

Select Board Meeting
Monday, July 13, 2020
6:50 PM
Remotely 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. The meeting was called to order by Mr. Papakonstantis at 6:56 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. Board Interviews

- a. The Board interviewed Grayson Shepherd for a position on the Historic District Commission.

3. Public Comment

- a. Tracy Coviello, an Exeter resident and the owner of Exeter Power Yoga, said she is looking to hold yoga classes in Swasey Parkway with a fee waiver. She's currently holding classes in Townhouse Common, but it's hard to social distance there. Mr. Papakonstantis asked that she wait until the first discussion item, which is relevant to this request.

4. Proclamations/Recognitions

- a. There were no proclamations/recognitions at this meeting.

5. Approval of Minutes

- a. Regular Meeting: June 29, 2020

MOTION: Mr. Browne moved to approve the minutes from June 29, 2020 as presented. Ms. Cowan seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

6. Appointments

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to appoint Grayson Shepherd to the Historic District Commission, term to expire 2023. Ms. Oliff seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

MOTION: Mr. Browne moved to appoint Molly Cowan as the representative to the TIF Board. Ms. Gilman seconded. By a roll call vote, Ms. Cowan abstained, and the motion passed 4-0-1.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to regretfully accept the resignation of Briana Brand from the Energy Committee. Ms. Oliff seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

MOTION: Ms. Cowan moved to reappoint James Murray as the Town Health Officer, term to expire in April 2023. Ms. Gilman seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

7. Discussion/Action Items

a. Town Property Permitting Discussion

Mr. Papakonstantis said that because of the Covid-19 situation, there is ongoing concern from the public regarding large gatherings. He proposed continuing to allow Parks and Rec manage the permitting, but to temporarily have the plan also come before the Select Board for extra vetting and public input. Mr. Browne asked how the Select Board would determine the safety of an event beyond what the Health Officer and Parks and Rec would do. Mr. Papakonstantis said the Board would review the information from the applicant and town staff to make the best determination for the public. Mr. Dean said they'd also like to get public input into some of these permits, as well as on the issue of enforcement of the guidelines.

Mr. Browne asked how they would determine when the temporary period was over. He said there should be a commitment to end the Board's involvement. Ms. Oliff suggested reviewing the process once a month to see if there were updated guidelines or if the process could revert back to town staff. Ms. Gilman and Ms. Cowan agreed that it should be periodically reviewed so that it doesn't go on indefinitely.

Mr. Browne asked if it would be better to give the Parks and Rec department more resources to continue to manage this process independently. Melissa Roy of Parks and Rec said that the State guidelines state that the local entity, which is typically the Select Board, has authority over events. Mr. Dean said under normal circumstances Parks and Rec are well equipped to handle things, but in the Covid-19 situation they'd like the Select Board to have input. Ms. Gilman said they initially gave the authority to town staff because the Board only meets every two weeks, and it caused delays in approvals. Mr. Bisson said the Select Board should weigh in on large events such as the upcoming holiday events.

Tracy Coviello, an Exeter resident and the owner of Exeter Power Yoga, would like to have her yoga class on Swasey Parkway. They're already holding the class in Townhouse Common. She has been applying to Parks and Rec, but hasn't made progress. She is also hoping the Board will waive the fee so that her business can survive. Mr. Papakonstantis asked her to email him so they can work with Parks and Rec on where to put the class.

Kathleen Wilkstrom of 7 Charron Circle said that the discussion about wearing masks at events is confusing. If it's a requirement, that's what it should be called. If it's a suggestion, it shouldn't be enforced. She would like to see more events take place and not have the organizers jump through extra hoops. Mr. Dean said the state guidelines for events are asking that attendees require masks.

Chetana Parmar of Grove Street, the Chair of the Sustainability Committee, said she wants to see the town help local businesses like Tracy's yoga business. She disclosed that she has taught classes there.

Robin Tyner of the Sustainability Advisory Committee said she'd done outdoor yoga classes at the Y and they're healthy events. She would like to see more events like this at Swasey Parkway.

