

Draft Minutes

Select Board

6/18/18

1. Call Meeting to Order

Present at this meeting were Anne Surman, Kathy Corson, Julie Gilman, Molly Cowan, Don Clement, and Russ Dean. The meeting was called to order at 6:50PM by Ms. Gilman.

2. Board Interview – Historic District Commission

The board went downstairs at 6:50PM to interview a candidate for the historic district commission. The board reconvened at 7:00PM.

3. Bid Award – Engine 4 Replacement

Fire Chief Comeau presented the fire department's recommendation for the Engine 4 replacement. They had received 3 bids, and are recommending Greenwood Fire Apparatus. The department already has two of their engines in operation. The total bid price will be \$500,214. It will take 300 days to build the engine. If the town decides to pre-pay, the price will be reduced further to \$489,916. This means that the town would pay for the engine and then wait the 300 days to have it delivered, as opposed to paying after delivery.

Mr. Dean said that one option would be to use a performance bond to protect against the pre-pay option in the unlikely chance that the company does not deliver or goes out of business. Mr. Clement clarified that the pre-pay option has been done by the town before. Mr. Dean said that they would go through Tax-Exempt Lease Financing, who would cut the check to the company. Mr. Clement asked if they would need to reequip the new fire engine. Mr. Comeau said the bid included a new radio, and some other additions. The hose and nozzles will also be transferable. The only equipment to buy would be what is out-of-service, and would be included in next year's budget.

MOTION: Ms. Surman moved to approve the \$489,916 pre-pay option from Greenwood Fire Apparatus for a new fire engine, using the Tax-Exempt Lease Financing or a like leasing company. Mr. Clement seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

4. Public Comment

Darius Thompson followed up on his last public comment about the Holiday Parade storage bin materials that were taken without his permission. Ms. Gilman said that the lock was offered to be paid for, and they would like to move the supplies to town property owned by DPW. They are currently being secured at a private business in town. Mr. Clement said he would like the board to vote on it being moved since the current storage has worked without prior issues. The holiday parade supplies are owned by the parade, not the town.

Mr. Thompson also asked the board to look into the possibility of the water/sewer rates decreasing after the wastewater treatment plant is finished being paid for. He also said that other towns had done that. Mr. Dean said that the rates are being used as proceeds to build the wastewater plant

right now. The loan will not be paid off for another 20 years. Mr. Thompson suggested the current board can put something into writing about the rates going down in accordance with the loan repayment.

Bette Hanneberry, who ran the holiday parade before Mr. Thompson, said that she would like to see the holiday parade supplies stay at their current location.

Karen Desrosiers talked about the arts committee and the recent events that have occurred. She emphasized the positive aspects of the committee and its contribution to Exeter's arts community. She believes that the Select Board should not have taken action against the arts committee and felt that they were singled out. She read from a prepared statement (see Attachment 1) and announced her resignation from the committee.

Ms. Gilman said that the action to put the arts committee meetings on EXTV was meant to provide support so that all claims would be publicized. She said she was sorry to see Ms. Desrosiers leave the committee and thanked her for her contributions. Ms. Corson agreed that the motion was not in any way against the arts committee. She said that the filming would show that the committee is doing a great job.

Ms. Desrosiers said that the committee would have agreed to being filmed, but they would have liked time to discuss it. They could not discuss it due to disruptions during their last meeting. The committee felt like it was imposed on them. She said that it was widely viewed as a punitive action.

Mr. Clement thanked Ms. Desrosiers and said that he is very upset about this issue. He said that he hopes that the board will voice their strong support for the arts committee.

MOTION: Mr. Clement moved to ask the arts committee members who have resigned to reconsider their resignations. Surman seconded the motion, and it passed 4-1-0 with Ms. Cowan voting nay.

Ms. Cowan explained that she felt uncomfortable with the motion, because she did not want to vote to ask the committee members to reconsider something that had clearly been well thought-out. She did want to recognize their volunteer work and the arts committee. Kathy Thompson asked what would happen differently in terms of support from the Select Board if they did reconsider. Darius Thompson said that, without support from the town, there will be fewer and fewer volunteers in the town. He thinks any town appointed board should have support from the Select Board and town manager. Also, he reminded them that all of the issues had been well-documented. Bette Hanneberry said that she was disappointed with the Select Board about their inaction.

