

SELECTMEN'S MEETING

Davis Public Library

August 10th, 2026

6PM

Meeting Minutes

Participants: Chairperson Terri LaRoche, Selectmen Dean Dorman, Town Administrator Michelle Pong, Selectmen Secretary Aisha Khan, Compliance Officer Harry Power, Town Clerk/Tax Collector Nancy McNeal, Deputy Tracie Gwynn.

Excused Absence: Jason Kovarik.

Guests: representative James gruber, Joe Traniello, Ray & Pixie Durand, Franz Haase, Herb Healy.

Meeting was called to order at 6 PM, followed by pledge of Allegiance.

o **Discussion with State Representative Gruber:**

- **State Legislative Impact:** Representative Gruber expressed concern that the state legislature is increasingly centralizing power and overriding local government control. While the state has cut taxes like the business enterprise tax, it has shifted significant costs to local governments.
- **State Funding Failures:** The state has stopped paying its promised 35% share of retirement benefits, costing local governments a billion dollars. State aid for education has not significantly increased since 1999, remaining around \$4,000 per student, while the New Hampshire Supreme Court has suggested it should be at least \$7,000.
- **Voucher Program:** A new voucher program, costing over \$50 million, is drawing funds from a shrinking pot. Stoddard specifically lost \$11,000 while \$106,000 was directed to vouchers. One speaker argued the program saves the town money and should be expanded, while the representative contended it now primarily benefits wealthy families already in private schools.
- **Mandated Caps:** The legislature passed a bill for a required spending cap for local governments and schools, seen as another attempt to remove local decision-making.
- **Zoning and Planning:** The board and representative shared concerns about the state overriding local zoning, citing examples like development on Class VI roads and large-scale projects like data centers proceeding without local input.

- **Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs):** Officials voiced concerns that new state "one size fits all" ADU rules strip local control, are problematic for small towns, and are being exploited by out-of-state buyers, straining services without providing intended housing benefits.
- **County Spending:** The board expressed frustration with rising county taxes. The representative explained this is partly due to the state cutting Medicaid, shifting nursing home costs to counties.
- **Tax Policy and Governance:**
 - Mr. Gruber discussed the rationale behind recent political positions and editorials, with some raising concerns about New Hampshire's tax structure disproportionately impacting property owners.
 - The system was described as working for wealthy residents and vacationers but not for regular residents, with rising housing costs making ownership inaccessible.
 - The political climate was noted, including the influence of Free Staters and rhetoric labeling taxes as "thievery," countered by the view that taxes are necessary for a civilized society.
- **Dog Licensing Communication Issue:**
 - A resident received conflicting information about dog licensing penalties from the representative and the town. The board emphasized the need for coordinated communication to avoid creating legal challenges. The representative apologized for the miscommunication.
- **Internal Town Business:**
 - **New Hires:** The board officially hired Oscar Sharp as the new Animal Control Officer and Rex Rodanas as the new Road Agent.
 - **Departmental Spending:** A question was raised about fire department purchases being charged to the select board's budget, prompting a planned discussion with the Fire Chief.
 - **Unlicensed Dogs:** The Town Clerk reported no new owners had come in to license their dogs. The new Animal Control Officer has started work, removing two owners from the list (one moved, one rehomed). Follow-up will continue.
- **Election Preparations:**
 - The town needs poll workers for the September 8 and November 3, 2026, elections. The town clerk has one Democratic appointee but needs another, plus two Republican appointees. According to RSA 658:2, if committees fail to appoint by July 15, the selectmen can. The elections will be at JFES from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.
- **Tax Collection and Delinquency:**
 - The town collected 94.52% of the \$2,630,533.83 warrant, with an outstanding balance of \$144,047.94.
 - A delinquent taxpayer (owing for 2022 and 2023) at risk of property deeding will be given a final offer to waive some interest in exchange for a formal payment plan.
- **Town Hall Water Issue:**

- The Town Hall and Gould House are experiencing a water outage as they share a well where the pump failed. A contractor was scheduled for August 11, 2026, to locate the correct, buried wellhead and move the new pump, which was mistakenly installed in the wrong wellhead.
- o **Building Permits and Code Enforcement:**
 - Building permits for a woodshed (Root property), a carport (Beall property), and a cold storage garage (Aten Road) were reviewed.
 - Code enforcement issues included a Whitney Roads property needing a new septic design, an unpermitted shed on Granite Lake, a bathhouse and shed on Sunset Terrace pending a state permit, and two retaining wall projects awaiting state guidance. A lot line issue for Stephen Rookies' shed permit was resolved.
- o **Waste Management Contract Discussion and Contingency Planning:**
 - **Jason joined the meeting by phone at 7:24 PM.**
 - The board debated renewing the Waste Management contract, which included a 12% price increase. Jason cited long-standing performance issues (attendant not checking stickers) and an economically unfeasible pricing model.
 - Despite anticipating public backlash and potential temporary closure of the transfer station, the board concluded declining the contract was the most fiscally responsible decision.
 - The Memorandum of Understanding with Waste Management remains in effect until August 14, 2026, after which the company has up to 14 days to remove equipment.
 - Interim plans include directing residents to Keene's facility (town to be billed \$3/bag), arranging for temporary 30-yard roll-off containers, and having the Transfer Station Committee develop a detailed operational plan.
 - The town needs certified attendants to operate the transfer station. The board approved paying for a resident, Ed, to attend a certification class on August 18, 2026.
 - A transparent PR message will be crafted to explain the short-term inconvenience and long-term benefits (cost savings, better service).
 - Temporary sites for roll-offs were discussed, with the "Road to Nowhere" being the primary option and the ball field being rejected.
 - **Terri motioned not to sign the existing Waste Management contract, Jason seconded, and motion was passed unanimously.**
 - **Terri motioned that we pay for Ed to become certified as a Transfer Station attendant. Jason seconded, and motion was passed unanimously.**
 - **Terri motioned to give Michelle permission to sign a temporary contract with the Keene Transfer Station. Jason seconded, and motion was passed unanimously.**
 - **Terri motioned to authorize Michelle to issue the RFP for transfer station services. Jason seconded, and motion passed unanimously.**

- **Terri motioned to allow the Transfer Station Committee, at his direction, to spend funds to have committee members or volunteers become certified, up to number of people. Jason seconded, and motion passed unanimously.**
- o **Budget and Operational Updates:**
 - Several budget line-item discrepancies were flagged for correction, including contract support, police gasoline, community kitchen funds, and a duplicate "Roads and Bridges Expendable Trust" line.
 - The Gould House well pump repair is scheduled for August 11; the mistakenly installed pump will be moved.
 - State policy no longer allows the town to install deer crossing signs on state roads.

Terri motioned that the board non-public session under RSA 91-A:3, II (b), (c) and (e) at 8:47 PM. Dean seconded the motion.

Terri motioned to back to public session at 9:07 PM. Dean seconded the motion.

Terri motioned to unseal the non-public session minutes. Dean seconded the motion.

Terri motioned to adjourn at 9:08 PM. Dean seconded the motion.

Respectfully submitted by Aisha Khan.

Terri LaRoche

Dean Dorman

Jason Kovarik

Date

