

Board of Selectmen

12/4/17

Final Minutes

1. Call to Order

Present are Dan Chartrand, Anne Surman, Don Clement, Kathy Corson, Julie Gilman, and Russ Dean. Chairman Clement called the meeting to order at 6:50pm, in the Nowak Room of the town office building.

2. Board Interviews – Arts Committee

The board went downstairs to conduct an interview for the arts committee. The board reconvened at 7:00pm.

3. Public Comment

Suzanne Peterson talked about the newly published Lamprey River topography report. The river was designated as a wild and scenic river by the National Park Service. She said that there was no representation from Exeter on the Lamprey River committee, and they had lots of resources they could offer the town if they had a representative. The applications are found online.

Brian Griset said that it would be helpful for the town to do an education program for pedestrians and bicyclists in the town because he has seen a lot of people not following the proper rules of the road. He also spoke about the public works department, saying that he thought that the department used consultants and expensive studies too often. For example, he brought up the error regarding the sludge at the wastewater treatment plant, and asked why the town was not filing a claim against the consultant for such a large mistake. He also mentioned the TTHM problem in the town's waters. He suggested that, if we are studying groundwater, that we pick either surface or groundwater for the town's use.

Paul Royal talked about the winter parking ban. In summer, the selectboard listened to presentations and voted to keep the winter parking ban despite the voters indicating they would like to get rid of the ban or to edit it. Mr. Royal was concerned that there was no public discussion on how to improve the current policy. He said there were problems in communication regarding snow emergencies. He was concerned that the selectboard were surprised that the voters wanted to get rid of the ban, and their rhetoric about the issue. Selectman Chartrand said he did not attend that meeting, but that maybe the town should look at how the parking ban works differently for commercial areas and residential areas. Chairman Clement also asked Mr. Dean to look into the parking fines.

4. Minutes & Proclamations

There were no proclamations at this meeting.

5. Approval of Minutes

There were no minutes to approve at this meeting.

6. Appointments – Planning Board

MOTION: Selectwoman Surman moved to appoint John Grueter to the planning board, term to expire April 30th, 2019. Selectman Chartrand seconded the motion, and it passed 4-0-1, with Chairman Clement abstaining.

7. Discussion/Action Items

a. Second Reading: Court Street Parking Regulation Ordinance Amendment

MOTION: Selectman Chartrand moved to open the public hearing on this issue. Selectwoman Surman seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Selectwoman Corson read the ordinance amendment, which would amend chapter 1 of the town ordinances. It would prohibit parking on the southeast side of Court Street from Elm Street to Elliot Street, and on the northeast side for 300 feet from Elm Street to Elliot Street. There would be “no parking” signs in the area if the ordinance was passed. Chief Shupe said that the reason the town is doing this is because the street is difficult to navigate when cars are parked on both sides of the street.

MOTION: Selectman Chartrand moved to close the public hearing on this issue. Selectwoman Surman seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

b. Involuntary Merger Request: 55 Washington Street

The applicant has since withdrawn their application.

MOTION: Selectman Chartrand moved to close the case at 55 Washington Street without prejudice. Selectwoman Gilman seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

c. FY18 Water/Sewer Rates Recommendation

Bob Kelly, the chair of the water/sewer advisory committee, said that on November 29th there was a public hearing to review the rate structure for water and sewer utility. They modified the rates in accordance to the model, the water rates are slightly higher. The quarterly rates will be adjusted as the model proposed, and the sewer rates will be adjusted in 2018 as the model proposed. The water fund balance is currently around \$340,000. Normally, they like to keep a minimum around \$500,000. Also, the town’s water consumption has continued to decrease. Since 2015, they are down about \$250,000 in revenue, and the budgets have gone up by about \$480,000. Finally, the budgets are expected to increase by about \$350,000 due to the TTHM issue and regulatory requirements. They are recommending that the board implement the new rates in January.

Selectwoman Surman asked if the rates include the \$900,000 increase from the wastewater treatment plant sludge error. Mr. Kelly said that there is enough money in the reserve to cover it, so it was not included in the calculation. Mr. Dean said also that Wright-Pierce indicated that the amount would be within the project’s budget, and the rate model would include that. Chairman Clement asked how many gallons of water were used. Mr. Kelly said that in 2015 about 330,000,00 gallons were used compared to 320,000,000 in 2016 and 305,000,000 in 2017. Chairman Clement asked why that loss did not translate to a loss on the sewer side. Mr. Kelly clarified that the \$250,000 figure is a combined figure of both water and sewer.

Chairman Clement spoke about the issue of retroactively charging people for using water if the rates were increased on January 1st. Selectman Chartrand said that last year, the selectboard that the issue wasn't a concern because it has to go up at some point, and that they should increase the rates on January 1st. He also said that declining water usage gives the opportunity to find other ratepayers, and for finding additional usage for the system.

d. FY18 Budget Recommendations Committee Recap

Niko Papakonstantis, the chair of the budget recommendation committee, began by thanking all of the committee members. He said the committee recommended a FY18 general fund operating budget of \$18,519,221, which is a 1.6% increase over FY17. The budget committee also made recommendations on CIP and warrant articles. The police budget had a recommendation for a replacement speed trailer. The IT department made a presentation about a mobile app called MyCity, which would cost \$7,500 initially but would streamline responses and allow citizens to report issues in town.

