

Select Board Meeting
Monday October 28, 2019
Town Offices, Nowak Room
Final Minutes

1. Call Meeting to Order

Members present: Anne Surman, Kathy Corson, Julie Gilman, Molly Cowan, Niko Papakonstantis, and Russ Dean were present at this meeting. The meeting was called to order by Ms. Corson at 6:43 PM.

2. Non-Public Session

MOTION: Mr. Papakonstantis moved to enter into non-public session pursuant to 91A:3:2(a),(b). Ms. Surman seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

The meeting reconvened at 7:02 PM.

3. Public Comment

Members of Exeter's LEGO League team, who ranged from 4th graders to high schoolers, suggested to the Board that they turn the loka into an arcade. They spoke with an architect, who calculated \$2.3 million at most to fix it with a new roof and sprinkler system; the impact to the taxpayers would be around \$39 per year for a \$300,000 home. The loka is in the Nationally Historic Register, so they could seek help like an LCHIP grant for the restoration. They suggested an arcade because it would be kid-friendly, attract more customers to other downtown businesses, and bring in tourists.

Ms. Corson said the Board has discussed the loka, but it hasn't necessarily been an option to buy it. The town has a lot of buildings that they own, such as Town Hall, and they cost a lot of money to maintain. We're renovating our library for \$4.5 million, renovating the Rec Park, and we built a new sewer treatment plant. She too is concerned about the loka, although the sign is now looking good.

Ms. Cowan asked if they had contacted LCHIP, because that's a good proposal. They said they called but hadn't gotten a response. Ms. Cowan said that groups have tried to buy the loka before and haven't been successful. She would be happy to meet with the Lego League to find public/private partnerships and see what other money is in the community. It's a missed opportunity for it to sit crumbling.

Ms. Surman said the arcade was a good idea, and she was impressed by the level to which they'd thought it through, saying that that's how entrepreneurs start. Ms. Gilman said an arcade is a nice idea. She has done some fundraising related to it. They have to deal with the owner. Ms. Corson said the owner might like to talk to them and she will try to arrange it.

4. Proclamations/Recognitions

Ms. Corson said that on Friday the 4th grade at Lincoln Street School celebrated Arbor Day. Several Board members attended and listened to the students' presentation on trees.

Mr. Papakonstantis read the Arbor Day proclamation:

*Whereas, in 1872, J. Sterling Morton proposed to the Nebraska Board of Agriculture that a special day be set aside for the planting of trees, and
Whereas, this holiday, called Arbor Day, was first observed with the planting of more than a million trees in Nebraska, and
Whereas, Arbor Day is now observed throughout the nation and the world, and
Whereas, trees can reduce the erosion of our precious topsoil by wind and water, cut heating and cooling costs, moderate the temperature, clean the air, produce life-giving oxygen, and provide habitat for wildlife, and
Whereas, trees are a renewable resource giving us paper, wood for our homes, fuel for our fires and countless other wood products, and
Whereas, trees in our city increase property values, enhance the economic vitality of business areas, and beautify our community, and
Whereas trees, wherever they are planted, are a source of joy and spiritual renewal,
Now, therefore, we the Select Board of the Town of Exeter do hereby proclaim the 25th of October, 2019 as Arbor Day in the Town of Exeter, and we urge all citizens to celebrate Arbor Day by supporting efforts to protect our trees and woodlands, and
Further, I urge all citizens to plant trees to gladden the heart and promote the well-being of this and future generations.
Dated this 28th day of October, 2019.*

Eileen Flockhart of the Exeter “Tree Team” spoke about their work. They are looking to get a Tree City USA designation for the town. This requires four qualifications: 1) a Tree Board or Committee; 2) tree ordinances; 3) an expenditure of \$2+ per capita for the care and maintenance of trees; and 4) an Arbor Day celebration. To meet the last criteria, they spoke with Lincoln Street School, who said they could celebrate in October, leading to the Arbor Day event last Friday..

Ms. Flockhart said that sometimes Tree Boards or Committees are connected to another group; they initially thought the Sustainability Committee may be a good fit. Ms. Corson recommended they serve as a subcommittee of the Conservation Commission instead, and loop in the Natural Resources Planner. Ms. Gilman will bring it up at the next ConCom meeting.