Ms. Gilman emphasized that the town government is expected to execute the State's requirements. She added that she doesn't consider a yoga class an "event," and it could have a different level of requirements than a large-scale event.

Ms. Cowan asked if charging the public by donation only for Swasey events is part of the town ordinance. Mr. Dean said that Swasey Parkway is open to the public, so other than the Powderkeg festival which involves alcohol, tickets cannot be sold and the park cannot be closed. Ms. Gilman said they wouldn't be able to prevent the public from also attending the class, but Ms. Oliff said she didn't feel that was a big concern.

Mr. Bisson said at the time of permitting this yoga class, Swasey Parkway was not open, so they ended up in Townhouse Common. Gilman Park has space. He's happy to work with the Chair and the applicant on this.

James Murray, the Town Health Officer, said it's a good idea to include the Board in the permitting for now. It would open the event permitting to public input, which he thinks is a good thing.

Darren Winham said restaurants go through a vetting process for temporary outdoor dining, and the town could be inclusive of other types of businesses in that process. The applicant reached out to PEA, but they wanted \$50 a day. The town should help these businesses if they can.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to amend the Application for Town Facility Use to provide for Select Board approval for a period of 21 days from July 13th, 2020. Mr. Dean asked if they could make it 30 days. Ms. Gilman amended her motion to have Select Board approval last until August 31st. Ms. Cowan seconded.

Mr. Browne said he was concerned that this would open them up to criticism about whether they approve or deny an event. Ms. Gilman said they have to draw lines on events, as waivers and other allowances can be a slippery slope. If they meet or do not meet the criteria to the Board's satisfaction, the Board can go against the Health Officer and Parks and Rec recommendations. Mr. Browne said that they should strengthen their policies rather than change the process. Mr. Dean said they're still in the beginning stages of permitting under these guidelines, and he would like the Board and the public to have insight into the events at first. Mr. Browne said he agrees but would like to see this go back to the previous process as soon as possible.

By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

b. Arts and Culture Advisory Commission Proposal

Mr. Papakonstantis said he's been working on a draft of an Arts Commission proposal for quite some time. Ms. Cowan said they are currently reimagining what the town looks like, so this is a good time to consider it, adding that Enna Grazier first suggested it in November of 2018. Mr. Papakonstantis invited the Board and the public to review the proposal so they can discuss it at a future meeting.

c. Second Reading Animal Control Ordinance Amendment

Ms. Gilman read the deletion from section 9:10 of the Town Ordinances, Section C, *Gilman Park off Bell Avenue*, which will allow the public to have dogs under control in the geographic confines of Gilman Park. Mr. Papakonstantis said there would be one more public reading of this change.

d. PEA Reopening

William Rawson, the Principal of Phillips Exeter Academy, discussed the fall reopening of the school. They are planning to bring all students back, but in a staggered way. First they will allow back the "student leaders," about 100 students, on Labor Day; 11 and 12th graders will be brought back three days later; and 9th and 10th graders will be brought back two weeks after that. Most instruction will be online. There will be extensive Covid testing, and they will not allow students to go into town until they've had two negative tests. Day students will be going home each day, but other students will be limited in their movements. They will be shifting to mostly single dorms, and will use Exeter Inn as a dormitory to de-densify the dorms. They will rely heavily on masks. If they have a positive case, the student will be treated in-house; contacts will be identified and quarantined. If reasonable, families will come and collect the students, but they've also set up a modular unit with 40 quarantine spaces. They're working with six independent medical experts as well as an engineering firm on their plans, and reviewing guidelines from the MA and NH State governments.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked what measures they'll take with students who do not comply with the restrictions. Mr. Rawson said if they have a student who won't comply, they will be sent home to learn remotely. Families also have the choice for students to learn remotely and have their fee adjusted to a day student charge.

Karen Lassey, the Assistant Principal, said they've also been engaged in a conversation with the State on these reopening plans.

e. Sustainability Coordinator Position

Dave Sharples, the Town Planner, said that he prepared a list of his sustainability activities, and the position description the SAC prepared for the Sustainability Coordinator dovetailed with his work. Mr. Browne said that issues touching sustainability could cross departments, so how would someone positioned within a department address them? Mr. Sharples said he would

shepherd anything to do with sustainability, limited only by the time that he can allot to the tasks.

Mr. Winham said the Planning Board and Conservation Commission already limit the damage a developer can do to the local environment. Having a Sustainability Advisory Committee is a positive thing, but in terms of recruitment, he's looking more for fit between the company, town, and workforce rather than strictly a sustainable business. If Mr. Sharples wanted to recruit businesses that were sustainable, he would support that.

Chetana Parmar, the Chair of the Sustainability Committee, said that sustainability is a huge umbrella, and having a coordinator to be a resource for sustainability projects, whether it be research, information, or grants, would enhance the town's work. They are running out of time to do this work, and they all want a healthy and sustainable environment. It will also attract residents and businesses who want to live in a healthier environment.

Mr. Papakonstantis said the request was to approve the job description in the packet, but he would rather see it go back through the vetting of the BRC. They don't know what the town's budget will be like this year, and he does not want to see any existing town services cut due to Covid-19. Sustainability is an important initiative, but that's why they implemented the committee and charged Mr. Sharples with working on these issues.

Mr. Browne said Mr. Sharples has done very well and realized savings on a part time basis, so if they give more resources to this they should realize more savings. Mr. Papakonstantis said that Article 31 was written as if it would pay for itself. He thinks that will be true, but they should create the gap analysis to show how this position will pay for itself.

Ms. Cowan said she wants to hear from other department heads where sustainability is a thread prior to the BRC process, so they can focus on what the town needs.

Robin Tyner of the Sustainability Committee said that things have not changed since the position has been created, other than the Covid-19 situation. Other places have tried committees but found they achieved much more with a dedicated coordinator, even if they were part time.

Mr. Papakonstantis said they were all saying they feel this is important and they want it to succeed. They'll get a Coordinator when the budget permits it. The job description is not a problem and he doesn't think it needs revisions. The BRC was looking at the budget when they did not approve the position.

Chetana Parmar said at the last Sustainability Advisory meeting a document was presented on where they are currently, and it involves different departments. She suggested Julie LaBranche share that document with department heads so they can fill in anything they're currently doing.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked Mr. Dean if the position would be in the budget for next year. Mr. Dean said last year they put some funds together and put it forward in the process, so if there is support from the Board they could do it the same way. Ms. Gilman said she has no problem approving this job description,

although it might change due to the budget. Municipalities are unlikely to get further funding for Covid-19 relief. Ms. Cowan asked if they're not in a financial place to approve this job, what will happen to it? She would like to approve it in concept. Mr. Papakonstantis said they could at least give Mr. Sharples a little more funding. Ms. Gilman said if they create the position and the BRC says no, they could fund it at \$1 and just not fill it.

MOTION: Mr. Browne moved to approve the Sustainability Coordinator job description as created by the SAC as of October 2019. Ms. Oliff seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

f. Proposal for Pocket Park for Jude & Rhoda Hall - Renay Allen

Renay Allen, an Exeter resident, proposed creating a small park as part of Swasey Parkway to commemorate the Black community of Exeter, especially its patriots. She asked the Select Board to form a group with representatives from multiple and diverse groups to refine the proposal further. Mr. Browne agreed to serve as a representative to this group from the Board.

g. COVID 19 Updates

Chief Wilking said the Fire Department has seen a return to normal call volume over the last 60 days, and their revenue is tracking back to pre-Covid. Covid-19 infection numbers continue to steadily settle down. There were three positive tests in the last few weeks, but those are the only people they're tracking. He hasn't heard back from FEMA on an additional request for \$20,000 in reimbursements.

Mr. Murray said the Farmer's Market moving back to Swasey went very well. They had some initial flow issues which were corrected.

