

Select Board Meeting
Monday August 10, 2020
7 PM
Remotely via Zoom
Final Minutes

1. Call Meeting to Order

Members present: Julie Gilman, Molly Cowan, Lovey Roundtree Oliff, Niko Papakonstantis, and Russ Dean were present at this meeting. Daryl Browne was not present. The meeting was called to order by Mr. Papakonstantis at 7 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. Town Moderator re: State Primary Election Update

Paul Scafidi, the Town Moderator, gave an update on the election planning. Today he visited the SST Building with Rusty Lyster, the SAU Director of Facilities, and Mr. Lyster is in full agreement with their plan to move the public in and out. The building will not be open to students until October, so that will not be an issue during voting. According to the Secretary of State's legal counsel, the moderator has the authority to require everyone wear a mask to enter the building; however, those without masks still have to be allowed to vote, so the town must find a way to let them vote without entering the building. Voters without masks will be asked to go to the Linden Street entrance, where staff will check in the voter and get their ballot from the official keepers of the checklist. Curbside voting will also be in place. If a resident doesn't want to go into the building, they can drive up on Linden Street and be given an absentee ballot. Whereas before the State said no hand sanitizer, now they're saying people must sanitize their hands before they vote.

Ms. Gilman said there was a recommendation for long-term care facility residents to stay separate from other voters. Mr. Scafidi said he would like to do so, but they're going to have difficulty manning all these separate stations. Andie Kohler, the Town Clerk, said the residential homes she's spoken with are trying to get their residents to fill out absentee ballots. Those people should stay home. The Town Clerk's office has already received 1,000 requests for absentee ballots. Mr. Scafidi said using absentee ballots wherever possible will help the whole process.

Ms. Gilman asked whether the electioneering would be socially distanced. Mr. Scafidi said yes, everyone in line and behind the barriers must be socially distanced, and there will be marks on the ground to guide them.

Ms. Oliff asked if they would have volunteers Covid tested before the voting. Mr. Scafidi said no, they've been told they don't have to. Everyone will be wearing masks.

Chief Wilking said if volunteers are not feeling well, they should not show up to work. He offered to send people from the FD for a health screening on the volunteers at the start of the day.

Mr. Dean asked if they were looking for more election volunteers. Ms. Kohler said about half of her usual balloteers have agreed to work the polls. They'll have a better idea of how many workers they'll need as they get more absentee ballot requests.

3. Public Comment

a. There was no public comment at this meeting.

4. Proclamations/Recognitions

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

5. Approval of Minutes - July 13, 2020 and July 27, 2020

MOTION: Ms. Cowan moved to table the minutes from July 13 and 27 until the next meeting. Ms. Gilman seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor, and the motion passed 4-0.

6. Appointments - Recreation Advisory Board, Sustainability Advisory Committee

MOTION: Ms. Cowan moved to table the appointments until the next meeting. Ms. Gilman seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor, and the motion passed 4-0.

7. Discussion/Action Items

a. Housing Advisory Committee: Exeter Multi-Story Unit Map

Nancy Belanger of the Housing Advisory Committee gave a presentation and showed a video that Dave Sharples, the Town Planner, had put together on the multi family story map. At the next HAC meeting, the committee will discuss how to further distribute this information to the public.

b. Greenhouse Gas Inventory Update - Rachel Nadolny, UNH Intern

Rachel Nadolny gave a presentation on her work on the Greenhouse Gas Inventory. Wastewater Treatment, Mobile Combustion, and Electricity are the biggest contributors by percentage. She recommends an emission reduction target of 30% reduction by 2030 and net zero by 2050.

c. New England Municipal Sustainability Network (NEMS) Letter of Intent

MOTION: Ms. Oliff moved to table the NEMS vote until the next meeting. Ms. Gilman seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

d. Quarterly Financial Report - Finance Director

Doreen Chester, the Town Finance Director, presented the financial report as of June 30th. She said there had been some concern about revenues in light of Covid-19, but tax revenues came in very strong at 97% collected. \$24.5 million was billed and \$23.8 million was collected by July 1. There was an overall revenue drop for all General Fund revenues, but not a severe one: it was \$43,300 less than last year, \$41,000 of which was in Motor Vehicle revenue. In Building and Permits, last year was unusually strong, and there was a decrease of \$152,000 this year. The Federal GOFER program, which provides Covid relief funds, was responsible for \$345,000 in revenue this quarter.

