

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
TOWN OF HAMPTON FALLS**

**JANUARY 17, 2024 – 8:00 AM
TOWN HALL**

FINAL

PRESENT: Ed B. Beattie, Chairman; Lou Gargiulo, Vice-Chairman;
Mark R. Lane, Selectman; Karen Anderson, Town Administrator;
Rachel D. Webb, Assistant Administrator

GUESTS: Ryan Veno, Police Chief; Justin Ranauro, Police Lieutenant; Russ Hilliard, Road Agent; Jay Lord, Fire Chief; Jim Ziolkowski, ELM; Reece Gandt, Eagle Scout candidate

Chairman Beattie called the Board of Selectmen's meeting to order at 8:00 AM.

Police Department / Animal Control Monthly Report – Police Chief Ryan Veno:

Police Chief Veno stated that he submitted his monthly report, and asked if there were any questions. He reported that in December 2023 the Police Department assisted with the Wreaths Across America that was a fantastic event. Police Chief Veno stated that Lieutenant Ranauro completed ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, and Evacuate) training in December 2023, to become an ALICE Instructor and stated that the Lincoln Akerman School (LAS) puts all their faculty through that training. Police Chief Veno stated that Lieutenant Ranauro completed research regarding School Resource Officers (SROs) and whether those positions were full-time or part-time, and stated that most were full-time positions. Lieutenant Ranauro reported that he researched 15-17 schools in Rockingham County and the majority, that have SROs are full-time. Three towns have part-time SROs are: Kingston, Newmarket, and Rye. He further clarified that Newmarket has two SROs with one full-time and a second part-time. In Kingston's example, he found that the SRO is employed by the Police Department and works strictly school hours for 180 days-per-year, so as not to exceed the maximum limit for part-time hours. Further, that Officer does not pick up shifts, and does not work road details. If school is canceled, the Officer does not get paid. During school vacations and the summer the Officer is off. He said that Newmarket was similar to Kingston, but Rye was different in that the Officer could pick up shifts as long as they did not exceed their part-time hours. He stated that Exeter, Epping, and Raymond are all full-time SROs.

M. Lane asked about the three part-time SRO locations whether they were High Schools or Elementary schools? Lieutenant Ranauro responded that Newmarket has one High School and one Elementary. He continued that Kingston has a High School SRO but the Elementary School gets paid a Detail rate all day. At Rye, he continued, the SRO decides their own hours to work during the school year.

M. Lane said that he is curious to see a job description of an SRO at an elementary school? Lt. Ranauro responded that in Kingston the job description was teaching DARE and/or LEADS and handling any situations that arose on-site, so that an additional Patrolman would not be responding to a situation at the school because there was already an (SRO) Officer on-site.

L. Gargiulo wondered what the school populations were of the elementary schools with SROs? Lt. Ranauro responded that he looked at towns similar in size to Hampton Falls. Brentwood, Kensington, East Kingston and Newfields do not have SROs.

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Chairman Beattie inquired if the fifth full-time Police Officer had been hired, and Police Chief Veno confirmed the new hire to start full-time February 01, 2024, and stated that in the meantime he has been working for the Town part-time.

Police Chief Veno introduced the Police Department's Administrative Assistant, Melanie Rivard, who was previously a Dispatcher with Rockingham County for the prior seventeen (17) years. He welcomed her to town and stated that he is excited to have the position filled, with her wealth of experience working with Police Departments, and her knowledge of the Police Department records systems.

Road Agent Monthly Report – Russ Hilliard: R. Hilliard reported the following activities in the past month:

- Dangling wire issue at Drinkwater and Starvish Roads. R. Hilliard stated that he is meeting with the power company after this meeting, and he would ask them about the wire to remove it.
- Many new shoulder washouts and drainage issues resulted from recent storms, and R. Hilliard will follow-up with worksheets for the damages once the snow dissipates and he can fully evaluate.
- Brown Road is becoming the Route 1 emergency road bypass when Route 1 floods out in the Marsh area. He stated that the heavy traffic is not helping the condition of Brown Road. The section of road between Towle Farm Road and Town Hall, when it is redone, the Selectmen may want to consider reclaiming the road, instead of shimming and topping it because of the amount of traffic. He said that 90% of the cars head straight for that detour when Route 1 at the Marsh closes, which has happened twice in the last few weeks, and the road has taken a fairly hard hit from it.

Chairman Beattie agreed that that condition is not going to go away, and R. Hilliard stated that he thought it was going to get worse, and it was his opinion that he believes that Brown Road will be used more frequently. R. Hilliard said that that was why he was recommending consideration of bringing the road up to a higher specification (to reclaim it) so that patching doesn't get destroyed right away.

- R. Hilliard requested permission to remove the signs at the ends of both Sanborn Road and King Street, that state: *"No Trucks with long trailers."* He stated that K. Anderson brought it to his attention stating that the wording is not a legal sign, because the sign instructs a truck that they cannot travel down that road, when in fact they can go, but might get stuck.

K. Anderson said that the sign could read: *"Sharp Curve, Trucks Use Caution"*, or the Town could add a weight limit sign, or add reasons why a long truck would not want to go down the road. She continued that due to the Interstate Commerce Act (Federal law) you cannot expressly prohibit trucking on a through road. She stated that the current signs were not installed by the Town.

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L. Gargiulo asked if someone had approved the sign, and if the large truck was still located at the end of the street, and K. Anderson responded no to both inquiries, and R. Hilliard stated that the reason for the sign has gone away.

Chairman Beattie stated that it used to be a publishing business that was located there, and he thought that they always used shorter trucks.

There was a discussion considering adding a weight limit, but the question became how to patrol it because oil trucks also use the roads. R. Hilliard suggested “*No Through Trucking – Sharp Corner Ahead*”. He offered to reach out to the sign company and ask what the standard is in this situation. He agreed to research some options and report back to the Selectmen.

K. Anderson stated that R. Hilliard is keeping separate track of expenses incurred as part of storm clean-up in case FEMA declares storm damage grant money, the Town would potentially be able to seek some reimbursement.

MOTION: To approve the Road Agent’s Core Services monthly bill for the month of December 2023, in the amount of \$8,073.00.

MOTION: L. GARGIULO

SECOND: M. LANE

UNANIMOUS

Fire / Ambulance / Emergency Management Report – Fire Chief Jay Lord: Fire Chief Lord stated December 2023 ended with 374 emergency calls, with the first call of 2024 at four (4) minutes after midnight. 1,081 total calls comprising emergency plus ambulance service calls. December ended with a storm and entered a cycle of several storms.

Fire Chief Lord asked if there were any questions regarding his monthly report, and there were no questions.

- The generator at the Public Safety Building (PSB) is temporarily down and not functioning. He reviewed that the lightning strike happened in July 2023, and the generator’s board was fixed then and was operating. Recently, it has been determined that there are other boards that need to be replaced. He stated that he was unsure if it would be viable to send to Primex as part of the lightning strike damage, as it was repaired and functioning after the lightning strike. Fire Chief Lord has ordered approximately \$2,500 of boards to be replaced and said that the cost can be absorbed into the Emergency Management budget if there are not many storms this summer. He stated that the downside is that when the PSB loses power, then the internet for Town Hall also goes down because the two buildings are linked by internet cable.
- Fire Chief Lord said that he would handle calling the phone or cable company about the wire on Drinkwater Road at Starvish Road.
- The next drill (CF2) regarding the Seabrook Nuclear Power Plant is February 07, 2024, and Chief Lord reported that there is a new representative with whom he is working, as the previous person was promoted as part of reorganization at Homeland Security.
- Fire Chief Lord stated that Deputy Fire Chief, Bobby Hudson, has started full-time and working with him Mondays through Fridays. He is fixing things that he has never had the

time to get to when he was previously working part-time, so they are making great strides in the first two weeks of the year.

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Building Inspector, Code Compliance, Health Officer Monthly Report – Mark Sikorski:

The Building Inspector was not available.

OLD BUSINESS

Financial Reports: General Fund Balance: \$ 4,027,631.50

K. Anderson reported the General Fund Balance at \$ 4,027,631.50.

Executive: Payroll Warrant, Accounts Payable, and Escrow Warrant: K. Anderson stated that there were no manifests/warrants for this meeting because two (2) were done at the prior Board of Selectmen's meeting, January 03, 2024. She continued that there will be two (2) to process at the next meeting, and then after that will be back on schedule. K. Anderson reported that the first payroll in the new system is being done today, and she stated that the company has been fabulous with the training, and they were coming in today to mirror staff. She continued that the first Accounts Payable run will be in two weeks, that gives time to reconcile data so that when the data is pulled over the data will be excellent.

Other Selectmen's Old Business: There was no Other Selectmen's Old Business.

OLD BUSINESS PUBLIC COMMENT: There was no Old Business Public Comment.

NEW BUSINESS:

Executive: Eagle Scout Proposal: Reese Gandt introduced herself as a Sophomore at Winnacunnet High School and stated that she is a Life Scout with Troop 185 in Stratham.

R. Gandt stated that her Eagle Scout proposal is to construct and install an informational kiosk at the Hampton Seabrook Estuary on Depot Road in Hampton Falls. She stated that she would be working with the Seabrook-Hampton Estuary Alliance (SHEA) to complete the project. She distributed information that listed the proposed materials and cost estimates for the project, along with sample photos of what the finished kiosk would look like. She said that the kiosk in the photo was made by an Eagle Scout in Hampton who was also working with SHEA and was installed near a pond in Hampton. R. Gandt is proposing to utilize the same blueprints, so that hers will look identical. R. Gandt stated that her kiosk is proposed to be located on Hampton Falls town-owned land at the Hampton-Seabrook Estuary marsh at the parking lot at the end of Depot Road at the entrance to the Rail Trail. She said that because the proposed information kiosk is going to be in the parking lot, it will not be located in the wetlands and therefore a wetlands permit from NH DES is not required. The timeline for the project is that her Troop approved the project in December, and she is proposing the project to the Hampton Falls Selectmen today. In February R. Gandt plans to propose the project to the Eagle Board, and finalize the design and plans through the Winter. In April she plans to have a car wash as a

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fundraiser, and then her work days will be in June and July in early Summer, and plans to complete the project by August.

The impact and importance of the information kiosk is that SHEA is trying to improve and promote the health of estuaries and increase knowledge about them. Further, she stated that creating signage was one of the action steps listed in SHEA's Estuary Management Plan, so the kiosk will be directly benefiting SHEA and helping them with their plan. The information on the sign will contain: the importance of estuaries, what they are, and how and why it is important for people to protect estuaries. R. Gandt clarified that she, herself, will not be designing the content of the sign because SHEA will be doing that, but she will be fundraising for it and funding it. The people she has involved in her Eagle Scout project are her Project Advisor Jeff Gandt (her Uncle), and David Gandt (her father), Mr. Emanuel her Scout Master, and SHEA is the beneficiary.

Chairman Beattie stated that he thought the proposed project was great, and both L. Gargiulo and M. Lane agreed.

MOTION: To approve the Eagle Scout Project of Reese Gandt to install an informational kiosk on Depot Road.

MOTION: L. GARGIULO

SECOND: M. LANE

UNANIMOUS

Highway: Winter Road Maintenance:

Chairman Beattie invited both Jim Ziolkowski, of ELM and Russ Hilliard Road Agent to give a summary of the recent winter storms, but before they started, Chairman Beattie conveyed some historical comments he has heard from the public regarding Winter Road Maintenance. He continued that one question is: *"Why is it that at the Seabrook town line the roads are all black tar?"* He said that in the past, the Selectmen compared the amount of salt that Seabrook uses on its roads with Hampton Falls and found that Seabrook uses multiple times more. Hampton Falls is conscious of the environmental impact of the salt. He continued that a previous Board of Selectmen had encouraged for the roads to be safe and passable, but not to spread an overabundance of salt. He had a similar conversation with someone recently, and thought that if there need to be made adjustments to the quantities of salt spread during storms, then the Selectmen should discuss it.

L. Gargiulo agreed that the conversations have been around the use of salt. He stated that he was of the opinion that the people who need to make the call about how much salt to use are the people who are out there in the winter conditions. He also said that safety concerns have to come before ecological concerns in some situations. He said that certain events require additional attention. He stated that it comes down to what does "safe and passable" really mean?

M. Lane stated that the difficulty of the storm was the length of it being so long, and that the snow was so heavy it gathered on the trees, so there was snow falling off of the trees. He agreed with L. Gargiulo that every storm is different, and some require more salt than others.

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J. Ziolkowski reviewed the winter season to date and reported that there have been three (3) storms to date. The first was 15.1 inches of snow. The second was the snow squall that came through Sunday night. The third was last night. He stated that the big storm in duration (not including clean-up time), from flake to flake, was twenty (20) hours. He said that his crews pre-treated the roads at 4:30 in the afternoon before the storm, and that held until about midnight. Then they plowed for twenty (20) hours, and then salted again. He said that what developed was a 2-3-inch pack, that could have been avoided had they done some salting during the storm. He clarified that the pre-treatment is not on every single road, specifically on the main roads and roads with curves and slopes. He said that perhaps that would be a subject to discuss whether to pre-treat 100% or not, and to add salt treatment during snowstorms.

J. Ziolkowski stated that the Town used \$6,000-\$7,000 of salt during that large snowstorm and it was not enough; it could have been as high as \$18,000. By comparison, yesterday's storm went through \$6,600 in salt, and there was five inches (5") of snow last night. He said that salt was being spread from 7am to 10pm. He stated that the number of inches of snow cannot be compared with salt consumption because every snowstorm is different.

The snowsquall Sunday cost the Town approximately \$3,000 in salt. He said adding up the three storms so far is approaching the total budget and there is still a lot of winter still to go. He stated that you have to go back five years to when there was a snowstorm greater than twelve inches (12"), so it is really managing the public's expectations, when there have hardly been any snowstorms the past several years.

M. Lane asked if J. Ziolkowski purposely used more salt on last night's storm because of the feedback on social media after the first storm, and he responded yes.

R. Hilliard asked if it would have been acceptable to spend \$18,000 on the first big storm? Chairman Beattie responded that the challenge is the intersection of budget economics and safety, and the Selectmen rely on R. Hilliard and J. Ziolkowski to get the right mix. Chairman Beattie stated that since he has been on the Board of Selectmen, that there was a program that the previous contractor attended to put down less salt, and it was an environmental emphasis and there was a certificate given for completion of the program; however, he said that he does not believe that that practice meets the expectations of some of the recent complaints.

K. Anderson reported that when she receives a complaint about a particular street during the snowstorm that she would forward that to R. Hilliard, and she would get a reply saying that they were responding. She stated that some of their time was spent chasing after particular problems, that were the streets with the large tree canopies so the sun was not reaching the pavement, and the snow was coming off the trees creating a thicker slush problem.

L. Gargiulo made the point that people cannot compare what they see for conditions on Route 88 (a State maintained road) with the Town roads, because the State uses so much more salt than the Town.

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M. Lane stated that he did not think the Selectmen's policy should be based on complaints, but rather on a hybrid of trying to keep the roads safe and also be environmentally responsible. He said that the aspect of the complaints that is good is that they point to where to focus resources.

Chairman Beattie suggested that the Selectmen review this subject again at their next meeting. K. Anderson stated that the next time the Selectmen meet will be the Deliberative Session, where/when amendments can be made to the budget at Deliberative Session.

J. Ziolkowski stated that the communication has been great between K. Anderson, R. Hilliard and himself, and, he stated that the equipment is solid. He said that he could not be more pleased with the decision the Town made to invest in the winter road maintenance equipment, and he said that plowing the roads has not been an issue. He said that they can tweak the approach to salting and he said that he thinks it will be good.

Assessing: Abatements: K. Anderson stated that the Assessor, Chad Roberge, has several abatement requests, and there are a few more (three) in process, still to come.

K. Anderson presented Abatement Refund # 801 in the amount of \$149.00, plus interest, to correct the amount of finished space in a basement, and also correcting the number of fireplaces. The recommendation from the Assessor is to approve the abatement.

MOTION: To approve Abatement Refund # 801 in the amount of \$149.00, plus interest.

MOTION: L. GARGIULO

SECOND: M. LANE

UNANIMOUS

K. Anderson presented Abatement Refund # 802 in the amount of \$1,364.00, plus interest, is a property of almost five-acres with a ranch that had been assessed for \$505,300 and the revised value would be \$400,000 due to corrections of the data and the condition of the property. The recommendation from the Assessor is to approve the abatement.

MOTION: To approve Abatement Refund # 802 in the amount of \$1,364.00, plus interest.

MOTION: L. GARGIULO

SECOND: M. LANE

UNANIMOUS

K. Anderson presented Abatement Refund # 803 in the amount of \$481.00, plus interest, for a commercial property which was assessed based on usable square footage. After meeting with the property owner, the Assessor considered the shape of the property and the location of the tidal river to determine that half of the property is unusable, with the remainder being 2-acres. The revised assessment went from \$1,125,700 to \$1,088,600 that is a value change of \$37,100. The recommendation from the Assessor is to approve the abatement.

MOTION: To approve Abatement Refund # 803 in the amount of \$481.00, plus interest.

MOTION: L. GARGIULO

SECOND: M. LANE

UNANIMOUS

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K. Anderson presented Abatement Refund # 804 in the amount of \$471.00, plus interest, to remove fireplaces that do not exist, and a sunroom that was listed as a living area. The property had been assessed at \$924,400 and the revised assessment is \$888,000. The owner had an appraisal done in between for reference. The recommendation from the Assessor is to approve the abatement.

MOTION: To approve Abatement Refund # 804 in the amount of \$471.00, plus interest.

MOTION: L. GARGIULO

SECOND: M. LANE

UNANIMOUS

K. Anderson presented Abatement # 805 in the amount of \$736.00, that is an undeveloped piece of land that was assessed as buildable, and it is not buildable, so the assessment went from \$144,700 to \$87,900. L. Gargiulo questioned whether it was buildable, and K. Anderson responded that the parcel only has a nine-foot (9') access to Exeter Road, so without zoning relief it is not currently buildable. K. Anderson stated that the prior assessment was \$56,000 before the revaluation. The recommendation from the Assessor is to approve the abatement.

MOTION: To approve Abatement # 805 in the amount of \$736.00.

MOTION: L. GARGIULO

SECOND: M. LANE

UNANIMOUS

K. Anderson presented Abatement # 806, with the recommendation from the Assessor to deny the abatement request. Assessment was based on \$649,600, and sales in that neighborhood were at \$630,000 and \$610,000, with the subject parcel being a larger property than the ones sold.

MOTION: To support the Assessor's recommendation to deny Abatement # 806.

MOTION: L. GARGIULO

SECOND: M. LANE

UNANIMOUS

K. Anderson presented Abatement # 807, with the recommendation from the Assessor to deny the abatement request. The property is 0.6 acres with a single-story store and is assessed at \$605,700. The owners claim they have been trying to sell the property at \$400,000 with no offers, although the Assessor found no evidence of market value, or listings both old or current, so he stands by the value.

MOTION: To support the Assessor's recommendation to deny Abatement # 807.

MOTION: L. GARGIULO

SECOND: M. LANE

UNANIMOUS

Policies: Re-Affirm Board Policies for 2024: K. Anderson stated that certain Selectmen's policies need to be re-affirmed on an annual basis, such as the Investment Policy, Fraud Policy and Fund Balance Policy. There have been no changes made to the existing policies.

MOTION: To re-affirm the town's Investment Policy, Fraud Policy and Fund Balance Policy.

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MOTION: L. GARGIULO
SECOND: M. LANE
UNANIMOUS

Other Selectmen's New Business: There was no Other Selectmen's New Business.

K. Anderson stated that the Selectmen received a letter from the NH Department of Revenue Administration (NHDRA) certifying the revaluation and establishing the equalization rate. She stated that the median ratio in Hampton Falls for tax year 2023 is 99.9%. So, the revaluation is accurate and assessments are at 99.9% of fair market value.

Chairman Beattie said that information is terrific, and K. Anderson agreed saying that it is not easy to get it that close to 100%. Chairman Beattie reflected to five years prior when he was on the Board of Selectmen and the previous revaluation was completed in 2018 and the equalization rate was at 89%. He said that prior to the revaluation the equalization rate recently got down to 62%.

K. Anderson reported another number released by the NH DRA is the *Coefficient of Dispersion* that has to be a measurement less than 20, and Hampton Falls measured at 4.78. The measurement means that each type of property or neighborhood is not over assessed and is assessed accurately. K. Anderson said that Avitar did a fabulous job on the revaluation. Chairman Beattie stated that it was very good news.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES: January 03, 2024 –

MOTION: To approve the minutes of January 03, 2024, as written.

MOTION: L. GARGIULO
SECOND: M. LANE
UNANIMOUS

NEW BUSINESS PUBLIC COMMENT: There was no New Business Public Comment.

Chairman Beattie stated that Deliberative Session will be held here at Town Hall on Tuesday February 06, 2024, and the Town portion will not start any sooner than 7:00 PM. He stated that the School Department's Deliberative Session will start at 6:00 PM same date and location, and if the School Department finishes in 45 minutes, the Town portion will not start until 7:00 PM. He stated that the School Department's Default Budget is higher than their proposed budget. Chairman Beattie stated that the Selectmen have tried to make it convenient for people with busy schedules to only need to come out once for both School and Town Deliberative Sessions in the same location, on the same night.

Chairman Beattie stated that the next regular meeting of the Selectmen is the day following Deliberative Session on February 07, 2024. K. Anderson stated that the Selectmen's meeting on Feb 07, 2024, will be the time when changes made at the Deliberative Session will be taken into account. If any Warrant Articles are amended, the Selectmen will need to vote whether to re-recommend or to not recommend the Warrant Article based on the changes made.

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
TOWN OF HAMPTON FALLS**

**JANUARY 17, 2024 – 8:00 AM
TOWN HALL**

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K. Anderson said that she has the first draft completed of the *Voter Guide* that she will have available prior to the Deliberative Session.

ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 9:10 AM

MOTION: L. GARGIULO

SECOND: M. LANE

UNANIMOUS

Next Selectmen's Meeting is Wednesday, February 07, 2024, at 6:00 PM.

Deliberative Sessions are both Tuesday February 06, 2024, and both at Town Hall:

- 6:00 PM School
- 7:00 PM Town

These Minutes prepared by Rachel D. Webb, Assistant Administrator