

HUDSON, NH BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Minutes of the October 10, 2023 Meeting

1. CALL TO ORDER - by Vice-Chairman Morin the meeting of October 10, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. in the Selectmen Meeting Room at Town Hall.
2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE led by HCTV Assistant Mike Johnson
3. ATTENDANCE  
Board of Selectmen: Dillon Dumont, Bob Guessferd, Dave Morin

Selectman Roy joined the meeting remotely from her home. Chairman McGrath had an excused absence.

Staff/Others: Steve Malizia, Town Administrator; Elvis Dhima, Town Engineer; Scott Tice, Fire Chief; Jim McIntosh, Director of Community Media; Mike Johnson, HCTV Assistant; Lisa Labrie, Finance Director; Gary Gasdia, School Board Member

4. PUBLIC INPUT - there was no one public input.
5. RECOGNITIONS, NOMINATIONS & APPOINTMENTS - none
6. CONSENT ITEMS

Vice-Chairman Morin asked if anyone had any item they'd like removed for separate consideration? Seeing none, *Selectman Guessferd made a motion, seconded by Selectman Dumont to approve Consent Items A, B, C, D, E & F. A roll call vote was taken. Carried 4-0.*

- A. Assessing Items - none
- B. Water/Sewer Items - none
- C. Licenses & Permits & Policies - none
- D. Donations - none
- E. Acceptance of Minutes - none
- F. Calendar

10/11	7:00	Planning Board	Buxton Meeting Room
10/12	3:30	Trustees of the Trust Funds	Buxton Meeting Room
10/12	7:00	Board of Selectmen - Budget Review	BOS Meeting Room
10/16	7:00	Conservation Commission	Buxton Meeting Room
10/17	7:00	Board of Selectmen - Budget Review	BOS Meeting Room
10/17	7:00	Municipal Utility Committee	Buxton Meeting Room
10/18	6:00	Library Trustees	Hills Memorial Library
10/18	7:00	Electric Aggregation Committee (HEAC)	Rodgers Library
10/19	7:00	Board of Selectmen - Budget Review	BOS Meeting Room
10/19	7:00	Benson Park Committee	HCTV Meeting Room
10/23	7:00	Sustainability Committee	Buxton Meeting Room
10/24	7:00	Board of Selectmen	BOS Meeting Room

7. OLD BUSINESS

- A. Votes taken after Nonpublic Session on October 03, 2023

1.) Selectman Dumont made a motion, seconded by Selectman Guessferd to hire Michael Pilon as an HCTV Assistant, for up to 29 hours per week, at a rate of \$19.00 per hour, moving to \$20.00 per hour after successful completion of a six month probationary period. Carried 3-0.

2.) Selectman Guessferd made a motion, seconded by Selectman Dumont to promote Eric Courounis to the position of Chief Mechanic in the Public Works Department at \$32.55 per hour, Grade XVI, Step 3, in accordance with the Hudson Public Works employee contract. This promotion will be effective October 8, 2023. Carried 3-0.

3.) Selectman Dumont made a motion, seconded by Selectman Guessferd to authorize the Public Works Director advertise the mechanic position. Carried 3-0.

4.) Selectman Dumont made a motion, seconded by Selectman Guessferd to hire Kyle Cloutier for the position of Truck Driver/Laborer in the Public Works Department at \$21.98 per hour, Grade VIII, Step 1, in accordance with the Hudson Public Works Department employee contract, effective, October 8, 2023. Carried 3-0.

5.) Selectman Guessferd made a motion, seconded by Selectman Morin to hire James Martorana for the position of Truck Driver/Laborer in the Public Works Department at \$21.98 per hour, Grade VIII, Step 1, in accordance with the Hudson Public Works Department employee contract, effective October 8, 2023. Carried 3-0.

6.) Selectman Guessferd made a motion to adjourn at 9:09 p.m. this was seconded by Selectman Dumont. Carried 3-0.

B. Amend Town Code Ch. 317 Vehicles and Traffic, Memorial Drive

Vice-Chairman Morin recognized the Town Administrator who explained, the Board had quite a bit of discussion with the Police Chief, Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Moulis and Mr. Bowen, the principal at Memorial School. As you recall, you had two public hearings. The most recent was last week. This was to consider amending Town Code Chapter 317-33, Schedule VI: Streets Closed to close Memorial Drive from Central Street to Thorning Road from 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on School Days. As you've had the required hearings, if you'd like to enact that, you would vote to do so this evening.

Vice-Chairman Morin then said, I don't see the Superintendent or the Police Chief. Mr. Gasdia, do you have anything you'd like to add to this at all? School Board Member Gary Gasdia, replied no, I just think I mean, my opinion is it would be a good decision to do as to stop some folks from cutting through during the school day. But obviously it's the decision of this Board.

Seeing no further questions or comments, Selectman Dumont made a motion, seconded by Selectman Guessferd to amend Town Code Chapter 317-22 Schedule VI: Streets Closed, to close Memorial Drive from Central Street to Thorning Road from 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on School Days. A roll call vote was taken. Carried 4-0.

8. NEW BUSINESS

A. Public Hearing - Benson Park Fencing Donation Acceptance

The Town Administrator explained, So, as you may or may not be aware, I believe Selectman Dumont was aware there was a safety concern brought up regarding the dog park and some fencing, I believe Gate City Fence, which is the Forrence Family, is donating 1000 hundred dollars' worth of the fencing. And I believe they're going to do work over there. They're also donating some other time, I guess. So in order to accept the donation, you need to have a public hearing. After the public hearing, you

can then accept that donation. Vice-Chairman Morin opened the public hearing at 7:07 p.m. seeing no one present for public input, the hearing was closed at 7:07p.m.

Selectman Dumont was recognized and said, I just wanted to add that I worked with Jeff from Gate City Fence, Judy from Benson Park and Jay from DPW on this. They located or Judy had pointed out and located a best spot for the secondary exit and access getting in and out of that dog park. And Jeff from Gate City Fence was generous enough to cover the majority of that through a donation and Jay will be working with them to get that accomplished. So I just want to say I appreciate everyone involved and I think it'll be a good thing over there. Seeing no further questions or comments Selectman Dumont made a motion, seconded by Selectman Guessferd to accept the donation from Gate City Fence Company in the amount of \$1,500 for fencing at Benson Dog Park. A roll call vote was taken. Carried 4-0.

#### B. Public Hearing - Acceptance of Bleacher Donation - Eagle Scout Project

The Town Administrator explained, this was a holdover from when Mr. Forrence was here. He had worked with a Boy Scout Eagle Project to build some bleachers. I believe you have a photograph and they're some fine looking bleachers. I've actually gone out and looked at them. They're very sturdy. This will be over by the basketball courts at Greeley Park. If you know where Greeley Park is, we have the ball field over there. There's a playground. This is at the basketball court. So I think the Board should open the public hearing. If there's no comment, I think you should accept the bleachers. It's very, very, very welcome donation.

Vice-Chairman Morin opened the public hearing at 7:09p.m. Okay. I'll open the public hearing at 7:09 p.m. School Board member Gasdia spoke up and said, I'd just like to say, you know, Kenny was in Troop 20 when I was the scoutmaster, a great kid. But I know that in addition to Jess Forrence, really the whole DPW participated and helped out and it was really a very collaborative effort. So thank you to everyone in the town to help make this possible. Seeing no further comments, the public hearing was closed at 7:10 p.m. Seeing no further questions, Selectman Guessferd made a motion, seconded by Selectman Dumont to accept the donation for the bleachers at the Greeley Park Basketball Court. A roll call vote was taken. Carried 4-0.

#### C. Melendy Road Bridge Over First Brook - Addendum #1

Vice-Chairman Morin recognized Town Engineer, Elvis Dhima. Mr. Dhima began saying, Thank you, Selectman Morin, Good evening, everyone. As you probably recall, last year we received a one-time payment from the State regarding Bridge Aide. It was in the amount of \$680,000. \$250,000 was dedicated to the construction phase for Tyler Falls and Veterans Memorial, which is currently into the bid phase right now. Hopefully we can get some good numbers for that. Some of the money was dedicated to County Road and some of the money was dedicated to Lowell and Birch and Melendy over First Brook. While we did not find any surprises at County Road and Lowell, at Birch Melendy, it's a bit rough condition compared to what we thought we would be dealing with. So the bottom line is it was rated a five. Once it got under the hood, it's more like a four. We had some back and forth. We went to the State with the findings. We feel that this should be on the red list right away. It should be taken care of. And we left the meeting with the State with good news. They're willing to help us out with the 80% of the construction phase and the construction related activities. If we take care of finish up the design, the permitting, the easements, construction easements, permanent and temporary construction easements, on our own dime.

Mr. Dhima continued saying, in a nutshell, it's the same approach that we did with the Twin Bridges, where we took care of the design, the evaluations, the utilities, and in return, the State came and basically gave us \$2.7 million at the last minute. This one is in line with that. So basically our approach of having shovel

ready projects is paying off. And I'm here in front of you tonight to basically commit to the additional tasks that are required to get this thing locked in and hopefully the State can get us the funds within 11 months to do the construction phase, which is pretty significant. Right now, we're looking at \$850,000 just for the construction. My estimate will be that I will not be surprised if it's probably about \$1 million by the time we're done next year. So we're looking at quite a bit. If we get the State to come up with \$800,000, we're in good shape. There's about \$285,000 left in the construction on the bridge program. So we're going to take the money tonight, about \$79,000 and change out of that. And we'll be leaving about \$200,000 in the books. So we'll be in good shape to cover our 20%. And with that said, I'll take any questions you might have.

Selectman Dumont was recognized and said, I just had a question. Just out of curiosity, what makes it a four instead of a five? You don't have to go into too much detail. Mr. Dhima replied, yeah, it's the deck. It's the substructure. It's the abutment. Like, the main thing there is if you had a chance or if you have a chance to look at it, is the walls are made of rock and mortar. And what's happening is over time, they're getting washed away. So there's no mortar anymore. It's just rocks. There's some shifting going on. So our concern is that if the legs are gone, the deck is right behind it. So if you look at it this way, you'll be if you look at the retaining wall, it's nice and straight. This thing is basically giving in a little bit. So looking at that, getting under the bridge and looking at the deck itself, how it's sitting in their opinion, was that, eh, we think it's a four. The State didn't argue with it. I think their rating is about a year old. Some of these bridges are right there, we call it on the pink list. It sometimes it takes five years to go from a five to a four. Sometimes it's one year, sometimes it's six months. But they felt strong about this probably being a four. So that's basically in a nutshell.

Selectman Dumont then said, and it looks like it says the State could provide 80% of the reimbursement, but it's figured, obviously if we're covering the 20%, they will provide the other 80%. Mr. Dhima replied, yeah, the the idea is they're acting in good faith. So they cannot do this until we deliver the design and the permitting. We have about 11 months to deliver. If we can't deliver, they cannot commit. So that's why it says could. But yes, if we get the design done, if we get the permitting done in time and we get it by their end of the calendar year, they'll come up with the funds as long as we have 20% match on it. So that's why you have that language in there. But again, if you're looking at \$1 million and we get 80%, that's a pretty good deal. That's quite a bit of money. I was hoping more of a shell, but yeah.

Mr. Dhima replied, yeah, yeah, yeah. No, it's just that's it. But again, I and again, if you guys, you know, if the Board moves forward, we'll also bring this up on the meeting on the 16th. The Commissioner Wheeler I'll be trying to put this in that design, shovel ready projects and we'll see where it goes. That's that's the plan of attack. It's been paying off so far, especially with the Twin Bridges. We continue to follow that process, being very aggressive of trying to get these things done. And in the queue, it looks like there's a bit more money than projects out there and we're benefiting from it. Why not? Selectman Dumont replied, knocking everything out off that Capital Improvements Plan. Mr. Dhima replied, it is. There'll be nothing left. Kidding, but yeah, no, it's it's we're, we're doing we're doing good. We got Lowell and First Brook right now in the queue. We're going to have this in the queue as well. It just County Road and Lowell and Birch left. That's about it. And those we have a little bit of time you know, County Road is a seven, Lowell and Birch is a five, but overall looks in good shape. And I think the way we might do the rehab of that, it won't be super dramatic. So we're in good shape.

Seeing no further questions from the Board, Selectman Guessferd made a motion, seconded by Selectman Dumont to approve the contract for additional environmental and engineering services for the Melendy Road Bridge over First Brook (114/083) to Wright-Pierce, Inc. for the amount not to exceed \$79,900 using account 4909-6211-502-000. A roll call vote was taken. Carried 4-0.

D. South Water Tank - Verizon Lease Update

Vice-Chairman Morin recognized Town Engineer, Elvis Dhima. Mr. said, thank you Selectman Morin. As you remember, not too long ago, about a couple of months ago, we started discussions about this. The Board of Selectmen authorized the Town Administrator and myself to move forward with a possible agreement between Verizon and us. We've been working for the past three months. We and the lawyers and we're basically have an agreement in place to execute this agreement, which is going to be a 25 year agreement and you will need a Town Meeting vote. So with that said, basically what we're looking at is five years with automatic five year renewals starting at about \$28,800 per year with 2% increase. Basically rent payments will start first month after Verizon pulls the permit. We're also going to be looking at an area of 12 by 20 for a building within our perimeter. With that said, I think the total value for the 25 years is just under \$1 Million. \$950,000. So significant amount. And with that said, if you wish to move forward, I'm asking you tonight to authorize the Town Administrator to put a warrant article together for this item. And that way we can decide in March if that gets approved, this Board will be ready to execute this contract and it will be making a bit of money just a little bit. But everything counts, right? \$30,000 a year. Not bad.

Vice-Chairman Morin asked Selectman Roy if she had any questions, she said, I'm all set. Although I do, Actually, I do have a question. I just want to be clear. We're receiving rents from them, correct? Mr. Dhima replied yes. to which Selectman Roy replied, Okay. Okay. That's my only question. Mr. Dhima reiterated, they're paying us. Yes. Seeing no further discussion, Selectman Guessferd made a motion, seconded by Selectman Dumont to authorize the Town Administrator to prepare a warrant article for this potential 25 year lease. A roll call vote was taken. Carried 4-0.

Vice-Chairman Morin then addressed Mr. Dhima saying, well we have you up here, sir, would you like to discuss Central Street tomorrow? Mr. Dhima replied, yeah, everyone If you have plans to go out tomorrow night, please be aware that Central Road will be closed due to Water Utility work, planned work. There's a detailed detour available on the web, if you'd like to see what that looks like. If you need help interpreting that detour, please feel free to call the Engineering Department. But basically there's going to be a road closure Central Street between Lowell and Central and Central and Library from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. We believe this is the best way to get that water from one side to the other and be done with it in one night and put this behind us and hopefully this will be the end of it for a while.

As far as road closure and work related out there. I also want to give an update to the Board about Lowell Road widening that got completed today. I enjoy it and it was a bit rough today, but we're done with that phase. Flagstone all the way down to the ramp, so that's done. So is the State with their portion of the work, which is basically adjacent to us. That's, that's why it was a little bit complicated, but that's done as of 6:00 tonight. So go out there and enjoy it. That was it. Thank you. You have a great night.

E. Hudson Community Television Staffing Restructuring

Vice Chairman Morin recognized Director of Community Media, Jim McIntosh and HCTV Assistant, Mike Johnson. Mr. McIntosh began saying, Members of the Board, good evening. We just come before you looking for permission to start restructuring HCTV. With the Comcast subscription starting to change, with subscribers falling off and going to over internet streaming and such. We're going to try and preserve as much of the funds as we can for HCTV right now. So we've been debating it for a while; Michael, Jackie and I. Jackie's in vacation right now in Mexico, which would have been nice, but she she's at the balloon festival. I've been trying to get there for ten years. But we we're trying to do the best we can. We've seen that over the last couple of years it's been harder and harder to get students, you know, a lot of qualified students to come in and help. And it's taking them longer and longer to get up to speed on doing covering the meetings and stuff. And we consider it an important factor to the Town of Hudson. We were going to transition back to having a part time HCTV Assistant, and one of their duties would be to cover a

couple of meetings a week. And we were going the and our whole structure is actually going to be changing with staffing and such. And we were going to transition one of the Production Coordinators into a senior junior type position. One's a senior, one's a junior. Looking forward to the possibility that in the near future the whole management is going to shift anyways. So we're trying to get the best possible bang for our buck in this case, with the loss of whoever at the top, the the fee structure is going to change in that respect for salaries and such. So we're just and we're going to be doing away with the position of Videographer that'll save us four people less paperwork, less scheduling, less training time that gives us more time to do other things and try to preserve as much as we can for the Town of Hudson. Does anybody have any questions?

The Town Administrator addressed the group saying, just remember, this isn't a revolving fund. So when we receive money from the cable subscribers that comes into the Town, I believe you're keeping three quarters of that money? Mr. McIntosh replied, HCTV gets 80%, the Town 20%. The Town Administrator went on to say, so this is a basically self-funded operation. Again, no taxpayer money is coming into this. It's subscriber cable subscriber. If you're not a subscriber, you're not paying into it. That's right. And this is really to help support all that you see for all the meeting coverage and a lot of the other events these folks put on. So that's just important to remember that for people out there.

Selectman Dumont was recognized and said I just have a question. I know you said that subscribers to Xfinity or Comcast are dropping off. Is there any way to... or do streaming services pay at all? How does that work? Mr. McIntosh replied, currently, no. The way public access was formed was Congress passed a law in, it was a long time ago, but they renovated in 1982, in any case, and that was to provide for they recognized that with the advent of cable television services, that there might be a day when the big networks might not want to cover local events. So your high school football would go away. Local parades and stuff were going and they pretty much have. If it wasn't for public access television, you would see very little ad except like the Saint Patrick's Day parade in Boston. And it's actually been very effective. So far they haven't responded because so many things going on at the political level. But there are people out there trying, saying that it's the same thing. It's still cable. You're just using it to stream Internet over now, you know, fiber optic cable or copper cable, it doesn't matter. We're just waiting for them to understand that and approve that. And then the fee structure will return to the same. I don't know how long that's going to be. So I'm kind of hedging our bets here and just trying to save as much as we can and conserve it and make it go as far as it possibly can. Selectman Dumont replied, thank you.

Selectman Guessferd was recognized and said, yeah, I know we've talked about this before in some of our meetings about how it's decreasing, how how rapidly are we are we seeing this decline right now? Mr. McIntosh replied, right now, not very much surprisingly, people are sticking to their guns. But as the market ages out, the younger people are going more towards streaming, like on their cell phones. So their parents are still paying for Xfinity and watching cable television. The kids are in their bedroom going on Facebook and social media and stuff and doing all that stuff. So that's revenue that should have been it should actually have been growing. So if you look at it respectfully, probably just 2 to 3% a year, it's going to start dropping off. And while that might not be a lot, we we do a lot HCTV, I mean, we have a lot of expensive equipment. We have, to keep experienced people we have to keep a competitive salary. And that's what I'm afraid is going to happen to us. I mean, we already lost one person that we were counting on to go forward with us into the future. So we have a new person to replace her and he's in the control room right now and he's right now he's doing very good. Very, very good. So I have a lot of high hopes for HCTV. But I mean, there's going to come a time when I'm going to retire and step down. So I want to make sure that these guys are ready to take over. So it's pretty much seamless and they're doing pretty good so far. I mean, I know a lot of you haven't seen me at a lot of events lately. That's because I throw it on them so that I can come in and yell at them for not doing it right later on or give them production value suggestions. But they're a good crew. They are doing very well.

Selectman Guessferd then said, yeah, and I have to admit, I'm one of those streamers. Yeah, I know. But we're seeing we're seeing that those prices are going up as well. So, I mean, it kind of seems to be doing this, you know, eventually. And if they eventually if Congress acts to tax the streaming services, you know, then it may just end up becoming as expensive as as the cable eventually. I don't know. But I just know

every few months it seems like they increase the price because they can. Mr. McIntosh replied, exactly. And it's because they can get away with it. Like right now in this market here, Comcast has a lock down on this area. I mean, nobody wants to come up because New Hampshire isn't super populated. Neither is Maine or Vermont. At least we don't have, there is some competition like in Maine with what they're called Spectrum. And I can't say what I think of them on the air or how I have not tried to court them at all. I've tried to court a couple of other people from Massachusetts to make it more competitive because Comcast does have the flexibility to give local incentives and better pay because, like, if you were living in Framingham, you would have a really good price. Unfortunately, they can just hang us out by our toenails and say, give me more, and they're doing it.

Vice-Chairman Morin asked, Selectman Roy, any comments or questions to which Selectman Roy replied, none. Thank you. At this point seeing no further questions from the Board, the Board thanked Mr. McIntosh and Mr. Johnson.

#### F. 2023 Tax Rate

Vice-Chairman Morin recognized Finance Director Lisa Labrie. Ms. Labrie addressed the Board saying, Yes. I'm here to talk about everybody's favorite subject, the tax rate. So we're looking at a tax rate of \$15.98, which is \$1.30 increase. The the Town has gone up approximately \$0.26. The School \$0.68. Some of that is because they lost some of their their Adequate Education Grant came down. So they've lost money in grants and their appropriations have gone up as well. The State Education Tax went up \$0.28 and the County went up 13%, \$0.08. So we get we get hit from the State as well as what we've what we planned. We actually came in a little bit under as far as the Town goes. We came in a little bit under what was estimated \$0.22 under. But overall, the rates up, which people aren't going to be happy with.

The Town Administrator then said, so one thing we just want to point out, we didn't find out about the County until Friday after all this was published, which is typical. We had estimated a 5% County increase. It ended up being a 13% County increase, which would have put the tax rate at \$16 even. But we're recommending taking another \$100,000 or one million dollars' worth of surplus to just kind of smooth out the rate, do the best we can for the for the taxpayers without making the rate go up and down too crazy. So there was a motion to take \$900,000. That's now going to be a million. And that'll put the rate at \$15.98 that the Finance Director just just explained to you. Again, a lot of these factors. I mean, the appropriations were all voted by the by the voters. So for the Town side, they voted for the School side they voted. The School had a couple of things that happened. Again, their Adequate Education Grant, as as the Finance Director said, came in at less than it was last year. That's a formula that the State utilizes. I think it was like a half a million or so less. Their Statewide Property Tax went from four something million to six something million out of their control. But it does affect our rate. It affects the bottom line of the rate. And again, the County. Ms. Labrie interjected saying went up \$500,000. The Town Administrator added, yeah, we were, that was a bit of a surprise. A 13% increase on their appropriation, not just to Hudson. That was their whole appropriation. And then we get a proportional share, which is approximately the same percentage that we had last year. So when they when they apportioned County, they look at your assessed value and everybody else in your county's value and they apportion it. We didn't change significantly there. It was the their gross appropriation that really changed. I'm sure they got a lot of pressures that we have. They have to pay competitive wages. They have health care costs that go up. They have all those things that contribute to that. We, I estimated 5% because, again, I had no other guidance. We came in at 13. So that didn't help. So again, based on our look at this today, we're recommending we take a \$1 million of that surplus as opposed to 900. You had budgeted 600 to start with. Right? But we're recommending the million still leaves us at about seven, I think seven, seven point something. Ms. Labrie said it would leave us at \$7,217,000. The Town Administrator asked, do you remember what the percentage of that was? To which Ms. Labrie replied, 8%. The Town Administrator replied, So that's very much within the 5 to 10% range that's recommended for good financial policy and good financial management. If you take the million this

year, we're confident you'll be able to take the same million next year. So you won't get a spike in the rate from taking a lot this year and not taking the same or more next year.

The Town Administrator went on to say, things like the automobile registrations contribute to us having a strong surplus. When we take in more than we budget that goes into the Fund balance. Under expanding although modest, you know, it's less than 1% underspent that goes into the Fund balance. I believe it was two years ago we had settled one of the big tax cases for FairPoint that put that put some liability money that was reserved back into the Fund balance. So they're very healthy fund balance, which allows us to weather things, whether whether the economy goes bad, whether our revenues drop off, whatnot. We have the ability to weather that. It also helps us when we did the police bond, even though we used the Bond Bank, our underlying rating, our underlying finances contribute to those rates that we get for those finances. So a strong balance sheet and a strong fund balance gives us a very good rate when we borrow money, particularly when it comes to debt.

The Town Administrator continued explaining So I think we're in pretty good economic shape, but nobody likes a tax increase because we're all paying it. But again, the voters approved appropriations, including the School contract. The Supervisors contract and various whatnots. Our side of it came in lower than we anticipated. The School side came in higher. It's not a criticism, it's just a simple fact. A lot of its mathematics. You know, people say take more of the surplus. You could do that, but then you run into the risk of what do you do next year? And then you don't want the rate to whipsaw up and down because you might save some this year. You're going to go back up next year. So I think more steady and even is what the philosophy has been through the years here. So I know there's probably a lot of explaining, but that's sort of where we're at. And the whole point of this is we need to go to DRA with these estimated figures and then they can lock us in and start getting our tax rate so that we can get the bills out in November, get the get the moneys due in December.

Vice-Chairman Morin said, before we have questions, Mr. Gasdia, would you like to any comments on this? Mr. Gasdia replied, No. I mean, no one likes when the tax rate goes up. You know, we knew that there was certainly we had a teachers contract and other things that were on there. We knew it was going to go up. I think it is a little bit higher than we thought. But as Mr. Malizia said, there were some unexpected, unanticipated things that were out of our control that that contributed to that.

Selectman Dumont was recognized and said, I just had a question for clarity. You had mentioned that the County came in. You got that information on Friday. The overall, the tax rate started would have started in July. Correct? Or am I misunderstanding? Ms. Labrie replied the first half, the first half of the year. The Town Administrator added, the first half of the year, which was due in July is an estimate. This is the, now you're paying. Now you get it gets reconciled and you're paying the second half. You're paying the final your final bill. Ms. Labrie added the second half usually ends up being more. The Town Administrator replied it will be more. Selectman Dumont replied and I know that and I talked to Lisa and I talked to you about I know it can get confusing, but just in case if anybody was wondering at home, because I found myself wondering, too. So that is nothing to do with 2024. It is purely 2023. The Town Administrator replied, it's the 23 tax year, but it's covering the fiscal year 24 expenditures. It's the money we're using to fund our operations now through next June. We're working on Fiscal Year 25 budgets. Her and I have no idea what year we're in anymore. I think we're in calendar 23. We're working 24 and now we're talking about 25. We have no idea. But this is the 23 tax year DRA deems it the 23. This is the 23 tax year.

Selectman Dumont replied, I want to make sure in case anybody had questions and all of that was based on what got voted on this this past or this past March. The Town Administrator explained, when the voters went to the polls in March, what they approved bills this tax rate. So we submitted what they call the MS-232, which is our appropriations actually voted. The school has a similar form. The Department of Revenue takes that, then they take our appropriate our estimated revenues, which this is what this is going to be. We put the best forward that we can. This may get tweaked a little by the Department of Revenue. They may say, oh, your Rooms and Meals Tax, we've got a different number for you. I don't know that number. For some reason, they keep it close to the vest. But these are the, this is the data that we know. And what you can control is your use of fund balance. So it's that simple. The other part of this would be once you vote to



do this, we then need a consensus, if we were to get more revenue, do you want us to use it to reduce the tax rate or do you want to use less surplus? My recommendation would be go against the tax rate, but sometimes the boards feel differently. Ms. Labrie added, historically, we've lucked out with the with the room and meals tax and we get a little bit more. The Town Administrator added, yeah, you'll get an updated report from the state. They'll say, Oh, we're going to get another \$100,000. Yeah, let's take that to the tax rate. That would be my recommendation. Our recommendation for the consensus. I mean, again, nobody likes this, but we all voted for things and those things have a price. Selectman Dumont replied, I just want to make sure, just so everyone knows, it was passed has nothing to do with what's coming up in March. It already happened. The Town Administrator replied, you are correct.

Vice-Chairman Morin then said and just to add to that, sorry. What was the percentage we came under? What we thought. How much was the difference? Ms. Labrie replied, the difference was \$0.22 under. I don't have my calculator. Vice-Chairman Morin replied, So we came under \$0.22. Ms. Labrie replied \$0.22 under what was estimated. The Town Administrator said we estimated tax rate, on our side of the street. We thought when all the warrants that passed was going to be about \$5.06, we're at \$4.84. So that's a 22 cent savings. As the Finance Director stated, some of that is because we had more assessed value, some of that's because, you know, the revenue that we've got. So the extra surplus we've taken. So that's what you can control. Selectman Dumont replied, awesome. Thank you.

Selectman Guessferd was recognized and said, just a couple of things. So these numbers here, we said one of them is going to change to a million. Does it change anything else here or is it still going to be \$15.94 per \$1,000? The Town Administrator replied No. I'm going to pass out a new sheet for you. This has the updated County figure in it. The rate will be \$15.98 because the \$15.94 had the old County appropriation in it, which was an estimate. Now that we got the new appropriation, that would have taken us up to \$16 even. We're recommending use another \$100,000 to get it back under \$16.00. I know it's psychological. \$15.98. So see where that says \$15.98. It used to say 1\$15.94. The piece that's changed would be the County went up or taken another 100 on our piece. So our piece is actually going down to \$4.84. I'm not trying to lose people. So our piece is going from \$4.86 to \$4.84. The County went from .82 to .89 and the School remained the same.

Selectman Guessferd then said just, you know, again, as we all say, as the taxpayer, we're going to hear from them no matter what. And you made a good explanation. And I just want to make sure that people continue to understand that, you know, this the the unassigned fund balance, we're not taking more out of there because we're trying to keep the rates stable, you know, as stable as we can, because that's going to be one of the questions probably that comes out is, is, you know, well, you take more the fund balance now our fund balance percentage you said it's it's what we're advised is going to be appropriate to have in that's consistent pretty much across with other communities and it's. the Town Administrator added, it's also consistent with the policy you've adopted and re-adopted since 2011, which basically articulates, I believe, between 5 and 10% with the goal of seven and one half as a goal. And again, think about your own personal finances and situation. You'd like to have something in the bank, so to speak, or at least creditworthiness. That's what this provides us. You don't want to do it at the expense of, you know, being able to help the taxpayer. But at some point, you know, it's just fiscal stability. I don't know if things are going to go over the cliff. For example, if car registrations dropped, this would help fill in a gap of something that we've budgeted. So far they haven't. It's fascinating to me that. Ms. Labrie said, nobody wants electric cars.

The Town Administrator then said, and we've been as negative as interest rates have been for the consumer. They've been pretty good for the town from the perspective of our investments are we've made more interest on our money in the first three months of this year than we did all of last year. And all of last year was probably more than the previous four years combined. So interesting interest environment we find ourselves in is helping us from that perspective. It's not helping the consumer. It's not helping the average guy. But at least from our perspective, it's a positive. Seeing no further questions from the Board, Selectman Guessferd made a motion, seconded by Selectman Dumont to authorize the use of \$1,000,000 of the Town's \$8,217,956 Unassigned Fund Balance in support of a tax rate of approximately \$15.98 per thousand, as recommended by the Finance Director. A roll call vote was taken. Carried 4-0.

G. Public Hearing - Acceptance of \$10,000 Donation from Elliot Hospital

Vice-Chairman Morin recognized Fire Chief, Scott Tice. Chief Tice said, Thank you, Selectman Morin. Good evening, everyone. So this donation from Elliott Hospital would be to defray the cost of buying three ventilators, which will be my next presentation. But they've offered this just as a way of community outreach to assist us in getting this project funded. Seeing no questions from the Board, a public hearing was opened at 7:43pm. Seeing no one present to comment, Vice-Chairman Morin closed the public hearing at 7:43pm.

Selectman Dumont made a motion, seconded by Selectman Guessferd to authorize the Fire Chief to accept \$10,000 in funding from Elliot Hospital as a part of a SolutionHealth towards a purchase of ZOLL Ventilators. A roll call vote was taken. Carried 4-0.

H. Request to Purchase Portable Ventilators

Fire Chief Scott Tice was recognized and said, As an initiative to improve our care of respiratory patients, the department would like to buy three ventilators. These ventilators would do three things. They would provide mechanical ventilation to patients that are in respiratory arrest or cardiac arrest. They would do continuous positive airway pressure, which is a mass that we put on the patient, and it keeps a pressurized air in their airway to force air into their lungs, to open up their airway for better breathing. This is a great benefit for patients. Before we CPAP and we do have CPAP through a disposable product now, so we don't have a lot of money invested in it. What CPAP does it saved a lot of patients from having to get intubated. Once these respiratory patients get intubated, it's very difficult for hospitals to get them off or get the get the get the tube out. And sometimes this ends up being their permanent state after this. The downside of CPAP is it's continuous pressure. So the patients are exhaling against this pressure, which increases their fatigue rate. So what BIPAP does, which these ventilators would allow us to do is when the patient exhales, it drops the pressure, makes it easier for them to breathe out. It leads to less fatigue of these patients.

The EMS Committee looked at what was available on the market. There is three ventilators that are appropriate for pre-hospital care. There was a more expensive unit than what we're recommending that had capabilities that we wouldn't be able to use. So it didn't make sense for us to recommend that. And there was a less expensive product that's at the end of its life and they're no longer producing parts. So it didn't seem to make sense to recommend that when once they run out of parts, they would not be available, they would be out of service. So we're recommending the ZOLL product, the only they don't have different dealers that we could go through purchase process with. ZOLL is just ZOLL. So that's why we're asking for the sole source purchase. The cost of the three ventilators with the associated equipment, shipping, handling, a lifetime training on the equipment and a five year service agreement that would start after the one year warranty period is \$56,225.31.

Vice-Chairman Morin said, just you said sole source, but you did go out, get a price on the more expensive one. Chief Tice replied yeah. So they looked at what, they looked at what was out there on the market and got bids for all that. So I don't know if this qualifies for sole source, but we can't for the sole product. We there's nobody to bid for because it's only ZOLL that sells that product.

Selectman Guessferd was recognized and said, that was you've kind of answered my question because that was my first thought was the whole idea of sole source. And that was I was going to ask that question. So basically what you're saying is that is that you looked at three different products, one that was more expensive, one that was less expensive, and each of them are a little different in terms of their specs or whatever, right? So bottom line is the specs that ZOLL that the ZOLL product has is what you were looking for, and ZOLL is the only they basically have a unique capability with, with their specifications, correct? Chief replied, correct. The more expensive model has capabilities that we wouldn't use. So it would really

be wasting money to go with the more expensive model and the less expensive model isn't going to be around much, much longer because they're not supporting it anymore.

Selectman Guessferd then said the only thing I would say, and hopefully it's there somewhere, is that you explain that in the file because all we see right now is just sole source and it does bring the question up. I think we all kind of scratching our heads as to why it was sole source if that's if that's inserted into your into your bid file. Chief Tice replied, we have all that information. Selectman Guessferd replied, yeah. That's, I would say because if somebody comes in and takes a look at it later on, they'll understand very clearly why it was "sole source" and and provide adequate justification for waiving the bid process. Chief Tice replied, that makes sense.

Selectman Roy was recognized and said, it's just a procedural question. The first one we did, we had three motions, but we only made one. Do we need to make the other two for the the acceptance of the donation? The Town Administrator replied, so you've already accepted the donation. This motion two and motion three applicable to this specific item. So we're going to waive the bid process. That's motion two. And then you're going to authorize the Chief to purchase them. That's motion three. So if you look at I'm assuming you have the packet in front of you, the Finance Director's memo had all three motions, but we divide it up because we had a public hearing for the first one. And if you look at the Fire Chief's memo, that was page two. He's got the two motions that we're going to be talking about here. Selectman Roy replied, okay. That was my only question.

Seeing no further questions, *Selectman Dumont made a motion, seconded by Selectman Guessferd to waive Chapter 98-7 Bidding Procedure of the Town of Hudson Town Code for the purpose of purchasing three (3) Z Vent Portable Ventilators, associated equipment in a five year service plan. ZOLL Medical is a sole source for this equipment. A roll call vote was taken. Carried 4-0.*

*Selectman Dumont made a motion, seconded by Selectman Guessferd to authorize the Fire Chief to purchase three (3) Z Vent Portable Ventilators, associated equipment and a five year service plan from ZOLL Medical Corporation in the amount of \$46,225.31. Selectman Dumont asked, just a clarification. It's \$56,000, correct? Chief Tice replied, so we would be buying them for the \$56,225.31 and then Elliott would be reimbursing us to \$10,000. The Town Administrator asked is that how you want to do it? Okay. I think the Finance Director carried the ten grand but we should. Selectman Dumont replied, that's what I was thinking but I thought it was more appropriate. The Town Administrator replied yeah, let's do it that way. Selectman Dumont said, I'll make the motion with the amendment to \$56,225.31. Selectman Guessferd seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. Carried 4-0.*

#### I. Request to Purchase Shirts for the Fire Explorers

Chief Tice was again recognized and said, can we defer that for, I would say indefinitely at this point. But at least for tonight.

Vice-Chairman Morin then addressed the Chief saying, before you go, would you like to talk about this weekend's events? Chief Tice replied, yeah, so Saturday night, the Fire Department will be having our annual awards night. So we'll start the night at 5:00pm at the the memorial at the intersection of Lowell Road and Central Street, where we do our annual memorial service for past members. And then immediately following that, we'll be going to the White Birch and we'll be having a dinner and our annual awards night where we recognize our members for any significant calls and service throughout the year. We were given some chief's awards, years of service awards, those types of things. So this is actually a pretty big night for us. It's the one night we get together and kind of recognize ourselves for the achievements throughout the year. Selectman Roy addressed the Chief saying, enjoy yourself Saturday night. To which the Chief replied, thank you.

J. September 2023 Revenues & Expenditures

The Town Administrator was recognized and explained, So we are completed the first quarter of the year. I have nothing major to report. It appears all expenditures are where they should be. As I mentioned, I think ad infinitum we encumber things. So when you look at the report, you'll see things like the solid waste contract is encumbered. We encumbered legal money, we encumbered, paving things. So on balance, though, the expenditures look where they should be for the first quarter of the year. It doesn't usually happen until we get to the winter time where things get a little fuzzy, but right now it looks pretty good. I alluded to, I mentioned before, motor vehicles continue to be strong. We're running ahead of last year by about 100K at this point in time, which is about 2% more. So that continues to be a good performer. And as I said, interest the first three months of interest of on our monies in the bank. This isn't the Trustee's, this is just the money the Treasurer and our Finance Department handle. We've taken in more interest in the first three months of this year than we did all of last year. And last year was a decent year where we took in probably more than we did the previous four years. So again, this is a negative for the consumer, but there's been a positive for the town and this will probably exceed at least \$300,000 this year, which is which is very positive. Very positive. So again, it's a negative for most of us who have to borrow money. But it's a positive for for us that have these investments. And kudos to the Finance Department and the Treasurer have been working together to make sure that we're maximizing what we can.

Town Hall Relocation Committee - Selectman Roy then said, I do want to bring up something that I sort of presumed would be on the on the agenda, but it's not. And that was my addition of the Town Hall Relocation Committee. Can we can we talk about that now? Vice-Chairman Morin replied yep, absolutely. Selectman Roy went on to say, okay, so here's my thought. What I got out of that that public hearing was that although the project we proposed wasn't their their their preference, they recognized the need for a new town hall. So what I'm suggesting is we take a couple of weeks until the next meeting. We we figure out what the parameters are we want for a committee who we want on it. If there's a budget or a price sale point, what we don't want, maybe we don't put land lease on there, those kinds of things. So I guess I just want to open up the discussion to do something like that. Vice-Chairman Morin replied could I can I ask you to defer that because there's a possibility of something else coming down the pike I understand. So if we could wait for that and then we'll take it up after that. Selectman Roy asked, can you send to the rest of the Board with that that new proposal might be? Vice-Chairman Morin replied, I don't have much information on it. I just got word that another what would you call him, contractor or developer? Developer had had an offer but I don't know. Have the information yet. That's why I'm asking to wait. Selectman Roy replied, okay. Well, I just figured the board should have all the information that. Vice-Chairman Morin replied, I don't have any information yet, that's why it hasn't gone out, that's all. Selectman Roy replied, sure. Vice-Chairman Morin replied, we're waiting for something official. There's nothing yet. Selectman Roy replied okay.

9. Board Liaison Reports/Other Remarks by Selectmen

Selectman Roy: I really have nothing except for, you know, visit your Library. They're great people. They have a lot of programs, and they save you a lot of money. So use your, use your library. That's all I have.

Selectman Dumont: Not too much since last meeting. We do have an upcoming Benson Park meeting on the 19th. Do have a lot going on with the budget. And just ask again if if anybody is looking to volunteer at any position in the town to come on down and fill out the paper.

Selectman Guessferd: Let's see. We've we're continuing working on the Planning Board on the Master Plan chapters. We're having our meeting tomorrow night. We're going to be going over the land use chapter. We. So we don't have any other developments tomorrow night on our on our Board agenda.

As far as Rec is concerned. Just a couple of things. The reminder of the tickets for the Comedy night for November 11th are I think I think sales are brisk as they usually are for for that. And there's going to be a Fright Night that's going to be held for the kids on October 27th. So have your kids sign up for that. And other than that, everything's going going pretty, pretty well. I don't think I have anything else at this point. I think that's it.

Selectman Morin: Budget Committee met last Wednesday. Fire Chief Tice attended the meeting and had discussion with the board reference to the tower ladder. A few more questions were sent forward to the Finance Director and the Town Administrator. They're working on those and we'll keep moving with that.

As we had discussed last meeting, the Food Pantry had invited us, so that is set for October 30th at 5:00p.m. at the Food Pantry.

And another thing, again, we have nothing official yet on this, but the Bears have approached. I got a call from one of the reps from the Bears. They would like to set up a meeting with the Town to resurrect Zach's Field and put a field. Again, nothing official. We haven't seen any documentation. It was just a phone call. So that may be coming in the future also. So we'll see where that goes. That's all I have.

10. Remarks by Town Administrator

Town Administrator Steve Malizia was recognized and said, So is everybody's favorite time of year budget. Budget review starts Thursday. That will be at 7:00. You have, I believe, a schedule. I believe the information is on our web page. I think it's right on the front of the web page. There's a link you can click and look at all the budgets and follow along if you'd like. It's scheduled for three evenings this Thursday. Next Tuesday, the following Thursday. We'll see where we get. But I believe everybody met their, did their best to meet the directives of the Board. So you should all have your packet and we'll start going through that on Thursday.

Another quick announcement on Monday. What date is Monday? 16th. The Governor's Advisory Commission on Intermodal Transportation will be having a public hearing on the on the draft 2025-2034, Ten Year Transportation Improvement Plan. This is a series of public hearings that the Governor's Council, I believe, holds across the state. They're coming to Hudson. It's on Monday at the community center. They'll be doing a 30 minute presentation and a 30 minute Q&A. So the public, any member from the public or any member from this Board so wishes to attend. You're welcome to attend. As I understand it, right now, it looks like two projects on the ten year plan, the preliminary engineering feasibility study of a roadway between 3A and 111. That's the southern terminus of the circumferential. And I believe it looks like construction of pedestrian improvements, sidewalks, drainage improvements along Derry Road/Route 102 from Ledge Road to Alvirne High School. Those projects are believe are on their list at this point. The public can submit public testimony within ten days of the completion of the public hearings or no later than November 3rd. But this is this is folks opportunity to hear and raise concerns, questions, comments. That's Monday at the Community Center, starting at 7 p.m. So I just want to make sure I got that public service announcement out there. That's it.

11. Remarks by School Board

Vice-Chairman Morin recognized School Board member, Gary Gasdia. Mr. Gasdia said, alright. Not too much tonight. Just want to thank everyone that volunteered for our new Strategic Planning Committee. We got some good feedback or good interest from a lot of folks in town. So that'll be forming soon. That group. We still have openings, so if anyone wants or knows anyone that wants to be teachers, special ed., teachers, facilities, maintenance, lunch pretty much right down the gamut. And of course, paraprofessionals, we have that.

And then budget season is starting. And all I'll say is, you know, we sat here tonight and, you know, we hear the tax rate and it's that oh, boy moment. But everything that was in there was voted on and it's there. And so, you know, the time to get involved is now. And the budgets similar to the Town will be on the School website start looking. If you get ideas, reach out and let us know and we'll go from there.

12. Nonpublic Session

Motion by Selectman Guessferd at 8:03 p.m., seconded by Selectman Dumont to go into non-public session under RSA 91-A:3 II (c) Matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person, other than a member of the public body itself, unless such person request an open meeting. This exemption shall extend to any application for assistance or tax abatement or waiver of a fee, fine, or other levy, if based on inability to pay or poverty of the applicant. A roll call vote was taken. Carried 4-0.

Nonpublic Session was entered at 8:03 p.m. thus ending the televised portion of the meeting. Any votes taken upon entering open session will be listed on the Board's next agenda. The public was asked to leave the room.

The Board entered open session at 8:32 p.m.

Motions made after nonpublic session:

1. Selectman Guessferd made a motion, seconded by Selectman Dumont to have the Fire Chief prepare a survey for the Board's review by November 14, 2023. A roll call vote was taken. Carried 4-0.
2. Selectman Guessferd made a motion to adjourn at 8:33 p.m. this was seconded by Selectman Dumont. A roll call vote was taken. Carried 4-0.

13. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 8:33 p.m. by Selectman Guessferd seconded by Selectman Dumont. A roll call vote was taken Carried 4-0.

Recorded by HCTV and transcribed by Jill Laffin, Executive Assistant.

absent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Marilyn McGrath, Chairman

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dave Morin, Vice Chairman

\_\_\_\_\_  
Kara Roy, Selectman

\_\_\_\_\_  
Bob Guessferd, Selectman

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dillon Dumont, Selectman