

Select Board Meeting  
Monday December 7, 2020  
7 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 7:04 PM. Mr. Papakonstantis read a statement:

As Chair of the Select Board, I find that due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with the Governor's Emergency Order #12 this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

Public notice of this meeting was posted on the town website and on the bulletin board of the town offices at 10 Front Street. As provided in that public notice, the public may access the meeting online and via phone.

Please note that all votes taken during this meeting shall be done by roll call vote. Let's start the meeting by taking a roll call attendance. When each member states their presence, please also state whether there is anyone in the room with you during this meeting and who that person is (son, daughter, spouse, etc...), which is required under the Right-to-Know law.

2. Board Interviews

- a. There were no interviews at this meeting.

3. Public Comment

4. Proclamations/Recognitions

Mr. Papakonstantis thanked Andy Swanson for dealing with an IT issue at the Town Offices.

5. Approval of Minutes

- a. Regular Meeting: November 23, 2020

**MOTION:** Ms. Cowan moved to accept the minutes of November 23, 2020 as submitted. Mr. Browne seconded. Ms. Gilman was not yet present so Ms. Cowan called the roll, and the motion passed 4-0.

6. Appointments

**MOTION:** Mr. Browne moved to appoint Conor Madison to the Conservation Commission, with a term to expire April 30, 2022. Ms. Oliff seconded. Ms. Gilman was not yet present so Ms. Cowan called the roll, and the motion passed 4-0.

**MOTION:** Ms. Oliff moved to appoint Adam Dumville to the Sustainability Advisory Committee, term to expire April 30, 2021. Mr. Browne seconded. Ms. Gilman was not yet present so Ms. Cowan called the roll, and the motion passed 4-0.

7. Discussion/Action Items

a. HB1129 - Town Counsel Walter Mitchell

Attorney Walter Mitchell said that the legislature has provided an option for an alternative to the traditional SB2 process for Deliberative Session and voting. The Select Board must decide whether to opt into this alternative process. There would be two informational meetings, starting around the normal date of Deliberative Session. The first session would be conducted by the Select Board to explain the articles on the warrant. Members of the public can watch and listen, but not comment. There's a seven day comment period, then another informational meeting at which the Select Board members discuss among themselves the input they've received and decide whether to amend any articles. The next step is voting, which is a drive-through process. There would be a regular ballot and an "alternative ballot" which asks the voters to approve the whole process. If they vote down the process, only the Operating Budget can pass. They can have a meeting to approve the Operating Budget only, or they can default to last year's budget. This is not the typical default budget process, which accommodates contractual increases; it's just last year's budget.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked if SAU 16 would allow them to use their facilities as the venue if they went with the usual session. Mr. Dean said Superintendent Ryan wants to hear the Board's thoughts. He [Mr. Dean] warned that they have a debt service payment on the Library that would not be included if the process approval failed. Mr. Papakonstantis pointed out that if they did drive-through voting, the town staff would be outside all day, and they should look at what accommodations the DPW could build or provide. Ms. Cowan suggested asking a Select Board member from Hopkinton about their drive-through voting process. Ms. Cowan asked how the voters would amend articles, and Attorney Mitchell said it's the Select Board only that makes amendments in this alternative process.

The Board generally agreed to get more feedback/information and discuss it again at the next meeting.

b. Budget Recommendations Committee Recap

Bob Kelly, the Chair of the Budget Recommendations Committee, discussed this year's budget process. The Departments dialed back on most budget requests, and they put almost all vehicle replacements on hold pending a system-wide vehicle replacement audit. There are new regulations in stormwater and sewer that require budget increases. The Salem Street area has been waiting for a water/sewer and stormwater upgrade for many years. The CIP Public Works Garage was requested several years ago; there have been some discussions about a new Public Safety complex, but that was not in the CIP this year.

