



NHMA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Meeting Minutes

March 20, 2026

Approved: April 17, 2026

Board Members Attending

Branley, Michael, Town Administrator, Windham
Buono, Laura, Town Administrator, Hillsborough
Dorsett, Andrew, Zoning Board of Adjustment, Lyman
Edwards, Robert, Select Board member, Antrim
Forrester, Jeanie, **Vice Chair**, Select Board Member
Fournier, Steve, Town Manager, Newmarket
Fox, Elizabeth, Asst. City Manager/HR Dir., Keene
Girard, Dale, Mayor, Claremont
Kretovic, Jennifer, City Councilor, Concord
Larsen, Holly, Finance Dir., Tax Collector, Berlin
MacIver, Conner, Town Administrator, Barrington
Michaud, Jim, Chief Assessor, Hudson
Moore, David, City Manager, Somersworth
Mulholland, Shaun, Town Manager, Londonderry
Normand, Matthew, City Clerk, Manchester
Radke, Lori, Town Councilor, Bedford
Rautiola, Lori, Town Administrator, Swanzey
Shanahan, Dennis, Mayor, Dover
Seymour, Thomas, Moderator, Hill
Stack, David, Town Administrator, Bow

Staff Members Attending

Burke Cohen, Sarah, Legislative Advocate
Byrnes, Margaret, Executive Director
Deshaies, Brodie, Legislative Advocate
Johnston, Christine, Legal Services Counsel
Pellowe, Judith, Business Administrator
Valley, Pam, Administrative Assistant

Chair Dennis Shanahan opened the meeting at 9:30 AM followed by the pledge of allegiance. Shanahan thanked Vice Chair Jeanie Forrester and NHMA staff for handling the February board meeting in his and Margaret Byrnes's absence.

Shanahan recognized that Lori Radke is now serving on the board in her capacity as Town Administrator in Milford.

1. Administrative Report

Judith Pellowe reviewed the February income statement, balance sheet, and workshop revenue with the board.

Shanahan asked if there were questions regarding the February financials. None raised.

Byrnes provided details on the AI conference, in response to a question raised at the last board meeting.

Shanahan asked if there were any changes to or questions on the February draft meeting minutes. None raised.

MOTION by Steve Fournier, seconded by Tom Seymour, to accept the administrative report as presented. Motion passed. Dale Girard and Lori Radke abstained.

2. Legal Services Report

Christine Johnston reviewed the legal services report. Recent top subjects for inquiries have been the Right-to-Know Law, Finance, Town Meeting, and Electioneering.

She also stated that NHMA Legal Services will be sending a letter to all members regarding access to legal services assistance. Currently, there are some municipalities that limit how legal services are accessed. The letters will make all members aware that they can have limitations if they choose.

Shaun Mulholland asked who the letters would be sent to. Byrnes stated that the main contact that is listed in the NHMA portal will be the recipient of the letters.

Jim Michaud asked if NHMA currently has amicus briefs in progress on cases that towns should be aware of. Johnston responded that we do not at this time.

3. NHMA Advocacy Report

Byrnes gave an update on the following bills:

HB 1359 & HB 1360 (oppose), anti NHMA bills (died)

HB 1491 (support), changing the law on regulating risk pools to be consistent with whether a pool is assessable or non-assessable (passed)

HB 1300 nongermane amendment, mandating a school tax cap question at every state general election (passed)

Byrnes asked board members about impacts on municipalities from an elections process perspective. Lori Radke stated that the ballots would be a cost for municipalities unless the state is going to pay for them. There were no concerns about having two ballots from a ballot processing perspective. Conner MacIver asked who would handle the recount requests. Brodie Deshaies stated that it appears the school board would be responsible for the recount.

Jim Michaud stated there has been no fiscal note on this issue, yet there are costs linked to it. Sarah Burke Cohen mentioned that flaws in the calculation were brought up and discussed with the committee. David Moore asked how it would work when there are two schools or more in a municipality. Would there be two ballots on that question? Deshaies stated that the language of the bill is not clear.

Holly Larsen asked how this affects dependent schools. Deshaies stated that the bill specifically applies to these types of districts as well. Shanahan asked how it works if there is an existing tax cap. Byrnes stated the bill addresses how that would work and states the more restrictive tax cap would apply.

Byrnes summarized that the board's feedback is that this bill does not have any serious technical issues from a municipal perspective but does have a serious cost issue. Shaun Mulholland stated the governor was briefed on this bill and indicated an unfavorable opinion of it.

Deshaies gave an update to the following bills:

HB 1195 (oppose), childcare zoning mandate (passed)
HB 1704 (oppose), individual employee contracting rights (died). Kretovic asked if NHMA could alert HR Professional organizations like SHRM for support on bills like this in the future.

HB 1131 (oppose), changing the way SB 2 adoption is voted on (passed)
HB 1224 (oppose), changing the default budget calculation (passed)
HB 1418 (oppose), vote threshold for appropriations (died)
HB 1575 (oppose), default budget calculation by the budget committee (passed)
HB 1355 (oppose), eliminating the default budget calculation and eliminating amending certain warrant articles, including petitioned, at the deliberative session (passed)

Sarah Burke Cohen gave an update on the following bills:

HB 686 (oppose), electioneering restrictions (passed)
HB 1184 (oppose), issuance of no trespass orders on municipal or school district property (passed)
HB 1788 (oppose), allowing citizens to sue municipalities over DEI provisions in contracts (passed). Burke Cohen shared that this language is similar to the language in last year's HB 2. It would void contracts and allow lawsuits by citizens.