Bill Childs said he was a member of Exeter arts committee until recently. He talked about the beginning of the arts committee and the gallery in the town hall, and doesn't want to think that the board doesn't value what the committee has done. Karen Noonan said that the body language of the Select Board members was obvious and spoke for itself. She also informed the board that Irene Hall had also resigned from the committee.

Ms. Surman prepared a statement about this topic after the board had received resignations from six committee members, leaving only one member to the arts committee. The common agreement in their letters was about not getting support from the Select Board and the town manager. As the arts committee representative, she stated that she hadn't seen anything but dedication towards the arts in

all form and by all people and said that any claims of bias were unfounded. She read her statement for the board and public (see Attachment 2).

Ms. Gilman said that she never doubted the information given to the board, but felt that choosing a course of action against a group that is not part of the town was too risky due to liability issues. The board cannot do anything to change the group's behavior. Mr. Clement suggested that the board should reaffirm that the arts committee has control over the gallery. Anyone unhappy with their decision can come to the Select Board and not the town manager or the arts committee. Ms. Cowan said that she felt that any committee in control of a budget or permits should be on TV. Ms. Surman disagreed with this.

Darius Thompson said that board needs to set the rules and enforce them, and believes that the board should call out the people that have been causing issues.

MOTION: Mr. Clement moved that the board reaffirm that the arts committee is responsible for managing and scheduling the 2nd floor arts gallery. Ms. Surman seconded, passed unanimously.

Ms. Corson asked what happens now because there is only one member on committee, so there is no quorum.

Darius Thompson brought up the holiday parade, which doesn't technically control a budget but receives funds from the town to support the parade. All of their invoices and any expenses are on record. He said that potentially filming the holiday parade and forcing them to meet under 91A would make finding volunteers more difficult.

Ms. Cowan said that the purpose of videotaping wouldn't be necessarily to enforce 91A, but to make sure that transparency is achieved for all parties involved.

Ms. Surman thinks that the processes need to be transparent, but the details don't necessarily have to be laid out. She brought up human services committee as an example. Mr. Clement didn't feel that the board had the authority to require being filmed. Ms. Gilman said that she disagreed, and that the board does have that authority.

5. Minutes & Proclamations

a. Proclamations/Recognitions

There were no proclamations or recognitions at this meeting.

6. Approval of Minutes

a. June 4th, 2018

Ms. Surman requested that on page 5, discussion was added to motion stating that she felt that the arts committee was being singled out. Mr. Clement asked for his written statement to be included on page 3 of the minutes.

MOTION: Mr. Clement moved to approve the minutes from June 4th, 2018 as amended. Ms. Cowan seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Clement asked about drainage issues that were brought up at the last meeting. Mr. Dean said that he looked into the issue, and they would be handled as a regular budget item, not as part of the Lincoln Street project.

7. Appointments – Zoning Board of Adjustment

MOTION: Ms. Corson moved to appoint Esther Olson Murphy as an alternate member to the ZBA, term to expire 4/30/2020. Ms. Surman seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

8. Discussion/Action Items

a. WW Lagoon Sewer Odor Update

Jennifer Perry, director of Public Works, said that the department has been adding additional aeration units to lagoon number 1 to improve the odor. They have also moved units from other lagoons and have ordered new parts to make the aeration more efficient. They had not received recent complaints. Wright Pierce and Bowker Associates sent a memo stating that the gas is hydrogen sulfide which is from the sludge and is detectable at extremely small levels. The level of gas at all times was measured as safe.

She also stated that one of the biggest challenges to wastewater is flushable wipes, because they get caught in the lagoons and need to be mechanically removed. They clog aeration systems, which makes the odor worse. The department could also add a chemical nitrate compound, which would add nitrogen to the system, but they are reluctant to do that. She explained that aeration of just the upper level serves as a “cap” that reduces odor. Essentially, the sludge needs to be given time to settle.

Ms. Cowan said that the town should communicate not to flush wipes down their systems. Ms. Perry agreed and said that they have done outreach in the past about it. Ms. Surman also wanted to emphasize that the odor is not a health concern. Ms. Perry said that James Murray, the town health officer, and DES were on location during testing. Mr. Murray also wrote a public information message that is on the town website. Mr. Dean said that there is a page on the website devoted to the lagoon order, and a public statement was released. Mr. Clement asked if they had reached out to Megan Eddy from last week’s meeting, and Ms. Perry said that they could.

b. WWTF Contract Amendment: Long Term Nitrogen Control Plan

Ms. Perry explained that the amendment is due to EPA by September 30th. They have been working on the nitrogen control plan as part of the overall efforts to get nitrogen under control. There are five tasks to be completed. They need to come before the board with Wright Pierce and Horsley Witten to talk more about the plan in detail. Since the work can be expensive, she suggested focusing on the biggest control methods. She also emphasized that if they do not get board confirmation tonight, they will need to submit for a second extension.

Mr. Clement asked if the contractors used the report from the last nitrogen control plan for the Exeter-Squamscott river, and if the target was still to get down to 88 tons of nitrogen in Great Bay. Ms. Perry said she would have to check on the current target, but the previous report was used. Mr. Clement also asked if the plan to remove 33,000 pounds of nitrogen would get them to their goal. Ms. Perry replied that the earlier memo from November is only a few suggestions and guidelines, and they have

not done the study yet. The majority of the nitrogen (about 75%) is coming from nonpoint sources, and is difficult to remove.

Mr. Clement clarified that the contract amendment is to develop the nitrogen control plan for nonpoint and point sources. He asked what fund it would get paid out of. Ms. Perry said it would come from the wastewater treatment plant funds. The nonpoint aspect is not attributable to the wastewater plant, so Mr. Clement did not feel that the ratepayers should have to pay for all of that. Ms. Perry said that the stormwater budget could also accommodate for some of this.

MOTION: Ms. Corson moved to approve amendment 1 to the engineering report phase contract for nitrogen control plan study in the amount of \$69,600. Ms. Surman seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

MOTION: Ms. Corson moved to approve the resolution as written. Ms. Cowan seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

c. SRF Loans: Asset Management Plans for Wastewater and Stormwater

Ms. Perry said that there were two warrant articles about this approved in March. They will be issuing an RFP for both at the same time using a single consultant. This plan would help identify the highest risk areas and is a valuable tool.

MOTION: Ms. Corson moved to enter into and approve a loan agreement with DES in the amount of \$60,000 to Exeter, and to authorize the town manager to sign the relevant paperwork. Ms. Surman seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

d. Lincoln Street Project Phase 2 – Construction Administration Contract

Ms. Perry included a memo from Jennifer Mates about the contract amendment with CMA Engineers. The amendment is for \$235,000, which is about 7% of the total cost. She said that CMA is a good company to work with, and they have worked with them in the past. Also, the additional \$235,000 is still within the voter approved budget.

MOTION: Ms. Surman moved to approve the amendment for construction phase services with CMA engineers for \$235,000, and to authorize town manager to sign. Clement seconded, unanimous.

e. LCHIP Grant Application (Raynes Farm)

Bill Campbell, chair of Exeter conservation commission, talked briefly about the history of the Raynes farm property which was acquired by the town in 2002. The land reminds the town of its agricultural and rural history, and was added to the state register of historical places in 2017. The barn requires a lot of upkeep, and doing it piece by piece has been a challenge to the commission. The property is also used for a lot of different events, but due to the barn's condition it is rarely used itself.

The Raynes Farm Stewardship committee and Parks and Rec. have had ideas for many uses for the barn. The remaining repairs need to be completed and will prepare the property for more regular, smaller maintenance. They are applying for an LCHIP grant, which requires a 50% match from the commission. The remaining repairs would be about \$240,000. which they would like to include as a CIP budget item, dependent on receiving the LCHIP grant. In order to move forward, they are asking for the support of the Select Board in the concept of this and supporting the application.

Ms. Gilman asked if they are more likely to get the grant if they show they already have the match. Mr. Campbell said that in 2002, they did it using a warrant the same year they received the grant. He also said that they would have two years to make use of the grant. He also thanked Kristin Murphy for her work on the application.

MOTION: Mr. Clement moved to apply for the LCHIP for \$140,000 and to authorize the town manager to sign the land owner acknowledgement and Julie Gilman to sign the governing body acknowledgement. Ms. Cowan seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

f. Kayak Cradle Donation

Greg Bisson informed the board that the Exeter Lions board wants to donate \$1,800 to purchase a kayak cradle, which allows a smooth transition into the water and will prevent traffic congestion in the water. The total cost is \$2,500 which could come from the recreational revolving fund. They need DES approval for this as well as Select Board approval. There are rules for the cradle that were recommended by Primex. There are also ordinances posted at the dock. Mr. Clement suggested also amending the ordinances in the future as well as posting the rules.

Mike Baillargeon, president of the Exeter Lions Club said that Lions International encouraged them to do something special for the town that they work with. They recently helped to refurbish benches and repaint the fence railing. This is another part of their ongoing legacy project to Exeter.

MOTION: Mr. Clement moved that the parks and rec. department accept the \$1,800 donation from the Exeter Lions Club for the installation of the kayak cradle to the town dock. Ms. Cowan seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

MOTION: Mr. Clement moved to approve expending \$700 from the recreation revolving fund for the installation of a kayak cradle. Ms. Surman seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

MOTION: Mr. Clement moved to have the parks and recreation department create and post temporary kayak cradle launch rules at the public dock. Ms. Cowan seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

9. Regular Business

a. Tax, Water/Sewer Abatements & Exemptions

MOTION: Ms. Cowan moved to approve the abatement for \$797.74 for: map 72, lot 222, unit 2. Mr. Clement seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

MOTION: Ms. Cowan moved to approve the abatement for \$6,048.69 for: map 55, lot 75, unit 100. Ms. Corson seconded the motion and it passed 4-1-0, with Mr. Clement voting nay.

MOTION: Ms. Cowan moved to approve the abatement for \$219.52 for: map 110, lot 2, unit 11. Ms. Corson seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

MOTION: Ms. Cowan moved to approve the abatement for \$128.96 for: map 110, lot 2, unit 8A. Ms. Corson seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

MOTION: Ms. Cowan moved to approve the abatement for \$134.74 for: map 110, lot 2, unit 8A. Ms. Corson seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

MOTION: Ms. Cowan moved to approve the abatement for \$88.34 for: map 110, lot 2, unit 8A. Ms. Corson seconded the motion and it passed unanimously

MOTION: Ms. Cowan moved to approve the abatement for \$68.23 for: map 110, lot 2, unit 16. Ms. Corson seconded the motion and it passed unanimously

MOTION: Ms. Cowan moved to approve the abatement for \$198.10 for: map 110, lot 2, unit 118. Ms. Corson seconded the motion and it passed unanimously

MOTION: Ms. Cowan moved to approve the abatement for \$3,003.59 for: map 86, lot 4, unit 2. Ms. Corson seconded the motion and it passed unanimously

MOTION: Ms. Cowan moved to approve the abatement for \$198.10 for: map 70, lot 107, unit 1. Ms. Corson seconded the motion and it passed unanimously

MOTION: Ms. Cowan moved to approve the excavation tax for \$197.56 for: map 113, unit 5. Ms. Corson seconded the motion and it passed unanimously

The exempt property reviews will be followed up on at the next meeting, because they were not included in this meeting's packet.

b. Permits & Approvals

MOTION: Mr. Clement moved to approve the use of the town hall and bandstand by Scott Ruffner of TEAM Exeter for June 7th from 4:00PM-10:00PM. Ms. Corson seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

MOTION: Ms. Surman moved to approve the use of the town hall and balcony by Diane Bitter of the Rockingham County Republic Committee on July 11th from 7:00PM-9:00PM. Ms. Corson seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Ms. Gilman asked about the application form, which has different formats. Mr. Dean said he will see which formats are on the town website.

c. Town Manager's Report

Mr. Dean said that rec camp will open on 6/19/18. Dave O'Hearn had a request about the boat ramp, and are working on making repairs to that boat ramp. Mr. Clement asked Mr. Dean to make sure to get back to board when an action is taken on an email request, especially when the entire board is included on the email.

There was an incident with the gates at train on Front Street. The response from Pan Am was that the gates were functioning properly. The Water Street project is going well, and Lincoln Street phase II is underway. The Economic Development department is looking for volunteers to help with a business retention program with UNH Cooperative Extension. He also let the board know that the attorney general's office reviewed the 53A agreement with Hampton about sewer charges, and came back with some changes. Next Tuesday is the Criterion bike race on June 26th at about 4:30PM. The TIF work on Epping Road is continuing, and Washington Street is on the paving schedule.

d. Select Board Committee Reports

Mr. Clement sat in on planning board meeting for Ms. Corson. They approved the dental office on Hampton Road. Mr. Schaffmaster asked for some waivers from impact fees for schools, and the planning board denied that. He also requested a waiver for 75% of the recreational fee, which was approved. Mr. Clement also attended a Swasey trustee meeting. One thing brought up was that part of a large tree had washed up on the riverbank behind the pavilion. He asked if they could have that removed. Mr. Dean said that there is a river hazards policy, and they can price it out to see how much it would be. Mr. Clement clarified that the tree is not a hazard, but is an eyesore.

Ms. Cowan attended a housing committee meeting, which has a regional housing discussion from 11AM-1PM on June 19th. They will be talking about ways to communicate how we need to increase affordable housing.

Ms. Corson had nothing to report.

Ms. Surman attended an E911 meeting, but had nothing specific to report at this time. She also attended the conservation commission meeting for Mr. Clement, where she went on a site walk for conservation land at Rose Farm development. They had a lively discussion afterwards. Exeter High School will have an EPA PFAS meeting about drinking water coming up. There are also more events in the Fall at Raynes Farm.

Ms. Gilman went to an energy committee meeting about electric vehicle charging stations. The committee wants to put in one in the town as a trial. There are cars in town that are fully electric, and the charging stations are public property. The cost would be \$2,500-\$10,000, depending on a number of factors. Ms. Corson asked why the town would install public charging stations if the cars are privately owned. She pointed out that everyone else pays for their own fuel. Ms. Cowan asked for more information on how other towns handle this issue. Ms. Gilman also reported that the heritage commission received a grant for \$20,000, for a survey of the Park Street area for a potential historic district.

e. Correspondence

There was a letter of donation for the kayak cradle. There is a letter informing them of grant provision from Division of Historical Resources. There is a report of the Select Board goal setting session. There were multiple letters of resignation from the Exeter arts committee members. There was also a letter about Swasey parkway trustee meeting about a permit that was denied. Finally, there was a recommendation from Skip Barrien to put together a commission about improving the arts community in town.

Mr. Clement said that he would like more email correspondence to be included in the packet, especially when it comes to the majority of the board. Ms. Gilman said that she held one out of the packet because it named a specific personnel member, but it is available for people to ask for.

10. Review Board Calendar

There will be a board work session on 6/25/18 at 5:30PM. The next regular meeting will be on 7/9/18.

11. Non-Public Session

MOTION: Ms. Corson moved to go into non-public session under RSA 91A:3 section 2, to discuss land acquisition. Mr. Clement seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously by roll-call vote.

Respectfully submitted by recording secretary Samantha Cave.

Attachment 1:

Karen Desrosiers

*Writer * Artist * Teacher*

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June 18, 2018

To the Town of Exeter Board of Selectmen:

I have been blessed to be an active member of the Exeter arts community for nearly twenty years. And I am grateful that I had the opportunity to spend the past twelve years of that working with and then on the Town of Exeter Arts Committee.

In my time on the Arts Committee, we have supported countless local artists, worked with numerous area organizations, and presented many wonderful exhibits and events. The EAC has hosted Youth Art Month for the SAU16 schools for about twenty years, and the event grows bigger each year, with over 1200 visitors to the gallery this past March. We hosted an exhibit for inmates of Rockingham County Department of Corrections, which was well-received by the administration, as well as the inmates' families – it was one of the most powerful, moving exhibits I've had the honor to work on. We sponsored music on the bandstand for three summers and have provided a number of other interdisciplinary arts events for the community. We've managed the display of art in the Town Offices building for over 25 years and have grown the exhibits in the gallery from a couple per year to almost every month of the year. The exhibits that the Arts Committee hosts are open to all artists, without exception, and are extremely affordable for artists, as we take no commission from sales. The mission and efforts of the Arts Committee has always been to foster an all-inclusive arts community, using the principle of the-more-the-better, with no other agendas. The Arts Committee has managed the Exeter Town Hall Gallery in the truest sense of a community gallery, solely for the benefit of area artists.

