living increase didn't really equate for taxpayers who would be seeing increases in costs in Medicare and deductibles. She felt it was a wake up call. People were struggling to pay their taxes. Everything kept going up in the school district. She asked what was happening within the district that demonstrated that the increased costs were leading to improved education? Chair Herbert interjected that the cost of everything goes up. Selectman Hoyt commented that a lot of parents were learning to be teachers at home; that effects families as well.

Louise Andrus said she had been attending finance committee meetings. One thing she had heard was that there were 268 less students than before. All over the State of New Hampshire, costs keep going up. There was going to be a day of reckoning. Someone somewhere was going to have to do some cost cutting. She added that since the pandemic started, no one in the district had been furloughed. Hilary Denoncourt commented that the 268 students was not attendees but instead students signed up for meals. The program had been extended.

One member of the public noted that he had not had a raise in two years, but teachers were get raises. He asked how the school could justify increases. Representative Seelye Longnecker replied that contracts had raises built into them. Also, the State increased the level of contributions the district had to make to retirement funds while reducing the amount of revenue that the district would receive from the State.

Karen Currier, dialed in via Zoom, asked for confirmation about how the school tax rate was calculated. It was confirmed that it was the number of students and property values. Ms. Currier said that there were currently 60 students at the Salisbury Elementary School. 20 years prior, there were 90 students; a decrease. It was pointed out that the school tax rate took into account the number of Salisbury students across all of the schools, not just SES.

Karen Currier asked where taxpayer money was going if they district was receiving CARES funding. Business Administrator Hilary Denoncourt replied that the funds received were offsetting the unanticipated costs incurred as a result of Covid-19. That included the purchase of Chrome Books, air purification filters, cleaning supplies and more.

Ms. Currier said that from what she understood, the government provided \$326,000,000 in the CARES Act for schools and yet the tax rate had increased. She wanted to know if the funds were being used efficiently. Even though contracts were in place, the pandemic may dictate changes were needed.

Business Administrator Hilary Denoncourt responded. She commented that of the CARES Act funds, New Hampshire received \$36,000,000. And of that, Merrimack Valley received \$400,000. The savings that the district does see will be reflected in the fund balance at the end of the year. Details about where funds go were documented and available to the public.

Upcoming MVSD meetings included:

- ◆ Monday, Jan 11 - School Board
- ◆ Wednesday, Jan 27 - Budget Hearing
- ◆ Friday, March 5 - Annual Meeting

Details about those meetings can be found on the Merrimack Valley School District website at:

<https://www.mvsdpride.org>

A member of the public asked if budget cuts had ever been made at budget hearings. Rep. Longnecker confirmed

they had been, but not big cuts. The gentleman suggested cuts be made this year.

Selectman Hoyt wondered why big TV screens were needed in the school hallways. Business Administrator Hilary Denoncourt replied that purchases like that typically were obtained via grants. Gayle Landry added that the TV screens were actually part of the security system, allowing staff to see students.

Marcia Murphy said that the Select Board asked all departments to level fund their budgets for next year. It would be nice to see the school do that. She also thanked the MVSD reps for coming to the meeting.

Dora Rapalyea asked how often the school board meets. The answer was the second Monday of every month. However, most of the work was done via committees. They meet as needed.

Mrs. Rapalyea asked if support staff have contracts. It was confirmed they have 3-year contracts. Contracts were voted upon at Annual Meetings as separate Warrant Articles. Once voted, it became part of the budget. The 2021 / 2022 budget work was underway. The public was welcome to attend the meetings. Mrs. Rapalyea also thanked the MVSD reps for their time.

Chair Herbert thanked the MVSD reps for coming to the meeting. He really appreciated it.

10. Public Comments

Gayle Landry thanked Kimberley Edelmann for her work on the Holiday Food Basket Program.

Selectman Hoyt said he was still focused on getting Internet service on North Road.

11. Adjournment & Next Meeting

Chairman Herbert made a **motion** to adjourn. Selectman Hoyt **seconded**. The **motion** passed with all in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 7:48 p.m.

Wednesday, January 6, 2021 @ 6 p.m. at Academy Hall.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kimberley Brown Edelmann
Recording Secretary

These meeting minutes were reviewed and accepted on January 6, 2021.

Selectmen, Town of Salisbury