

**Board of Selectmen  
Meeting Minutes  
February 11, 2026**

Present: Selectwoman Iris Campbell, Richard Pelletier – Selectman, and Laura Buono, Town Administrator

Absent: Selectman James Bailey - Chairman

Others present: Brett Taber, Nick Taaffe, Angela Poluchov, Ernie Buttler, Cathy Houle, James Clough, Nathaniel VanCamp, Samantha Gallo, Tamara McClure, Tom McClure, Riche' Colcombe, Karn Pellicano, Dana Clow, Steve Parentueau, Patty Parenteau, Luke Levesque, Dennis Yeaton, Trish Bush, Robyn Payson, Kim Hanson, Mark Murdough, Chris Parsons, Ken Stafford, Arthur Jurkowitsch

**1. CONSENT AGENDA**

Selectwoman made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda for February 11, 2026. Selectman Pelletier seconded the motion, the motion passed.

- Intent to Cut – Map 12 Lot 42
- Elderly Tax Exemption – Map 23 Lot 13
- Abatement (approvals)/Refunds – Map 12 Lot 67-21 \$1,317.28; Map 11J Lot 392 \$907.30; Map 9 Lot 175 \$257.92
- Abatement (denial) – Map 25 Lot 97; Map 17 Lot 217

**2. MANIFEST**

Selectwoman Campbell made a motion to authorize the Selectmen to sign manifests and order the Treasurer to sign Payroll Check numbers 20847 – 20879 a/k/a Vouchers 6 & 7 in the amount of \$260,321.83 (includes 253 direct deposit stubs) and \$1,491,379.77. Selectman Pelletier seconded the motion, the motion passed.

- A/P Check include payment to HDSD in the amount of \$1,004,841.83

**3. MEETING MINUTES**

Selectwoman Campbell made a motion to approve the meeting minutes for the January 28<sup>th</sup> Meeting. Selectman Pelletier seconded the motion, the motion passed.

Selectwoman Campbell made a motion to approve the meeting minutes for the February 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting. Selectman Pelletier seconded the motion, the motion passed.

**4. BUDGET REVIEW**

The Board reviewed the final budget documents with the Town Administrator which will be used for the public hearing scheduled for later in the evening.

**5. APPOINTED TREASURER POSITION**

Ms. Buono notified the Board that the current Treasurer has stated that he is not planning on continuing once his term is up next month. She said moving forward as was voted by the Town,

the Treasurer position will be appointed versus elected. She suggested that the Deputy be approached to find out her interest in taking over the position, and if there is no interest to then advertise for interested parties to apply. If there is an interest from the Deputy in continuing as Treasurer, then they will need to search for a Deputy. The Board agreed with the recommendation.

## **6. NICK TAAFFE RE: VALUATIONS**

Ms. Buono said that Nick Taaffe, who has recently taken a part-time position with the Town of Hillsborough as our in-house assessor (he previously worked for the agency we had contracted with) is here to hear questions from the Board regarding the recent revaluation of properties. She said Nick has spent many years working in Hillsborough and knows the properties and areas well. Ms. Buono said Norm Bernaiche also works alongside Mr. Taaffe to verify the work moving forward was unable to attend the meeting tonight but is willing to come in if the Board has additional questions. Mr. Taaffe spoke briefly about the revaluation process and subsequent meetings with individuals who requested them. Selectman Pelletier asked about what appears to be inconsistencies in the percentage of changes between properties. Mr. Taaffe explained lot sizes based on location in conjunction with the question of values on smaller lots downtown versus larger lots. There were a couple of questions that Selectman Pelletier brought up because they had been asked of him, but Mr. Taaffe said to be able to give a response, he would have to know the property address so that he can review the cards. He said he's in the office on Tuesdays and Wednesdays for appointments.

## **7. PUBLIC HEARING – 2026 BUDGET**

Selectwoman Campbell opened the 2026 Budget public hearing at 6:30 pm and asked for no side conversations during the meeting. She also directed the audience, when speaking, to stand and state their name each time.

Article 12 – to raise and appropriate \$11,025,344 for the 2026 operating budget. Included is an extra pay week in 2026, a 3% increase for union employees, nonunion employees 3% as well as step increases for eligible employees, police & dispatch increase is 2.75% and health insurance carries a 11% increase beginning July 1.

The following are questions from the public:

- Tom McClure, regarding the 7% increase in the Town Clerk/Tax Office, he said the union contract is going up 3%, he said the Town Clerk is elected. Selectwoman Campbell explained that the Deputy is in the union who is now at the top of the wage scale and only receives a cost of living and the Town Clerk Tax Collector's salary is based on what everyone else receives.
- Tamara McClure asked about the Treasure positions. Selectwoman Campbell said this year the Treasurer needs to be appointed rather than elected and the Treasurer for the Trustees of the Trust Funds has not received an increase in quite a while.
- Ms. McClure asked about the increase in health insurance. It was explained that the premiums are increasing 11% beginning July 1 and one employee opted into the plan for 2025 which is now included in the 2026 budget.
- Riche' Colcombe asked how much is budgeted for the Treasurer position and whether it is full or part-time. Ms. Buono said the Treasurer is a stipend position, there is \$5,000 budgeted.

- Riche' Colcombe asked if the \$37,000 budgeted in assessing solely for the assessor? Ms. Buono explained there is still the utility assessor and one part-time contractor who reviews things and submits them to the Department of Revenue.
- Riche' Colcombe asked what the benefit is for hiring an assessor. It was explained the assessor is a non-benefit position and will be available to the public twice a week.
- Riche' Colcombe asked why there is an increase for Economic Development Commission. Planner Robyn Payson said the money is for the Economic Development Plan, working on the TIF Plan, assistance with future Gateway Zones, the development of the web page, promotion of commercial industrial tax exemption with support from the Central Regional NH Planning Commission. A due's is paid annually to CNHRPC which helps to get a good rate for contracted services, Robyn said the CNHRPC provides a lot of services for the money that is paid.
- Tom McClure asked for an explanation of the payroll amount in the Planning Office. Ms. Buono said the budgeted amount covers one employee which is now capped.
- Nathaniel Van Camp asked if the town reviews the town's assets and equipment. Ms. Buono said the list is reviewed every year, property liability covers the town's buildings and equipment.
- Someone asked if the town will be able to vote on whether the town should continue police coverage for the town of Deering. Deering is voting this March on whether they want Hillsborough to cover the town. The audience member said Hillsborough should have the chance to say no to the coverage. Ms. Buono said Deering will be voting on a contract to pay Hillsborough, without a contract Hillsborough will be called to do mutual aid, yet, Deering does not have the staff to send to Hillsborough. Someone said Deering is surrounded by six other communities, why is Hillsborough the only community that supports Deering. Police Chief Chris Parsons explained Hillsborough is the only 24-hour agency in the area with more resources and dispatch. The amount being voted on in Deering amounts to \$275,000 in the first year, \$285,000 in the second year and \$295,000 for the third year.
- Riche' Colcombe said she spoke to a lieutenant at the State House and learned this is not a unique issue, because the State Police are shorthanded and other communities are facing the same issue. She learned the town can engage in an MOU with the State Police and possibly get compensated for calls the town is covering on behalf of the State Police.
- Someone asked about the wear and tear on the police cruisers and does the money the town receives go into the general fund. Chief Parsons said the goal is to put about \$2,000 a month into the police revolving fund, but no decision has been made by the Selectmen. The audience member feels all the money should go into the general fund. He now pays the town \$1,200 a month in taxes and feels it is time to start cutting the budget.
- It was confirmed that the insurance rates have not increased because the town is helping Deering.
- Brett Taber asked if the liability is different if you receive revenue for a service. Ms. Buono said the town is being reimbursed for the time that is being spent in Deering. The town also has contracts with Windsor and other communities, and it doesn't raise the rates for going into other communities. Mr. Taber asked if those funds go into the general fund or other funds. Ms. Buono said the money goes into the general fund.
- Nathaniel Van Camp asked if there is a process to explore ways to reduce vendor costs. Ms. Buono explained contracted services are specific to the vendors the town purchases equipment from such as radios, body cameras, and software packages for example, so they are exclusive to those vendors. She said in order to get a different price on a contract for support, they would have to purchase new products from different vendors.