I put in a minimum of 25 volunteer hours per month for this town and at least twice that in March for Youth Art Month and December for the annual holiday events. That's nearly 4000 volunteer hours for Exeter.

I've done this work for the Exeter community because I believe in the power of the arts to bring people together, to enrich, educate, and heal. In an April 2017 letter to the editor I said: "The Arts Committee has always done and been good at doing visual arts—that's why the committee was formed. There is another organization in town that is good at doing music and performing arts. There is space for both. There is a need for both. There is space for overlap, cooperation, and collaboration....It is heartbreaking that 'the arts', which should bring joy and connection, are being used to divide the community." I still firmly believe this and will always believe this.

I could tell you about how the experience of the past three years has impacted my health, my sense of safety, my peace, my job, and how I'm done being slandered, harassed, yelled at. But what's

happening in Exeter is bigger than that. What's happening is not in support of the arts or community in Exeter, and it's a game I'm not willing to play. The community loses here. The arts community is going to become less diverse, less robust, just less in every way.

One of my favorite quotes is from Maya Angelou: "In diversity there is beauty and there is strength." I believe this applies to all aspects of life. This conviction, as well as the fact that I have a mixed-race child and many other reasons, are why I find it frankly ludicrous to have a false allegation of discrimination leveled against the Arts Committee, and therefore me, at the June 4th Board of Selectmen meeting. For the select board to take clearly punitive and disrespectful action against the EAC shortly after and appear to validate that fictional claim was unacceptable.

I had hoped, when the previous problems within the committee were resolved last spring, that we would be able to go back to providing arts for the community, putting exhibits together, and supporting artists with positivity and peace. And we've tried, damn hard. We rebuilt the committee and have done a lot of fun work for the community in the past year. Unfortunately, it has not been enough to stop the virus of negativity, spite, ignorance, and hate. I have refused to take the bait, to come forward and respond to or defend myself and the committee against the false accusations, slander, and defamation because as Michelle Obama said, "When they go low, we go high." I have not seen the need to spread dirt about anyone, no matter what they say about me. But, make no mistake, my silence was never affirmation and the accusations leveled against me and the committee are false.

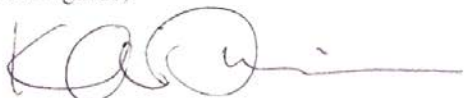
To paraphrase Robert Kennedy, what we need is not division, what we need is not hatred, what we need is love and wisdom and compassion. And John F Kennedy said, "Tolerance ... condemns the ... persecution of others." I hope this community, Exeter, will move toward these ideals for everyone's sake.

I love doing this work, but I don't like being persecuted for it. I will miss the work I do, have done, with the Exeter Arts Committee, and in many ways I am punishing myself for other people's bad behavior. I have reached the point where altruism must succumb to self-preservation, at least for a while. It is time for me to get back on a path of building an arts community that is respectful as well as inclusive, and mutually supportive, that is appreciated and appreciative, in a community that is focused on the power of creativity rather than competition and destruction. That's my dream, though it just might not be possible in Exeter.

The Town Hall Gallery space provided by the town is truly a unique treasure and gift, and it's up to you to protect it. I hope that you will find a way to keep it and keep it safe. I would remind you that the 2018 Exeter Master Plan states: "Exeter will continue to maintain a committee in our local government for the support and proliferation of arts within the community." I urge you to actually support that committee and its work moving forward.

As the Buddha said, "I do believe in a fate that falls on them unless they act." Effectively immediately, I resign from the Town of Exeter Arts Committee. I will drop off keys and final reports on Tuesday, June 19, 2018. Thank you.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karen Desrosiers', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Karen Desrosiers

Attachment 2:

Good Evening,

I am inclined to make a brief statement tonight in regard to letters in tonight's packet and public comment from our last Selectboard meeting. I do so, in light of the fact that we just heard Ms. Derosiers resignation from the Town of Exeter's Art Committee. In the last week, the board has received resignation letters from, the current in chair of the EAC, Ms. Kathy Thompson, also, resignations from Mr. Dean Scott, Mr. Darius Thompson, Ms. Karen Noonan, Ms. Kelly Nagle: six members have resigned, leaving us with two members to run the affairs of this very active and vital town-sponsored committee. The common theme in all the letters has been non-support by this Selectboard and Town Manager. I couldn't agree more. Why have these long-serving members resigned from a committee that they have enjoyed and enhanced over the years? Simple. They were bullied and harassed by people and supporters from a private organization called, "TEAM" and by a former Selectman, Dan Chartrand. Ironically, in my first three years as a member of this Selectboard, Mr. Chartrand was the Selectboard Representative to the Town of Exeter Arts Committee. He rarely, if ever delivered a report to the board, leaving most of us in the dark about any problems that might have been brewing. I chose to become the rep to the Art Committee in my 4th year as a Selectboard member. I did not know anyone, on that committee prior to attending my very first meeting. In the year and months since, I have witnessed nothing but dedication, passion and support for arts of all varieties: on canvas, on stage, with instruments of music, with a camera: young people, older people, all people of every description and art form have been welcomed by this committee to perform or display their art. The notion of "bias", "exclusivity" or non-inclusiveness is absurd, unfounded and without merit.

In our last BOS meeting, our chair, Ms. Julie Gilman began the meeting with a very strong statement in regard to this situation. I was very pleased and hoped that she had an action plan to support her words. Unfortunately, within seconds of Mr. Chartrand expressing his distress with Ms. Gilman's statement, Ms. Gilman backed down so that that her original points, became muddied and lost in the public comments that followed: Public comments that continue to bully the Art Committee members and myself. I have been called out by Scott Ruffner and by Dan Chartrand on more than one occasion in public meetings, so that is why I am naming them tonight. Bullying comes in many forms. Mr. Chartrand chooses the passive-aggressive approach. Mr. Ruffner, who in the last meeting stated that he was not a bully not only uses the passive aggressive approach but is relentless in his attempts to intimidate members of committees to get exactly what he wants. He states no willingness to compromise. Incidentally it is somewhat amusing that he would state that he is not a bully. It is not up to the bully to say that he is or he is not one. The recipients of his attacks feel bullied, so, it is of little consequence what the perpetrator of the action may think of himself. The actions are of a relentless and continuing nature with no basis in fact.

Ms. Gilman's solution to the problem is for the Selectboard to have a work session and review application policies and procedures for EVERY Committee or Board that has facilities that can be applied to for various uses. Ms. Corson's solution was to make a motion to mandate that the Town of Exeter Art Committee meetings be recorded live in the Nowak Room starting with the next meeting. Hmm. I fail to see how either of those options solves the problem. I would call on Ms. Corson or one of the others who voted in favor of that motion to bring forth a motion to reconsider since with a broad brush, that 3-2 vote put an obligation on one board that in no way answers the question of the harassing situation that is the elephant in the room.

We all talk about civility. We talk about it too much. We have taken no action. What I had hoped was that as a board, that night, we would come to a decision; call out the intimidators and let them know that based on facts, their issues are unfounded: Their applications for use of the Gallery have been taken under consideration and voted on in the same way as every other group or organization or person that has come before them. This Selectboard has heard what TEAM and its supporters has had to say, and while we can't change how they may feel about the situation, no evidence exists to support their continued harassment of this Town-sponsored committee. The Town of Exeter Art Committee has provided this board with detailed documentation about the past and recent past leading up to the actions of resignations that are evidenced in this packet. It is a very sad state of affairs when people that were appointed by the Selectboard had to be let down by this Board.

We need to do a better job of supporting all our boards, especially our volunteer boards. It is shameful that we have not supported this committee. They have been driven to resign from a committee in frustration due to our lack of action. I am very disappointed in this board and myself. Clearly, I did not express my concerns in public loudly enough.

Anne L. Surman, Selectwoman
June 18, 2018