Mr. Dean said the new tax bills just went out, and the rate was \$24.49. The town's share of the rate is up 20 cents. The Board will discuss the budget and any potential changes to it at the December 21st meeting.

c. COVID 19 Updates

Chief Wilking said NH is doing slightly better than national averages, but there is more than a 5% positivity rate. 7,000 NH residents tested positive in the last two weeks, 1880 of those in Rockingham County and 58 in Exeter. 197 total Exeter residents have tested positive. Exeter is doing well compared to neighboring communities. A vaccine is on the horizon; a vote may be taken this week on the State level so that the vaccine can be rolled out. There are somewhat conflicting accounts of the number of available vaccines in NH, but there should be a substantial amount. The first to get the vaccine would be frontline health care workers, those in long term care facilities, and first responders. They're looking at distributing it at SST. This week, they began testing all employees with the State's rapid test program, and all of the first tests were negative. Mr. Papakonstantis asked about the PPE supply, and Chief Wilking said they are doing well. They received 595 masks two weeks ago. The State's distribution of PPE has had no shortages.

Health Officer James Murray said that at the last meeting, they discussed updating the town mask ordinance following the passing of the State-level ordinance, and he did a draft. "Selectboard" was changed to "Select Board"; he removed the reference to NH not having a mask order; he also revised section 11 to include the State's exemption for the hearing impaired: *Any person who is deaf or hard of hearing, and any person while communicating with an individual who is deaf or hard of hearing or who has a disability, medical condition, or mental health condition that makes communication with that individual while wearing a mask or face covering difficult.* Finally, he changed the effective until date to January 15th.

Mr. Bisson said the Parks and Rec building is open, although their registration software is down. They discussed the proposed skating rink, but a rink is difficult to do correctly. They would have to get the correct system with a liner. They used to have a rink on Park Street Common, where they put down boards and flooded it, which used a lot of water. A NiceRink system is 50x80 for \$7,000, which is not full size. Ms. Roy said they used to work in a community with a rink, and there was vandalism, and litter would become frozen in the ice. They talked about doing it on the tennis or basketball courts which would be fenced in, but it's a lot of work. Because of the sizing, they either have to have multiple rinks or limit its use to children. It requires five days of freezing weather to get the ice to set before starting. It would be hard to pull it together this year. Strawberry Banke uses a refrigeration system. Mr. Browne asked about a plastic skating surface, and Mr. Bisson said it's very expensive, much more so than the rink with liner. Jackson Landing and Guilford have permanent rinks with a cement floor and roof, lessening maintenance issues.

Regarding the Department's IT issues, the webserver did not survive the crash and must be rebuilt, which is a five hour process. Rodents in the building ate the fiber

cables, so they had to order new parts. Mr. Bisson also discussed the Gunstock skiing program.

Mr. Dean listed the Covid 19 reimbursements the town has received. There has been \$362,525 from GOFER; a First Responder Grant of \$126,471; FEMA reimbursements of \$16,505; election reimbursements of \$5,647, with about \$30,000 more pending; and a CARES grant of \$18,176, for a total of \$529,324 in General Revenues. The EMS fund received a stimulus grant in the amount of \$25,623. The Rec Revolving Fund had revenue of \$19,000 for the summer childcare program. All funds to date equal \$573,947. The Town Clerk's office now up and running again. The employee's Covid case was very serious but she is now recovering.

## 8. Regular Business

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

Mr. Dean explained the abatement request for 155 Front Street: the property owner said she did not receive her first tax bill, and is asking for the interest to be waived, in the amount of \$144.96, although interest is continuing to accrue. If an account is delinquent, the town doesn't chase it down; it's the owner's responsibility to pay it. Ms. Oliff asked if they post notice on the town website that the bills have been sent, and Mr. Dean said yes. Mr. Papakonstantis added that the bills go out at the same time each year. Ms. Gilman said they should cut off the interest so it stops accruing. Mr. Dean said they can make it known that the tax bills should be paid before making abatement requests going forward. Mr. Papakonstantis said yes, paying it would show good faith.

**MOTION:** Ms. Oliff moved to deny the request for an interest waiver for 155 Front Street, as of November 25th. Mr. Browne seconded. Ms. Cowan voted nay. The motion passed 4-1 and the abatement was denied.

Mr. Dean explained the abatement request for 163 Water Street Unit C2: the new property owner thought the bill was rolled into the price of the property, and is asking that interest from the first half of the year be waived.

**MOTION:** Ms. Oliff moved to deny the request for interest waiver for 163 Water Street Unit C2 in the amount of \$137.75, cut off as of December 1st. Mr. Browne seconded. Ms. Cowan said they should be more lenient in their policy, it doesn't make sense to penalize people for small errors. Mr. Papakonstantis and Ms. Cowan voted nay. The motion passed 3-2 and the abatement was denied.

### b. Permits & Approvals

Greg Bisson said Gale Park was completed in time for Veteran's Day. The project was designed with a metal border to secure the cobblestones, but after the installation it didn't look correct, so he had them remove it and redo the border at an extra cost of \$875. Also, because it's a high traffic area, they needed a police detail, at a cost of \$4,728.75. The construction lasted about 12 days.

**MOTION:** Ms. Cowan moved to approve spending \$875 from the Parks Improvement Fund for edging removal from the Gale Park pathway. Ms. Gilman seconded. In a roll call vote, all were in favor.

**MOTION:** Ms. Gilman moved to approve spending \$4,728.75 from the Parks Improvement Fund for a Police detail. Mr. Browne seconded. In a roll call vote, all were in favor

- c. Town Manager's Report
  - i. Mr. Dean said they are facing challenges with the server situation. They have a consultant coming in to do documentation of the incident. Andy Swanson has been working overtime. They're still trying to get everything back up and running.
  - ii. Mr. Dean asked the Board if the Town Offices can close on Christmas Eve using employee leave time, as they've done in the past. The Board agreed.
  - iii. The Holiday Decorating Committee did a great job downtown.
  - iv. This year instead of the usual holiday drop-in event for town volunteers, they'd like to send out small gift cards for local businesses to Board, Committee, and Commission members. The Board agreed.
  - v. They're collecting tax bills, which can now be paid online.
  - vi. The Westside Drive project field work is complete, and the consultant is preparing conceptual design alternatives. The second public meeting is scheduled in March.
  - vii. Regarding the Salem Street project, the consultant is preparing the 90% design documents.
  - viii. Jay Perkins has made progress on the Kingston Road easement acquisition, and the DOT does think it can fit into their 2021 season.
- d. Select Board Committee Reports
  - i. Mr. Browne said the Communications Committee survey is out, and he encourages residents to fill it out.
  - ii. Ms. Oliff had no updates. Friday is the Housing Committee.
  - iii. Ms. Gilman has a Conservation Commission meeting tomorrow. There's an Energy Committee meeting next Wednesday with a presentation from Community Power on the electrical aggregation of communities. Tuesday of next week is a Heritage Committee meeting and Thursday is HDC.
  - iv. Ms. Cowan had a Rec Advisory Committee meeting, where they talked about the Basketball league, but no decision was made. In Summer Camp planning, they're waiting on logistics from the State. At the Planning Board, they approved changes to the Downtown People's United Bank and other projects.
  - v. Mr. Papakonstantis had a Sustainability Advisory Committee meeting, where they heard a brief update from Mr. Sharples about grants and initiatives.
- e. Correspondence

- i. A memo about Hockey Rinks from Mr. Bisson
- ii. An email from the State about drought improvement, with a cautiously positive outlook. Mr. Dean said Ms. Perry saw the drought going into 2021, and suggested bringing her back for an update.
- iii. A notice from Pennichuck, which owns a community water system in town. When they set rates, they must notify the town. The town has no control over the rates, which are higher than the average town bill.
- iv. A letter from AIM about the town renewing its membership. They pay \$250/year. He will keep the membership up to date.
- v. An appeal for holiday donations from the Society of Saint Vincent De Paul.
- vi. A thank you letter from Family Promise of Seacoast New Hampshire for the town's \$750 donation.
- vii. A notice from the Rochester ZBA that Exeter is within 20 miles of a proposed communications facility. Mr. Dean said they're not really an abutter; even though it's within 20 miles, they probably can't see it or have an interest.

9. Review Board Calendar

The next meetings are December 21st, January 4th, and January 11th.

10. Non-Public Session

**MOTION:** Ms. Cowan moved to enter into non-public session per RSA 91A:3II(a)(c), personnel and reputation. Mr. Browne seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor, and the meeting went into non-public at 9:05 PM.

11. Adjournment

The Board emerged from non public session at 9:48 PM.

**MOTION:** Selectwoman Gilman moved to seal the minutes of the non public session until unsealed. Selectwoman Cowan seconded. Motion carries by roll call vote with all voting aye.

**MOTION:** Selectwoman Gilman moved to adjourn, seconded by Selectman Browne. Vote is taken and by roll call vote all vote in the affirmative, motion carries 5-0. The Board is adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Joanna Bartell  
Recording Secretary