

TOWN OF WARNER



PO Box 265
Warner, New Hampshire 03278-0265
Telephone: (603) 456-2298 Fax: (603) 456-2297
Warnernh.gov administrator@warnernh.gov
selectboard@warnernh.gov

Select Board: Michael Smith, Chair
Faith Minton
Harry Seidel
Kathleen Frenette, Town Administrator

Select Board Meeting DRAFT Minutes

March 4, 2025 Tuesday 4:00 PM

Lower Meeting Room Warner Town Hall 5 E Main St

I. Open the Meeting and Roll Call

Harry Seidel called the meeting to order at 4:01 PM.

Present: Faith Minton, Harry Seidel, and Mike Smith (via Zoom)

Faith Minton made a motion seconded by Harry Seidel to include Mike Smith via Zoom. Motion passed unanimously.

II. Select Board Meeting Minutes: February 12, 2025 / February 18, 2025 / February 25, 2025

February 12, 2025

Pg. 3 adjournment time 12:45 PM

Harry Seidel made a motion seconded by Faith Minton to approve the February 12, 2025 Select Board meeting minutes as amended. Roll Call Vote Minton YES Seidel YES Smith YES

February 18, 2025

Pg. 1 line 37 strike collections insert collects

Pg. 1 lines 41 & 42 correct name of auditor

Faith Minton made a motion seconded by Harry Seidel to approve the February 18, 2025 Select Board meeting minutes as amended. Roll Call Vote Minton YES Seidel YES Smith YES

February 25, 2025

Faith Minton made a motion seconded by Harry Seidel to approve the February 25, 2025 Select Board meeting minutes as presented. Roll Call Vote Minton YES Seidel YES Smith YES

III. Moderator Ben Frost, Town Meeting: Order of Business / Speaker for Articles

Ben Frost via Zoom stated that he anticipates Michael Cutting Chairman of the Budget Committee to present the budget. He stated that he will be seeking the lead petitioner of the citizen petitions to speak to the petitions; Articles 6 and 7 by Jonathan Lord, Articles 8, 9 and 10 by James Gaffney and Article 11 by Kimberly Edlmann.

Warrant article 12 Speaker Michele Courser

Warrant articles 14 – 19 Speaker Tim Allen

Warrant article 22 Speaker Mike Smith

Warrant article 24 Speaker Ray Martin

Warrant article 26 Speaker Harry Seidel

Warrant article 13 Speaker Police Chief Chandler

Warrant articles 20 & 21 Speaker Fire Chief France

Warrant article 23 Speaker Mike Smith

Warrant article 25 Speaker Harry Seidel

Ed Mical stated that in years past the Emergency Management laptop has been used to project the various warrant articles and presentations. Kimberly Edlmann stated that typically the day before Town Meeting there is a dry run to ensure that presentations display properly. Ben Frost stated that Article 26 will be moved up on the agenda to be heard after the budget presentation. He advised the Select Board that he anticipates a

1 PowerPoint presentation from James Gaffney. Faith Minton will present the dedication. Harry Seidel stated
2 that the Select Board will take a few minutes to thank Faith Minton for her service as her term comes to an
3 end. Ed Mical, Mike Cutting and Ben Frost will coordinate the dry run for Wednesday morning.
4

5 **IV. Nicholas Edraos, Map 18, Lot 28 Jennifer Pletcher Owner, Speak to Abatement Denial**

6 Mr. Nicholas Edraos stated that the Town's assessor determined that he disturbed a portion of the property
7 that is in current use. He explained that the acre in question is a farm which is a permitted use in current use.
8 He stated that there was dumping site that has been there since the 1970's and a well that is on the verge of
9 collapsing. Mr. Edraos stated that taking all that into consideration they decided to clean up the area. He
10 informed the Select Board that he used an excavator to clean up the area of the dump site, the old well, the
11 barn foundation and the area previously used for farm animals. The area cleaned up now has a hoop house
12 for growing and the solar field. He stated that the solar array is strictly used for farm use. Mr. Edraos spoke
13 about the valuation of the LUCT. He explained that the property is in a conservation easement that prohibits
14 any development and the one acre in question is not worth \$80,000. He stressed that the land is serving
15 agricultural use only as a working farm.
16