- Ms. Colcombe asked where the insurance reimbursement for the cruiser would go, she couldn't specifically find it in the detailed revenue. Ms. Buono said typically insurance reimbursements are added to the general fund.
- Ms. Colcombe asked if the Windsor contract was updated this year and if not, when was the last time it was. Fire Chief, Kenneth Stafford said the last time it was updated was when the police stipend was added, he didn't have the actual contract to reference from. Mr. Stafford believes the contract was updated in the last 5 years.
- Tom McClure asked if the ambulance service in Hillsborough has been contacted instead of considering hiring a full-time employee. Chief Stafford said the cost would be more for an ambulance service and that service is not the same as with the fire department. Plus, the town would be losing revenue. The Fire Chief does not feel the town is at that point in hiring a service.
- Ms. Colcombe asked why the town isn't increasing the cost for Windsor, she recalled looking at the contract, which is from 2010 or 2015 for \$4,000, she did say she is not confident in the figures she quoted. Chief Stafford believes the contract amount is higher than \$4,000. Ms. Colcombe feels it's the Selectmen's job to make sure the contracts are current and feels the town is not bringing in enough revenue to offset what the taxpayers are paying for these services.
- Dana Clow said the ambulance service that was referenced, that service is more for transfers not emergencies.
- Arthur Jurkowsch said he is a ham operator and asked if the town has a program to contact those operators in town in case of an emergency. If not, would the town be opposed to having one. It was agreed it should be discussed.
- Brett Taber asked why Dispatch increased when the last that years that budget wasn't fully spent. Chief Parsons said Dispatch was short handed the last two years and 2026 includes 2 vacation buy-outs.
- The Teen Center budget is showing a 7% increase; part of that increase includes 10 hours a week for the Director to work with the Town Administrator updating policies and on various other projects. Leigh Bossie asked when the town authorized the new position of Assistant Town Administrator. Ms. Colcombe asked why that position wasn't open to the public to apply for. Ms. Buono said the town has a current staff member who can assist her and who has already established policies to bring forward and has the experience to manage projects. Ms. Buono asked why we wouldn't tap into someone like that, since they are already on staff instead of trying to find someone to average 10 hours a week. Ms. Colcombe asked if this was a decision made by the Board of Selectmen. As far as Mr. Bosse is concerned, he feels the Teen Center should be shut down and reformatted, put more money on teen services and less toward salaries. Ms. Buono said the town offers programs that are now self-sustaining and are no longer included in the budget that generates revenue and the Director made this change within his first year of employment. She also stated that the salary line only includes one individual who is dedicated to the teen center and the others have jobs that cover parks, recreation, programs, and more but this is where they have always been budgeted.
- Kim Hanson asked why the Teen Center is not part of the school. Teen Center Director James Clough explained the school runs an after-school program for K – Grade 5 and the Teen Center have 7<sup>th</sup> grade – 12<sup>th</sup> graders and looking to add the 6<sup>th</sup> grade which is free to those that come in. Ms. Hanson asked what services are provided at the Teen Center. Mr. Clough said it is a drop in Teen Center, there are 20 kids every weekday. The first hour there is no electronics, homework help and interacting with each other take place. At 3:00 pm it is a safe space to be in, at 5:00 pm the teens are served dinner and at 6:00 pm it's time to go home. In that time span the students help with the Easter and Halloween events,

they help with the 5K and do community work such as stacking wood and helping with the wood bank. The students learn to cook and work on their developmental skills.

- Ms. Colcombe asked Mr. Clough what the revolving fund is used for, there is \$28K in the fund, could it be used to reduce the budget. Mr. Clough said farm ball started this year and money was used from the revolving fund to start that program and all expenses for programs are paid from the revolving fund. Ms. Colcombe said between the two revolving funds, one for Parks & Rec and the other for programs amounts to about \$66K and she asked why that money can't be used to offset the budget. Ms. Buono said those funds would need to be researched on how they were set up.
- Tom McClure said it seems the town is competing against HYAA (Hillsborough Youth Athletic Association) they have softball, baseball, soccer, etc. Mr. Clough said the programs he runs are from K – 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, HYAA does competitive from third grade to middle school. Mr. Clough said in addition he runs toddler programs, adult and senior programs, there is also a MOU recently signed with HYAA that outlines everything out. Ms. Colcombe said she hopes the Board will consider using some of that \$66K to decrease the budget.
- Ms. Colcombe asked what animal control is responsible for doing. Chief Parsons said the town did have an on-call employee, currently the position is vacant. Ms. Colcombe feels the \$7,000 in the budget could be removed and contract out the position.
- General assistance was reduced by 47%. Karen Pellicano who works at the Grapevine said the need for rent, heating and electricity needs are increasing. If the money is not available for those needs where does the money come from. Ms. Buono said in 2025 there was \$108K budgeted and \$66K spent, the budget was lowered because of the surplus. Ms. Pellicano is concerned about the cut and feels the town will overspend the welfare budget. Ms. Buono said they are currently experiencing people applying for welfare who do not qualify since they make enough money to cover their primary needs but are making poor lifestyle choices.
- Ms. Colcombe asked if the \$52K made by Manahan Park will go to the general fund. The answer was yes.

The overall total increase to the budget is 3%. Ms. Buono thanked the residents for attending.

- Brett Taber asked on the overall budget what is the surplus amount for 2025. Ms. Buono explained not all 2025 expenses have been paid, \$150K will go towards the capital reserve funds and there are hopes that number could climb to \$200K.

Review of the Capital Budget:

- Tom McClure asked how much is in the unassigned fund balance. Ms. Buono did not have that information with her and will send it to McClure. Ms. Colcombe had a copy of the audit with her; the balance is \$2,325,685. Mr. McClure then asked why the town is raising \$80K from taxation for the capital budget when the surplus could be used. Ms. Buono said keeping the unassigned fund balance at a certain level helps provide cash flow. The Selectmen does have the choice to use the unassigned fund balance. The problem the town runs into with cash flow is the taxes are never 100% whole, the town still must pay the school, water & sewer liens are paid off, and the town collects for Emerald Lake. This year the town needed to take out a tax anticipation note to maintain the cash flow.
- Brett Taber asked what roads are planned for paving. Road Agent Ernie Butler said Beard Road will be reclaimed.
- A new sidewalk tractor in the amount of \$208,500 is being proposed, it will be a 5-year lease agreement. A resident asked why the tractor is so expensive. Ernie Butler explained the current tractor is 26 years old and the town mechanic felt it would be wise to purchase

another that will last just as long. The plan is to keep the current tractor as well. The residents still feel there are cheaper options available.

- A new heavy rescue pumper truck for \$1,500,000 will be on the warrant. The current truck is 26 years old. The new truck will take 32 months to build and will be used as a multi-use truck. Mr. VanCamp asked if it has been considered purchasing something used. Chief Stafford would not consider purchasing used because the town is busy, there were 1,367 calls in 2025 with 20 people. Tom McClure asked what the trade value is. The Chief said the last piece of equipment that went to Vermont sold for \$30K. Mr. McClure asked if there are any grants available. The Chief said there are, but hard to get, he tries for grants as much as he can.
- Granite VNA is requesting \$18,000 for home health care. In 2025, 4,403 Hillsborough residents received services in the amount of \$890,652, some are covered by insurance, and some are not. Ms. Colcombe asked if there is accountability. There will be representatives available at the Town Meeting to answer questions. Ms. Colcombe confirmed the amount can be amended at Town Meeting.

Selectwoman Campbell closed the public hearing at 9:08 pm

A true record  
Mary Whalen  
Recording Secretary

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved by:  
Hillsborough Selectboard

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James C. Bailey, III, Chairman

\_\_\_\_\_  
Iris Campbell, Selectwoman

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Richard Pelletier, Selectman