

**Town of Benton
Select Board Meeting
Monday, January 19, 2026**

Select Board Members: William Darcy, Chair, Regina Elliott, and Philip Chicoine

Also Present: Dwight Swauger, Treasurer and School Board Chair; Mike Stiebitz, Town Clerk and Tax Collector; Joe Boutin, III, school board member and Planning Board Chair, and Daniel Chaput, property owner.

These draft minutes of the Town of Benton Select Board are believed to be accurate and correct, but they are subject to additions, deletions, and corrections by the Select Board at the next meeting when the Board votes its final approval of the minutes. These minutes are made available at this time to conform to the requirements of New Hampshire RSA 91-A:2.

Chairman Darcy called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM.

Member Chicoine moved approval of the January 5, 2026, minutes, seconded by Member Elliott, and the motion was approved.

Mr. Dan Chaput came to the meeting to respond to the letter the Board sent to him concerning the maintenance of a vehicle junkyard on his property. The Chair noted that the letter failed to mention that the Benton zoning regulations specifically prohibit junkyards. Mr. Chaput said it was not a junkyard. When it was pointed out that the property meets the definition of a junkyard in state statutes, he stated that the state statutes and Benton zoning regulations were not enforceable. He also claimed it was not a junkyard because the vehicles were all personal property and antique vehicles. He also stated that he didn't own any of the vehicles, they were all owned by the state because the title to the vehicles had the state's name on the top of the title document. He stated that he had planned to contract for a building to house the vehicles, but was having some contracting difficulties. He stated that when he is able, he would house the vehicles in tents. He stated that he did not own the property, that he was the property manager, and that a trust owned the property. When the Chair asked who the trustee was, he did not answer.

There was a discussion of the 2026 budget and warrant articles in preparation for the budget hearing. The Board made decisions to increase the prior year's budget as a result of this year's elections, to address increases in line items from last year, higher ambulance expenses, and to cover the legal costs of likely court actions to enforce zoning regulations. The Board agreed to use last year's estimated revenues for this year's budget.

The Board also discussed changes to the draft warrant articles concerning elected positions and their terms of office. The Board identified the need for a Moderator candidate.

The Board discussed the legislative efforts to reduce the advocacy of the New Hampshire Municipal Association and agreed to send letters to our representatives opposing those efforts.

There was a discussion of the draft School Board budget, which showed a significant reduction, largely due to a decline in expected student enrollment.

Treasurer Swauger reported \$398,816.70 in the Bar Harbor Bank & Trust operating account and \$246,989.40 in the NH PDIP account. The Treasurer submitted the checks for the Board's signature.

On the recommendation of the contract assessor, Avitar, the Board approved an adjustment to the property taxes of Jason Newton in the amount of \$525, plus interest.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.