17 Faith Minton explained that the Select Board agreed with the Assessor's recommendation. She stated that
18 there is a process and steps that need to be followed under RSA 76:16. She explained that the next step for
19 the taxpayer is to file an appeal with the Bureau of Land and Tax Appeals (BTLA) or the Superior Court.
20 Mr. Edraos feels that the assessor did not take into account that the land is a working farm. He does not
21 believe the Select Board has heard his side of the situation. Harry Seidel explained that the Select Board
22 relied on the professional opinion of the Assessor. He stressed that taxpayer did not provide a map of the area
23 to scale. Faith Minton reiterated that the next step is to appeal. Mr. Edraos stressed that the Select Board did
24 not have the full picture when they made their decision. He stated that the land was used as agricultural use
25 cleaned up and still is agricultural in use.
26

27 **V. Select Board New Business**

28 **1. Town Clerk/Tax Collector Combined Position Informational**

29 Harry Seidel explained that last year the Tax Collector resigned and at that time the Select Board discussed
30 combining the Town Clerk and Tax Collector departments. He stated that Town converted to new software
31 (Avitar) for both the Tax Collector's office and the Assessing Department. Faith Minton stated previous
32 Select Boards had considered this as well. She stated that last year the Select Board decided to wait a year
33 because there was not enough time. She stated that last summer Mike Smith expressed interest in researching
34 the idea. Faith Minton stated that she did a little research as well. Harry Seidel explained that the Town did
35 not purchase a component of the software that allows residents to pay online. Faith Minton explained that in
36 her research she found that communities that have combined their departments have done it in different
37 ways. She stated that the Select Board voted to ask the Town if they support combining the two departments.
38 She is hoping that this informational discussion will give information to the residents. She explained that she
39 looked at 13 communities. Those communities vary regarding the position of a deputy tax collector, salary
40 ranges and hours of operation.
41

42 Martha Bodnarik stated that the town should have been asked before the research was done. She explained
43 that when she moved to Warner years back she chose Warner because she wanted a small town so that she
44 could know her neighbors and know who was doing town business. She appreciates being able to come in to
45 town hall and speak to the Town Clerk and Tax Collector. She enjoys the small town approach and feels that
46 this would take away the small town approach. She stated that the Select Board is supposed to represent the
47 residents and they should talk to the resident to hear what they want.
48

49 Andy Bodnarik asked to hear from Mike Smith on his findings. Mike Smith stated that he would like to hear
50 more from the residents. Andy Bodnarik stated everyone came to hear the Select Board's basis for the

1 proposal. Mike Smith explained that he appreciates the small town feeling of Warner and he acknowledged
2 that times are changing and there are people who would like to pay online. He explained that in talking to
3 other communities he realized it very important that Warner starts moving in that direction to try to save time
4 for town personnel. He noted that the Town Clerk has started taking payments online for car registrations.
5 He stated that the cost savings will come down the road. He stated that it would reduce staff, salaries and
6 insurance costs. Mike Smith stated that it would be negligent not to look into this. He explained that his
7 position has wavered on the idea. Mike Smith stated that the warrant article is to ask the residents how they
8 feel. He stated that his main concern is that one person would be responsible to collect the base amount of
9 the town's revenue coming in. Harry Seidel asked if other communities require all payments be made online.
10 Mike Smith stated that the payment kiosk is another option for residents. He explained that the kiosk would
11 take payments for the tax collector, assessing and land use. Mike Smith reiterated that he has concerns that if
12 the departments are combined and something happens to the person running the department who would
13 collect the Town's revenue. Faith Minton stated that she found that other communities have a deputy tax
14 collector. Mike Smith stated that he has not been able to investigate the Tax Collector side. He was hoping to
15 bring this forward next year.
16

17 Andy Bodnarik stated that the Town only purchased a portion of software that is needed. He asked if anyone
18 asked the other towns who have combined the departments about the software they are using. He stated that
19 it sounds like Warner is jumping ahead without having all the detailed information that is needed to vote on
20 something like this. He is bothered that the Town is being asked to make this decision without adequate
21 information. Mike Smith explained that they did ask about the software used in other communities. He
22 explained that additional components can be added at any time. He wanted to make sure that if additional
23 software components are added that it is not a waste of taxpayer's money. Mike Smith stated that most of the
24 communities contacted utilize Avitar Software and Interware software for the Town Clerk. Andy Bodnarik
25 would like to hear more about the full ramifications of buying the actual software package and testing it out
26 fully before implementation. Mike Smith explained that clerks will still need to enter payments from the
27 kiosk but it allows that to be done when time allows and it is a convenience for the residents.
28

29 Rebecca Courser said that she would like to hear from the employees affected by this. She stated that this on
30 the paper ballot that does not give the residents to discuss it in open. She stated that she is not opposed to the
31 change. Michele Courser stated initially she was against the idea. She stated that after speaking to other
32 communities she understands why the departments have been combined. She explained that currently she
33 does not support the concept because there is no plan on how to implement it. Harry Seidel expressed his
34 concern that if this passes this year the Town is bound to implement it. He stated that his understanding was
35 that the Town Clerk understood that this could be a good direction for the town to move towards in the
36 future.
37

38 Ginger Marsh asked how many communities were contacted that have not combined the departments and
39 their reason for not combining the departments. Furthermore, she asked if the software and a plan is in place
40 if this passes. Mike Smith stated that the credit card machines have been purchased. He stated that he has
41 been looking at the office layouts. He has a work order in with Tim Allen to start doing some of that work
42 even if the departments are not combined in an effort to streamline functions. He reiterated that he had hoped
43 that it would be a warrant article that could be discussed at Town Meeting rather than a ballot question, but
44 he is confident that either way the Town can adapt.
45

46 Martha Mical asked for clarification on the cost to combine the departments. Harry Seidel explained that if it
47 passes it would be implemented and budgeted for in next year's budget. Trish Mitchell stated that she is
48 excited about the idea of combining the two position. She appreciates that there will be a backup person who
49 knows the job who could jump in if needed. She stated that she does not foresee losing the small town feel.

1 She does appreciate the future cost savings. Mike Smith explained that combining the positions ensures that
2 all payments are made in one place.
3

4 Martha Bodnarik asked for further explanation regarding how this would save time for town personnel. She
5 suggested that the Select Board could ask voters to vote the article down and discuss the proposal on
6 Wednesday at Town Meeting. She stated that it will not save money.
7

8 Elizabeth Labbe stated there are people online waiting to comment. Harry Seidel asked Elizabeth to read a
9 comment. Darcie Buskey suggested that the Town Clerk and Tax Collector be allowed to finish their current
10 terms since the residents voted for them in for three years.
11

12 Rebecca Courser spoke about the positions and the confidentiality that is associated with each position. She
13 spoke about the tax collector position being a position without benefits.
14

15 Kimberly Edelmann stated that she conducted a survey with all the tax collectors in the state asking only
16 those towns who have separate departments to respond. She collected data from over twenty communities
17 and that was given to Michael Smith. She stated there are seven tax collector's software companies, Avitar is
18 fairly popular throughout the state. She explained that Warner did not get the tax kiosk for online payments.
19 She stated that the salary of the Tax Collector was dropped 40% because it was thought that the Avitar
20 software was going to save so much time. Kimberly Edelman stressed that she is doing the same amount of
21 work as the previous Tax Collector. She explained that she is billing and collecting property taxes for 3,700
22 parcels plus timber tax and excavation tax and land use change taxes. She stated that it will take two years to
23 separate the departments. She stressed the Tax Collector and Town Clerk are two radically different jobs.
24 Kimberly Edelman stated that she had 361 people visit her office from June – September to pay bills.
25

26 Michele Courser stated that in the communities with a combined department there are long lines during tax
27 season because people will be renewing registrations and others will be in to pay taxes in one location.
28 Kimberly Edelmann stated that some towns with combined departments put off taxes when there is an
29 election because they cannot do both at the same time. She stressed that will affect cash flow. Mike Smith
30 stated that residents versus parcels is crucial to know how many dogs and vehicles will be registered.
31

32 Sara McNeil announced that tonight at 7:00 PM is candidate night and she encouraged people to attend and
33 ask the Select Board and Budget Committee candidates for their position on combining the Town Clerk and
34 Tax Collector into one department.
35

36 Harry Seidel explained that he still on the fence, because the difference in the positions relating to the public
37 and private aspects of the job. He stated that if this passes the Town is bound and it does not seem as though
38 all the players are on board. Mike Smith stated that it is allowing the voters to be heard. He stated that it can
39 still be discussed on Wednesday. Faith Minton believes it would have been beneficial to have this
40 information session a few months ago.
41

42 Martha Bodnarik reiterated that an informational meeting should have been held during the evening when
43 more working residents can attend. She stated that too many people have been cut out of the process. Faith
44 Minton agreed that the voters will make the decision. Martha Mical suggested using the blinking sign to ask
45 the voters to vote no on the question of whether the Select Board felt more investigation is needed. Mike
46 Smith stated that the Select Board has previously voted in favor of putting the questions to the voters.
47
48
49
50

1 2. Northeast Resource Recovery Association (NRRA): NH Beautification Grant and
2 Other Grant Opportunities

3 Faith Minton stated that the NH the Beautiful Inc. is a nonprofit charitable trust funded by members of the
4 NH Beverage association. They offer municipal recycling grants, signs, anti-litter programs and technical
5 assistance to recycle programs. She explained that the grants are for things such as equipment. Mike Smith
6 stated that the Town should jump on this as soon as possible. He would like to have something put together
7 by the end of March so that they can apply for the April grant. He explained that there is money available to
8 meet the 50% requirement. Mike Smith stated that he will take charge of this and get this moving forward.
9

10 **VI. Select Board Continued Business**

11 1. Discuss Ideas to Use the Encore Energy Renewal “Good Neighbor” donation

12 The Select Board discussed how to use the \$20,000 donation from Encore Energy. Ed Mical stated that the
13 two Welcome to Warner signs need updating. The Select Board will review the pricing information
14 previously provided.
15

16 2. Blue Moon Berry Farm Conservation Easement Signature Page Names

17 Harry Seidel and Mike Smith agreed to sign the easement moving forward.
18

19 **VII. Town Administrator Report**

20 None

21 **VIII. Consent Agenda**

22 None

23 **IX. Manifest**

24 Faith Minton read the previously signed manifest.

25 **Faith Minton made a motion seconded by Mike Smith to approve the manifest as read. Roll Call Vote**
26 **Minton YES Seidel YES Smith YES**
27

28 **X. Public Comment**

29 Ed Mical thanked Faith for her dedication as a Select Board member for the last year and eight months. He
30 acknowledged the challenges that members face. Mike Smith thanked Faith for volunteering her time to
31 serve the Town of Warner. Faith Minton stated that she is glad she did it. She appreciates the town employees
32 for all their hard work.
33

34 **XI. Select Board Other Business**

35 Harry Seidel stated that the Planning Board is working on the housing chapter of the Master Plan and only
36 the Library has submitted their thoughts/comments. The Select Board agreed to submit something.

37 Harry Seidel spoke about the NH Saves Button Up program. He stated that Energy Committee would like to
38 host a workshop in Warner on April 24th at Town Hall.
39

40 **XII. Non-Public Session** (if needed, RSA 91-A:3 II (a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,I,j,k,l,m))

41 None
42

43 **XIII. Adjournment**

44 **Faith Minton made a motion seconded by Harry Seidel to adjourn the Select Board meeting.**
45 **Roll Call Vote Minton YES Seidel YES Smith YES**
46

47 The meeting adjourned at 6:02 PM
48

49 Respectfully submitted by Tracy Doherty

50 Edited by Darcie Buskey, Assistant Clerk