5. Approval of Minutes

a. Regular Meeting - October 7th, 2019

MOTION: Mr. Papakonstantis moved to approve the Select Board minutes of October 7th, 2019 as submitted. Ms. Gilman seconded. All were in favor.

6. Appointments

Ms. Corson said that Rob Ficara resigned from Recreation Advisory Board so that he can serve on the Friends of Exeter Recreation Board. Ms. Cowan said he will continue to be very involved with the Rec department.

MOTION: Mr. Papakonstantis moved to accept Mr. Ficara’s resignation from the Rec Advisory Board. Ms. Gilman seconded. All were in favor.

7. Discussion/Action Items

a. Public Works Project Updates

Jennifer Perry, the Public Works Director, gave an update on DPW projects.

They're wrapping up construction/paving season. All of the roads on the 2019 list have been paved. Trying to do crack sealing on Portsmouth Ave. Extend the life of existing roadways at a lesser cost. The Lincoln Street project is substantially complete, and the work has enhanced pedestrian safety and parking.

The trihalomethane project, in which they switched from chlorine water treatment to chloramines, has reduced TTHMs by 60-80% depending on the sample site. They are officially in compliance with acceptable limits, and will not be issuing a notice of violation for the first time in many years. Ms. Corson said they should publicize these good results.

Newfields Road is reopened to two-way traffic. Contractor JA Polito finished a month ahead of schedule because they were able to shut the roadway down.

The Epping Road traffic signal was installed at Continental Drive. This was important to improving traffic flow out of Continental to support existing and new businesses there.

Ms. Corson asked Ms. Perry to discuss the issues with trucks loading and unloading on Lincoln Street. Ms. Perry said there aren't any designated loading zones. Some trucks pull into train station area and offload there. Arjays has their own loading area. They could restripe to add a loading zone, but parking spaces are at a premium. The Police Chief said the loading situation isn't ideal, but most people are able to negotiate without undue inconvenience. Mr. Dean said that they are asking people who have negative experiences with trucks on Lincoln Street to call the Police Department.

Ms. Surman asked about the project on Kingston Road. Ms. Perry said they never received the final wetlands permit, so it will not start this year. They're pushing for next year. Dealing with state agencies takes extra time.

Mr. Dean asked for an update on brush handling at the Transfer Station. Ms. Perry said that the Select Board approved fees of \$50 for a large load and \$25 for a small load of brush from commercial landscapers. As of October, they've sold 93 large and 40 small load tickets. They budgeted \$20,000 for brush grinding by the Dirt Doctors. This company did two days of grinding this year, and will return November 4th. They've seen a significant drop-off in brush coming to the transfer station, and she thought commercial landscapers may have found cheaper alternatives. She added that 2019 has not been a heavy tree damage year so far. Overall, the brush grinding is a successful program that has brought things under control.

Ms. Corson asked if this program is sustainable going forward, and Ms. Perry said yes. She felt it was too soon to cut the grinding budget but it could be re-evaluated in 2021.

Jay Perkins said that previously, about 39 contractors frequented the brush dump, and it's now down to about 6 or 7. They still get a lot of residential, but don't charge the residents the same fees. The number is below what they were expecting but he agreed with Ms. Perry that they should stay where they are with the budget for now.

b. Seacoast Farms Products Proposal - Cross Road Landfill Area

Bob Kelly presented a proposal for a composting site at the Cross Road Transfer Station, which could expand the town's sustainability efforts. For the past 20 years, he's been a principal in Seacoast Farms Compost Products, which provide materials to organic farms, landscapers, garden centers, and direct to homeowners. They currently have a headquarters in

Fremont, but the landlord wants to redevelop the property. Mr. Kelly reached out to Mr. Perkins about the Cross Road Landfill, suggesting the company could site its operation there and provide a benefit to the town at the same time, by operating that facility for the town. If they went forward with this proposal, it would save DPW labor and equipment and potentially provide expanded services to town residents.

Ms. Corson asked if they'd thought about adding food composting for residents. Mr. Kelly said they would be open to that. They already have composting relationships with grocery stores and Exeter High School. They don't have the infrastructure to do collection. A local company, Mr. Fox, does that; they used to be a client of Seacoast Farms, and they could potentially partner.

Mr. Papkonstantis said the proposal sounds beneficial to the taxpayers and the DPW. He asked if Primex had reviewed it for any insurance ramifications. Mr. Dean said no, he wanted to get the Board's general reaction before asking Primex. Any company working on town property would have to provide insurance and worker's comp.

Ms. Surman said this sounds like outsourcing, and asked if there's an exchange of money. Mr. Kelly said the plan is not to charge to town. Mr. Dean said they may need a variance from the Zoning Board for this operation. There's also a law on the books which requires the town to collect property taxes for non-governmental use of public property. For example, the Sportsman's Club pays a nominal lease and property taxes. He can consult with legal on the best form of agreement. Any lease agreement that goes past 5 years requires Town Meeting approval.

Ms. Cowan asked if they would take over brush grinding from the Dirt Doctors. Mr. Kelly said no, they don't have the equipment. Wood takes longer to break down than leaves, and is not as beneficial to the compost process. They could help the town manage the pile by keeping it neat. After the grinding, they could look at incorporating the finished part into the compost.

Ms. Corson said she thinks they're all in agreement that they should work together and come up with something. She would love to see the ability to drop off food waste. She asked about their proposal to dig a well, and whether this would be a contaminant concern. Mr. Kelly said they would just be using the water for dust control. They don't need to add water to the piles. He added that they would need electrical power at the site as well.

Ms. Gilman asked whether there would be increased noise that would affect the residents. Mr. Kelly said that traffic during peak periods would be 10 -15 trucks a day; 5 a day in fall; and about zero in winter. They would try to stay away from the residential entrance.

Dan Chartrand of 63 Jady Hill Ave said he's delighted that the Board is interested in pursuing this. Despite the best efforts of the DPW to run compost, this would be a significant upgrade in the output. Seacoast Farms' compost is like gold. It's a win-win and a great idea.

Ms. Corson asked Mr. Kelly to work out the details with the DPW and come back.

Ms. Perry then discussed the Town Hall cupola proposal. The maintenance project list for 2019 included work on Town Hall for the restoration and painting of the cupola, gables, and soffits. These are difficult to access but must be regularly maintained. They have \$100,000 total in the maintenance projects budget, but the scaffolding alone to do this work was near \$60,000. They received an alternative proposal from Limerick Steeple Jacks. They do old-style craftsman work with no scaffolding, mostly suspended, and use manlifts to deliver materials. They can do most of the work for \$48,800. If there's additional work, \$65/hour per worker. These are very

reasonable rates. They have worked with this company in the past, and they do very careful work. It does exceed the town's purchasing policy, since normally contracts over \$25,000 go to bid, but this is a difficult project and it would be very difficult to find someone else. She would like to encumber the remaining \$30-35,000 of the 2019 maintenance budget and dedicate additional money from 2020 to complete this work in Spring.

Mr. Papakonstantis said the Facilities Committee had been supportive of this proposal. Ms. Surman said she's concerned about not going out to bid, since that's going against policy. Ms. Gilman said she's in favor of the historic preservation aspect. The Energy Committee wants to get into the attic to insulate, but can't until the cupola is watertight. She understands Ms. Surman's concerns, and asked if other companies made written proposals. Ms. Perry said no, the estimate on scaffolding alone makes conventional methods of doing this work extremely expensive. Mr. Dean said they have a policy which allows them to "sole source" a contract with written documentation.

Ms. Corson said that they only have a \$100,000 maintenance fund for all buildings, and she would have liked to see this project as a warrant article last year instead of coming from this budget. Voters would like to support work on Town Hall and know it's being done. She agreed that the soffits are in bad shape and must be addressed immediately. Not a lot of people have the skill to do this for a historic building. Ms. Perry said it's not really a capital improvement, just a maintenance item; they need to do it every 10 years or so.

Ms. Surman said that if the work wouldn't start until next Spring, it could still be a warrant article. The maintenance fund was supposed to be spread out, not all spent on one project. Ms. Corson said if it must be a warrant article, they can't award the project to this company, and they lose the timeline. She agreed that they should do it differently next time, the building is severely compromised and they don't want to lose these people. Ms. Perry said that Limerick Steeple Jacks is in high demand and have a backlog. If they went through a Warrant vote and didn't get the funding until March, they wouldn't get this company for next year.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve entering into a contract with Limerick Steeple Jacks for \$48,800 for the restoration of the Town Hall cupola and soffits. Ms. Cowan seconded. Mr. Papakonstantis asked if they needed to include the encumbrance in the motion, and Mr. Dean said no, they can move on the final number at the last 2019 Select Board meeting. Ms. Surman voted nay, and the motion passed 4-1-0.

c. Fund Balance Policy and Discussion

Mr. Dean said they hope to have the tax rate set in the next few days; DRA is still waiting for the school piece. The Board should have their annual discussion about what to apply from the unreserved fund balance to lower the tax rate, and talk about the fund balance policy, which has been in place since 2013. Due to the revaluation, values went up quite a bit, up to a 30% increase. This year, he recommends applying \$708,525. Normally they apply \$600,000, but they got some land use change tax this year that was not applied to the revenue projections. The revenue streams related to the Great Dam and Court Street projects are going away in the next year or two, and by having more reserves on hand they can stabilize that.

They project that applying \$708,525 will bring the tax rate from \$7.25 to \$5.72. The average single family home, which went from \$337,000 to \$437,000 in the revaluation, would see a reduction of \$151.25 on the town share of the tax bill.

Regarding policy, they have a fund balance policy of 5% as a floor; the GFOA floor recommendation is 8%, but as long as you're in the 5%-8% area DRA is happy.

The state sets the tax rate, not the town, so they will finalize the rate and the town will get the word out to the public and begin the billing process. Ms. Corson suggested announcing the tax rate publicly because of the anxiety around the revaluation and the tax rate.

MOTION: Ms. Cowan moved to apply \$708,525 from the unreserved fund balance to lower the town's share of the tax rate. Mr. Papakonstantis seconded. All were in favor.

MOTION: Ms. Cowan moved to certify that this is the certificate. Mr. Papakonstantis seconded. All were in favor.

8. Regular Business

a. Tax, Water/Sewer Abatements and Exemptions

Mr. Dean discussed the assessor's ratio filing, which is a normal part of their process. They take data from sales, do a comparison, and find a sale price median ratio. The COD [coefficient of dispersion] and PRD [price ratio differential] is in line with DRA requirements. Ms. Corson read the certificate:

We the undersigned do hereby certify that the assessment and sales information provided by us on the NH Mosaic Equalization System has been thoroughly reviewed by the Board and is complete and accurate to the best of our knowledge. We understand that this information will be used by the NH Department of Revenue Administration to calculate the municipality's equalization ratio. The equalization ratio will be used to calculate the total equalized valuation for this municipality.

b. Permits & Approvals

Mr. Dean discussed Mr. Bisson's memo about the requirement of a permit for the AOT [Alteration of Terrain] program associated with the Rec Park improvements. The state implemented a new fee schedule, so fees will increase by 250% November 1st, to \$9,375. The permit application will take three months to process, and once approved will be active for five years and can be extended for a further five year period. Having the permit would enable the town to start renovations if the funding were in place. They would like to submit this application before Nov. 1. Ms. Corson said this is not making any decisions for the town, it's just a placeholder. Applying now would be saving the town 250%, which is good.

MOTION: Mr. Papakonstantis moved to approve the application for an Alteration of Terrain Permit through state of NH DES under the AOT program in the amount of \$3,750. Ms. Cowan seconded. Ms. Gilman said "submit" not "approve." Mr. Papakonstantis revised his motion: he moved to approve to apply for an AOT permit through state of NH DES under the Alteration of Terrain program with a fee of \$3,750. Ms. Cowan seconded. All were in favor.

Ms. Corson said that Larry Murphy had applied for a one-day malt and wine license for a fundraiser for military families and veterans, "A Toast to our Troops," on Sunday November 10 from 1 -5. This permit is before the Board because there is alcohol involved. There is a clear

description of the manner in which alcohol will be served to guests, and they have a licensed caterer.

MOTION: Ms. Cowan moved to approve the one-day liquor license for A Toast to our Tropos November 10 from 1-5 PM in Town Hall. Mr. Papakonstantis seconded. All were in favor.

c. Town Manager's Report

- i. They recently extended their natural gas contract. The new pricing is 56.9 cents per therm, a reduction of 35%. This should help the budget.
- ii. The Cable TV franchise fee has an issue identified by legal counsel, has slowed down our renewal process.
- iii. He met with a group on October 15th to discuss the DES new proposed integrated permit for Great Bay. They're looking for the governor to support a peer review process based on what could be in the new permit. They are proposing regulating loads into Great Bay on a cumulative basis, and there are concerns about whether that is valid.
- iv. Newfields Road is open again. He thanked Matt Berube, Jen Perry, and the contractor.
- v. Next Monday, there is an event at the new Wastewater Facility with a State Senator and Representatives. They are coming in to support a bipartisan infrastructure building program, Build Together.
- vi. He attended a Downeaster Meeting. Attendees were impressed by Lincoln Street.
- vii. Public works cleaned up the train station. Each year they block off parking lot for one day to do extra maintenance.
- viii. He attended the Arbor Day celebration at Lincoln Street School.
- ix. The Household Hazardous Waste collection October 19th was well attended, and they received over \$3,800 in donations.
- x. He attended the ICMA Conference last week in Nashville. It was a great conference with valuable sessions. There was a keynote on the "Great Second Rewrite," a societal shift related to smart phones and the recession of 2008. The speaker said self-driving vehicles will be mainstream in 8 - 12 years.
- xi. Trick or Treat is October 31st from 4 - 7 PM, rain or shine.
- xii. The BRC is Wednesday at 6:30. They will discuss the Public Works general budget.

d. Select Board Committee Reports

- i. Ms. Gilman said the Conservation Commission met and had a long agenda. They talked about the misuse of the parking area at the McDonnell property conservation easement. Kristin Murphy is talking with Jay Perkins, the property owner, and Police about solutions. They heard a report on the spread of invasive species from the mower. There was a meeting with reps from the UNH Cooperative Extension to finish planning for the Community meeting in the spring. At the Library meeting, they heard they went over budget for the work. There's a finished design

- update but nothing to look at yet. They heard about special needs such as adult changing tables for the new building, which will be addressed.
- ii. Mr. Papakonstantis attended the Facilities Committee, where Ms. Perry did a presentation. The Planning Board meeting last Thursday was brief; Verizon wireless withdrew application for cell tower, and the subdivision on 100 Linden Street was continued. The Sustainability Committee will meet next Tuesday.
 - iii. Ms. Surman had no meetings.
 - iv. Ms. Cowan had no meetings.
 - v. Ms. Corson attended a parking meeting with Mr. Winham, Ms. Gilman, and Mr. Papakonstantis. There was little support for a parking lot on High Street. Mr. Winham is presenting survey results at the next meeting. At the River Advisory Committee, Melissa Paley from Great Bay WaterKeeper did a presentation on their continuing work on restoring Great Bay. At the Historic District Commission they heard four cases, three of which are on High Street. There was one denial, one was tabled, and there was a design change at 101 High Street which is very appropriate. She went to Exeter Squamscott River Local Advisory Committee meeting to discuss the Library riverwalk and alterations as part of construction; everything was fine. At the meeting of the Swasey Parkway Trustees, they decided to continue with the composite benches they've previously used rather than the type of benches that the town decided on. They made a motion to no longer do granite benches. They found places for six more benches on the Parkway; there are currently 45 benches there.
- e. Correspondence
- i. A letter about the CATV renewal.
 - ii. A letter from the Probate Division regarding the estate of Ann Cashell of 156 Front Street.
 - iii. A letter from Mr. Dean to Governor Sununu, regarding concerns about the proposed EPA integrated permit.
 - iv. A letter from Senator Morgan. Ms. Gilman explained that it discusses the process they went through to get a signed budget, as well as what state aid and school aid are coming back to Exeter.
 - v. A letter from Chief Poulin about the Live Scan machine they obtained.
 - vi. A notice about the DPW Employee of the Summer.
 - vii. A quarterly progress report from Matt Berube of Water/Sewer. They found no CSOs and no SSOs.
 - viii. A letter regarding a wetlands permit for Bert Freedman.
 - ix. A letter from Mr. Glowacky about what Exeter TV can do for your Department/Committee.
 - x. A notice of a Unitil meeting in Portsmouth on October 30th.
 - xi. A notice from Xfinity about channel updates.
 - xii. A draft of the new-format ballot.

9. Review Board Calendar

- a. The next meeting is Tuesday, November 12th, because Monday the 11th is Veteran's Day.

10. Adjournment

MOTION: Mr. Papakonstantis moved to adjourn. Ms. Cowan seconded. All were in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary