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DRAFT
DURHAM TOWN COUNCIL
MONDAY, MAY 18, 2026
DURHAM TOWN HALL - COUNCIL CHAMBERS
7:00 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Joe Friedman, Councilor Jay Gooze, Councilor Jim Lawson, Councilor Carden Welsh, Chair Pro Tem Darrell Ford

MEMBERS ABSENT:, Councilor Emily Friedrichs (who uses the pronouns ze/zir/zirs/zirself and the title Mx. Friedrichs), Councilor Heather Grant, Councilor Michael Lehrman, Councilor Curtis Register

OTHERS PRESENT: Town Administrator Todd Selig

I. Call to Order

There were not enough Councilors present in person at the meeting for a quorum so the meeting was not called to order and Councilors could not take any action or votes. It was decided the meeting could proceed with agenda items that did not require a vote. On Zoom, Councilor Register decided to join the meeting in person with his son so there would be a quorum and timely votes could take place, and then leave early and continue on Zoom from home.

II. Town Council grants permission for fewer than a majority of Councilors to participate remotely - No action taken.

III. Roll Call of Members - No roll call was taken at this time.

Chair Friedman said the Council would proceed with Public Comment while waiting for Councilor Register to arrive.

VIII. Public Comment

William Hall, 3 Smith Park Lane, said two recent house fires in Madbury were started by a faulty circuit breaker. He displayed the type one of breaker that caused the fires, manufactured by Federal Pacific, and noted its red switch handle. He asked residents to look at their breaker boxes and if they find one, stressed it should be replaced.

Al Howland, state representative for Strafford District 20, updated the Council on matters in the State Legislature that could affect Durham. HB1010 gave the town the ability to say no to a site plan if the infrastructure required doesn't exist. HB1588 says the town is not allowed to add additional requirements to properties zoned commercial after July 1. It says the town could change the height setback, but it couldn't be any more than what already existed. He said it's going into a committee of conference, which resolves disagreements between the state House and Senate on bills. He said the challenge for the town will be in where it allows multi-unit housing, not the mixed-use housing. He said

1 the State Legislature is not making things easier for towns. The 79E Housing Opportunity
2 Zone changed so towns can set the criteria, and for new construction not just
3 rehabilitation. He said expanding the C-PACER program and private money will help
4 property owners with energy improvements and could help in new construction. He said
5 the good news is there is more flexibility and no deadline pressure.
6

7 Councilor Gooze said everything the town does to allow more housing in residential
8 neighborhoods will lead to more students renting, which changes the nature of the
9 neighborhood.
10

11 Rep. Howland said the legislature has put the town in a bad position and what it's doing
12 is very vague. He said at least Durham is not in the line of fire this year.
13

14 **XI. Presentation Items**

15 **A. Receive annual report on the Historic District Commission/Heritage Commission** 16 **activities and projects – Larry Brickner-Wood, Chair** 17

18 Chairman Larry Brickner-Wood thanked everyone for working respectfully with the
19 commission. He said the Bickford-Chesley House at Wagon Hill Farm is essentially
20 finished and looks great, and is something for the town to be proud of. He said they are
21 still working on the gallery and hanging an exhibit, but hopes to have an open house in
22 June. He said a tenant will move in upstairs on June 1. He thanked the Department of
23 Public Works, the contractors and the Oversight Team for their support of the project. He
24 said an historic marker will soon be posted on the Old Durham Town Hall. He said the
25 commission is working to post one historic marker per year and an entrance sign to the
26 Historic District. He said they are also working with homeowners within and outside the
27 District to post signs on their homes with the year they were built and who built them. He
28 said the commission has signed a Memorandum of Understanding to fulfill the Section
29 106 requirements for the Mill Pond Dam removal. Jerry Monkman, who he said is one of
30 the best filmmakers in New England, will make the required documentary. He said
31 commission members are participating in the search for a new planning director. He said
32 the draft of the Town Council goals for the year does not include anything about
33 historical and cultural preservation and asked that it be added to a final version, even if it
34 just picks up the vision statement in the Master Plan.
35
36

37 Councilor Welsh echoed his praise of the Bickford-Chesley House and the first exhibit to
38 be hung there. He said it's moving and shows how a lot of people in town were complicit
39 in slavery either intentionally or unintentionally. He said the town really depended on
40 slaves for a lot of what it had. He saluted Caroline Singer, who curated the exhibit.
41

42 Mr. Brickner-Wood praised Ms. Singer, too, and thanked her. He said the exhibit is filled
43 with tough stories, not designed to make people feel bad, but to document the historical
44 truth. He also recognized and thanked Charlotte Hitchcock, Janet Mackey and Nancy
45 Sandberg for their expertise and work.
46

1 Chair Friedman thanked him for his report.

2
3 Councilor Register arrived at the meeting at approximately 7:20 p.m. Chair Friedman
4 called the meeting to order at 7:25 p.m. He called for a roll call.

5
6 **III. Roll Call of Members**

7 Councilor Curtis Register, who also asked for permission to attend the meeting on Zoom
8 later, Councilor Carden Welsh, Councilor Jim Lawson, Chair Pro Tem Darrell Ford,
9 Chair Joe Friedman, Councilor Jay Gooze.

10
11 **II. Town Council grants permission for fewer than a majority of Councilors to
12 participate remotely**

13 Chair Friedman initiated a vote to give permission to Councilor Register to participate via
14 Zoom later in the evening. Councilor Gooze, Chair Friedman and Chair Pro Tem Darrell
15 Ford voted aye, before Administrator Selig pointed out that the law requires six
16 Councilors present in the room for a quorum and that when Councilor Register is on
17 Zoom later, there will not be a quorum and no votes can be taken. The voting was
18 discontinued since the Council will not be able to take any action when he is on Zoom
19 and will be in non-meeting format again. Councilor Register checked to make sure the
20 vote on the Tax Warrant will take place before he has to leave, and Chair Friedman
21 confirmed necessary votes would take place before he leaves.

22
23 Chair Friedman said the Council would proceed with the second presentation on the
24 agenda and then will take a vote on the Unanimous Consent Agenda.

25
26 **B. Receive annual report on Zoning Board activities – Neil Niman, Chair**

27 Chair Niman said business at the Zoning Board of Adjustment has been slow. In all of
28 2025, the ZBA heard 10 cases; normally it meets monthly, and it only met six to eight
29 times last year. This year so far, it has heard nine cases; two of them repeats. He said at
30 the last meeting they had five projects. He said the board is using AI to construct its
31 Finding of Fact and Notice of Decision documents, and said it is working well. He said
32 last fall the board decided to do a better job of articulating why and how it reaches its
33 decisions, especially in potentially controversial cases so if there is a lawsuit, the court
34 could clearly understand how the ZBA reached its decision. He said he reviews and edits
35 every one once it's composed, and its rationale and reasoning are clearer now and he
36 feels it is an accurate reflection of the ZBA conversation in writing. He invited
37 Councilors to look at some of the letters it has sent out using this process. Councilor
38 Register asked if it is a paid tool, and Administrator Selig said no, it's the free version,
39 the town hasn't subscribed to any AI program. Councilor Register said it is important to
40 track the company because not all are created equal and to make sure a human reviews
41 everything. Chair Niman said the ZBA has had the same members for five years and that
42 Micah Warnock would like to transition off, but can't because they don't have enough
43 people. He said at some meetings they are struggling to come up with five members and
44 challenged Town Councilors to reach out to former Councilors and others to join the
45 board. Councilors thanked him for his report.

46

1 **IV. Approval of Agenda**

2 Chair Friedman called a vote on the agenda. *He MOVED to approve the agenda with*
3 *changes as stated to accommodate when Councilor Register could be present.*
4 *Councilor Gooze SECONDED the motion. The motion PASSED on a unanimous roll*
5 *call vote of 6-0.*
6

7 **VI. Approval of Minutes - May 4, 2026**

8 *Chair Friedman MOVED to approve the minutes for the Town Council meeting of*
9 *May 4, 2026. Councilor Welsh SECONDED the motion.*

10 Councilor Gooze said there were several errors about his service to the town when he
11 was introduced at the last meeting, but he said the minutes reflect what was said in the
12 meeting so he didn't request any changes. He said he has been serving the town longer
13 than was stated in the meeting. Councilor Lawson asked about a point of order. He asked
14 if Councilor Ford abstains from this vote, would there still be a quorum and could the
15 Council vote to accept the minutes. Chair Friedman and the Town Administrator
16 confirmed it could.

17
18 *The minutes as amended were APPROVED on a unanimous roll call vote of 5-0.*

19 Councilor Ford abstained because he did not attend the May 4th meeting due to illness.
20

21 Chair Friedman said the Council would take up agenda items out of order so the Council
22 could vote on ones that require a vote while Councilor Register is at the meeting in
23 person and it has a quorum.
24

25 **IX. Unanimous Consent Agenda**

- 26 A. Shall the Durham Town Council authorize the Administrator to sign the Town of
27 Durham's first half 2026 Property Tax Warrant and direct the Tax Collector to collect
28 partial payment of property taxes assessed on April 1, 2026 in the amount of
29 \$20,486,670?
- 30 B. Shall the Town Council, upon recommendation of the Administrator, review and re-adopt
31 the Town's Investment Policy as required by New Hampshire Revised Statutes
32 Annotated (RSA) 41:9?
- 33 C. Shall the Town Council schedule a Public Hearing for Monday, June 1, 2026, on
34 **Resolution #2026-07** to accept and expend unanticipated grant funds totaling up to
35 \$25,000 From FY23 Federal Emergency Management Agency Assistance to Firefighters
36 Grant to be used as reimbursement to the Town of Durham for tuition and overtime
37 wages paid to Fire Department personnel to attend Blue Card Incident Command
38 Training Program?
39

40 Chair Friedman invited any proposed changes and there were none. *Chair Friedman*
41 *MOVED to accept the Unanimous Consent Agenda.* The motion didn't need a second.
42 *The motion PASSED on a unanimous roll call vote of 6-0.*
43

44 Chair Friedman said the Council would continue with the Public Comment period.
45

46 **VIII. Public Comment (continued)**

1 **William Hall, 3 Smith Park Lane**, reminded the Council that Councilor Lawson once
2 said that every student Durham houses is one less student on the market in Newmarket or
3 Dover, which does fulfill the purpose of lowering rental costs in surrounding towns and
4 creating more workforce housing. He also said Councilor Lawson at the end of last
5 meeting critiqued the management of the town, but it didn't go far enough because it
6 didn't address how we got here and how we get out of here. He said Councilor Welsh
7 noted when he came to the Council the town had hired three more positions. He said he
8 hopes the Council heeds what Andy Smith said during his report about the police survey
9 about the need for controlling scooters and other vehicles downtown.

10
11 **Julian Smith, 3 Chesley Drive**, thanked Administrator Selig, Department of Public
12 Works staff and VHB representatives for having a neighborhood meeting last week to
13 answer questions about the removal of the Mill Pond Dam and road closures. He said
14 only one Council member was there, Councilor Register. He said there were still a lot of
15 questions about timing and the detours, and hopes there will be an update.

16
17 **X. Citizen Committee Appointments**

- 18 A. Shall the Town Council, upon recommendation of the Agricultural Commission Chair,
19 appoint Samantha Register, 6 Rocky Lane, to an unexpired regular membership position
20 on the Agricultural Commission with a term expiration of 4/29?

21
22 Chair Friedman asked Councilor Gooze to make a motion to nominate Ms. Register.
23 **Councilor Gooze MOVED to appoint Ms. Register to the Agricultural Commission.**
24 **Councilor Lawson SECONDED the motion. The motion PASSED on a unanimous roll**
25 **call vote of 6-0.** Councilors thanked her for being willing to serve.

26
27 Councilor Register said at 7:54 p.m. that he has to leave the meeting, and he will join on
28 Zoom soon. **Councilor Register MOVED to adjourn the meeting. Councilor Lawson**
29 **SECONDED the motion. The motion PASSED on a unanimous roll call vote of 6-0.**

30
31 Administrator Selig said the remaining five Councilors can have an informal
32 conversation about the Council goals.

33
34 **XII. Unfinished Business**

35 **Continued Discussion on the Development of Town Council Goals for FY 2026/27**

36 Chair Friedman noted Councilors have a new draft of the goals compiled by
37 Administrator Selig, which incorporates items that were discussed at the last Council
38 meeting.

39
40 Councilors made language edits to the document such as Councilor Welsh suggesting the
41 words integrity and honesty in the core values goal are synonyms and that honesty should
42 be removed, to which Councilors agreed. They agreed with Councilor Lawson's
43 recommendation to drop "regional collaboration" in Goal 6, which seeks to increase
44 communication and educational opportunities with efforts such as annual presentations
45 and field trips to facilities like the wastewater treatment plant. They discussed the need
46 for Councilors to let the Town Administrator know what they need to learn more about,

1 how Council goals are by default Town Administrator's goals, and how they are shared
2 goals where town officials and staff actually do the heavy lifting of achieving the goal.

3
4 Councilors talked about the amount of work doing a comparative budget analysis with
5 other similar towns takes, how the town has limited resources, and proposed removing
6 that from the budget goal.

7
8 Councilors talked about the need to better explain to residents what's going on with the
9 town's budget, discussed a more broad-based presentation of the budget to the town such
10 as public forums, and the need to more graphically present budget numbers to help
11 identify trends. They talked about how hiring a new business manager is a good time to
12 set up a new format to use. They recommended deleting the references to Portsmouth in
13 the budget goals.

14
15 Councilors discussed revitalizing the community core, but maintaining the
16 neighborhoods, not really revitalizing them, and removing the word neighborhood from
17 the revitalization goal. They discussed Heritage and Historic District Commission Chair
18 Brickner-Wood's request to include some reference to historical and cultural preservation
19 in the goals.

20
21 Councilors discussed inclusivity and non-discrimination, and Administrator Selig listed
22 the town's efforts to edit language in town contracts and documents to be gender-neutral,
23 creating unisex bathrooms in town buildings except at the Fire Department, which has
24 limited facilities. He said it is difficult to be consistent and the effort continues through
25 the Human Rights Commission.

26
27 Councilors discussed encouraging collaboration with UNH in general, and the need for a
28 new fire station, for which the recent UNH Master Plan sees Lot B as a potential site, but
29 agreed nothing can be done for at least the next five years. They discussed how the Fire
30 Department has made good improvements at its current facility despite its limitations.

31
32 On intergovernmental awareness and collaboration, Councilors discussed meeting with
33 the School Board chair once a year. Historically, the superintendent has addressed the
34 Council twice a year. They talked about inviting them both, and possibly meeting with
35 the full School Board as well as with Strafford County Commissioners.

36
37 No vote was taken on the goals because there was not a quorum.

38 39 **XIII. Councilor and Town Administrator Roundtable**

40 41 **Administrator Selig**

42 He said a crew from ReelQuest will be filming in the area of the Mill Pond Dam for the
43 documentary, which is being created as part of the town's historic mitigation
44 requirement.

45
46 Tenants will move into the apartment at the Bickford-Chesley House on June 1. The rent

1 is \$2,350 per month.

2 On the search for a new business manager, he said 13 applied, and seven were
3 determined to be potentially qualified. Phone interviews were done and narrowed the
4 field to two. He said he and Business Manager Gail Jablonski will meet with the two on
5 Zoom and then convene the larger group to interview them. He described them as non-
6 traditional, which he said means they don't have a municipal or school district
7 background.

8
9 On the search for a new director of planning, he said June 15 is the deadline to apply.

10
11 He said he has reached out to labor attorneys and is waiting for pricing from three, and
12 will make a selection in a couple weeks.

13
14 He said he notified the Police Officers Union that beginning collective bargaining is on
15 hold until the town finds a labor attorney. Its contract runs out on Dec. 31, 2026.

16
17 He said DCAT Director Craig Stevens' last day will be June 25, and he is trying to roll
18 the DCAT duties into current staff positions through reorganization.

19
20 He said he received a call from a resident who has an active development project who
21 said he was scammed for \$5,500 after being contacted by someone who he thought was
22 the Town of Durham asking for fees. He paid them, and now is trying to get his money
23 back, but he wanted the town to know.

24
25 He said the Town Gown Collaborative held its first meeting and decided its initial focus
26 will be on housing inventory, and what UNH and Durham need.

27
28 **Councilor Register - Oyster River Co-operative School Board**

29 He said the School Board met May 6 and will next meet May 20 at 7 p.m. at ORMS
30 Recital Hall. He said it discussed the leadership and budget challenges. He said all 28
31 teaching positions and five school nurses will be retained for next year, but it is looking
32 for options to right size and terminate positions in the next school year. He said the Mast
33 Way and Moharimet principals presented on finding efficiencies in the instructional
34 program, which is finding ways to save time while meeting requirements. He said the
35 ORHS Robotics team placed in the top 150 of 400 teams at the World Championships in
36 St. Louis, Missouri; and 12 high school students made the all-state music festival. He said
37 another high school student placed in the Top 10 in the world Principles of Finance
38 competition. He said the ORHS principal earned her Ph.D. There will be no school on
39 May 22 and 25. He said kindergarten registration is ongoing and directed residents to
40 [orcsd.org](https://www.orcsd.org) for more information.

41
42 **Councilor Register - Integrated Waste Management Committee**

43 He said the committee learned the new trash carts from Casella will be distributed May
44 27 (which has since been delayed to a later date) and the new service starts June 29. Old
45 trash totes can be disposed of at the Transfer Station. He encouraged residents to
46 subscribe to the new Sustainability Newsletter. He said Allison Jeffries will speak about

1 the impact of PFAS in the area at Great Bay Changemakers meeting in Greenland on
2 June 16 at 5:30 p.m. He said IWMAC will next meet May 20.

3 **Councilor Register - Land Stewardship Subcommittee**

4 He said the subcommittee had a great Bio Blitz with lots of participation. It heard about
5 Japanese knotweed removal and how the only effective treatment is chemical. Its next
6 meeting is June 10.

7
8 **Councilor Register - Town Gown Collaborative**

9 He said he's excited the Town Gown Collaborative met and that Administrative Selig has
10 made it happen. He said President Chilton was there and it paid dividends in just its first
11 meeting with a comprehensive unified events calendar being created. They talked about
12 redoing the housing needs analysis. Next meeting is June 10.

13
14 **Councilor Register - Dam Removal Briefing**

15 He said he attended the dam removal briefing and 20 to 30 residents were there. He
16 thought it was really well done, and friction was handled well. He said removal will start
17 June 1 or 15 depending on the fish migration and will be completed by November. He
18 said they are removing brush around the pond, but no trees or clear-cutting. He said they
19 said no loads would be wet, which would be less risky, and that arsenic amounts were
20 elevated but not a risk. He said they are opening an old landfill in Saugus, Mass., to
21 dispose of the materials because the Rochester landfill only takes toxic materials.

22
23 **Councilor Register - Strafford Regional Planning Commission**

24 He said the SRPC met Friday and there are several grants due in June that the town may
25 be interested in and he will follow up with Administrator Selig. He said the comment
26 period for the comprehensive economic development strategy is open.

27
28 **XIV. New Business -** There was none.

29
30 **XV. Nonpublic Session (if required) -** Not needed.

31
32 **XVI. Adjourn (NLT 10:30 PM)**

33
34 The meeting had already been adjourned at 7:54 p.m. The meeting ended at 9:56 p.m.

35
36 *- Jane Murphy, Minutes Taker*

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40