

APPROVED
MINUTES OF THE MILFORD BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING
June 26, 2023

PRESENT:	Gary Daniels, Chairman	Lincoln Daley, Town Administrator
	Chris Labonte, Vice Chairman	Tina Philbrick, Executive Assistant
	Paul Dargie, Member	Mitchell Hemmer, Videographer
	Tim Finan, Member	
	Dave Freel, Member	

1. CALL TO ORDER, BOARD OF SELECTMEN INTRODUCTIONS & PUBLIC SPEAKING INSTRUCTIONS:

Chairman Daniels called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m., introduced Board members, and then led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. APPOINTMENTS – (Approximate times)

5:30 p.m. – Approval of 2nd Annual Recovery Walk – Kate Choquette

Addiction Recovery Coalition of New Hampshire would like to host their 2nd annual recovery Walk on September 6, 2023, from 4 pm to 7 pm. This is to raise awareness in the community that recovery from substance use disorder is possible. Ms. Choquette outlined the walk that will end back at 180 Elm Street. They are expecting between 50 to 100 participants.

Selectman Labonte made a motion to approve the 2nd annual recovery walk. Seconded by Selectman Finan. All were in favor. The motion passed 5/0.

5:45 p.m. – Approval of Veterans Tax Credits, Exempt Properties, Residences in Industrial or Commercial Zone, and Approval of three (3) Abatements and Denial of two (2) Abatements.

Veterans Tax Credit – All applications were late-filed but are believed to qualify for the current year based on "accident, mistake or misfortune" which allows leniency for late submission.

Selectman Dargie made a motion to approve the four Veterans Tax Credits as recommended by the Assessor. Seconded by Selectman Freel. All were in favor. The motion passed 5/0.

Exempt Properties – The Assessor reviewed all information and recommends approval of the 7 properties for the 2023 tax year.

Selectman Dargie made a motion to approve the seven Exempt Properties as recommended by the Assessor. Seconded by Selectman Freel. All were in favor. The motion passed 5/0.

Residences in Industrial or Commercial Zone – The Assessor recommends that the Board of Selectman approve the Residences in an Industrial or Commercial Zone for the tax year 2023. The statute allows for leniency. The applicant lost track of the paperwork and exemption time frame due to a death in the family.

Selectman Dargie made a motion to approve the taxing of the Franklin Street Residence in Industrial or Commercial Zone as recommended by the Assessor. Seconded by Selectman Freel. All were in favor. The motion passed 5/0.

Three (3) Abatements for approval – All paperwork was submitted as required. Ms. Noel explained the process that you need to go through for a fire to file for an abatement. Typically, we budget \$75,000 yearly for abatements. The total for this session is \$27,907.05. The total from prior granted 2022 abatements is \$38,952.86. The total for appeals resolved in 2023 is \$34,255. The final total is \$101,114.91. There was additional discussion about the abatement process.

Selectman Dargie made a motion to approve the three abatements for approval as recommended by the Assessor. Seconded by Selectman Finan. The motion passed 5/0.

Two (2) Abatements for Denial – The abatements were untimely filed after the statutory deadline of March 1. This one has no room for leniency.

Selectman Dargie made a motion to approve the denial of the two abatements as recommended by the Assessor. Seconded by Selectman Finan. The motion passed 4/1 with Selectman Freel opposed.

6:00 p.m. - Fire Department Update – Fire Chief, Ken Flaherty and Deputy Jeff Marshall

Areas of responsibility-

- a. Fire - Emergent and non-emergent calls, prevention, inspections, fire drills, and car seats. They are around 600 so far this year for inspections, slightly higher than last year.
- b. Emergency Management Office - Hazardous mitigation plan, local emergency operations plan, disaster preparedness
- c. Health office - Investigate complaints, inspections, and liaison for the State of New Hampshire. We are not a self-inspection community like Merrimack which handles this in-house and gets all the revenue from this process. The State of New Hampshire is currently collecting about \$55,000 to \$60,000 from permitting fees from Milford because we are not a self-inspection community. Chief Flaherty said he would like for Milford to be a self-inspection community but they don't have the manpower right now. After the first year, it would almost be 100% funded. Selectman Labonte has concerns about expanding our services when we have a hard time funding what we have now. There was additional discussion about restaurant inspections. Chief Flaherty said there are things that we are not inspecting because there aren't enough hours or people to do the inspections.

