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Town of Northumberland
Board of Selectmen
2026 Budget Public Hearing – Minutes
Date: February 12, 2026
Place: Town Meeting Room – 10 Station Square
Time: 6:00 pm

Board Members present: Jim Weagle, Al Rossetto, Robin Irving
Others Present: Michelle Randall, Deb Miles, Debbie Montgomery, Wayne Montgomery, Jim Gibson, Nancy Merrow, Bill Baxley, Sheila Smith, Gloria & Doug White, Jerry Monahan, Debbie Gaudette, Mark DeGennaro, Bonnie Auger, Richard Archer, Kathy Wiles, Terri & Reggie Charron, Glenn Cassady, Chris Roberge, Dylan R, Jim Tierney, D. S.?, Rebecca St Cyr – Minute Taker/Transcriber

J. Weagle noted that the next Selectmen meeting has been re-scheduled for 02/18/2026 due to the passing of Jodi Paradis. Jim requested a moment of silence in honor of Jodi.

1. Chairman opens the Public Hearing – J. Weagle reconvened the Public Hearing at 6:00 pm

2. The purpose of this Public Hearing is to receive questions or comments on the 2026 Proposed Town Budget.

Reviewed the budget numbers – page by page.

Sewer – There was a concern about the order of the packet that was available on Tuesday. M. Randall explained there was an incorrect line item that needed to be corrected. New packets where run in a slightly different order. Started with General Government.

General Government –
Executive – N. Merrow asked what is Benevolence for? J. Weagle said it's for flowers if someone passes away.

Elections, Reg. & Vital Statistics –

Town Clerk / Tax Collector – W. Montgomery asked if we can get the salary to a more reasonable amount. Kathy commented her wages technically did go up and explained how we saved money. She did put in for a raise.

Elections / Town Meeting – Postage – N. Merrow questioned the amount; K. Wiles explained with the increasing costs of postage including certified mail it needed to be increased.

Computer expense – M. DeGennaro questioned the amount for software / hardware, M. Randall explained the TC/TX Collector's software was a different line item. It was moved into a line item in her budget. We went with a new software and we are seeing a increase in software support. There are several versions of the assessing software which is causing some issues. We are moving to a cloud based program because current software is no longer supported. It's a statewide conversion. It should be a onetime adjustment.

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Financial Admin – B. Baxley reviewed last years budget, this years was increased to $247,598, which is a $99,135 increase. The 2025 budget was $170,796. D. Gaudette said it's more - $250,000. J. Weagle explained assessing has gone up $30,000. Michelle further reviewed the first miscellaneous assessing is $48,000, Sansoucy is $11,000 (utility assessments), $1,590 Summit software support. We are lucky to have an assessor right now. Kathy noted that no one wanted to come above the notch. Robin said there is a serious shortage of assessors. With the high demand, they keep their prices up and pick and choose where they want to go.

J. Weagle had a major increase in insurance, we are trying to help our employee's by giving them a $1.00 raise plus 4% COLA to keep our employees. W. Montgomery further discussed the differences, $30,000 is for assessing service, and a $50,000 increase which is a lot.

Michelle said the board asked her to put an ad out for a Financial person. Wayne asked about the part time wages. Michelle – the amount includes paying Tammy who is on a very part time hourly basis. Wayne asked what we have actually paid her. Michelle further explained. Wayne asked what we have actually paid her and where is it accounted for.

B. Baxley questioned the Adm FT Wage, J. Weagle said all regular employees are getting a $1.00 plus 4%. The top line is what Bill is questioning. Jim W. said it's $20,000 more. Tammy's is in the part-time. We are also looking for an accountant, some is in FT and some in PT. Wayne asked if we are paying the current employee's $131,000. Without knowing what the numbers are this doesn't make sense. Wayne – someone has to have an idea what is included in the line item. Weagle said Romy's wage and Michelle's wage are in the top line item and there is some for a new person.

D. Montgomery asked about the $3,988 – this year actual PT Wage, what is this? That's where Tammy's wage is, previously she was FT, which is in the other line.

N. Merrow – asked about the Financial person and assessing clerk. Robin explained after she attending training, there is supposed to be separate person for each function. It all needs to be separate. We don't know what we will get for an applicant pool to know who can fit where. Nancy asked when Romy transferred, at what level did she come in. Michelle – she learned to do payroll and Michelle was doing AP (part-time). The plan was for she and Romy to start cross training, but there is a lot to catch up with. She has been talking with vendors for cost saving measures which have been a priority.

Nancy – Niki was making $25.00 when she left; is Romy getting that for the 2 items she does. Jim and Michelle commented that Romy is doing what Niki was doing plus some of what she was doing in the other office.

J. Monahan asked when the books closed, J. Weagle said 12/31 but we pay into February. Jerry asked why we are looking for $100,000 this year. A lengthy discussion continued regarding FT wages. Robin noted that for what Tammy did, she was grossly underpaid, she was worth the 2 people that we are now looking at in that line. Al – if we don't hire anyone, the money will not be spent. B. Baxley noted that we pay taxes on money that you may or may not spend. J. Weagle said we do the best we can.

J. Monahan asked if there are 2 raises. J. Weagle said no, the $1.00 is a raise and the 4% is a COLA increase. The 4% is figured first and then the extra $1.00 is added on.

Legal Expense – we get charged every time we call the lawyer, Weagle further discussed. Michelle commented there is also a free legal service that we utilize a lot. During a re-valuation year, we go up on the legal amount.

Personnel Administration – W. Montgomery asked how do we know what the line item is costing us, can it be broke out. J. Weagle said you can request at the Town Office. Robin added when there is a right to know request, what we are supposed to provide are any reports that are generated during the regular course of business. If we don't generate those reports, (which we do

not), then we don't have to generate them. We do generate a payroll manifest, but you would have to do the math. If it's not generated in the regular course of business, then it's not available to the public. Michelle noted Romy is the only one eligible in that line item for overtime. Wayne – there are several others getting different amounts of income for what they do. Without knowing what we pay them for health ins, dental, disability, it's hard to understand what the costs are. Robin – we have a check register, it won't break it down by benefits, but it can be figured for the annual amount. K. Wiles – asked if the insurance can be broke out for single, 2 people and for a family plan? Robin said that can be disclosed.

D. Gaudette – she lived in VT. Their town reports include a breakdown of all employee's wages and benefits. Why can't it be the same in NH? J. Weagle said we were told to take it out of our Town Report. Debbie suggested getting another legal opinion. All NH State employees can be looked up online, it should be the same for town employee's

B. Baxley asked if the Town puts a cap on increases for health and dental ins? Jim W. explained we pay the employee 100%, the we pay 50% for a 2 person plan and the family plan. We are on the same package as the School – School Care. Further discussed the increases. Wayne – to have continuity it would be nice to have it all broke out. J. Weagle discussed.

M. Degennaro asked if the health insurance was put out to bid? J. Weagle said we've been consistent with School Care, when the contract was received, it was too late to put out for bid. DeGennaro said last year the Town Administrator promised it would be put out for bid. He asked if you are still paying T. Letson when this major element was missed. Yes for training and her expertise. Reggie you get the best rates by volume, we are in with the School. If you go on the open market you won't touch this. D. Gaudette said she looked and it's $459.00 for one person. Mark talked about ADP (a large payroll company), looking at their rates on average it goes by census, experience ratings, etc. We really need to put this out to bid; Jim W. said there wasn't enough time to do that. Michelle added that we received the contract the last week in January and it needed to be back Feb 1. They said across the State they were looking at a 17.6% - 38% increase. Ours is a 37.8% increase. Michelle discussed going to the open market. We are talking about what we can do, can find something on the open market at a cheaper rate for the Town, giving the employee's a stipend. We need to seek insurance outside of the box.

Planning & Zoning – no questions.

General Government Buildings – Meeting House - Michelle explained the attendant's wages, 16 hours/week for 2 employees for 13 weeks. Memorial Day – Labor Day. An extended season is through Columbus Day. She is working on reducing the phone and wi-fi, since it's only open 13 weeks and we are paying for it yearly. The employees set their own hours; K. Wiles noted that Paul is looking for grants. With 2 employee's both working 16 hours /week -Memorial Day to Labor Day – estimated cost: $6,436. J. Weagle recommended cutting them back to 10 hrs. - 10 hrs. x 2 = $4,033.60 Memorial Day – Labor Day. Extended season - 10 hrs. x 2 – Memorial Day – Columbus Day = $5,042 – the Board agreed to the extended season.

Water/Sewer - $38,000 – S. Smith asked why it's so high? There were some expenditures that were not put on the right lines.

Cemeteries – Glenn suggested adding a line for the Sexton for $500.00; Terri does all the deeds, sells the lots, etc. She is putting time into it which takes times away from her family and her own business. Board agreed to add $500.00 to the Professional Services line.

S. Smith asked who does the mowing? Jim W. said the Cemetery Trustee's put it out to bid and bring it to the Board to award. Terri further discussed, the contractor we hired is not the least expensive, but he knows what he's doing and the amount of time it takes.
D. Montgomery asked what the Security line is for at the cemetery? Terri said it's for security cameras that were put up do to vandalism.

Property & Liability Ins. – No questions

Other General Government – Equipment Purchase - Michelle talked about the server and a recent Issue. A portion of the switch was no longer working, she discussed further. This is why the line item went up. The equipment in the IT closet is aging; some things are reaching their end of life. K. Wiles commented the assessing computer is from 2010 with Windows 7, which is no longer supported. Michelle talked about the cost of new servers. Primex will not cover us if we don't follow their protocol for cyber security. We have a great IT company. There is a CRF for computers, she wasn't sure what the current balance is.

Briefly discussed the Master Plan – it has been found.

D. Montgomery – Perambulation, what is that? J. Weagle explained it's the boundary lines Between the towns of Stark, Lancaster and Stratford. It needs to be done every 7 years. Stratford isn't due until next year or later.

C. Roberge asked about software / hardware, cloud base. Michelle addressed. Our IT company is working with us on this. Michelle noted that she tries to take care of any issues, if she can, to save money.

Public Safety – Police - J. Weagle said we lowered it down, we are still actively trying to bring back the PD. We dropped the wages, it would probably be at least May 1 before getting anyone through the process. We are still committed to try to rebuild the PD.

K. Wiles asked what the advertising is for. Michelle discussed, we utilize sites that are free; she Int'l Police Assoc, State Police Assoc, National Police Assoc which allow you to post ads for free. She just put the ad out with NH Employment Security. She has spoken with multiple people on the position as well.

C. Roberge – the money that wasn't used goes into the General Fund, why can't we use it to offset the budget. J. Weagle said we can't, to be able to use it we have to petition the court. Robin explained that we can do that with the overlay on the tax rate. The undesignated fund balance is recommended to be within a certain amount we have been taping into it and it's on the low end, so we are trying to build that up. This year we played with the overlay. Chris – further discussed, J. Weagle said again the money is off limits except if we petition the court or use it for overlay. Chris - If the money goes unused, it helps the longevity of the fund but the burden is on the taxpayers. J. Weagle – we can't use the money until the following tax year. Chris – can we designate the funds specifically for overlay at the end of the year.

K. Wiles – last year's leftover for not having a PD cannot be reflected until the next tax cycle. Jim commented (hypothetical) if we have some major damage on a bridge or road and we have a County Tax and School Tax due. They have to be paid first. So, when we need money beyond that, It has to come from the General Fund and we would have to petition the court. You want to have a kitty to cover a disaster.

D. Gaudette asked if you can have a Unencumbered Warrant Article yearly for the PD funds that are not used are to go into that Unencumbered account specifically for when the PD is up and running or to offset taxes. Debbie further discussed. J. Tierney said that's correct but the unreserved fund balance, when the tax bill is generated, 100% of the tax money shows up on the ledger. We are $2,000,000 behind on the tax collection for the last tax bill that went out. The $2,000,000 is showing as received, but it's not there, it's monopoly money, it's not there. You have to look at the receivables.

PD Service Contracts – J. Monahan asked what this is, Michelle said a big portion of it is for Grafton County – Dispatch services, it's also IT. EMS pays a portion, the Fire Dept has their own. D. Gaudette discussed the dispatch when the State took it from Coos and giving to Grafton. The dispatching is being done by people that don't know our area. Michelle read an email regarding Grafton County's services, their costs, and estimates, 15% cap for increase or decrease. Discussion continued regarding the dispatch service.

S. Smith asked what if someone comes in and want's more money? Jim W. explained if the budget gets passed we have to work with it. Sheila reviewed the numbers. J. Weagle said we reduced it based on the number of months that it won't be used. We will hire a Chief first and then he will hire beyond. J. Monahan asked if we have had any interest in the Chief position, Jim W. said yes but it fell through. Michelle noted that if/when we hire, it takes approx. 2 months for the background check. If we were to hire someone tomorrow, you wouldn't see them until May.

State Police - we only pay them if they are doing details, we haven't received any invoices from them. D. Gaudette commented that the State Police answer calls and can't charge us, they do Northern Border patrols, if something happens in a Town, they will respond. J. Weagle said we thought we signed a contract for special detail coverage. Michelle said the contract was for background investigations. A. Rossetto said we further discussed a special details contract that the Board thought they signed. W. Montgomery noted that we had someone from the State Police who came in and told us they could do 4 hours/week. N. Merrow the State Police officer that was here said they were not going to rush here unless it was an emergency situation. Michelle will reach out to State Police to clarify. D. Miles further discussed.

J. Monahan – we were told that the State Police will do details, J. Weagle said we thought we did that and will get it corrected. Monahan asked why we paid so much out of the budget w/o a PD? J. Weagle addressed, we have a PD for approx. 7 months. The total is everything, rent, w/s, etc. J. Weagle further discussed the budget numbers and the reasoning.

Ambulance – B. Baxley – discussed wages, the amount budgeted and the actual. J. Weagle said the $310,000 includes the increases. J. Weagle said we are estimating, and try to guess the best we can. J. Gibson talked about the wages, we would put money into employee's and then they would go somewhere else for more money. The years you see the increases, he would bring people in and then lose them. Because we don't have people, we don't do as many transfers.
B. Baxley noted there are other line items that reflect the same thing – budgeting more than the actual. J. Gibson noted some of the numbers weren't posted correctly and further discussed the reasons for the fluctuations.

W. Montgomery – do you think that the coding for accounts and the information is off by as much at $70,000. J. Weagle said he didn't think so.

K. Wiles – if we still have a budget for the PD why isn't the dispatching divided more evenly. Michelle said it's based on call volume. Jim G. discussed the dispatching process. We have a contract so that hopefully when 911 calls come in, it should go to the State Police. Jim said he's been to more domestic violence, rapes, and overdoses than he cares to talk about, but we don't put it out there. Sometimes the crew has to wait 2 hours for State Police to get here, but we have to wait before we can go in.

Fire Department – No questions

Emergency Management – J. Gibson – this is for major storms, damage, flooding,

Administration – Highways & Streets – Salt – Glenn has a load delivering tomorrow. Further reviewed the costs. The new storage building is included, most of it was ARPA money.

Highway Capital Projects –

Bridges –

Street Lighting & Other –
Admin & Solid Waste Collection – D-4 went up a bit on their weekly charge. They do a good job.

Solid Waste Disposal & Clean up – reviewed wages – Paul is full-time - 40 hrs. Brian is part-time. Paul does the dump schedule and does the hauling to AVRRD.

Administration – Pest Control – Health Officer – we don't have one currently. They go to houses where there are health concerns, bed bugs, rats, etc. The pay is a stipend

Welfare - Admin & Direct Assistance – Welfare for people that need assistance with rent, etc. It's hard to know what we will have, if someone comes in and qualifies we have to provide the service. B. Baxley had a concern about budgeting and not spending – the people are having to pay for this. We direct people to Tri-County Cap, Catholic Charities, or The State. If someone passes away and has no family we pay for the burial.

J. Tierney- it's anybody that shows us seeking assistance. When he first came is was $30,000 - $40,000 range. This is all over the State, D. Gaudette commented Groveton has a very strict policy, it's good but maybe a little too strict at times. Michelle handles this in the office.

Charitable Organizations – in the Warrant.

Parks & Recreation – The Rec Dept has their own budget worksheet.

Recreation Department – The wages increased to be compatible with other facilities. Michelle reviewed the wages for the lifeguards, director, and employee's.

Chemicals – Briefly discussed the cost of chemicals for the pool.

Library – B. Baxley talked about the W/S rent charge. There isn't a number on the line, it could be in the Government Building line.

Patriotic Purposes – T. Charron reviewed – the monuments, the Cemeteries, the Meeting House. She purchases them through her supplier for a much better rate. We unified them to all the same size. As we replace – it alternates between the Town, Legion, VFW, and every 4th year she supplies one.

Other Culture & Recreation – Groveton Garden Club says thank you.

Other Conservation –

Debt Services -
Long Term Bonds & Notes – both the water projects
TAN Notes – none

Machinery, Vehicles & Equipment – Michelle gave a break down; $13,435 – Cruiser lease, $11,950 – new container at Transfer Station; $48,125 - Ambulance lease; $68,000 – Bobcat. Talked about the cruiser, breaking the lease, selling if we don't use, etc.

Buildings – the Town Office building has been paid in full.

Improvements, other than buildings –

Operating Transfers

Sewer – We are not over budget on the Hill Project, we may be able to complete the project with what money we have, including adding a pump station.

D. Montgomery asked about the Warrant Articles and is that amount on the bottom line? J. Weagle explained where the amounts are. Where we request to money into the CRF's or the expendable trusts.

Water Distribution & Treatment – B. Baxley questioned the budgeted, actual and the increases. J. Tierney reviewed the lines, some of the lines are blank but the items were purchased and paid.

Michelle said we found after doing some research we haven't been paying a phone bill. She further discussed the phones, alarm systems, the costs. They are land lines that are crucial to the system. Michelle and Reggie have been working with Verizon to get him what he has, now the cost is cheaper. Michelle further discussed the wi-fi.

2026 WARRANT ARTICLES –

J. Weagle read each Article and the Board voted to recommend or not.

Article 1 – No vote needed.

Article 2 - Motion to recommend by: A. Rossetto, 2nd by: R. Irving, All in Favor 3-0

Article 3 – Motion to recommend by: R. Irving, 2nd by: A. Rossetto, All in Favor 3-0

Article 4 – Motion to recommend by: R. Irving, 2nd by: A. Rossetto, All in Favor 3-0

Article 5 – Motion to recommend by: R. Irving, 2nd by: A. Rossetto, All in Favor 3-0

Article 6 – Motion to recommend by: A. Rossetto, 2nd by: R. Irving, All in Favor 3-0

Article 7 – Motion to recommend by: R. Irving, 2nd by: A. Rossetto, All in Favor 3-0

Article 8 – Motion to recommend by: R. Irving, 2nd by: A. Rossetto, All in Favor 3-0

Article 9 – Charitable Org. - Granite Guild is requesting $5,000 – N. Merrow asked if all the organizations are meeting the requirements. Yes they are.
Motion to recommend by: A. Rossetto, 2nd by: R. Irving, All in Favor 3-0

Article 10–Michelle commented there was a change to the law in July, she further explained. This Article was put in at the recommendation of DRA.
Motion to recommend by: R. Irving, 2nd by: A. Rossetto, All in Favor 3-0

Article 11 – No vote needed.

Article 12 – No vote needed.

Article 13 – No vote needed.

K. Wiles asked what the tax impact is, the Board indicated it would be less than $1.00.

3. Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn by: A. Rossetto, 2nd by: R. Irving, All in Favor 3-0

Meeting adjourned at 9:08 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca St. Cyr – Minute Taker/Transcriber

Minutes approved by Northumberland Select Board Members on_____

X _____
Jim Weagle
Northumberland Select Board Chairman

X_____
Robin Irving
Northumberland Select Board Vice Chairman

X_____
Alan Rossetto
Northumberland Select Board Member