

GOFFSTOWN SELECT BOARD
MINUTES TO MEETING OF JANUARY 20, 2026

In attendance were Chairman Peter Georgantas, Vice Chairman Mark Lemay, Selectman Jim Craig, Selectman Joshua Douglas, and Selectman Richard Manzo.

Also present were Town Administrator Derek Horne, Assistant Town Administrator Danielle Basora and Police Chief Eric Sereno.

Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance

6:00 p.m. Chairman Georgantas called the Goffstown Select Board Regular Meeting to order. He led the board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Acceptance/Correction Of Minutes

01/12/26 Public Minutes

The Board delayed approval of minutes.

Announcements

The Chair announced a reminder to residents interested in running for elected town or school district positions that the candidacy filing period opens Wednesday, January 21. Filings are received at the town clerk's office during regular business hours (Monday-Friday, 8:00 AM-4:00 PM). Any filings delivered after regular business hours will be receipt dated as the next regular business day. Candidates filing on the last day (Friday, January 30, 2026) must appear in person per RSA 669:13. The town clerk's office will remain open from 4:00 PM to 5:00 PM only on the last day of filing to accept declaration forms.

Select Board Review Of Citizen Submitted Petition Articles

The Chair clarified that tonight's meeting was for the Board of Selectmen to receive information from petitioners about their petition articles, not a public hearing. Discussion of the articles would take place at the deliberative session.

Petition Article Seeking to Raise the Income Limit for the Elderly Tax Exemption (RSA 72:39-a)

Town Administrator Horne explained that the lead petitioner had a scheduling conflict and could not attend. He presented the petition, which seeks to raise the income limit for the elderly tax exemption from the current levels (set in 2023) of \$42,500 if single and \$60,000 if married to \$47,000 if single and \$66,000 if combined income for two people. The petition noted that inflation into 2026 is about 10 percent, which is reflected in the revised numbers. The exemption amounts themselves would remain unchanged.

Town Administrator Horne clarified that the income limits had not been adjusted for three years, and the petitioners felt it was time for an adjustment.

Motion: Selectman Craig moved to recommend the article, Vice Chairman Lemay seconded. VOTE: 5-0-0. Motion carried unanimously.

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Petition Article Proposing Fund Balance Limitation

Petitioner Shanun Carey of 16 Gorham Pond Road presented the article, explaining that it would place a 10% limit on unassigned fund balance. She emphasized that her goal was not to criticize staff or the board but to explain why the article exists and clarify distinctions regarding fund balance.

Ms. Carey distributed handouts explaining that approximately 88% of Goffstown's general fund revenue comes from property taxes, with the remaining 12% coming from sources such as state aid, grants, fees, and licenses. She argued that the overwhelming driver of fund balance growth is property tax over-collection, making it accurate to say the fund balance is largely accumulated taxpayer money.

Ms. Carey presented a comparison showing actual unassigned fund balance versus a conservative 10% benchmark over the past decade. She emphasized that her proposal would not touch legally encumbered funds, only the assigned and unassigned fund balance, which are policy-level designations. She also provided information showing that many towns operate successfully with unassigned fund balance targets between 5% and 10%, while Goffstown's current target of 16% is higher than common practice.

Town Administrator Horne explained that the Government Finance Officers Association recommends having about two months' worth of operating cash (16.7%), and in 2022 the Board modified their fund balance policy to have a minimum unassigned fund balance of 12% (from 5%) with a target of 16% (from 8%) of general fund operating expenditures. He noted that the New Hampshire Municipal Association advised that this would not be a binding article because the authority to set fund balance policy is reserved for the Select Board under Department of Revenue Administration rules.

Concerns were raised about potential impacts to bond ratings, cash flow, and the ability to earn interest revenue if the fund balance were reduced. Town Administrator Horne also noted that Goffstown does not have a contingency fund, and about 25% of annual revenue comes from the meals and rooms tax, which is dependent on the state legislature and could be reduced after the town's budget process is complete.

There was discussion about potentially creating more capital reserve funds in the future to provide greater flexibility while reducing reliance on unassigned fund balance.

Motion: Selectman Douglas moved to not recommend the article. Selectman Craig seconded. VOTE: 4-1-0, with Vice Chairman Lemay opposed. Motion carried.

Petition Article Proposing Restriction on Retail Sales of Nonregulated Intoxicating Substances

Laurie Warnock from the Northern New England Poison Center presented on behalf of petitioner Tricia Bannon who had a medical emergency to attend. Ms. Warnock explained the effort to place restrictions on unregulated products including Kratom, hallucinogenic plants, and nitrous oxide (poppers). She described these as "over the counter but under the radar" substances that can have harmful effects, especially for adolescents and young adults.

Ms. Warnock noted that these products currently lack regulation for purity, labeling, content, and age restrictions. She explained that the regional effort aims to bring these products to the attention of the state legislature, whether towns adopt binding regulations or non-binding guidance.

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Police Chief Sereno stated that Goffstown has not been experiencing issues with Kratom in the community, and the police department and school resource officers were not aware of its presence. He compared it to past issues with synthetic marijuana (Spice) and bath salts.

Town Administrator Horne reported that the town attorney advised that state and federal laws preempt the town's ability to regulate these substances. He explained that New Hampshire is a home rule state, and there is no authority in state law for municipalities to regulate substances of this type. He suggested that if adopted, the article would not be enforceable and might better serve as an advisory message to state legislators.

Motion: Selectman Douglas moved to not recommend the article. Selectman Craig seconded. VOTE: 5-0-0. Motion carried unanimously.

Petition Article Proposing Restriction for Retail Access to Nonregulated and Intoxicating Cannabis or Marijuana Products

This article proposed restrictions on hemp-derived cannabis products that may contain THC or Delta-9, including age restrictions, packaging, labeling, and product testing requirements.

Police Chief Sereno noted that while he couldn't speak specifically to hemp-derived products in the community, he was aware of THC products being used in vape pens, with adults purchasing them for underage users. He mentioned that these products are coming from other states or communities.

Similar to the previous article, Town Administrator Horne advised that the town attorney's opinion was that this regulation would be preempted by state and federal law and would not be enforceable at the local level.

Motion: Selectman Douglas moved to not recommend the article. He expressed that he would support it if modified to be advisory at the deliberative session. Selectman Craig seconded. VOTE: 5-0-0. Motion carried unanimously.

Town Administrator's Report

Select Board Review and Recommendations on 2026 Annual Warrant

Town Administrator Horne presented the draft warrant and requested a Select Board recommendation on the proposed budget.

Motion: Selectman Douglas moved to recommend Article 9, the town's operating budget in the amount of \$27,519,425. Selectman Craig seconded. VOTE: 5-0-0. Motion carried unanimously.

Town Administrator Horne asked the Board to confirm their position on Article 16 regarding stipends, noting that the Budget Committee had voted 11-1-1 to not recommend it. The article, which had been proposed by the Select Board, was presented as a separate appropriation article. Vice Chairman Lemay expressed concern about the potential for the article to be defeated by the town, which would prevent the stipends from being reallocated back into the budget.

Motion: Selectman Douglas moved to recommend Article 16. Vice Chairman Lemay seconded. VOTE: 5-0-0. Motion carried unanimously.

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2026 Default Budget (MS-DTB Form)

Town Administrator Horne presented the 2026 default budget form in the amount of \$26,648,427, which would take effect if the town operating budget failed.

Motion: Selectman Craig moved to approve the default budget form in the amount of \$26,648,427. Selectman Douglas seconded. VOTE: 5-0-0. Motion carried unanimously.

2025 Budget Transfers

53rd Payroll

Town Administrator Horne explained that since the 53rd payroll fell on December 31st and January 1st, the Board had previously chosen to book this in 2025. He requested a transfer of funds into fire department, public works, parks and recreation, and library from the benefit line in the total amount of \$184,594.97.

Motion: Selectman Douglas moved to approve the budget transfer request for the reallocation of \$184,594.97 from Benefits line to the departmental wage, tax and retirement lines, as presented. Selectman Craig seconded. VOTE: 5-0-0. Motion carried unanimously.

Fire Car 2 Reclassification

Town Administrator Horne explained that at the December 8th meeting, the Board had approved the fire department to purchase a Car 2 replacement out of available funds in the fire department operating budget. However, due to unanticipated repairs, particularly the Tower pump fix that would not be reimbursed through insurance and overtime costs, they needed to reconsider the previous vote and transfer funds from the benefits line instead.

After discussion about potential alternatives, including using the Capital Reserve Fund, the Board decided to proceed with the transfer from the benefits line as recommended by staff.

Motion: Vice Chairman Lemay moved to reconsider the vote of December 22, 2025, for the budget transfer of \$85,500 from fire operations into CIP. Selectman Douglas seconded. VOTE: 5-0-0. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion: Vice Chairman Lemay moved to approve a budget transfer to reallocate \$85,500 from the insurance benefits line to the fire CIP vehicle line. Selectman Craig seconded. VOTE: 5-0-0. Motion carried unanimously.

Status Update – NHDES Removal of Hadley Falls Dam

Town Administrator Horne reported that NHDES has received authorization to use aquatic resource mitigation grant funds (approximately \$4.6 million) to remove the Hadley Falls Dam. However, these funds are limited to wetland mitigation and dam removal, not off-site improvements, despite the significant impact dam removal will have on the village.

A meeting has been scheduled for February 9th with Executive Councilor Stephen, the DES Commissioner, and local officials to discuss potential additional state assistance to mitigate the impact on the village. Board members expressed concern about the loss of the dam and its effect on community events like the Pumpkin Regatta, as well as the character of the village. Town Administrator Horne suggested that the Board use this opportunity to advocate for the state to go beyond just wetland mitigation and to consider the broader impact on the town.

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Non-Public Session RSA 91-A:3,II (a) employee compensation

7:13 p.m. Motion: Vice Chairman Lemay moved to enter non-public session under RSA 91-A:3, II for (a) employee compensation. Selectman Douglas seconded.

ROLL CALL VOTE: Vice Chairman Lemay-aye; Chairman Georgantas-aye; Selectman Craig-aye; Selectman Douglas-aye; and Selectman Manzo-aye. 5-0-0. Motion carried unanimously.

7:26 p.m. Motion: Vice Chairman Lemay moved to exit non-public session. Selectman Craig seconded. VOTE: 5-0-0. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion: Vice Chairman Lemay moved to seal the minutes of non-public session. Selectman Craig seconded. ROLL CALL VOTE: Vice Chairman Lemay-aye; Chairman Georgantas-aye; Selectman Craig-aye; Selectman Douglas-aye; and Selectman Manzo-aye. VOTE: 5-0-0. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion: Selectman Craig Lemay moved to approve an extension of other medical leave for a non-union employee, with healthcare, dental, life, and disability premiums, as applicable, being paid by the employee in accordance with Article IX, Sections 9 and 11 of the Town's Personnel Plan. Selectman Manzo seconded. VOTE: 5-0-0. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion: Vice Chairman Lemay moved to approve the Employee Status Report for end of temporary pay stipend for non-union employee. Selectman Craig seconded. VOTE: 5-0-0. Motion carried unanimously.

Adjournment

7:28 p.m. Motion: Selectman Manzo made a motion to adjourn. Selectman Craig seconded. VOTE: 5-0-0. The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 7:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Derek M Horne, Town Administrator (prepared with assistance of AI, ClerkMinutes.com)

These minutes are subject to approval by the Select Board.