

Town of Canterbury, NH
Board of Selectmen
Date: 2025 November 18
Location: Sam Lake House

Selectmen: Scott Doherty (Chair), Beth Blair, Calvin Todd

Town Administrator: Ken Folsom

Others Present: Kal McKay (Admin Assistant), Ben Davis

1. Call to Order
 - a. The meeting was called to order at 5:02 p.m.
2. Scott made a motion to sign the 2025 Tax Warrant. Beth seconded. All in favor by roll call, motion carried.
3. Transfer Station
 - a. Scott opened the budget discussion with a question of the others on their thoughts on the Aries report on cost options for the existing Transfer Station.
 - b. Beth feels that option 2 on table 1, which is to install a stand-alone compactor away from the existing building would be the best option. This would allow traffic to move more efficiently. We would also have to build a canopy and shelter/office at the site. She also feels that we should provide better bathroom facilities. She spoke with a company that provides office trailers and they have a 2-station trailer with a clean water tank and holding tank for septic for \$38,000. The cost option from Aries listed this at \$57,000 and \$30,000 for a well and septic system. She feels that the well and septic are not needed. We could have the current porta-potty provider pump the tank on the trailer and get non-potable water brought in by Highway or Fire dept.
 - c. Both Scott and Calvin also agree that a well and septic is not needed. They are both not sure about spending \$38,000 on a bathroom for a facility that only operates 20 hours per week. Beth will investigate leasing instead of purchasing.
 - d. Calvin feels that we should invest in a new or used packer truck. Scott agreed and the consensus was to also get costs for an electric hydraulic pump, so the truck didn't have to idle all day during operations.
 - e. Ken will talk to the Road Agent about the expected life of the current packer to determine if a new or used one should be purchased in 2026 or 2027.
 - f. The Board also agreed that for short-term planning we should invest in a packer truck replacement and for long-term planning, take more time to investigate the compactor options. There are questions about the need for a building for a remote compactor vs installation of one where the current packer is and a truck to move and transport the compactor containers. Do we need to purchase one, or can we hire a private contractor or collaborate with a neighboring town?
 - g. Beth asked about the salt shed and wondered if we needed to do anything with that. The Aries report indicated that a new salt shed could be constructed west of the current building.
 - h. The existing salt shed is structurally ok. It is used for storage of recyclables during the summer, but we need to use it for salt in the winter.
 - i. This also led to discussion about the Highway Department Sand/Salt spreaders and how they are currently stored in the off season, which is on barrels behind the Highway Department garage. Ken reported that the previous Road Agent had solicited for estimates for a structure that would allow the spreaders to be hung and covered which would make it safer and easier to

put them on and off the trucks. It would also extend the life of the spreaders since they would be out of the weather when not being used. There were no responses to the requests for estimates.

- j. Ken will talk to the Road Agent about this and see if there are any records from the previous Road Agent on this.
- k. The Board also agreed that they should conduct a site visit at the Transfer Station with the Road Agent and the Transfer Station Manager to determine storage of recyclables.

4. Executive Session

- a. Scott made a motion at 5:58 p.m. to enter into Non-Public session as per RSA 91-A:3 II (a) to discuss a personnel matter. Beth seconded. All in favor by roll call, motion carried.
- b. Scott made a motion at 6:37 p.m. to exit the Non-Public session. Beth seconded. All in favor by roll call, motion carried.
- c. Scott made a motion to seal the minutes. Beth seconded. All in favor by roll call, motion carried.

5. The Selectboard discussed the meeting schedule from now until Town Meeting in March.

6. Healthcare

- a. Ken and Kal presented the health insurance quotes provided by CGI Business Solutions, SchoolCare, HealthTrust, and Cross.
- b. CGI and Cross are the only ones that would allow the Town to continue to offer Harvard Pilgrim. Continuity in the plan would reduce disruption for employees.
- c. However, CGI and Cross only offer age-banded plans. This means that the older an employee is, the more their monthly premium would be. This is legal, but amounts to age discrimination. For the youngest employees this could reduce their premium by a couple hundred per month, but the oldest employees could see their rates double. Kal explained that age-banding would also present an administrative burden because the rates would change every time an employee or dependent had a birthday.
- d. The Selectboard agreed to eliminate the plans from CGI and Cross.
- e. SchoolCare is who the Town currently uses. Their rates for the next 6 month period are the lowest, but starting in July the rates jump and they will force us to switch to a July-June fiscal year renewal instead of the calendar year we have been doing. Since we budget on a calendar year, this would make budgeting very difficult.
- f. There was discussion about the special assessment that SchoolCare did. They seem to have avoided the problems that led to NHIT's collapse, but they are currently dependent on payment plans from members to pay premiums. The actuaries are experts and say this plan will work, but there is still risk.
- g. The Selectboard agreed to eliminate the plans from SchoolCare.
- h. HealthTrust means switching from Harvard Pilgrim to Anthem, but most physicians in the area accept both and the Town had been using HealthTrust/Anthem until this past year. When the Town switched to NHIT in 2025, it was purely for budgetary reasons. HealthTrust's service was always great.
- i. The Selectboard decided to offer 3 plans: \$0 Deductible, high-deductible with HRA, and high-deductible with HSA. They will leave the HSA contribution from the Town at \$1K.
- j. Kal explained the options for dental in 2026. Since the Selectboard decided to go with HealthTrust for health insurance, they have the option of keeping MetLife for dental or switching to HealthTrust for dental. The HealthTrust plans cost a couple dollars more, but the coverage for even the cheapest plan is significantly better.
- k. The Selectboard decided to offer options 3A (the cheapest) and 1S (the best) for employees to pick between.

7. 2026 Budget

- a. Ken reviewed notable lines in the latest draft 2026 budget.

- i. CPI is ~3% so all wages have a 4% COLA raise placeholder right now. Ken is still waiting on responses for the wage survey.
- ii. There will be 3 elections in 2026 so wages and supplies for those lines are up.
- iii. Ken will ask Sam why he boosted the postage budget by \$1K. The YTD spend doesn't yet show the cost of sending out the December tax bills.
- iv. The Payroll line in Personnel Administration is new because we use Checkmate now.
- v. Planning Board Secretary wages are up because meetings have been running longer and are more involved. Part of that has been the Hildreth Farm application and the Master Plan, so things may actually settle down a bit in 2026.
- vi. The Planning Board Professional Services line is down because we are now able to create escrow accounts to have applicants pay for engineering/legal consultations.
- vii. Planning Board Legal is up. All requests to the Town's counsel are still getting approved by Ken and questions that can be diverted to NHMA's legal team are being sent there.
- viii. The Land Use Administrator is still marked to get a 4% COLA raise, but the hours are down, so the budget line is down.
- ix. Heating fuel costs are up, but not as much as they could be since the Library should need less fuel this year with their new insulation.
- x. Municipal Building Alarms are up because Ken is trying to switch providers for that building to the same one used at the Sam Lake House.
- xi. The Janitor line is down because the position has been changed from salary to hourly and the new person is working fewer hours.
- xii. Ken will ask Primex why the liability and workers comp insurance is up so much.
- xiii. Chief Crotty will be coming in with a new step plan for PD wages.

- b. There was discussion about if a wash rack would help increase the life of the vehicles in Highway/Fire/Police. Concord Fire Dept. has a local business who lets them use their wash rack. Installing one would be difficult and expensive because you have to plumb for disposing of the dirty water. The Selectboard wasn't sure if this idea was feasible/economical.
- c. Ken continued reviewing notable lines.
 - i. The \$17K for the loader appears to be a mistake. The \$15K repairs were approved for this year, so it doesn't need to be budgeted for next year.
 - ii. Ken will ask John why the culvert budget was bumped up.
 - iii. Recycling services are overspent and the budget is up because the fees for construction debris went up without warning from \$102 per ton to \$132 per ton. This line is going to be broken out and rearranged since construction debris isn't really recycling.
 - iv. Co-op fee Ash Disposal is being renamed to MSW (Municipal Solid Waste). The cost is going up from \$95 per ton to \$100 plus a \$3.50 surcharge that the State will reimburse when invoiced.
 - v. CCPC budget has been reduced to \$1.
 - vi. We don't know the latest rate for Penacook Rescue Squad so a 7% placeholder was put in for now.
 - vii. We are switching from Belmont Rescue to Loudon Rescue. Same \$10K rate.
 - viii. The \$10K for 4th of July is a placeholder until the contract arrives.
 - ix. We don't know the fire engine bond numbers just yet, so \$50K was put as a placeholder.
 - x. 2026 is the last year for the Cruiser-Bridge-Command Car bond.
 - xi. The Backhoe Lease will be paid off in 2030.
- d. There was discussion about the Library wages increase.
 - i. The Library is budgeting an increase of \$29,892 to the wages (half of the increase to be covered by the trust funds). This is a range of 7% to 15.4% raises across the employees.

Rachel told Calvin that the Trustees are willing to continue funding their half of the wage increase indefinitely.

- ii. The Library's budget is created by the Library Trustees. The Selectboard can bring a lower bottom line number for the Library to Town Meeting, but the townspeople could vote to increase it from the floor. Whatever the bottom line budget ends up being, the Library Trustees would be in charge of how to spend that money.
- iii. Ken reviewed a budget comparison of Elkins with other libraries in similar NH towns. Elkin's operating budget is about 3-6 times more than the other towns.
- iv. Our library is more expensive than others, but it is also very active, and in the past the townspeople have decided the expense is worth it.
- e. With this draft, the bottom line is up 7.5% from last year.
- f. If the Selectboard decides to do a project for the Transfer Station, the warrant article to deposit money into the capital reserve funds will need to be adjusted.
- g. There was discussion about the Police Dept. vacancy.
 - i. The PD hasn't been fully staffed for quite some time. Could they function without this position and use the extra money to increase wages for those who remain?
 - ii. In 2016, the Sheriff's Dept. made recommendations about what coverage was needed for the Town and our Police Chiefs have been trying to staff to that level. Eliminating the 4th officer position would either require a reduction in hours or more OT.
 - iii. It would be the same tradeoff if the unfilled Highway and Transfer Station positions were eliminated.
- h. Kal will make a historical wage comparison so the Selectboard can see the context around the Library and Police wage increases and determine if those are appropriate.
- i. The Selectboard expressed concern over the high budget increase because they are expecting another hike from the School District next year.
- j. The Selectboard scheduled another work session on the 2026 budget for 11/24 at 10 a.m. at the Sam Lake House.

8. Adjournment

- a. Scott made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:12 p.m. Calvin seconded. All in favor by roll call, motion carried.

Next Meeting: 2025 November 24, 10 a.m. at the Sam Lake House – Working Session
 2025 December 1, 5:00 p.m. at the Meeting House – Regular Session

Minutes submitted by Kal McKay and Ken Folsom