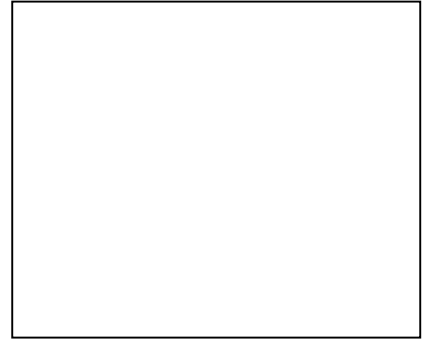


**Town of Fairhaven  
Board of Public Works Meeting  
February 26, 2024**



**Present**

Brian Wotton, Commissioner  
Robert Hobson, Commissioner  
Anne Morton Smith, Commissioner  
Daniel Lopes, Commissioner  
Travis Rapoza, Commissioner  
Vincent Furtado, BPW Superintendent  
Rebecca Vento, Office Manager  
Joshua Crabb, Highway Superintendent  
Anne Carreiro, Town Accountant  
Cheryl Almeida, Resident  
Robert McConnell, Resident  
Ken Blanchard, Resident  
Steve Martin, Resident  
Brian Messier, Resident  
Doug Brady, Resident  
Carolyn Lopes, Resident  
Christina Lopes, Resident  
Cameron Durant, Resident  
Jessica Fidalgo, Resident  
Paul Andrews, Resident

**I. Call to Order**

Mr. Wotton called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m.

**II. Routine Matters**

**A. Signing of Departmental Bills**

**III. Approval of Minutes**

**A. February 12, 2024**

Mr. Hobson motioned to approve the minutes of February 12, 2024. Ms. Smith seconded. Rollcall Vote: Mr. Wotton, Mr. Hobson, Ms. Smith, Mr. Lopes and Mr. Rapoza in favor.

**B. February 12, 2024 – Executive Session B**

Mr. Hobson motioned to approve the minutes of February 12, 2024 – Executive Session B. Ms. Smith seconded. Rollcall Vote: Mr. Wotton, Mr. Hobson, Ms. Smith, Mr. Lopes and Mr. Rapoza in favor.

Mr. Furtado – We are not going to go into Executive Session tonight and we have not received EL Harvey’s Agreement back from Town Counsel so we can skip right down to Item for Action C Trash Fees.

**Town of Fairhaven  
Board of Public Works Meeting  
February 26, 2024**

**IV. Executive Session A**

- A. To discuss the reputation, character, physical condition or mental health, rather than professional competence, of an individual, or to discuss the discipline or dismissal of, or complaints or charges brought against, a public officer, employee, staff member or individual (Sewer Superintendent)**

**V. Appointments**

- A. n/a**

**VI. Item for Action**

- A. Sewer Superintendent Evaluation**
- B. EL Harvey Trash & Recycle Agreement**
- C. Trash Fees**

Mr. Wotton – At the last meeting we received notification from the Town Administrator and the Town Attorney requesting that the Board of Public Works assess a trash fee to the tax base. Tonight, we have Anne Carreiro who is the Town Accountant here to present us with the FY25 Budget Deficit Analysis Report so we can get a better understanding of where we're coming from and what we're looking for. Since we have a lot of residents on Zoom and in the room for this discussion once Ms. Carreiro is done with her presentation I will open it up to the Board Members first, then to anyone that is in the room and lastly anyone on Zoom that wish to speak.

Ms. Carreiro presented the FY25 Budget Deficit Analysis Report. (Attachment A)

Mr. Hobson – I do not want to see anyone laid off. I do not think that \$25 four times a year to collect rubbish is bad.

Ms. Smith – I am with Mr. Hobson, I do not think that \$25 a quarter is a lot to ask to make sure that we can fully support our Police Department, Fire Department, the BPW and the School Department. I appreciate all the information that you presented because FinCom and Select Board meetings are really hard to follow.

Mr. Lopes - I do not think any of us want to see anybody laid off. It's hard to get people and it is even harder to keep them. Just some clarification if you could, I know we have lost some revenue from SEMASS, but for the folks that are watching, in the past the trash and recycling contracts has been paid by the general fund, correct?

Ms. Carreiro - Yes, and that's what we are discussing tonight is the general fund.

**Town of Fairhaven  
Board of Public Works Meeting  
February 26, 2024**

Mr. Lopes – The fee that you are looking to impose would completely cover the expense of the contracts for the year?

Ms. Carreiro – No, the contracts for the year are \$1,030,000 and that is a huge amount for the residents to absorb. We are looking to just decrease the deficit at this time.

Mr. Lopes – Would the goal be to work up to completely cover the cost of the contract year after year?

Ms. Carreiro – I am not sure at this time. We are looking at other options to bring in revenue to the Town. At this time, we are asking for \$700,000 of the \$1,030,000. We are also, looking at new growth for the Town which is really important.

Mr. Rapoza - I do have a couple of questions. My first question is what was the expected revenue if the 2.5% override had passed? What did we lose by not doing that?

Ms. Carreiro - You lost \$450,000 in FY24. However, I do believe it was more than that. We had a very qualified consultant come in to help us. He was thinking that we were on the same wavelength as the town that he works in where he has requested a \$450,000 override 3 years in a row, and received it. I think that he had that feeling that we would be able to go that way also and we weren't able to have it pass. I believe that the deficit was higher last year and we chose to go with a \$450,000 deficit.

Mr. Rapoza – Just to be clear even if the 2.5% override had passed, we would still find ourselves in a deficit now, because it would not cover the expenses that we've gone up from last year.

Ms. Carreiro - We had a \$450,000 deficit last year and right now, we're sitting at \$2,170,000.

Mr. Rapoza – Even if the 2.5% override passed would we still be looking at assessing other fees like a trash fee?

Ms. Carreiro – Yes, I think that we would have been looking assessing a trash fee.

Mr. Rapoza – Is there any precedent from neighboring communities that assess trash fees to make up on budget deficits.

Ms. Carreiro – The Town of Dartmouth, Freetown, Lakeville, Dighton and Bridgewater all have trash fees.

Mr. Rapoza - My last question is, in your experience if we don't assess any sort of fee or try to make up this budget deficit what are the biggest harms that will come to the Town?

Ms. Carreiro presented the cuts to the Town (Attachment B).

**Town of Fairhaven  
Board of Public Works Meeting  
February 26, 2024**

Ms. Carreiro - Without the trash fee revenue, the School Department will have a \$617,000 cut, the Police Department will have a \$210,000 cut, Fire Department will have a \$180,000 cut and the BPW will have a \$166,000 cut. The other smaller departments will receive cuts also. I have never been before this Board in over 20 years and if I did not believe in this I would not be here tonight.

Mr. Wotton – At this time we will take questions from anyone that is here in the room.

Mr. Carrerio answered questions that the residents had regarding the presentations.

Ms. Almeida - I heard about cuts but what has the Town actually cut right now?

Ms. Carreiro - We have sat down with each department and reviewed their budgets and made cuts to their operating expenses. At this time, we have not cut any salaries.

Ms. Almeida - There are many residents in Town that are not able to handle the increase in taxes and that's why they voted the override down.

Ms. Carreiro – I am not referring to layoffs I am referring to cutting services to the residents. If there are layoffs then there are less services that we can offer.

Mr. McConnell - I voted today and they mentioned that starting on Saturday the poll will be open for a whole week for early voting. How many people are actually vote early? I feel like this is wasted resources.

Ms. Carreiro – That is the mandate from the State for the extended poll.

Mr. McConnell – Have the legal fees gone up? I read that the legal fees have gone up at an exponential rate.

Ms. Carreiro - Yes, we are reviewing that at this time. Even if the legal fees did not go up it still wouldn't have covered a 2.1-million-dollar deficit.

Mr. Blanchard – What has the town done to close the deficit?

Ms. Carreiro – As I mentioned earlier, we are looking into 40R which is, when you do a mixed use that you will be able to use commercial buildings and have condos or rental property above them. I've seen it done in Hingham.

Mr. Blanchard – Are you trying to close the \$400,00 deficit that exists with forward thinking growth?

Ms. Carreiro – No, I have my own list of \$800,000 cuts that I am doing right now, with the \$700,000 in trash fees that will bring us down to a deficit of \$670,000 that I feel that we can absorb opposed to \$1,400,000.

**Town of Fairhaven  
Board of Public Works Meeting  
February 26, 2024**

Mr. Blanchard – I understand that \$100 does not sound like a lot but it is still a bite to some people.

Mr. Martin - I came from Freetown and the bag situation is a mess and we do not want to go down that road.

Mr. Messier – So we talked earlier about how the \$400,000 override did not pass. I understand that we are now looking for \$700,000 that could potentially be revenue from a trash fee. So that is almost double what the tax payers already said no to. Where does this stop? I am confident that this is just the beginning of the Town telling the tax payers that they need more money. We also talked about how the legal fees have gone up 94%. Since the override failed what has physically been done to reduce the budget in the last 8 months? What is the actual number to date right now that the town has to close the budget gap?

Ms. Carreiro - I have a list going of what needs to be cut and it is about \$800,000. As it looks now it looks like there are huge increases but I am trying to make cuts.

Mr. Messier – Are you combining the \$800,000 plus the requesting \$700,000 to close the budget gap?

Ms. Carreiro – Correct, there is a \$2,170,000 deficit

Mr. Messier – Why was it 1.4 or 1.6 million dollars the other night at FinCom? What changed?

Mr. Wotton – I think they were anticipating the Board implementing the \$100 trash fee.

Mr. Messier- I think \$700,000 on the backs of the taxpayers before you've made all the possible cuts that can make is premature. I am opposed to it as it stands, I think there are alternatives that the Boards need to look at while you make those cuts on paper.

Ms. Carreiro - Those cuts will never equal 2.1 million dollars.

Mr. Brady – Can this Board implement a trash fee or does it have to go to Town Meeting?

Mr. Wotton - The Trash Fee Bylaw was actually introduced 30 something years ago and the dollar amount has stayed at 0 since it was implemented on the tax levy.

Mr. Brady - Can you put a restriction of time length on it? You will do it for one year, come back next year and reevaluate. When we're talking about all this growth that we're trying to do since we don't have the actual hard numbers.

Mr. Wotton – My understanding is that it is a one-time \$100 fee, but I could be wrong.

Ms. Smith – Is this a fee that we would need to address and renew annually?

Mr. Wotton - I believe it would be based on the motion that is put on the floor.

**Town of Fairhaven  
Board of Public Works Meeting  
February 26, 2024**

Ms. Carolyn Lopes – Some residents have more than one trash bin. Would they be charged for each bin?

Mr. Wotton – It would be based on the 7000 residents that have the bins. Multi families would be assessed a \$25 fee per unit. If they have two trash bins they would pay \$200 per year.

Mr. Durant – The residents and the taxpayers in the Town of Fairhaven are in the bottom 90% of residents whose income goes towards their property tax in the Commonwealth. We're all feeling the pinch but we just need to make the determination about whether we are going to maintain the services at a level like our neighbors who are paying higher taxes, or we need to make determinations about whether services need to be cut or changed or affected, and that residents need to go with less services. There is no way around that. You know, we have a similar tax base as the Town of Dartmouth and they have an additional tax for their fire department on their bills. Also, Dartmouth has a much larger commercial tax base to help supplement their services but they have to pay \$90 per year as a trash fee plus bags.

Ms. Christina Lopes – I am opposed to the fee. I also, wanted to add that the average household median income for Fairhaven residents is averaging between \$76,000 and \$80,000. So, if you're thinking about a household of, say, 2 parents or 2 spouses they're obviously struggling already with their bills and with the taxes being raised. This is why I'm opposed to it, because people are already feeling the severity of their bills and having to cut back in so many different areas. I just wanted to advocate for the seniors that are here in town that are struggling right now.

Ms. Fidalgo – I know that the Board is getting a lot of attention and a lot thrown at them. I feel that we are looking for money to help with the deficit and to me the \$100 fee is worth the services.

Mr. Monroe – I wanted to thank Ms. Carreiro for the presentation and explaining why we are where we are.

Mr. Messier – Are full time residents going to be assessed the same fee as seasonal residents?

Mr. Wotton – The fee will be assessed to anyone with a blue bin.

Ms. Smith – I think that we also need to take into account income related / senior discounts with age and income perimeters.

Mr. Andrews – If I get rid of my bins can I opt out?

Mr. Furtado – Yes, there will be an opt out option.

Ms. Almeida – If we opt out would we still get recycle picked up?

Mr. Wotton - You would not be able to opt out of only trash. If you opt out the bins would be removed from the property.

**Town of Fairhaven  
Board of Public Works Meeting  
February 26, 2024**

Mr. Wotton motioned to table the discussion of Trash Fees until the next meeting. Mr. Lopes seconded. Rollcall Vote: Mr. Wotton, Ms. Smith, Mr. Lopes and Mr. Rapoza in favor. Mr. Hobson opposed. Vote passes 4-1.

Mr. Hobson motioned to take a brief recess at 7:52 p.m. Mr. Wotton seconded. Rollcall Vote: Mr. Wotton, Mr. Hobson, Ms. Smith, Mr. Lopes and Mr. Rapoza in favor.

Mr. Wotton reconvened the meeting at 8:19 p.m.

Mr. Rapoza left the meeting at 8:19 p.m.

**D. Methuen Construction Co., Inc, WPCF Upgrades Payment # 2 \$994,997.15**

Ms. Smith motioned to approve Methuen Construction Co., Inc, Payment # 2 in the amount of \$994,997.15 for WPCF Upgrades. Mr. Lopes seconded. Vote unanimous.

**E. Builders Risk Insurance Payment \$200,635.00**

Mr. Hobson motioned to approve Builders Risk Insurance Payment in the amount of \$200,635.00. Mr. Lopes seconded. Vote unanimous.

**VI. Table Matters**

**A. n/a**

**VII. Public Comments / Open Forum**

**VIII. Old Business / New Business**

**A. Superintendent**

**Superintendent Report for February 26, 2024**

- Treatment Plant Upgrade Meeting
- Snow event
- Attend Department Head Meeting
- Attend FY 25 budget meetings
- Attend Stormwater bylaw meeting
- Attend Bridge St Reconstruction Meeting

**Town of Fairhaven  
Board of Public Works Meeting  
February 26, 2024**

- Attend meeting with GPS vendor
- Chair monthly MRV Meeting
- Chair monthly BBAC Meeting
- Receive Green Light letter from Bond Counsel
- Wrapping up wireless meter installation project
- Cove St Water system upgrade meeting
- Force main bids reviewed and approved by engineer
- Water tank Maintenance bids are being scored
- Meet with Tree Warden - re logistics
- Reminder - office closed on February 28 - Town Professional Development Day
- Reminder - FY 25 Budget Presentation to Selectboard/Fincom on February 28<sup>th</sup> (changed from the original date of 29<sup>th</sup>)
- Send trash contract to Town Counsel for review/approval
- Livesey Skate Park to go to bid shortly

Mr. Furtado answered any questions that the Board had regarding the Superintendent Report.

**B. Board Members**

Mr. Wotton – Just following up with the illegal pumping on Bergeron Lane that I brought up at the last meeting.

Mr. Crabb- I have sent a letter the resident a letter.

**C. Marine Resources Committee – BPW Related Matters**

Mr. Hobson – We met but there was nothing that had to do with the BPW.

**D. Community Preservation Committee – BPW Relate Matters**

**IX. Set Date for the Next Meeting**

Mr. Lopes motioned to set the date for the next meeting on March 4, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. Mr. Hobson seconded. Vote unanimous



**Town of Fairhaven  
Board of Public Works Meeting  
February 26, 2024**

**X. Adjourn**

Mr. Hobson motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:28 p.m. Mr. Wotton seconded. Vote unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

*Rebecca L. Vento*

Rebecca Vento  
Office Manager

Minutes approved on March 18, 2024