

**TOWN OF ENFIELD  
ENFIELD SELECT BOARD  
MEETING MINUTES February 20, 2024**

**TIME: 6:00 PM**

**LOCATION: Public Works Facility & Teams videoconference  
74 Lockehaven Road, Enfield**

**PRESENT**

**Select Board:** Kate P. Stewart, John Kluge, Tracy Young, Alice Kennedy (via Teams)

**Select Board Excused:** Erik Russell

**Administrative Staff:** Alisa Bonnette, Assistant Town Manager; Whitney Banker, Recording Secretary

**Members of the Public:** Debbie Ford, Dave Beaufait, Sharon Beaufait, Madeleine Johnson, Thomas Lockitt, Thomas Claus, Dan Regan, Sue Gibson, Marty Gibson, Kurt Gotthardt, Dan Kiley, Joan Proulx, Mike Kirk, D. MacMeekin, Susan Brown

**CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. Stewart called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

**PUBLIC HEARING**

**Adoption of SB2 (Warrant article submitted by citizen petition)**

Ms. Stewart called the public hearing to order at 6:04 pm.

Ms. Stewart reminded those present that because the warrant article is by citizen petition, the Select Board (SB) cannot change the wording by law. She also reminded those present that there would be further discussion and deliberation at Town Meeting this year.

The presentation included an overview of SB2 and how the timing of meetings and votes differ from the existing Town Meeting format. Changing to the SB2 format would have a first session between the first and second Saturdays following the last Monday in January. This session would include a presentation and discussion, similar to the current Town Meeting format. However, there would not be any voting. The second session under SB2 would be held the second Tuesday in March, and all voting would happen by ballot at that session. Absentee ballots are still available under SB2, with a ballot request going through the Town Clerk. The timeline for SB2 moves ahead from the existing timeline; this includes petition warrant article submission deadlines, the budget hearing, warrant and budget postings, and final budgets and ballot questions printed in the Town Report.

The presentation also reviewed a default budget and how the default budget process would work if the operating budget were to fail under SB2.

Ms. Stewart invited those who wished to speak to comment.

Ms. Ford stated that she wished to give everyone the opportunity to vote.

Mr. Beaufait said that he has long opposed the SB2 procedure for voting, and after further discussion and seeing how things have been in town, he reluctantly supports it. He has concerns about the turnout for the first session under SB2 and noted that it only takes a few votes with a low attendance to turn an article

52 around from what most community members would like it to be. He said that he felt it was a good idea to  
53 help allow community members to vote who are unable to unwilling to attend the organized Town  
54 Meeting session as it currently stands. He stated his hope that SB2 could increase this turnout.

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56 Ms. Ford responded that while the School Board meetings appear to have low attendance when there are  
57 more significant matters to discuss, there is a large turnout. She stated that she believed it would be the  
58 same for Town Meeting deliberative session attendance when there are large projects in Enfield.

59  
60 Ms. Johnson said that she wondered about the reasons for changing from SB2 in the past to the current  
61 format. Ms. Ford said that she believed it was due to the low turnout for the business session of the Town  
62 Meeting. Mr. Kluge said that he also believed it was due to low turnout. He stated that he is also  
63 concerned about low turnout if the town switches to SB2. Ms. Stewart said that in NH, very few towns  
64 that have gone to SB2 have ever returned to the Town Meeting format, but Enfield is one of those towns.  
65 She stated that when that change happened, the internet and resources for information were less prevalent  
66 than they are now (with minutes recorded and posted, meetings recorded and posted, etc.).

67  
68 Mr. Lockitt asked, if SB2 is passed, is the rollback process the same to revert to the Town Meeting  
69 format, if community members are not happy with it. Ms. Stewart said that it could be either put forward  
70 from the SB or a petitioned warrant article.

71  
72 Mr. Beaufait said he believed it was a 3/5 majority vote to either switch to SB2 or back to Town Meeting  
73 format. He stated that he believed there was a second session of some sort needed to return to Town  
74 Meeting as well. Ms. Stewart said that both would require a public hearing.

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76 Mr. MacMeekin asked if there was a middle ground. He said the goal is to get people to vote even if they  
77 cannot make it, such as absentee ballots. Ms. Stewart said it is state law, and they cannot do this.

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79 Ms. Brown read a Thomas Jefferson quote, "Town Meeting is the wisest invention ever devised by the  
80 wit of man for the perfect exercise of self-government." She said she would like to see data that shows  
81 that having SB2 increases participation in the deliberative session and the number of community members  
82 voting on the articles. She said that she felt having the discussion and voting simultaneously is helpful for  
83 community discussion and participation. She stated she did not believe SB2 had improved this anywhere.

84  
85 Mr. Claus said that he was in favor of this warrant article to allow those who cannot attend the meeting  
86 the ability to vote – those who may not be local in the winter, who may have work, who may have illness,  
87 etc. are excluded from participating with the current format. He asked how the absentee ballot process  
88 would work. Ms. Stewart said that it is dictated by NH State Law, where a community member could go  
89 in person or email the Town Clerk and pick up the form in person or have it mailed. Ms. Bonnette said  
90 that an absentee ballot could be requested before the ballots arrive. Mr. Claus asked when the absentee  
91 ballot would need to be received to count. Ms. Bonnette said she did not know the exact time, but  
92 generally, it is hand-delivered the day before, and that mail is also checked at the end of the business day  
93 on election day. Ms. Stewart added that if the mail does not come in on that deadline, it will not count.

94  
95 Ms. Brown asked if the town would provide childcare for the current format and said that last year, the  
96 warrant was sent to everyone in town, and she felt this was helpful to inform those about it. Ms. Stewart  
97 said this would not relate to SB2 but could be discussed later during Public Comment.

98  
99 Mr. Regan said that he loves Town Meetings and enjoys community discussion. He said he was also  
100 intrigued by the possibility of more people voting with SB2. He said he would like to see the data if it  
101 shows that SB2 allows more community members to vote or not.

Mr. Regan stated that the default budget concerns him and allows those against the budget to just vote against it – which would kick the can down the road for things like the new building projects. He said he would like to hear thoughts from SB members. Ms. Stewart said that those expenses are included in the default budget in cases like the current budget, where the buildings were previously approved by vote at Town Meeting 2023. Ms. Johnson added that debt service would be part of the default budget.

Ms. Gibson asked is SB2 taking away Town Meeting? Ms. Stewart said that it changes to a deliberative session ahead of the ballot vote, and all items are voted on by ballot on Tuesday. Ms. Gibson asked if an absentee ballot was allowed for the Town Meeting and how it would change. Ms. Stewart clarified that no absentee ballots are currently allowed for the Saturday in-person Town Meeting session (all articles have to be voted on in person).

Mr. Gibson asked if the town has any data to support that going to SB2 will benefit the town for voter turnout. He said he would like to see this available if so. Ms. Stewart said the SB does not have data on this because it is a petitioned warrant article. She also said that data for other towns that have switched is available online, which she had looked at personally but had not compiled.

Ms. Beaufait said that one other difference she understands between SB2 and the Town Meeting format (and asked for clarification if needed) is the way the articles are presented, it is the full article presented to the voters – whereas SB2's deliberative session allows modification to the articles. She said this would make it so voters cannot debate the whole story. Ms. Stewart restated that at Town Meetings, they don't look at every article but only those required to be voted on at Town Meeting. Those articles on the paper ballot under the current format are not discussed at Town Meeting. The SB2 format allows discussion ahead of paper ballots, where the intent of articles can be changed (but not the subject of articles). Further discussion took place of recent examples among local school boards.

Ms. Kiley said that on Tuesday, when there are votes for SB members, there are usually about 300 votes, and there are never that many people attending town meetings.

Mr. Regan respectfully requested that each SB member share their point of view on the default budget and SB2. Mr. Kluge stated that he had previously spoken against SB2, as he believed in the historical value of town meetings. He said he truly believes that attending the Saturday meeting can change minds and help others understand the reasoning for certain votes. He said that he is concerned that a small percentage of community members could fine-tune and change the intent of articles while Town Meeting provides a more balanced approach. Mr. Young agreed that he felt the Saturday Town Meeting is very educational, and a great deal of discussion occurs at that session. He also stated that changing to SB2 would require presenting a default budget, which will naturally be less than the proposed budget. He said that the Budget Committee (BC) does a lot of work to present and prepare its budget and that the SB2 default budget could cause problems. He said he felt community members deserved the right to discuss this with their neighbors before voting. Ms. Stewart shared that as a child, she attended Town Meetings with her parents and came with them to specific committees, etc., so she feels Town Meetings can be helpful. She said that she had attempted to petition to go from SB2 to a Town Meeting when she was a member of the School Board and shared various reasons for her thinking at that time. Ms. Stewart said she now supports SB2 as she feels it is more inclusive and less likely to disenfranchise folks. She agreed that community members show up when significant articles and critical discussions occur. Ms. Stewart said that she would support what the town votes for either way. Ms. Kennedy echoed that she would also support what the town decides. Ms. Kennedy said her concerns are for those who cannot attend the deliberative session. Ms. Stewart said Mr. Russell is traveling for work and cannot participate in today's meeting. However, she will ask him for voting data that he has compiled to share.

Mr. Gotthardt shared data he had compiled going back to 1980, compared to the November national

election data. Enfield typically has a 70-80% turnout for November elections. For Tuesday's paper ballot elections, there is typically a 15-20% turnout. When the town did SB2 from 1997-2001, the Tuesday voting turnout was usually 25%. He did not have the deliberative session numbers. When the town returned to the traditional town meeting format, Tuesday voting remained at 15%, and Saturday voting was typically between 5-15%, often closer to 5% in most years. He said it appears that it's just a matter of choice, whether community members decide to vote or not vote.

Ms. Ford said that the town elects the SB members to do their jobs and felt that turnout is generally lower when things are going well. She said more people will show up when there seem to be problems that voters wish to correct.

Ms. Proulx asked, for voting for SB2, what the hours are compared to the Town Meeting. Ms. Stewart said it would be the same standard hours as the paper ballot voting, 8 am to 7 pm. Ms. Proulx said that after attending the last three meetings, people attended to vote for what they were interested in and then left. She said that she is hearing from community members that those who are very elderly are not going to attend the Town Meeting, and those who have to work and cannot afford to miss the pay cannot attend. She stated that the votes for these community members are being taken away. Ms. Stewart said that bringing chairs is allowed but agreed that doing so if very elderly was unlikely.

Mr. Beaufait commented that SB2 election absentee ballots have to be received via the mail before 5 pm the day of the election and that they have to be delivered in person the day before.

Mr. MacMeekin asked what the town could do to make the Town Meeting more comfortable or exciting. Ms. Stewart said this question had been asked for many years. She said that she brings her child, and that the town has also offered babysitting through a third party. Another option is using the Mascoma High School auditorium. However, that would require bussing citizens to the location, which would be necessary.

Ms. Stewart moved forward to online questions/comments.

Mr. Kirk thanked those who proposed the SB2. He respectfully said that he felt if Thomas Jefferson was living today, he would support SB2. He said things change and allowing as many people as possible to vote is essential. He said it was an opportunity for those to let their voices be heard and that he felt members were well-informed. He said, please give us an avenue for our voices to be heard.

Ms. Stewart asked for further questions/comments from those online. With none, she asked for further questions/comments from those in person who had not yet asked any. With none, she moved on to secondary questions for those who had already asked questions.

Mr. Lockitt asked how Town Meeting and SB2 work for those who have a second home in Enfield – do they have to be state residents or just property owners? Ms. Stewart said that to register to vote in NH, you must be a primary NH resident. Ms. Johnson added that there are requirements for being a NH resident. Ms. Stewart clarified that you can only be a resident who votes in a single location.

Mr. MacMeekin asked if the deliberative session would be online like the hearing is. Ms. Stewart said there would be no electronic participation/voting component unless NH changed this. There will be a video, but participation online to vote to change article wording is not allowed.

Mr. Gotthardt asked, if the town does vote to do SB2, where would the deliberative session be held? Ms. Stewart said this question could not be answered today because it needed to be voted on first. She said the SB is charged with providing a venue, which they would do.

Mr. Kiley said that he served on the school district's Budget Committee for six years, and the default budget was never chosen over the budget proposed by the committee. He said having SB2 does not appear to change the voter's understanding of the committee's work. Ms. Ford said there was only one time in the last ten years that she has been involved in a budget failure, which was the year after the renovation was passed.

Ms. Johnson said that she had asked Ms. Huntley about the number of absentee voters and shared the number of 1255 ballots cast, of which 81 were absentee in the January Primary. In the State Special Election in 2023, 658 ballots were cast, of which 50 were absentee. In the town election of officials in 2023 (paper ballot at town meeting), 385 ballots were cast, of which 60 were absentees.

Ms. Stewart asked for further questions. She also said the lead petitioner, Ms. Ford, could be asked questions. With no further comments or questions in person or online, Ms. Stewart closed the public hearing.

Ms. Stewart moved on to the next agenda item.

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES – February 6, 2024**

Mr. Young made a motion to approve the February 6, 2024, minutes as printed. Mr. Kluge seconded. Roll call vote unanimous in favor of the motion (4-0).

#### **BOARD REPORTS**

Ms. Stewart said the Conservation Commission (CC) did not meet in February.

Heritage Commission (HC)

Ms. Kennedy said that the Enfield Village Association (EVA) is looking forward to their next capital project and preparing for the Shaker 7 on June 23.

Planning Board (PB)

Tax Increment Finance District Advisory Committee (TIF)

Mr. Kluge said there were very exciting budget hearings, including a joint hearing with the SB by the Budget Committee (BC). He said that even those unhappy with the budget said the BC had done an excellent job and put together a good presentation. He said that some factors led to an increased budget, but he does think it is the best budget that can be put forth to allow the town to continue to do the things they have been and need to do. He said he did not think there was any way to cut the budget without damaging the town or its employees.

Capital Improvement Program (CIP)

Mr. Young said that the Energy Committee (EC) had not met.

Mr. Young said that the Municipal Facilities Advisory Committee (MFAC) had met to see the progress at Whitney Hall. The target for completion by the end of 2024 is still on target.

With no further comments or questions, Ms. Stewart moved on to the next agenda item.

**TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**

With Mr. Morris excused, Ms. Bonnette read the Town Manager's report Mr. Morris had prepared.

The Enfield Police Department is happy to announce hiring Frederico Mereno as a new uncertified police officer. Mr. Mereno began work on February 12 and will work through field training before attending the NH Police Officer Training Academy in June 2024. The hiring of a new police assistant is in the process of being finalized.

The Whitney Hall demolition and excavation are going well. Demolition of the Town Offices and Library is nearly complete, and structural demolition and stabilization are underway. Footings for the addition are expected to go in at the beginning of March. Mr. Morris thanked the Department of Public Works (DPW) for trucking soil from the site, which reduced the total cost of excavation for taxpayers.

The Public Safety Facility continues to work through the final budgeting phases to break ground in April or May.

Mr. Morris will add the Methodist Hill Property discussion to the March 4 meeting agenda.

The final demolition of the remaining Shedd Street building and property grading will occur this spring. After the town meeting, the town will finalize the RFP and prepare for the property sale.

The town has begun upgrading computer security systems to managed endpoint detection and response (MEDR).

The town has started migrating from Microsoft 365 to Microsoft 365 Government to ensure federal, state of NH, and police department compliance.

Ms. Stewart asked for any questions or comments on the Town Manager's report. With none, she moved on to the next agenda item.

**BUSINESS****Sewer Connection Request – Meadow Lane (McLaughlin)**

Mr. Young made a motion to approve Ed McLaughlin's to connect the property located at 18 Meadow Lane to the Enfield sewer collection system. Mr. Kluge seconded. Roll call vote unanimous in favor of the motion (4-0).

**Mascoma Lakeside Park Resignations (D. Smith, McMullan)**

Mr. Kluge made a motion to accept the resignations of Mr. Smith and Ms. McMullan from the Mascoma Lakeside Park Committee. Mr. Young seconded. Roll call vote unanimous in favor of the motion (4-0).

**Tax Increment Finance District Advisory Committee Resignation (Shapiro)**

Mr. Kluge made a motion to accept the resignation of Mr. Shapiro from the Tax Increment Finance District Advisory Committee (TIF). Mr. Young seconded. Roll call vote unanimous in favor of the motion (4-0).

**Tax Increment Finance District Advisory Committee Application (Ruel)**

Mr. Young made a motion to accept Ms. Ruel as a member of the Tax Increment Finance District Advisory Committee (TIF). Mr. Kluge seconded. Roll call vote unanimous in favor of the motion (4-0).

**ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS****Equalization Ratio Study**

Mr. Morris had received and shared with the board a memo from Mr. Bernaiche (contract assessor for the 2023 equalization ratio study). Mr. Bernaiche is available to discuss the findings of his analysis with the board.

SB members agreed by consensus that they would only have a further discussion once Mr. Bernaiche has something to report concerning the reassessment.

**OTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE SELECT BOARD****Public Comments**

Ms. Brown said that she respectfully requests that the SB ask the NH DOT to lower the speed limit on the Rail Trail between Lakeside Park and Pillsbury Street. She said many people are going through this area – the kindergarten class, hikers, skiers, snowshoers, etc. She said that the speed limit on Rail Trails in NH is 45mph, which could lead to a horrible accident. She asked the board to consider all those using the rail trail between Lakeside Park and Pillsbury Street daily and stated additional safety concerns. She said the NH DOT needed to consider lowering the speed limit through Enfield Village (from Lakeside Park to Pillsbury Street). She also stated concern about electric bicycle speeds.

Mr. Young asked why she would not suggest lowering the speed to the town lines. Ms. Brown said that she was not opposed to this but that there did not seem to be as many people outside the village. Mr. Young asked if the speed limit was posted anywhere. Ms. Brown said that it was not.

Mr. Young stated that the electric bicycles allowed on the rail trail are under 28 MPH. Ms. Gibson said that they are on the rail trail a lot and see the same types of rail trail traffic in the village area that Ms. Brown stated. She also stated that no speed limits are posted on the rail trail. Mr. Gibson added that there is very little traffic past Pillsbury St. He also stated concern for special awareness of trail users as an issue. He also said that if the speed limit were passed, it would be up to NH Fish & Game to enforce it. Mr. Young agreed it would not be enforceable.

Mr. Gotthardt asked for details of the 2023 Equalization Ratio Study. Ms. Bonnette provided a copy of the memo from Mr. Bernaiche, the contract assessor.

Mr. Lockitt asked what came about with the Johnston Drive property. Mr. Young said several SB questions were submitted to the Town Attorney. They expect the report in the next month or so, and there will be another public meeting to discuss those answers.

**Other Business**

Ms. Stewart reviewed some suggested edits to the SB letter for the town report with board members.

Members also reviewed edits to the dedication of the Town Report.

**Non-Public Session RSA 91-A:3 II (a) for Town Manager Annual Evaluation**

Mr. Kluge made a motion to enter nonpublic session at 8:55 pm pursuant to RSA 91-A:3 II (a) for the purposes of the Town Manager Annual Evaluation. Mr. Young seconded. Roll call vote unanimous in favor of the motion (4-0).

Mr. Kluge made a motion to exit the nonpublic session at 9:26 pm. Mr. Young seconded. Roll call vote unanimous in favor of the motion (4-0).

Ms. Stewart stated for the record that during the nonpublic session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3 II (a), no decisions were made other than to have another non-public session on March 4 and again on March 18.

**INFORMATIONAL ITEMS – NO ACTION REQUIRED**  
**2023 Equalization Ratio Study Memo & Report**

**Culvert Repair-Replacement Statutory Permit by Notification, File 2024-00101, Tax Map 12 (Piper)**

**NH DES Letter of Deficiency, File #2019-02333, ROW between 41 & 37 NH Route 4A, Map 18 Lot 34, 35 (Jewell)**

**NEXT MEETING**  
**Monday, March 4, 2024, 6 PM @ Public Works Facility**

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Kluge made a motion to adjourn at 7:52 pm. Mr. Young seconded. Roll call vote unanimous in favor of the motion (4-0).

The meeting was adjourned at 7:52 pm.

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Katherine D. P. Stewart, Chair

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Erik Russell, Vice-Chair

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John W. Kluge

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Alice Kennedy

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Tracy Young  
Enfield Select Board