Financial Status -

The department as of 6/1/2023 or 40.1% of the year completed is at 38.6% expended. Currently, the only line over expended is 12202-535000 medical expenses because of an increase in fees. Chief Flaherty expects projects will be over on contractual vehicles and overtime.

Vehicle updates -

- Rescue 1 is expected to be delivered in May 2024. This was prepaid.
- The new engine is expected to be delivered in February 2025
- Car 1 needs to be replaced as soon as possible. It needs quarter panels and rocker panels for a state inspection. He feels putting quarter panels on that vehicle, is a waste of money. He won't be driving the vehicle after September, he will drive the utility vehicle instead. Car 1 was removed twice from the budget due to manpower and people priorities. A replacement vehicle will be placed in the 2024 budget. The vehicle was involved in a major motor vehicle accident its frame was replaced. Selectman asked if Chief Flaherty could get a price on what it would take to fix car 1 so it would pass inspection. Chief Flaherty said yes.
- We have had a few major repairs this year that have taken trucks out of service, but have since been repaired. (Starter, engine clutch fan)

Employee update -

The Milford Fire Department is one of the larger combination departments in the State. Our current roster is at twenty-seven. The roster is made up of nine full-time employees and eighteen paid-on-call positions. Six full-time employees work a 4 on 4 off schedule and consist of 12-hour shifts from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm. The Fire Chief and Deputy Chief work M-F 8:00-4:30. One administrator works 9:00 – 4:30 M-F. The paid-on-call firefighters respond to all emergencies but are the primary responders after 7:00 pm.

Selectman Labonte asked what was budgeted for call positions. Chief Flaherty said \$40,000 but it's been cut back. Chief Flaherty explained how he budgeted for on-call positions. If anyone from the public is interested the Fire Department is still down about 12 members.

We have no major projects in the next three months planned. Residence can report issues or concerns via social media, email, telephone, or in person.

Chief Flaherty said the current issue facing the Milford Fire Department is staffing. We along with many other area fire departments are impacted by the lack of workforce availability. The Town is growing and it's our responsibility to maintain the level of service that the community expects and deserves. We look forward to working with the board and administration over the next few years to meet the needs of the community and department. We had to give some type of stipend for the call guys to stay in town on weekends this summer so we can have coverage.

Deputy Marshall said they looked at staffing in multiple ways. They looked at a part-time call budget per call and diem. This approach is a transition that will likely take place over the next 3 to 5 years. This summer's schedule was based on what we went through last summer to make sure we balance the needs of the department and town. We don't currently do per diem shifts. Chief Flaherty said when he was young Milford had 7,000 people, now it's over 16,000. We need to start planning for additional growth sooner rather than later. We had 1,400 calls last year and we are just going to continue increasing. We are already at 620 calls for this year without service calls. The structure fires are labor intensive and we have three in six months not including the major motor vehicle accidents. We also answer about 100 calls out of town calls per year. We as well as other surrounding town Fire Departments are trying not to tax other fire departments. We have also had to deny mutual aid because of manpower staffing.

Chairman Daniels asked if they could include mutual aid calls in the monthly newsletter. Chief Flaherty said yes. Selectman Labonte asked about food shopping being done by the firefighters using the fire vehicles. Chief Flaherty said he's explained this before, when the firefighters come on shift for four days, they go shopping on their first day coming into work and shop for the days that they are on shift so they don't have to leave the station again. While they are out shopping, they are also looking at fireboxes and doing inspections. The crew is doing good community service tasks while they are out getting their food for their shifts. They also go together because if one of the three firefighters covering the station goes to get food and there is a fire call, the other two can't respond to the fire because we need three on a truck. If the crew is already out, there isn't a delay in getting to a call.

Selectman Freel said he doesn't see maintenance on the fire ponds being done. If they are not being maintained, can they still be used. Chief Flaherty said Fire Department is maintaining the fire ponds. The Water Department maintains the fire hydrants. Public Works makes sure brush is cut back and everything is cleared. Things are still being maintained.

6:10 p.m. - Human Resources Department Update – Human Resource Director, Karen Blow

Areas of responsibility – Compensation and Benefits, Performance Management, Recruitment and Retention, Succession Planning, and Workplace Safety.

