

Select Board Meeting  
Monday April 13, 2020  
Remote meeting via Zoom  
Final Minutes

1. Call Meeting to Order

Members present: Julie Gilman, Molly Cowan, Lovey Roundtree Oliff, Daryl Browne, Niko Papakonstantis, and Russ Dean were present at this meeting via Zoom. The meeting was called to order by Mr. Papakonstantis at 7:05 PM.

Mr. Papakonstantis said that gatherings of 10 or more people currently pose a risk to our community. The Select Board meeting is imperative to maintaining the Town of Exeter public services, so per RSA 91-A:2(3)b, this meeting will be conducted without a quorum of this body being physically present in one location. He welcomed the members of the public attending remotely, and said the usual rules of conduct and decorum will apply. All votes will require a roll call vote.

2. Public Comment

a. There was no public comment at this meeting.

3. Proclamations/Recognitions

4. Approval of Minutes

a. Regular Meeting: March 30, 2020

**MOTION:** Ms. Gilman moved to approve the minutes of March 30, 2020 as submitted. Ms. Oliff seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

5. Appointments

a. There were no appointments at this meeting.

6. Discussion/Action Items

a. 2020 Board and Committee Appointments

Mr. Papakonstantis said that some appointees' terms expire at the end of the month, but not all committee members have been approached about serving again yet. The Board should consider taking up the appointments at the next meeting, which is still prior to April 30th. The Board was in agreement.

Mr. Dean said the Select Board policy on appointments states that a person may serve on up to two Boards or Committees, but only one Land Use Board, although the BRC is not included in the two-Committee restriction. The Select Board once a year can have a discussion on the existing Committees and revise the list if necessary. Ms. Gilman said only allowing volunteers to serve on one Land Use Board is contrary to pending State law. Exeter had one volunteer who wanted to serve on both the Planning Board and ZBA. According to the State law, one person can serve on two Land Use Boards, but must recuse themselves in the second instance if the same case comes before both Boards. Mr. Dean said if the Select Board wants to make a more restrictive policy than State law, they're allowed to do that. They want to involve more people as volunteers, not fewer. Mr. Browne said if

it's a small Board, and one member must recuse themselves, they could have an issue getting a quorum. Ms. Gilman said a vote doesn't have to have a quorum, it just has to be a majority of those that are present.

Mr. Papakonstantis said that in Section 5 subsection 7 of Select Board Policy, Committee members that fail to attend 60% of the meetings should be removed from the position. He actually thinks is too low a bar, but asked how to better enforce the existing policy, which is not put into practice currently. They should open the absent members' positions up to other applicants. Mr. Dean said they could ask the Committee Chairs to give an annual report on attendance. Ms. Gilman said 60% was in consideration of volunteers having kids and other commitments. Ms. Cowan said the Water/Sewer Advisory meets so infrequently that if she missed one meeting she would be close to the limit. They do want to make sure there is continuity created by the members consistently being at the meetings.

The Board will consider the appointments at the next meeting.

b. Article 25 Letter - Granite Bridge Pipeline

Mr. Papakonstantis said this Citizen's Petition on the Granite Bridge Pipeline was approved at the recent town election. If passed, the Select Board was to write a letter opposing the Granite Bridge Project. He thanked the sponsors for their patience while the Select Board transitioned to meeting remotely; now they should go ahead and create the letter.

Stephanie Marshall of 7 Nelson Drive, one of the creators of the Citizen's Petition, this project is not likely to go away. Exeter has a key piece in the initial plans for a metering station. As a Citizen's Petition, this is non-binding to the town, but she asked that if Liberty Utilities comes back with a revised plan, they take into consideration the will of the people.

The meeting was interrupted at this point. Mr. Papakonstantis apologized to the public for the vandals who crashed the meeting. The police will investigate.

c. Water Sewer Abatements - Discussion

Mr. Papakonstantis said currently they offer a once-in-10 year abatement of water/sewer bills over the average, up to \$500. He, Ms. Cowan, Mr. Dean and Bob Kelly, the Water and Sewer Chair, discussed revising the policy to allow a greater abatement to those who can prove they didn't know they had a leak. It would still be a one time in 10 years abatement. The ratepayer would also have to prove to DPW that they've fixed the issue.

Ms. Cowan said that previously, the DPW would send an inspector to the house when higher than usual water usage was identified, but that's not safe with social distancing in practice. They're looking for ways to mitigate the risk while still being fair to the public.

Bob Kelly, the Chair of the Water/Sewer Committee, discussed the abatement requests. In March 2019, they revised the policy to give more latitude with abatements. Previously, if it was not the town's system leaking, the ratepayer was fully responsible, but that seemed draconian. It's usually accidental. There are many

requests that exceed \$500, some by people who can't afford to pay the bill. He suggested they abate 80-90% of the overage from an average bill, not 100%, since the resident should have some responsibility. This revised policy may cost the town \$15,000-25,000 per year, out of a \$4 million budget, which is a small price to pay to work with the ratepayers in light of this difficult time and the increase in the rates because of the town's debt service. The Water/Sewer Committee currently has three abatements to consider and the next meeting is scheduled for May. Mr. Papakonstantis asked if the rest of the Water/ Sewer Committee approves of this revision, and Mr. Kelly said yes, a majority of the members were in favor.

**MOTION:** Ms. Cowan moved that Select Board allow for a trial period of 90 days an 80-90% abatement of the amount that represents the overage of the four quarter average of their bill. This would be a one-in-ten-year abatement and would require the verification of the department that the issue has been addressed. Ms. Oliff seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

d. COVID 19 Updates

Assistant Fire Chief Wilking said as of Sunday, 985 NH residents had tested positive for COVID-19. The average is 50 a day, with a high of 81 and low of 31. There were only 35 new positives today, and he suggested that they may have reached a plateau. Rockingham County has had 345 total cases. The State is now providing town data, and Exeter has its 5th case. 23 NH residents have died due to COVID-19, of which three were in Rockingham County. He and James Murray coordinate daily with DHHS and other agencies. They're monitoring all Public Safety employees daily. No employee of the Fire Department has received a positive test, although three are quarantined due to exposure; they will be returning to work this week. The State has been working to create facilities for front line professionals who may need to be quarantined away from home, and there's an MOU with Hampton Inn in Exeter for 65 rooms for first responders, paid for by the state. The call volume remains down, at about 70% of normal. Their stock of PPE remains good but is beginning to be used. They may be a recipient of some of the 91,000 pounds of goods coming into NH. Sig Sauer has offered to donate a number of their N95 masks. He remains engaged with Exeter Hospital on setting up the surge site in Durham; it's ready and just waiting for the need. This facility would serve four area hospitals.

James Murray, the Town Health Officer, is working with food service establishments on meeting the Governor's requirements. He recommended issuing a provisional food service license to the 32 establishments in Exeter whose license renews in April, May, or June, allowing them to operate for up to 90 days without needing to pay their annual food service license. This may provide some relief to restaurants. Ms. Gilman asked if this fee is something they could forgive with federal money rather than deferring. Mr. Dean said they can discuss that in the planning of how to use the federal money. Mr. Browne said he'd rather see it be part of a larger strategy, rather than forgiving debts piecemeal. Ms. Oliff said she wants to ensure it's not just business owners receiving benefits, but also employees.

**MOTION:** Mr. Browne moved to authorize the issuing of provisional licenses for those restaurants whose annual license renewal is due in April, May, or June. Ms. Gilman seconded. Ms. Oliff asked if a business closed before everything got back to normal, would they still be expected to pay what they owe? Mr. Dean said that could be evaluated as a business decision. It's not a lien that they would have a bankruptcy right toward. Mr. Murray said they haven't had that situation before. If a business were to close, it would have been just a license for 90 days. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

Police Chief Stephan Poulin said everyone in the Police Department is 100% healthy now. Three were out on quarantine pending tests, which came back negative. Some officers have spouses that work in the healthcare field who've had exposure. They're no longer seeing calls complaining about other people not quarantining. At the beginning, there had to be some education about the importance of not gathering. Police are continuing to wear PPE when dealing with the public, and they're testing all officers for fevers prior to their shifts. They've also implemented staggered shifts, which limits officer-to-officer contact. The Police worked with the Rec Department and Fire Department and had an Easter parade on Friday. People are getting out on the parkway and trails to get fresh air and exercise. Ms. Oliff asked if Swasey Parkway was being used properly. Chief Poulin said people are doing well out there, they're maintaining their distance.

Mr. Dean said his impression is that things are being handled well community-wide. The next milestone date is May 4, when the Governor's stay at home order will either be extended or modified. The Governor was talking today about the end of school; students likely won't be going back to the classroom before summer vacation, but the decision will be made this week. In correspondence, there's a notice about the CARES Act, the financial package coming to the state, which will provide \$158 million in assistance. They're all working to understand the nuances of that, and Senator Shaheen's office is hosting a call to clarify things this week. Darren Winham has been coordinating with businesses on their needs. Unitil has established a \$225,000 fund to aid those with hardships in paying their utilities.

Mr. Dean said some organizations in town are booked for events at town facilities in May, which are just in a holding pattern. The town will take cues from the Governor's executive order, which limits gatherings to 10 or fewer people. They don't have guidance on whether campgrounds can open, but it has been a subject of discussion in the Public Safety calls. State to state movement may become an issue as the weather gets nicer.

## 7. Regular Business

### a. Tax Abatements, Veterans Credits and Exemptions

**MOTION:** Ms. Gilman moved to approve a Veterans' Credit in the amount of \$500 for 104/17. Ms. Cowan seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

**MOTION:** Ms. Gilman moved to approve a Veterans' Credit with Disability in the amount of \$2,000 for 64/105/42. Ms. Cowan seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

**MOTION:** Ms. Gilman moved to approve Elderly Exemptions in the amount of \$152,251 for the following properties: 95/64/62; 73/83; 85/75; and 95/64/148. Ms. Cowan seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

**MOTION:** Ms. Gilman moved to deny an Elderly Exemption for 68/2. Ms. Cowan seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

- b. Permits & Approvals
  - i. There were no permits and approvals at this meeting.
- c. Town Manager's Report
  - i. Mr. Dean asked that the Board members reach out to Pam McElroy to coordinate providing the necessary signatures at the Town Offices.
  - ii. He's getting department updates each Friday. They're continuing with the quasi-virtual office environment and it seems to be going well.
  - iii. The paving program will kick off this Friday.
  - iv. He met with the parking consultant on the Lincoln Street project. That project may be longer-term than planned, but he feels it's important to continue to work on it. The RFP for equipment is expected to be finalized April 20th.
  - v. The TAP easement process continues, and the paperwork has been mailed out, as well as checks for the easements.
  - vi. Finance is working on the 2019 audit and bond bank applications for the Library and Ground/Surface Water Assessments. They're also creating new accounts for the Federal money and COVID-19 leave. Tricia Allen, the Office Manager at DPW, has done a great job with virtualization of the AP process.
  - vii. Public Works contractors are still working per NH DOT guidance, following the rules of social distancing. There's not as much traffic, so they got the downtown striping done quickly.
  - viii. They put out the annual CIP directive to the department heads.
  - ix. The Town Clerk's office has been supporting Seabrook as their Town Office is quarantined.
  - x. Mr. Papakonstantis asked Mr. Dean if any warrant articles passed in March would be delayed because of the COVID-19 circumstances. Mr. Dean said they're taking a look at that now to see if any should be held. From a revenue perspective, the Town Clerk's Office didn't deviate that much in March. The reality is they may need to consider deferring a couple of things.
- d. Select Board Committee Reports
  - i. Ms. Gilman said her meetings were cancelled but there is a Conservation Commission meeting tomorrow night via Zoom.
  - ii. Mr. Papakonstantis said the Sustainability Committee met via Zoom. Dave Sharples and Julie LaBranche talked about the grant. They also

talked about doing a virtual sustainability fair, and a working group will discuss it with Mr. Sharples prior to the next meeting.

- e. Correspondence
  - i. A letter on behalf of the Arbor Day Foundation, congratulating Exeter for becoming a Tree City USA.
  - ii. A quarterly update to the EPA from Matt Berube in Water/Sewer.
- 8. Review Board Calendar
  - a. Next meetings are April 27, May 4, and May 18.
- 9. Non-Public Session
- 10. Adjournment

**MOTION:** Ms. Gilman moved to adjourn. Mr. Browne seconded. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 9:09 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Joanna Bartell  
Recording Secretary