They recommended the selectboard budget, and recommended a \$5,000 sign. They also recommended the approval of \$50,000 for a fire and police department dispatch study. It would be an assessment of current operations. They also recommend a DPW loader replacement. For the library, they recommended the \$5,049,755 for the addition and renovation project. They unanimously voted to recommend \$7,100,520 for the recreation park project. Finally, they recommend \$107,500 for human services funding.

Selectman Chartrand said that he agreed with everything recommend except for the cleanup for the Sportsmen Club, because he feels they should be responsible. Selectwoman Surman asked the for a narrative for the justification behind the recommendations. Mr. Papakonstantis said that having the department heads come in and have to present their budget does a disservice. He said that the subcommittee should go through the budget and that the department heads should be available for questions. Selectwoman Gilman thought that a summary would be helpful.

Len Benjamin, who is on the budget recommendation committee, said that he agreed that the Sportsmen Club created the conditions that led to the warrant, and that they should be accountable for the cleanup. Peter Lennon, also on the budget recommendation committee, disagreed with Selectwoman Surman and said that the consensus was that the members should hear from the subcommittees to work with the department heads, and that everybody was welcome to speak. Fran Hall, another member of the committee, commented that the process has become more streamlined.

Nicholas Gray, a member of the committee, brought up the tax burden and said he would like it to remain constant or to decrease. He said that the town is becoming more unaffordable and that more young people are moving out. He also said that he voted no on the library renovation, and that he felt there was little public support for the renovation. This is opposed to the recreation department project, because recreation space is needed in Exeter. He suggested that the board push the library expansion to another year. Selectwoman Gilman said that the tax rate is increasing because the county rate is increasing. Ms. Soutter thanked the committee for adding a human services committee, which she believes added transparency to the process.

e. FY18 Budget, Bonds & Warrant Articles Discussion

Chairman Clement said he'd like the board to have time to go through the budget and bring up any areas that they'd like to discuss at the next meeting on the 18th. Selectman Chartrand said he'd like to go over the funding for the Sportsmen Club cleanup. Selectwoman Surman wanted to discuss the police and fire dispatch study, the intersection and downtown improvement study, the library project, and the recreation project. Selectwoman Corson wanted to talk about the staffing of the fire department, and the MyCity application.

Chairman Clement said that he wanted to discuss the board of selectmen budget special expense item. He wanted to talk about the IT department software package; the economic development for the recording secretary; a design study in the planning department; the digital signboard for the police department; the staffing in the fire department; paving maintenance, sidewalks, and stormwater in public works; the human services budget; cemetery work; various studies for public safety; the sportsmen's club; and various issues in the water department including GASBY compliance and TTHM compliance; and the warrant article about the groundwater source exploration.

f. Human Services Funding Policy

Chairman Clement drafted a new revision of the human services funding policy. It states that the town manager will distribute applications to those who requested funding in July, then will be reviewed by the human services funding committee. Their recommendations will be submitted to the budget recommendations committee and board of selectmen. Each agency that has received funding in the past would go onto a warrant article. They will be listed individually in one warrant article for a grand total. The goal is to make sure that everybody can see who receives funding.

Selectman Chartrand said that he was originally going to go with the separate warrant article. However, he brought up that the town needs to make sure that the agencies funded are meeting the needs of the town. If there is a separate warrant article, the town is locked in and they would have to disperse that money. If it's in the budget, the human services committee could choose to cease making payments.

Selectwoman Surman asked how the town would handle a new request. She advocated for the SPCA or other human society as providing basic human needs. If they were to apply, would they automatically be denied? Chris Soutter, a member of the human services committee, said that the committee created criteria based around basic human needs. She pointed out the simplicity of the application process, and that any non-profit can do that. Selectwoman Surman expressed concern that agencies that apply will be decided on by the committee and will not go on the warrant.

Ms. Soutter pointed out that the voters do not have the applications to vote on, and they are not well informed about the agencies. She also asked what would happen if one agency has bad press one year, and that if a voter did not want to support that one agency, they'd have to vote no to all of the agencies. She did not think it should be an all or nothing issue. Chairman Clement pointed out that they do not have all the information when it's a line item in the budget either.

Selectwoman Corson said that the warrant article does not say how much they are giving to each applicant, and just lists the sum grand total. She said that it would allow greater follow-through. Selectman Chartrand asked if not listing the amounts of individual agencies could be considered a lack of transparency. Selectwoman Gilman agreed with Selectwoman Corson. She also said that she talked to various selectmen in the House of Representatives, and another town she heard about tried to make it into one warrant article, but people complained about the all-or-nothing scenario, and they switched back to adding it to the budget.

Mr. Royal suggested that the warrant article contain a short descriptor about the committee. Selectwoman Gilman said that some agencies in the past that asked for more money submitted a citizen's petition. Selectman Chartrand said that at that point, the committee was not in place, and that problem may not occur in the future. He suggested that we do not put new agencies on separate warrant articles. Selectwoman Corson also pointed out that the information is on the website. Selectwoman Gilman suggested deleting the second 4 on the suggested draft, and revise the wording on the first 4.

8. Regular Business

a. Tax, Water/Sewer Abatements & Exemptions

MOTION: Selectwoman Corson moved to approve the abatement for map 110, lot 2, parcel 115 for \$50.15. Selectwoman Gilman seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

MOTION: Selectwoman Corson moved to approve a veteran credit for map 68, lot 6, unit 141 for \$500. Selectman Chartrand seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

MOTION: Selectwoman Corson moved to deny a veteran credit for map 72, lot 152. Selectman Chartrand seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Dean brought up the DRA sales ratio survey, which looks at the sale price medium for the 2017 tax year. In this review, the change is about 7% from last year. This is a market metric. The ratio of assessment to sales has gone down from about 91% to about 85%. This is submitted to DRA. Selectman Chartrand asked how the 85% compares to normal. Mr. Dean said that it was the lowest that he's seen as town manager. Selectman Chartrand said that is due to prices of homes going up. Mr. Dean said that they must be between 90%-110%, and will need to be in compliance by 2020.

b. Permits & Approvals

There were several bids for the wastewater chemicals. The bid items are as follows:

1. Sodium Hypochlorite Solution, price per gallon
2. Activated Carbon, price per pound
3. Potassium Permanganate, price per pound
4. Sodium Hydroxide, price per gallon
5. Liquid Sodium Bisulfite, price per gallon.

Borden & Remington Corporation: \$0.8392. No bid. \$1.9233. \$1.1627. No bid.

Chemrite: No bid. No bid. \$1.775. No bid. No bid.

Coyne Chemical: No bid. \$1.1987. \$1.7763. No bid. No bid.

Harcros Chemicals: \$0.7795. No bid. \$1.73. \$1.2067. No bid.

Holland Company: No bid. No bid. No bid. No bid. \$1.80.

JCI Jones Chemical: No bid. No bid. No bid. No bid. \$1.45.

PVS Chemical Solutions: No bid. No bid. No bid. No bid. \$1.40.

Shannon Chemical Corporation: No bid. No bid. \$1.69. No bid. No bid.

Thatcher Company: No bid. \$1.128. \$1.789. No bid. No bid.

Univar: \$1.05. No bid. \$1.989. \$1.177. \$1.90.

MOTION: Selectwoman Gilman moved to forward the bids to the water and sewer department. Selectman Chartrand seconded, and it passed unanimously.

MOTION: Selectman Chartrand moved to approve the use of the town hall main floor by Bonnie Galinski for the Festival of Trees from November 26th to November 30th, 2018. Selectwoman Corson seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

c. Town Manager's Report

Mr. Dean said the town's holiday drop in will be from 4:30-6:00pm on 12/6/17. He mentioned the "Ring in the Season" events that happened in the past week, which were successful. Liberty Utilities is planning a major gasline project, and they put out a press release. It is called the Granite Ridge Project, which would go through Route 101. An opioid task force through the YMCA was formed, and they invited the selectboard to participate. The next meeting is 12/14/17, at 6:30pm. The Seabrook drill took place, which went well. It deals with public safety in terms of an evacuation plan for Seabrook. The Rockingham Planning Commission is helping to update the hazardous mitigation plan.

d. Selectboard Committee Reports

Selectwoman Gilman had nothing to report. Selectwoman Corson said that there is a planning board meeting on the 14th, in the Exeter High School cafeteria. The green lawn committee will come forward with a zoning article for the planning board to review. Selectwoman Surman said there is a conservation commission meeting on the 5th, and also mentioned that she was a judge for the Pooch Parade.

Selectman Chartrand has a master plan steering committee meeting next week. Chairman Clement said that there was a green lawn committee meeting last week. There was also an Exeter Squamscott local advisory committee meeting, where they were asked to comment on new structures as part of the TTHM management at the surface and groundwater treatment plants. There will be an E911 meeting on the 5th. And, on the 8th there will be an update from the Piscataqua River Estuary Project.

e. Correspondence

There was a letter from Sharon Rondu about the estate of Franklin and George Fink. There was also a memo from Penachuck Waterworks to the town clerk about the utility and rate case, there will be a prehearing to look at their rates.

9. Review Board Calendar

The next meeting will be on December 18th, at 6:00pm.

10. Non-public session

There was no non-public session.

11. Adjournment

MOTION: Selectwoman Gilman moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:00pm. Selectwoman Corson seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by recording secretary Samantha Cave.