Director Blow is working on turnover numbers. Open positions include:

Town Planner FT (opened 3/2023)

Seasonal Laborers (ongoing)

HR Coordinator PT (opened 6/2023)

Call Fire (ongoing)

Police Officers x (ongoing)

Program Coordinator (REC) (7/2023)

Deputy Town Clerk PT (Open 5/2023)

Water System Technician FT (Open 6/2023)

Lab Professional FT (Current Lab Sup retiring)

Selectman Freel asked about the difference between the Water System Tech and the Lab Professional. Director Blow said the Water System Tech is a distribution field guy out working for the community. Paul Calabria said the Lab Professional does all the analysis of the samples. Selectman Freel asked if this could be outsourced. Administrator Daley will look into it. There were additional questions and Director Blow asked that the questions be directed to the Water Utilities Director.

Major projects include wage survey, benefit survey, and recruitment. Wage surveys are part of a process that may take several years to complete. It's a multi-phase approach that was brought up several times in the past year. The wage survey last year was only part of the process. Director Blow explained the process. The data is being evaluated by directors of various departments. There will be no discussion of wage increases this year in 2023.

Selectman Labonte asked about promoting the Sight of Service Insurance Plan. Director Blow said some people have benefited from it. It isn't a standalone, you need to have something else for employees to choose from. Some people are not interested in the work involved in a SOS plan. Selectman Labonte said some of the people he's spoken to don't understand the SOS plan, they feel they are getting less. Director Blow said there are pros and cons of both plans and we reviewed the plans in detail. Some employees don't mind sharing their positive experiences with the SOS plan. You can talk to Tina Philbrick or Paul Calabria for additional information. It's a good plan but not a solo plan.

The 4.5-day work week did not result in any schedule changes as HR usually works 9 to 10-hour days.

Annual goals could be obtained easier with a 15 – 20 hr. per week person (Previous Town Administrator Shannon previously approved up to \$20k for a part-time person and the Administrator Bender reduced to \$8k for 2023 and requested HR hold off until at least after the vote. HR will be asking for a 20 hr. person, \$18-\$20/hr. DOE for 2024).

Selectman Freel asked what someone would be doing in this position. Director Blow said it depends on their skill set. Her previous person has some HR background. There is a number of things they can help with. Selectman Freel asked why the departments can't do their wage surveys. Director Blow said some do but it takes time and not everyone has that time. Ambulance and Police do pull together information that is needed to help with this. It's a lot more than just looking at numbers. Selectman Labonte asked how much time is spent looking at the culture of Milford to see what you can do for employee retention that isn't financially related to pay or benefits. Director Blow said this is part of what is being looked at.

Selectman Labonte asked about using light-duty help in the HR department for someone coming back after medical leave.

Administrator Daley said there is an opportunity but HR works with sensitive data that can't be viewed by everyone. Privacy issues need to be looked at. Director Blow said there are times when she can use a light-duty person.

Chairman Daniels asked if the person HR is looking for can be used to help Finance as well. Director Calabria said it could be if we could find a 30-hour person that we don't have to offer medical to, it's a position that can be shared. He will take whatever hours he can get for extra help.

Chairman Daniels asked if anyone has been coming into HR after 12:00 on Fridays. Director Blow is usually at work on Fridays until about 2:00. She has had a couple of people come in after 12:00, but not many.

Director Blow said the Boards continuing to express the value they hold for employees speaks volumes throughout the community.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS There were no comments at this time.

4. DECISIONS

Selectman Labonte asked to remove 4. a) 2. From the consent calendar.

Selectman Finan made a motion to accept the consent calendar except for 4. a) 2). Seconded by Selectman Dargie. All were in favor. The motion passed 5/0.

a. CONSENT CALENDAR

1. Approval for The Conservation Commission to accept a \$10,311.08 grant from the Trail Animals Running Club (TARC). The funds are from the Ghost Train Rail Trail Race 2022 and will be deposited into the Granite Town Rail Trail Revolving Fund.

2. Approval to host the 34th Annual Milford Pumpkin Festival scheduled for October 6, 7, and 8 2023.

Selectman Labonte asked if the support for the Pumpkin Festival gets billed out as detailed pay. Director Calabria yes. On Friday, the Public Works Department is already working so they get regular pay. The departments send their bills in and they are billed to the Pumpkin Festival. He will get additional information for Selectman Labonte.

Selectman Freel made a motion to accept 4. a) 2) on the consent calendar. Seconded by Selectman Labonte. All were in favor. The motion passed 5/0.

b. OTHER DECISIONS

a. n/a

5. TOWN STATUS REPORT –

1. Speed Trailer Data Results from the Badger Hill Area – Chief Viola

11,791 vehicles were documented.

Vehicles that traveled over 30 mph unless otherwise posted:

- 15 vehicles were traveling at speeds between 40 and 43 mph.
- 1,926 vehicles were traveling at speeds between 30 and 40 mph.
- The average speed of vehicles traveling over 30mph was 35.89 mph.

Vehicles that travel under the town-wide speed limit unless otherwise posted:

- 4,824 vehicles were traveling at speeds between 25 and 30mph.
- 3,606 vehicles were traveling at speeds between 15 and 25mph.
- 1,420 vehicles were traveling at speeds between 5 and 15mph.

According to the data that was captured by the speed trailer, 9,850 vehicles out of the 11,791 vehicles were traveling through the area at or under the 30mph speed limit. Residents feel like the traffic has been getting slightly better. They are looking into a grant to get a speed sign. It will be a 75/25 match. There are a couple of options to look into.

2. MACC Base Surplus – Captain Frye

Captain Frye said the MACC Base total surplus is \$137,413 total surplus. Milford's share is \$98,032.31, Wilton's share is \$23,677 and Mont Vernon's share is \$15,703. He is asking the Board to hold \$15,000 for possible overages in the Federal Hill Tower. Removing the \$15,000 would leave Milford with a balance to the town of \$83,032. This money would also allow us to put in some monitoring systems so MACC Base can be alerted if anything happens.

Selectman Freel asked what was put in the budget as something planned. Director Calabria said they budgeted about \$77,000 in that line item. Selectman Labonte asked what created the surplus at MACC Base. Captain Frye said positions and benefits. The Director is new and he's doing a great job on balancing the budget. We lost some dispatchers. We will always have a surplus but the goal is to get the surplus down lower.

Selectman Labonte asked if we should continue to plan \$77,000 or lower it. Captain Frye said he would like to keep more at MACC Base until we need the money for the towers. Selectman Freel said he would rather not be having anything in the budget. There was additional discussion about how much to keep in the budget. The money left at MACC Base will not be spent on anything except communications.

Deputy Marshall said we spent money previously and all the equipment has an end-of-life. We need to save for that depreciation of the equipment. Selectman Freel said he would rather keep the extra money up at MACC Base and not put it in our budget.

Selectman Dargie made a motion to retain \$15,000 of Milford's share of the MACC Base surplus for communications and return the remaining \$83,032 to the town. Seconded by Selectman Freel. All were in favor. The motion passed 5/0.

6. DISCUSSIONS

a) LCHIP Grant Discussion – Scout House - Katherine Kokko

Ms. Kokko said the Heritage Commission submitted two grants. One was to the Moose plate program for \$20,000 for the bandstand to reduce the amount in the bandstand warrant for next year. The other was for an LCHIP grant for the Laurel Hardy Scout House. She will present a more formal update at the end of July. The LCHIP grant is a 50% matching grant for \$48,000 they requested \$24,000 and Milford's contribution would be \$16,000 assuming that they can get additional donations and Heritage will add some money in as well. Ms. Kokko explained the timeline and LCHIP grants are presented in November. Heritage completed an assessment of the Scout House and will send that report to the Board. She would like the Boards support.

Chairman Daniels asked if the donations put towards the windows count as part of the match. Ms. Kokko said no, that was a self-contained project that was already addressed. Selectman Labonte asked how much is usually given away for the LCHIP grant. Ms. Kokko said several million dollars and there are 40 applicants. This request is considered a small dollar amount compared to what they usually see. Selectman Finan asked if there has to be a municipal component to the match. Ms. Kokko said yes, it looks better. They originally put in for the 1772 grant for some of the upgrades and it was denied because they felt that the Town didn't put into this building what they should have in the past.

Selectman Freel asked what the building was used for. Ms. Kokko said the scouts and it's currently being used a couple of nights a week. Chairman Daniels asked if this could come out of the building maintenance fund. Administrator Daley said yes, but they are already allocating \$75,000 toward the library roof. They would have to look at other sources. Ms. Kokko said they have two years to use the money from the fund. She made a couple of suggestions of where she thought the money could come from.

Selectman Labonte asked where we were at for the bandstand. Ms. Kokko said we raised \$42,000. The estimate was \$90,000 and if we get the grant for \$20,000 the remaining amount would be \$28,000. They will discuss how the warrant article will be worded next time to better explain it to the public. Chairman Daniels said to continue to be aggressive in raising the funds.

7. SELECTMEN'S REPORTS/DISCUSSIONS

a) FROM PROJECTS, SPECIAL BOARDS, COMMISSIONS & COMMITTEES

Chairman Daniels asked if there was someone in charge of the JMLC committee. Administrator Daley said yes. The group is reassessing the Chair of that committee. Chairman Daniels said the meeting didn't have a quorum and the chair is part of "non-management" and he needs to step down. It is statutory that the committee meet quarterly and they didn't have a quorum at the June meeting and they still need that meeting. This is under the Worker Compensation category. There are 12 members and they need 8 for a quorum.

Tina Philbrick said employees were asked if they would like to step up for that position and no one responded. She will volunteer to be a member. Administrator Daley said she could volunteer and it requires a vote from the committee.

Selectman Labonte said those meetings are scheduled a year in advance. Chairman Daniels said yes. Chief Viola said he has an officer on the committee that was in court the day of the meeting so he couldn't attend. Because of their work schedules, some of the members who are not in management can't always make it.

Administrator Daley said they are looking into the vacancy issues. Selectman Labonte asked if employees could be assigned to be a part of the group. Administrator Daley said yes, but they are looking for volunteers. Chief Flaherty said if we do force employees to be on this committee, are they going to be paid overtime if a meeting is on a day when they are not scheduled to work? Selectman Labonte said the dates have already been set for these meetings so you should know if that employee is working. Chief Flaherty said with a rotating schedule, it is hard to do this. Every week it's different with a four-day on and four days off schedule.

Chairman Daniels said if Ms. Philbrick wanted to take this on based on the response we got last time, he didn't think there would be a problem. The next meeting would need to be scheduled in July.

Selectman Labonte asked about the AoT permit. Administrator Daley said there was movement. There will be a restriction on the Conservation Easement. Fish and Game doesn't want to hold the easement, so the Town would have to take over management of it. Fish and Game has offered their comments and will act as a secondary manager. There are still questions about monitoring. There was additional discussion about third-party monitoring and possible cost. A survey will still need to be done. The cost will be discussed with the contractor. More clarification is needed. Nothing has been budgeted to be done this year.

Selectman Freel is considered an abutter for a current project for Planning Board. He doesn't have anything to gain from this project. The applicant and several people don't have an issue with him staying on the Board. He asked the Board what their thoughts were. Selectman Finan read a similar court case and said that it could be challenged. The consensus of the Board was that Selectman Freel should recuse himself from voting/discussing the project that the Planning Board is discussing that involves his property. There was additional discussion about the process and what could or could not be done. Selectman Freel and Selectman Finan will discuss offline.

Chairman Daniels said the Recycling Committee is still looking for additional people.

There was additional discussion about a beaver overpopulation problem and trees that need to be replaced on the Oval. Administrator Daley said the trees can be reviewed when during the Downtown Improvement phase. The final design element of the phase will come before the Board later this year.

b) **OTHER ITEMS (not on the agenda)** There were no comments at this time.

8. PUBLIC COMMENTS There were no comments at this time.

9. APPROVAL OF FINAL MINUTES – June 12, 2023

Selectman Dargie made a motion to approve the minutes of June 12, 2023, as amended. Seconded by Selectman Freel. All were in favor. The motion passed 5/0.

10. INFORMATION ITEMS REQUIRING NO DECISIONS.

a. Selectmen's Goals and Initiatives

11. NOTICES. Notices were read.

12. NON-PUBLIC SESSION – Selectman Dargie made a motion to go into non-public at 8:05 under RSA 91-A:3, II(c)) Reputation and approval of non-public minutes from June 12, 2023. Seconded by Selectman Freel. All were in favor. The motion passed 5/0.

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363 **Selectman Freel made a motion to come out of non-public. Seconded by Selectman Labonte. All were in**
364 **favor. The motion passed 5/0.**

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366 Chairman Daniels said in non-public the Board reviewed communication from the Board of Governors and de-
367 termined that it didn't need to be discussed in non-public. No action was taken. The MACC Base communica-
368 tion letter was viewed as informational only. The Board approved the non-public minutes of June 12, 2023.

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370 **13. ADJOURNMENT: Selectman Freel moved to adjourn at 8:22. Seconded by Selectman Finan. All were**
371 **in favor. The motion passed 5/0.**

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Gary Daniels, Chairman

Tim Finan, Member

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377 Chris Labonte, Vice-Chairman

Dave Freel, Member

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380 Paul Dargie, Member