First Responder Stipends provided \$300 a week for eight weeks for all certified Police Officers and Firefighters. There was a Blue Bag revenue increase of \$24,000. There was \$7,000 in alarm revenue. There was a \$4,600 increase in police details.

General Fund expenses were at \$8.7M; 43% of the entire budget was spent. They slowed down the spending this year, typically they're at 50-52% spent. The Police Department was at \$1.68M spent, or 45% of their budget. There was a savings in Prosecution services; they're now using inside help, resulting in a \$63,000 decrease in wages. There was a retirement of the Fire Chief in the second quarter, and expenses went up due to an NHRS payment of \$13,000 for his sick leave buyout. Public Works was at \$2.25M, or 40% spent. There was an open position for a Water/Sewer Tech who left in January. The snow removal expenses were down significantly, \$122,000 less than the prior year. Maintenance expenses are down. There was extra cleaning related to Covid, but it was submitted for Federal reimbursement. Parks and Rec was at 47% spent, a net decrease of \$15,000. There were less contracted services in Parks. At the Library, there were some decreases. The part time employees weren't paid from April through July because of the shutdown.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked what expenses they expect from the upcoming elections. Ms. Chester said the budget for the elections is typical, the only unknown is the Covid expenses. She doesn't know about any additional funds coming from the State to cover them. Mr. Papakonstantis asked if Blue Bag revenue is offsetting the solid waste costs. Ms. Chester said it's not a full offset; they don't charge so much that people don't dispose of their garbage properly. Mr. Papakonstantis asked if, with the Library closed, there will be any savings from the renovation project finishing earlier than anticipated. Ms. Chester said there's actually been a delay in the Library project, since the contractors are waiting longer for materials. The project will not be finalized until May 2021 now.

Ms. Gilman asked whether the IT staff used at remote meetings could be covered by Covid funds. Ms. Chester said they've expended the GOFER funds; much of it was for first responders. She's not aware of further funds coming, but they're still tracking the hours related to Covid-19. Mr. Dean said FEMA is a possible reimbursement stream for that. They're looking at 75/25% reimbursement for election precautions, virtual meetings, etc. Chief Wilking said FEMA has approved their first application package, and they're now gathering invoices for a second package. They were attempting to gather all GOFER Fund claims as quickly as possible to move on to other projects, so they may have missed some departments. They'll gather every dollar they can. Mr. Dean said they budgeted \$30,000 for the 2020 elections, but the upcoming elections will certainly go beyond that.

In the Water Fund, there was a rate increase last October. They're \$1.78M or 47% collected at the end of the 2nd quarter. There was an increase of \$66,000 in Water Consumption charges, for a total of \$1.43M. There was also a service rate charge increase. Water Fund receivables were at \$476,000, with current billing outstanding at \$457,000. Water and Sewer Departments will resume shut offs this quarter, which will bring the outstanding numbers down. Mr. Dean said he talked to the Deputy Tax

Collector, who indicated that the list of shut offs was consistent with prior quarters, so there was not a big surge in new customer shut offs.

Water Fund expenditures were at \$1.46M, or 41% spent. In Water Administration, there was an increase due to Wages, Taxes and Benefits budgeted, offset by a Water Sewer Technician position which has been vacant since January. This position is split 50/50 with Sewer. Water Billing Expenses was at 44% spent or \$78,000, a decrease of \$9,000. There was \$6,700 less in benefits due to changes in health plans. There was a decrease in overtime wages. Water Distribution was at \$316,000, or 38% spent. There was a YOY decrease of \$61,000, some of that due to timing of water tank maintenance. Debt Service was at \$453,000, increased due to the Surface Water Treatment Plant and utilities. Water income was at \$307,000, a decrease of \$156,000, but this should even out due to increased rates.

The Sewer Fund was at 39% collected. There were revenue increases due to rate increases. Usage charges were up \$1.2M over the prior year. They paid debt Service for the Sewer Treatment plant. New septage fees were established in July, and this is a new line item. In Sewer Fund Expenses, they were 17% spent at \$1.32M; the budget went up significantly in anticipation of the payment in December. There is a \$1.4M budget for the Wastewater Treatment plant, due to additional technicians, more electricity, more chemicals, and other costs of supporting a bigger operation. The Sewer Fund Debt Service will see a \$4.3M payment in December. There was a \$900,000 increase in net income in the Sewer Fund.

In CATV, there was a net deficit, mostly due to the Comcast Payments being out of sync with the town calendar. Part time wages were down, since there were not as many events to film. There's a \$47,600 deficit, which is expected to turn around by the end of the year. The Recreation Revolving Fund is not doing well due to the pandemic; they cancelled spring sports and summer programming. \$23,000 came in from the CareKids program.

EMS was flat YOY. The run volume is now starting to pick up, but calls for service were down in the first two quarters. They received a grant for ambulance services from the Federal CARES Act, which will provide \$25,600 reimbursement for uninsured patients taken in for Covid services.

e. Animal Control Ordinance Amendment - Gilman Park

MOTION: Ms. Oliff moved to table this amendment reading until the next meeting. Ms. Gilman seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor, and the motion passed 4-0.

f. Mask Ordinance Discussion

Mr. Papakonstantis said there's a provision under NH RSA 147 to allow the requirement of wearing masks in town. The CDC and the World Health Organization are saying in order to stay safe from the virus people should wear masks, with some exemptions. The Board received a lot of emails from town residents supporting a mask ordinance. The Board could charge Mr. Dean and James Murray, the Public Health Officer, with crafting a draft mask ordinance, which would come back to the Board at the next meeting for a public hearing, at

which time the Board could vote on it. At least three members of the Board would sign, and it would be processed by the Town Clerk.

Ms. Oliff said she's in favor of masks being worn indoors and in outdoor settings involving close proximity. Ms. Gilman said she would also like to move forward with a mask ordinance. With pandemic numbers rising in NH, it's wise to go beyond a "strong recommendation." She would like to include outdoor spaces as well. Mr. Papakonstantis said with the lack of Federal and State leadership, they should take initiative as a local board. They should focus on the enforcement question, as they don't want vigilantes to enforce it. Ms. Cowan said she would also be in support of a mask ordinance. She's interested in getting kids back to school as quickly and safely as they can. She also wants to make sure that workers in local businesses are not the ones having to enforce mask wearing. The Board needs to take responsibility and ensure all residents are safe. They could have narrowly defined exemptions. PEA is coming back in person, with people from all over the country, so it's important to protect people.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked for public comment.

Anne Surman of 14 Cullen Way said she would like to see this ordinance pass before voting day. Mr. Scafidi had concerns about staffing the elections, and if people knew everyone would wear a mask they may get more volunteers.

Heidi Heath of 10 Chestnut Street said she believes this is not an optional choice, given PEA's decision to bring students back.

Michael Palma of 44 McKay Drive asked if they have an endpoint or objective to this proposed ordinance. He's a medical doctor and hasn't seen any data that proves that wearing masks prevents viral transmission. Mr. Papakonstantis said the Board would listen to the CDC and other medical experts. He doesn't think they could put a finite date on this.

Hilary Justice said that this ordinance would resolve the ambiguity around wearing masks. She suggested the Board put in a periodic review every three or six months.

Sheri Gushta of 24 Woodridge Lane said a mask ordinance is important given the PEA students coming back. There are too many people walking downtown without masks.

Mark Whitney of Exeter Hospital said this ordinance would help us protect the community, both from a public health and an economic perspective. This will help to maintain the reopening of businesses. Masking is a big reason that the hospital has been able to keep its staff and patients safe.

Mr. Papakonstantis closed the discussion to the public.

Darren Winham said he spoke with other communities on this issue, and they said the businesses are asking the towns to pass this kind of ordinance. He's also heard this from Exeter businesses. They felt that customers would feel safer and come out more.

Ms. Oliff said she's in favor of masks in any indoor location, but they should specify what they mean by outdoors. In neighborhoods and more rural areas, it's easier to stay apart. She's reluctant to put the enforcement with the

Police Department. Ms. Gilman said they could define it as the Downtown area and Lincoln Street where there is dense retail, plus Portsmouth Street.

Mr. Dean said the NH statute is written so that the original proposal comes from the Health Officer, and the Board discusses it and makes the determination.