Shanahan inquired about the status of the HB 2 lawsuit. Burke Cohen confirmed the litigation was ongoing and stated that the attorney general's office sent out a second email to municipalities informing them of the lawsuit and injunction. Steve Fournier, Jennifer Kretovic, and Shaun Mulholland all stated that they never received responses to the emails they sent back to the attorney general's office on this matter.

SB 538 (support), extending net metering eligibility terms for municipal energy projects (passed)
SB 626 (support), defining "citizen" under the Right-to-Know Law (tabled)

Byrnes gave an update on the following bills:

SB 661 (oppose), changing current law (RSA 5-B) on the regulation of risk pools. This bill was amended to address some concerns but still requires pools to be assessable. The bill also creates new member equity stabilization funds to allow pools to hold additional reserves above the limit stated in the bill. We

understand that there is a tentative agreement for both the House and Senate to pass bills, one amending RSA 5-B and one creating a pathway for a pool to move oversight to the insurance department.

MacIver shared that he does not see the stabilization accounts as a terrible concept. He used the Community Power Coalition as an example. MacIver asked if there are other organizations using a similar model that the SOS is using as examples. Byrnes stated that she is not aware of other organizations in New Hampshire following this model and has not heard the regulator provide any examples.

Deshaies continued with updates on the following bills:

HB 1134 (oppose), mandating the order in which appropriations “accumulate” for the purpose of the tax cap.

HB 488, incompatibility of offices (ITL on consent)

4. Executive director’s matters of interest

- o Pension matter update (Enforcement action webpage)

Byrnes shared that NHMA’s Finance and Services Committee met this morning. NHMA’s motion to intervene was denied, but, in the order, NHMA was invited to file an amicus brief. NHMA submitted a motion for clarification on the filing of an amicus brief. The hearings officer denied that motion and therefore did not clarify our question. Board members can view all the filings and orders on the SOS website.

The Finance & Services Committee’s recommendation is that NHMA file an amicus brief, in conjunction with several NHMA retirees who are interested in getting involved. This is based in part on the order on the motion to intervene, in which the hearings officer stated he believed NHMA’s position was really that of the employees and/or retirees. Byrnes stated that clearly both the organization and the individuals benefitted by the pension have an interest. Allowing retirees to join NHMA in the amicus brief would help NHMA build a strong record, get more than one perspective on the record, and protect our position. Byrnes discussed the pros and cons of the approach, but stated she believed there were more benefits, and ultimately agreed with the recommendation of the committee on how to proceed.

Board discussion ensued regarding whether or not the issue requires a board vote. Members confirmed that they trust the executive director’s judgment and, therefore, they were comfortable with giving the executive director discretion to move forward with this matter by consensus. David Moore stated the importance of the NHMA Board taking appropriate actions to fulfill its fiduciary duties to the organization.

Shanahan asked the board for consensus to direct the executive director to proceed with taking actions, as necessary, to protect NHMA’s position. No objections from the board.

- o Legislative policy process

Byrnes reminded the board that April 17 is the deadline for NHMA to receive legislative policy proposals.

- o *NHMA Works!* Campaign

NHMA is continuing to work on messaging the importance of local government in accordance with the strategic plan. NHMA will be sending out a survey to members, starting with board members, to collect local success stories.

- o NHMA Social Media

NHMA began using LinkedIn about a year ago. We are now considering Facebook. The purpose of the page would be to post facts and information so that NHMA members could share our content on their social media pages. Byrnes asked the board for input.

Fournier shared that his municipality uses Facebook and it benefits his community and believed towns and town departments would share relevant information on their pages. MacIver agreed and stated Facebook is a low effort way that municipalities are using to tell of town things and to highlight positive information.

- o Co-op program with Plymouth State University

Plymouth State University contacted NHMA because they are interested in launching a pilot of a co-op program. It is in the planning phase. Undergraduate students would work in a municipality as paid employees for a semester. Byrnes asked for board feedback.

Fox and Kretovic stated that their cities do this now. David Stack asked how they fund these positions. Fox stated that they budget for them, and she also stated funding opportunities exist like the MMANH fellowship program.

Byrnes stated that she believes working with Plymouth State on this is consistent with NHMA's strategic plan goal to get more people interested in and involved in municipal government.

- o Micro-credentials for local officials through Vermont Law and Graduate School

NHMA has tuition discounts with Carsey UNH and now with Vermont Law and Graduate School. Additionally, Byrnes is working with Vermont Law to build online program that NHMA members would be allowed to take through Vermont Law for "micro credentials."

Dorsett asked if children of local officials could also earn these micro credentials. Byrnes stated that was a good idea, and she would look into it.

- o Other items

Shanahan asked if there were other questions or concerns. None raised.

MOTION by Steve Fournier, seconded by Andrew Dorsett, to adjourn the meeting.

Shanahan declared the meeting adjourned at 10:57 a.m.

Minutes prepared by: Pam Valley, Administrative Assistant