

**TOWN OF NEWFIELDS SELECT BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY JUNE 26, 2025**

Select Board Present: Chairman Hoby Harmon, Mark Kasper & Catherine Tarnowski

Others Include: Betsy Coes, John Hayden and Police Chief Young

The Select Board reviewed and approved the following items:

Checks Dated	06/11/25:	School Tax Payment	\$493,267.88
Checks Dated	06/11/25:	Payroll Manifest	\$80,223.67
Checks Dated	06/20/25:	AP Manifest	\$59,786.77

Chair, Hoby Harmon called the meeting to order at 7:00pm

Betsy Coes Public Statement in Response to Allegations

Betsy Coes attended the meeting to address allegations made at the previous Select Board meeting by Todd Guerdat. Mr. Guerdat had claimed that Betsy responded to his advertisement seeking help on his farm under false pretenses.

Betsy stated that the account presented at the last meeting was both false and misleading. She has lived in town since 1988 and said there is no protocol or basis for the accusations made against her. She expressed that she was blindsided by Mr. Guerdat's remarks.

According to Betsy, she applied for the job in good faith. As someone who works at the University of New Hampshire and gives talks on farming-related topics, she saw the position as an opportunity to connect further with agricultural work. She also noted her extensive public service experience, having served a total of 18 years on the Select Board and five years in the state legislature, and emphasized that she knows better than to engage in any behavior that could be considered inappropriate.

She said she does not understand Mr. Guerdat's motivation for making such claims and believes his account was a misrepresentation. Betsy said they discussed hydroponics and hydroculture, and he even gave her a strawberry plant as she was leaving. At one point, Mr. Guerdat brought up a nearby farm. Betsy told him she was a member of the Zoning Board of Adjustment and could not discuss the matter further. That, she said, was the extent of the conversation.

She expressed disappointment over how the situation unfolded and felt it was unfair for Mr. Guerdat to present it in the way he did. Initially, she had hoped to find time to take the job, but given the circumstances, she had decided not to pursue it. While she said she would welcome an apology, she does not expect one.

Hoby addressed concerns about the perception that the Town holds an agenda against farmers and businesses, firmly stating that this is simply not true. He emphasized that the Town fully supports individuals and enterprises that comply with established ordinances and policies—regulations that have been thoroughly reviewed by the Planning Board, Select Board, Zoning Board of Adjustment, and Conservation Commission, and have been approved by Town voters.

He acknowledged that misrepresentations over the past few years have contributed to misunderstandings but made it clear that there are no hidden agendas or behind-the-scenes efforts working against anyone. Hoby reiterated the Town's commitment to supporting farmers and businesses that follow the proper procedures and expressed his intent to ensure residents understand that the Town is here to help—not hinder—those acting in good faith and in compliance. The Board considered the matter closed.

Water/Sewer Department Request for Permit Fee Waiver

John Hayden, the Water Commissioner, reported that the sewer plant has been in need of a new roof for some time, and funding for the project has already been budgeted. The roofing company handling the work notified the department that a permit would be required.

John consulted with Larry, the Town Building Inspector, who indicated that there is nothing in the project requiring inspection. As a result, the Water/Sewer Department formally requested a waiver of the permit fee. Larry confirmed he had no objection to granting the waiver.

Hoby made a motion to waive the permit fee, which was seconded by Mark. All were in favor and the motion carried.

Planning Board Updates

John Hayden provided updates from the recent Planning Board meeting. One item discussed was Shawn McGowan's preliminary, non-binding proposal to relocate a barn to Newfields in order to improve the performance of an associated solar array. The proposal involves no changes to the barn's size. The Planning Board is currently awaiting McGowan's decision on whether to proceed with a formal permit application or site plan review.

John also mentioned that the Planning Board discussed ongoing concerns about lighting at the Mobile station. Although a letter addressing the issue had not yet been sent, Glenn committed to follow up after the meeting. Additionally, John reported that work on the

Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is still in progress, with the Planning Board aiming to complete it as soon as possible.

Conservation Commission and Trail Access

Hoby also raised the topic of a landlocked parcel owned by the railroad that could present an opportunity for conservation and improved trail access. John said the parcel, though sizable, is not currently being considered for development by the railroad. Shawn McGowan had inquired about purchasing it but was informed that the railroad had no interest in selling.

John suggested that the parcel could potentially be combined with the nearby Earl Smith Wood lot, which features a connected network of trails. This could result in a valuable conservation area with protected public access. Hoby recommended to Mark that the Conservation Commission explore this idea further at their next meeting. Hoby noted that CSX is more receptive to follow-up discussions than the prior railroad company, Pan Am.

New Road Bridge Repairs and Railroad Tie Removal

Hoby provided an update on the New Road bridge repairs, noting that CSX is currently waiting for the State to submit an invoice before proceeding with the work. He has sent a follow-up email to prompt action on the matter.

In addition, Hoby plans to contact the appropriate parties again to request the removal of new railroad ties located along the properties of the Pawlencio and Lawrence residents. The ties have been a concern due to a noticeable diesel odor. Hoby will follow up on this issue later this week.

Main Street Safety Group Update

The Select Board discussed a recent meeting held by the Main Street Safety Group, where residents voiced concerns about speeding and overall safety on Main Street. Several residents would like the speed limit reduced on Main St. Police Chief Young recommended that a Select Board representative attend all future meetings with the State to answer their questions or concerns that may come up. Since Catherine initiated the discussions on this matter, Hoby motioned, seconded by Catherine, to appoint her as the Select Board representative to the Main Street Safety Group. All were in favor and the motion carried.

Mr. Pawlencio asked the Board not to forget the outskirts of Main Street. He already has issues entering/exiting his driveway due to the backup from Rt. 85/ Rt. 108 traffic light. Reducing traffic speed and adding stop signs will significantly impact him.

Police Chief Young will have Sue McKinnon send out an email to residents once he learns when the next meeting with the State will take place so Town residents may attend.

Nurture Nature Raffle Approval

Hoby provided background on Nurture & Nature's request to hold a raffle to raise funds for renovations at a new location. Nurture & Nature, which has served the Newfields' community for nearly 30 years, originally operated as a childcare center for Hutchinson Sealing plant employees before becoming a private entity. The center explored options to extend its lease or purchase its current property but was not viable for Hutchinson Sealing.

Recently, Nurture & Nature purchased a new location in Kensington—a former diner—which requires significant renovations to accommodate their operations. To help fund the rehab, the organization proposed a raffle, with prizes including a \$10,000 cash prize or a free year of childcare.

Hoby noted that the group had encountered difficulties navigating the State's raffle application process. Hoby motioned, seconded by Mark, to approve the raffle and agreed to develop a formal application process for similar future requests. All were in favor and the motion carried. The Board acknowledged the value Nurture & Nature provides to local families and expressed support for its continued success.

Town Hall Masonry Repair

Hoby and the Board discussed the urgent need for masonry repairs on the Town Hall building due to eroded mortar, water damage, and invasive ivy growth, all of which are compromising the structural integrity of the building.

A reputable mason from Exeter confirmed that while the building is extremely well-constructed, immediate repairs are essential to prevent further deterioration. Hoby did receive an estimate from him, but due to the expected cost, bids will be required. He showed the bids to the other Board members but did not mention the cost aloud.

The Board reviewed potential funding sources, including the Town Hall Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund of \$20k and other applicable budget line items. To meet procurement requirements, they agreed to solicit additional bids and proceed with the necessary repairs as soon as possible. The Board decided to place this maintenance before painting and refinishing the Town Hall Floors. Hoby motioned, seconded by Mark, to put the masonry out to bid. All were in favor and the motion carried.

Town Hall Painting and Flooring Projects

Hoby noted the bids that came in for the Town Hall for the painting and floor refinishing. Given the priority of the masonry maintenance and limited funds, the Board discussed the potential of dividing the Town Hall painting and flooring projects into smaller phases to better manage costs and preserve funds for future needs, such as furnace issues. They

emphasized the importance of prioritizing specific areas and approaching the work in stages.

To help offset expenses, the Board agreed to explore the possibility of accepting donations from residents. They discussed creating or utilizing a trust fund designated for Town Hall maintenance and improvements, allowing community members to contribute directly to the projects. Hobby will reach out to the Town Attorney to determine the legality of accepting donations.