James Murray, the Health Officer, said he's reviewed other community ordinances. Hanover has an end date of the 61st day to readdress the issue. Nashua has an end date of when the Covid-19 Emergency Order #4 is rescinded by the state. He would like to hear an age recommendation from the Board; the CDC recommends no one under the age of 2 wear a mask. Mr. Papakonstantis said Mr. Murray should also consider exemptions for pre-existing health conditions covered under the ADA. Ms. Oliff said they should look at what the SAU would have done, as well as what other countries are doing.

MOTION: Ms. Cowan moved that the Health Officer should draft a mask ordinance for the Select Board to review at the Aug 24 Select Board meeting that would also serve as a public hearing pursuant to RSA 147:1. Ms. Gilman seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor, and the motion passed 4-0.

g. COVID 19 Updates

- i. Chief Wilking said he wanted to emphasize the importance of a mask ordinance. Over the last month they're tracking a slight uptick in NH cases; they've gone from 25/day to 28/day over the past month. Exeter had 5 residents in the last two weeks test positive, more than before. The PPE supply is still strong. Mr. Murray was able to acquire more for the election.
- ii. Darren Winham said the Gateway at Exeter project is moving ahead; this would be 234 apartments, 25% of which is workforce housing, plus commercial space. He's working with four other small projects which are using the MUND zoning change. Local businesses are hoping for another stimulus package on the Federal level. On the State level, the Main Street Relief Fund and its appeal period are complete, and the Self-employed Fund is complete. The NH Gap fund will be paid out or denied by Aug 18, when the appeal period begins.
- iii. Greg Bisson said CareKids is going very well. They've extended the program for another week at a significant discount, and a number of kids have signed up. Different organizations are looking to see if they should run youth sports this fall. With schools going remote, sports would be a good chance for socialization. Everyone would wear masks until they get on the field to play, and they would limit attendance numbers. All kids would come from within SAU16, and they will try to pair the kids by community for less exposure. They would hire a field supervisor to monitor the games and sanitize equipment.

MOTION: Ms. Oliff moved to approve the modified fall sports program for Parks and Rec to begin on September 21st. Ms. Gilman seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

8. Regular Business

a. Tax Abatements, Veterans Credits and Exemptions

i. There were no abatements or exemptions at this meeting.

b. Permits & Approvals

Mr. Bisson gave an update on the TEAM Arts Festival planned at Swasey Park. There were originally 20 vendors, but some have dropped out. He's waiting to hear final numbers. Mr. Papakonstantis said the anticipated number of guests is 500 over 7 hours; that could be 50 or 500 or more at a time. The guideline needs to be a six foot distance between people. Can they calculate the maximum occupancy of the Parkway? Mr. Murray said per state guidelines, any outdoor event should not be limited as to capacity. As long as there are enough volunteers to monitor social distancing, that should be adequate. He calculates that the festival would need at least seven volunteers in various areas. If they were going to do health screenings, it would be more like 10 volunteers.

Ms. Oliff said the Board needs to be consistent in their messaging and what they do going forward. If they don't want to have events taking place, that has to be across the board. She's heard that there are problems with social distancing at the Farmer's Market. Ms. Cowan said their number one priority should be to get kids back in school. If the consistent messaging is that they won't have events, then they shouldn't have the Farmer's Market as well. Ms. Gilman said they approved this event in July. She added that maintaining social distancing at the Farmer's Market was part of that event's approval. Mr. Dean said they would look at the Farmer's Market this week and see what's going on.

Mr. Papakonstantis said he's enjoyed the TEAM Arts Festival in the past but is concerned about the numbers. He read the previous motion voted on by the Board, and asked if all protocols have been met as stipulated. Mr. Bisson said yes, they've met all the guidelines. Mr. Murray agreed.

Anne Surman of 14 Cullen Way said it's a fluid situation. They shouldn't feel badly as Board if they change their vote because things have changed. The town can take more conservative measures than the state guidelines.

Rev. Heidi Heath said she's opposed to this event. They're supporters of the arts community and appreciate TEAM contributions, but the public health of the community is more important. People aren't having weddings and funerals because it's not safe but they can have this event?

Mr. Papakonstantis closed the discussion to the public.

Ms. Cowan said this event is now planned for August 22nd, which is just two weeks before school is scheduled to begin. It doesn't look like students are returning in person until October, and the administration is working to make it as safe as possible. School staff have had threats of violence. Voting must be safe as possible and absentee ballots should be used if possible. All other festivals have been cancelled for public health reasons. They don't know how many

people will show up to the TEAM Festival, and don't have a mandate to require masks in time. It's a public park, and attendance can't be limited. The number of volunteers will likely not be sufficient. She's not willing to risk community spread and the return to in-person school.

MOTION: Ms. Cowan moved to deny the permit. Ms. Gilman seconded. Ms. Oliff asked why they have voted yes at every step. Ms. Gilman said they didn't have the same information then. This would be a great event, but things have changed since they approved it. Mr. Papakonstantis said this event was initially permitted before Covid-19. Across the country and the world, they've seen that large events mean a surge. All other local events have been cancelled. If kids can't go to school and the elderly can't leave their house, it would be irresponsible to permit this, especially two weeks before school start. Ms. Gilman said other festivals are known to have a larger attendance, since people are eager to get out of the house. Mr. Papakonstantis said they don't know what attendance will be, they can't base it on years past. Ms. Oliff voted nay, while Ms. Cowan, Ms. Gilman, and Mr. Papakonstantis voted yes. The motion passed 3-1 and the permit was denied.

Mr. Bisson said EYSA (Youth Soccer) has proposed running a fall season. They ran different protocols by Mr. Bisson and Mr. Murray, and they both recommend the plan.

Marc Chabot of EYSA said they would stay in an intramural format rather than travel. It makes more sense to stay local. They would not only be using Exeter fields, also Brentwood, Stratham, and CMS. They would restrict practice by age group. They will do temperature checks and ask Covid screening questions.

Jason Faria of EYSA, a resident of 16 High Street, described the screening protocol they will follow.

Mr. Murray said he was satisfied with the proposal.

MOTION: Ms. Oliff moved to allow Exeter Youth Soccer Association the request to use the Exeter Rec fields this fall under the proposal submitted 8/10/2020. Ms. Gilman seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor and the motion passed 4-0.

Mr. Bisson said that Exeter Youth Softball has proposed an end of year Jamboree with four other teams, with a total of 150-200 people. They would observe social distancing and wear masks. Mr. Murray said his concerns were the number of volunteers, but after talking with the organizers it seems adequate. Ms. Oliff said to be consistent she can't see how this is different from the TEAM festival. Ms. Cowan said this event is inviting community spread. Mr. Papakonstantis said the group could find private property to hold this on. This doesn't seem controlled.

MOTION: Ms. Cowan moved to deny the permit for a softball jamboree tournament of August 29th. Ms. Gilman seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor and the motion passed 4-0.

MOTION: Ms. Oliff moved to table the planned discussion about the tennis and basketball courts to the next meeting. Ms. Gilman seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor and the motion passed 4-0.

- c. Town Manager's Report
 - i. Mr. Dean said the Budget Recommendations Committee meets Wednesday for their first meeting.
 - d. Select Board Committee Reports
 - i. Ms. Oliff said the Swasey Trustees would like to maintain the closure to vehicles of Swasey Parkway.
 - ii. Ms. Cowan had no meetings.
 - iii. Ms. Gilman attended the Heritage Commission. One member was going to reach out to Renay Allen about another location for her proposed memorial which is closer to Park Street. At the HDC meeting, they approved the temporary removal of the marquee from the Ioka Building during the restoration.
 - iv. Mr. Papakonstantis said the Sustainability Advisory Meeting was cancelled due to no quorum.
 - e. Correspondence
 - i. A memo from Public Works Director Jennifer Perry recommending the water restrictions stay in place.
 - ii. Mask ordinance correspondence
 - iii. A notice of the HDC decision about the Ioka Marquee
 - iv. A FEMA Rockingham County Coastal Flood Map Update
 - v. A memo from the Dept of Transportation regarding Highway Block Grant Aid, \$297,933.26 to be paid in four installments for FY 20-21
 - vi. A letter from the President of the Regional Development Center
9. Review Board Calendar
- a. The next meetings are Aug 24 and 31.
10. Non-Public Session
- a. There was no non-public session at this meeting.
11. Adjournment

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to adjourn. Ms. Oliff seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 11 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary