



Town Council Regular Session

December 18, 2024 at 7:00 PM

Town Council Chambers

MINUTES

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Conley convened the meeting at 7:00 PM. Councilor White led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Roll Call

Present: Council Chair Kattana Conley, Council Vice-chair Brian Ward, Councilor Scott Blackstone, Councilor Joe LaMattina, Councilor Colin White, Councilor Sonke Dornblut, Councilor Justin Glazebrook.

Staff Present: Town Manager Stephen Fournier and Wendy Chase, Recording Secretary.

3. Public Forum

Chair Conley opened the public forum at 7:02 PM.

Chair Conley closed the public forum at 7:02 PM without public comment.

4. Town Council to Consider Acceptance of Minutes

a. December 4, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Motion: Councilor White made a motion to approve the December 4, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Second: Councilor Dornblut

Vote: Unanimously Approved (7-0-0)

5. Report of the Town Manager

a. December 18, 2024

Town Manager Fournier distributed the MS DTB (FY2026 Default Budget) for Councilor signatures. The Default Budget is the same appropriations as contained in the operating budget authorized for the previous year, reduced and increased, as the case may be, by debt service, contracts and other obligations previously incurred or mandated by law, and reduced by one-time expenditures contained in the operating budget.

The town hall will be closed Friday, January 3rd because of needed repairs to a cracked sewer pipe.

Central Street: The Highway Safety Committee met to assess the feasibility of implementing parking and potential traffic adjustments on Central Street. Due to

safety concerns, the committee concluded that adding parking is not feasible under any traffic conditions. The plan is to reenact the parking commission to take a look at other town owned lots to add parking.

FY25 Expenses and Revenues: November completes 42% of the fiscal year. The operating budget is 46% spent, which is the same as the previous fiscal year. Revenues are on target.

NH DOT Urban Compact: The Town and NH DOT had a productive meeting discussing reclassifying NH 108, Gerry Avenue, Packers Falls Road and Grant Road to increase local control while maintaining regional traffic flow. For Packers Falls Rd and Grant Rd, NH DOT will complete resurfacing, drainage repairs, and bridge inspections before reclassification. The Town will submit a reclassification request and collaborate with NH DOT on a Memorandum of Understanding for responsibilities like road closures and traffic management.

New Road Railroad Crossing: a fire severely damaged a 300-foot section of a railroad trestle over the Squamscott River in Stratham on December 3rd., temporarily shutting down a vital freight rail line in the seacoast area. The rail line is operated by CSX Corp and will remain closed for an extended period for repairs, which are expected to take about two weeks.

New Road Bridge - Newfields: The bridge was damaged likely caused by equipment on the railroad tracks fixing the bridge. The Newmarket DPW staff inspected the bridge with the Newfields Highway Department. The Town of Newfields contacted an engineering firm to assess the structure. With guidance from the engineer, Newfields decided to keep the bridge open with temporary traffic controls directing vehicles to the east side.

Town Manager Fournier reminded the Councilors that the January 1st Council meeting will be held the following Wednesday, January 8th due to the holiday.

Town Manager Fournier wished the councilors, staff and the public happy holidays and a happy new year.

b. Department Reports - November 2024

Councilor Blackstone congratulated all the police officer award winners. He said he attended the Rec Department's free holiday party and there were a lot of people and everyone had a great time.

6. Committee Reports

Councilor Dornblut reported on the December 11th Public Transportation Committee Meeting:

The Committee discussed the first draft of the transportation chapter of the Master Plan. Councilor Dornblut returned a call to a senior citizen at the Wadleigh Falls senior housing complex regarding lack of public transportation for the elderly. He spoke to the Committee about her concerns and he called Rad Nichols, Executive Director for COAST Bus. COAST Bus Route 7 boundary doesn't currently include the senior facility on Wadleigh Falls Road. He asked Town Manager Fournier to reach out to Mr. Nichols

to consider extending the boundary line to include the senior housing building. Town Manager Fournier will write the letter to Rad Nichols. Councilor Dornblut said the town has some responsibility because zoning allowed the senior housing in a place that doesn't offer public transportation. The Committee will be holding public meetings to address the state of public transportation to Newmarket residents.

Councilor Ward reported on the December 12th Conservation Commission Meeting:

The Wiggins Farm boardwalk replacement may be delayed to March due to the cold. The Heron Park gate remains locked due to people driving through it and damaging it. There are people parking in the mobile home park to access Heron Park which may become a problem. The Commission received support from the Nature Conservancy for salt marsh preservation efforts. There may be a new UNH Capstone project next year called the Salamander Crossing Brigade. Volunteers stand on the side of the road to slow down traffic when the salamanders start crossing to make them cross the road safely to procreate.

Councilor Ward reported on the December 16th Budget Committee Meeting:

The Budget Committee reviewed the proposed FY2026 town operating budget.

Councilor Blackstone reported on the December 10th Planning Board Meeting:

The Planning Board approved a change of use application. An auto body station located on Elm Street to a landscaping business. The Board is looking at a couple of projects on Exeter Road. The zoning currently doesn't allow commercial on the first floor making it difficult for developers to get financing from commercial banks. There is talk of changing the zoning.

Councilor LaMattina reported on the December 9th Riverfront Advisory Committee Meeting:

The Committee worked on the riverfront chapter of the Master Plan. There may be issues coming forward to the Council regarding the Weir and public access.

Councilor LaMattina reported on the Energy & Environment Advisory Committee Meeting:

The Committee is working on the Energy Chapter of the Master Plan and looking at recycling starting with aluminum recycling. The Community Power seacoast challenge currently leaves Newmarket in last place between the participating towns. There are 5,401 accounts in Newmarket, 3,794 use community power and 300 of those accounts are commercial accounts. In the first 6 months community power has saved Newmarket residents \$48,000. 32 residents pay for 100% renewable energy and they saved 14 tons of CO₂ going into the atmosphere. New rates will be coming out next month for February through July. There is also a program coming out that if you have solar panels community power will buy back your electric output even if you are not a customer of community power. The Committee is working with the Business Association to set up a public joint meeting. The Energy & Environment Committee recommends the town stay with the current plan Granite Basic with no additional

revenue. If the Council wants to change that the Chair or Vice-chair must reach out to Community Power by the end of December 2024.

7. Old Business

8. Resolutions/Ordinances in the 1st Reading

- a. Resolution #2024/2025-25 - Approval of Amendment to the Collective Bargaining Agreement Police

Town Manager Requests the Suspension of Rules

Motion: **Councilor Ward** made a motion to suspend the rules

Second: **Councilor LaMattina**

Discussion: Town Manager Fournier explained that the reason he requested suspension of the rules to vote on the Resolution this evening is due to time constrictions.

Vote: **Unanimously Approved**

Motion: **Councilor Ward** made a motion to Approve Resolution #2024/2025-25 - Approval of Amendment to the Collective Bargaining Agreement Police

Second: **Councilor White**

Vote: **Unanimously Approved (7-0-0)**

9. New Business/Correspondence

- a. Correspondence to the Town Council

There was no correspondence to the Council.

- b. Closing Comments by Town Councilors

Councilor LaMattina attended the Christmas Tree Lighting on December 5th. He suggested investing in a better PA system for future events. The current system is inaudible. He congratulated Councilor Ward on winning the Powder Raid raffle.

Councilor Dornblut thanked everyone on the Council and commented that they are a good group of people to work with.

Chair Conley wished everyone happy holidays.

- c. Next Meeting

- i. January 8, 2025

10. Adjournment

Chair Conley adjourned the meeting at 7:38pm without objection.

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy V. Chase
Recording Secretary