Mark noted that Michael Sununu paid to replace the lighting in the Town Hall.

Town Hall Oil Bid

The Board reviewed the oil bids and found the Town's current supplier, Harry's Franconia Fuel, to be the lowest bid at \$2.589 a gallon. Hobby motioned, seconded by Catherine, to accept the bid. All were in favor and the motion carried.

Piscassic Cemetery Deeds

Hobby motioned, seconded by Mark, to approve and sign the cemetery deeds for Lot 167 to Andrew and Melanie Nichols and Lot 168 to Abrahamson Family Trust, both in the amount of \$1,000. All were in favor and the motion carried.

Intent to Cut

Hobby motioned, seconded by Mark, to approve Hutchinson Sealing's Notice of Intent to cut timber for Map 204, Lots 5,8,10 & 11. Hobby emphasized that he spoke with the facility, and this is only to cull trees. There will be no clear cutting. All were in favor and the motion carried.

NH Forest Fire Warden Appointment

Hobby motioned, seconded by Mark, to accept the appointment of Jeff Buxton as replacement for Ray Buxton as the NH Forest Fire Warden. All were in favor and the motion carried.

399 Piscassic Rd

Hobby mentioned that Brian, the Road Agent, will finish cleaning up the yard. The yard will then be mowed.

Badger Park

Hoby provided an update on Badger Park. Some pruning was completed over the past week, and Brian will finish the cleanup using his woodchipper. Louise Williams has given the Town permission to spread the resulting wood chips along the embankment on her property.

Hoby expressed interest in eventually removing the maple and ornamental cherry trees, as they are in poor condition. These trees would be replaced with new, healthier ones.

Hoby also noted that the rock with a commemorative plaque could be relocated to a more prominent location at the front of the park. Hoby added that the plaque on the bell should be bronzed and mounted in a more visible spot to enhance public appreciation and that Munch will handle some necessary repairs to the bell pavilion. After, the cleanup has been completed, the Board hopes that Veteran's would like to volunteer to maintain the area.

Water/Sewer Lien Documentation

Postponed until the Water Sewer department completes the necessary paperwork.

Police Cruiser Windshield Issue

One of the police cruisers was struck by a tree limb three years ago, and the windshield was replaced at that time. However, Police Chief Young now suspects there may be an underlying structural issue with the vehicle, as the windshield crack again and had to be replaced for a second time.

Primex Insurance Safety Survey

Hoby informed the Select Board that Primex Insurance will be conducting a safety survey of the Police and Fire Departments on August 14th. The purpose of the visit is to provide safety suggestions and analysis. It was noted that the survey will have no impact on the Town's existing insurance policy.

ARPA Filings Status

The ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) filings have been reviewed and are confirmed to be in good standing.

Upcoming Bid Solicitations

Recycling and refuse services will be put out to bid this fall, along with mowing and landscaping services, which have not been rebid since 2020.

Concerns Regarding NH Senate Bill 213

Catherine reported that the New Hampshire Senate Bill 213 could significantly restrict the speech of Town employees. The proposed legislation would make it a misdemeanor offense for public employees to engage in legal advocacy—even when sharing factual or educational information about candidates, ballot topics, policies, or procedures.

She noted that the bill creates a gray area that could limit the ability of Town employees to conduct routine business and engage in personal expression outside of work. This includes answering residents' questions or discussing issues in either an official or personal capacity.

Catherine strongly encouraged residents to contact their legislators and oppose the bill. She emphasized that it contradicts the principles of free speech and conflicts with existing RSA provisions that explicitly allow public employees to educate and inform the public as part of their official duties. She expressed concern over how far the bill has progressed, calling it "alarming."

Hoby added that this legislative session has seen a number of concerning bills, including proposals that shift zoning authority from the local to the State level and others that could negatively impact the retirement benefits of law enforcement officers and firefighters.

July Meeting Dates

The Select Board's next meetings will take place on the 8th and 22nd.

Prior Meeting Minutes

Hoby motioned, seconded by Catherine, to approve the 6/10 /25 meeting minutes as amended. All were in favor and the motion carried.

At 8:04pm, Hoby motioned, seconded by Mark, to adjourn. All were in favor and the motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Kisha Therrien