Darren Winham said Employment Security is launching a new job search tool to connect job seekers with open positions. If they don't continue the July 31st unemployment, there will be a lot of people looking for work. SELF for self employed businesses is taking applications. The VFA Gap Fund is a grant, not a loan, to assist businesses that have not been able to access state Covid resources. PPP through August 8th. Helping businesses with these resources.

Mr. Bisson said the CareKids program is going well, they still have 28 participants. They received a grant from the State of NH for Emergency Child Care at \$100,000 this summer; they can also continue with a fall program and get an additional \$8,000. They also received cleaning supplies. They hired additional staff with these funds. The movies are going well, and more people are showing up for the drive-in concerts.

Mr. Dean said the Town Offices reopened, which is going well so far. People are generally being respectful of the requests to wear masks and use hand sanitizer. They're looking for people to make appointments and use online services when possible. The Amtrak Downeaster is increasing its service July 31st. There were some questions about dog licensing and civil forfeiture; he checked, and the State regulations are a "shall." He checked in with other towns and they're pursuing it too. The ability to register dogs was still an option when the Town Offices were closed to the public.

8. Regular Business

a. Tax Abatements, Veterans Credits and Exemptions

- i. There were no abatements, credits, or exemptions.

b. Permits & Approvals

Mr. Bisson asked for authorization to expend \$6,350 for Brickyard Park, which is infested with a turf disease. They will improve drainage and close the park down for 6 - 8 weeks to help the grass regrow. They will be working with Organic First Turf Company.

MOTION: Mr. Browne moved to allow Parks & Rec to expend \$6,350 out of the Parks Improvement Fund to contract Organic First for emergency repair and disease remediation for Brickyard Park. Ms. Cowan seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

Mr. Bisson asked for authorization to expend \$8,900 from impact fees for additional playground chips for Kids' Park. In order to achieve the correct density, they had to use an unanticipated amount of woodchips. The woodchips need to fall under an ASTM compaction rating, which required 12" of these chips where they had anticipated 10". They purchased 156 yards at \$45 a yard. The contractor also removed tripping hazards from the park.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to expend \$8,900 out of Recreation Impact Fees for additional materials and timber removal for Kids' Park Playground. Mr. Browne seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

c. Town Manager's Report

Mr. Dean said that taxes were 92% collected by July 2nd. Despite initial concerns, that is about where they normally are.

d. Select Board Committee Reports

- i. Ms. Gilman said the Historic District Commission had a demolition review of a barn and two houses on Kingston Road; there was nothing to recommend they remain. The HDC is having a sitewalk at the loka tomorrow at 10, but they will only be able to go into the lobby. Thursday is the final hearing on the loka.
- ii. Ms. Oliff had a Swasey Parkway Trustees meeting, where they discussed the pocket park project, the sewer siphon project, pavilion repairs, and installing a kiosk at the front of the Parkway for rules and notices. The kiosk was proposed but not voted on. The Housing Committee will be presenting at the next Select Board meeting.
- iii. Mr. Browne had no meetings, but will have a Communications and a Facilities meeting this week.
- iv. Ms. Cowan attended a Planning Board meeting, but there was a problem with the case, the applicant decided not to appear.

e. Correspondence

- i. Mr. Papakonstantis expressed his concerns about Board interactions with correspondence and social media, and what constitutes a "meeting." He

asked if they could reach out to NHMA for a training on RSA 91A procedures.

- ii. The Board received a letter regarding a proposed donation of a tree. Mr. Dean will give it to the Trustees of the Parkway.
- iii. Town Moderator Paul Scafidi would like to meet with the Town Clerk, Select Board, and Supervisors of the checklist to coordinate on the upcoming election. Mr. Dean will coordinate this meeting.

9. Review Board Calendar

- a. The next meeting is July 27th.

10. Non-Public Session

- a. There was no non-public session at this meeting.

11. Adjournment

MOTION: Ms. Oliff moved to adjourn. Mr. Browne seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor, and the meeting adjourned at 10:30 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary