

Select Board Meeting
Monday February 22, 2021
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 Melissa Roy, the interim Town Manager, were present at this meeting. The meeting was called to order by Mr. Papakonstantis at 7 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. The usual rules of conduct and decorum will apply.

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 board interviews at this meeting.

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

- a. Regular Meeting: February 8, 2021

MOTION: Ms. Oliff moved to approve the minutes of February 8, 2021 as presented. Ms. Gilman seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

6. Appointments

- a. Jason Fritz, currently Deputy Chief of the Fire Department, has been nominated as Deputy Health Officer.

MOTION: Mr. Browne moved to appoint Jason Fritz as Deputy Health Officer for a term to run 3 years concurrently with that of the current Health Officer. Ms. Oliff seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

7. Discussion/Action Items

a. COVID 19 Updates

i. Principal Bill Rawson of PEA

Mr. Rawson said that 75% of students returned to campus Feb 11 - 13. 25%, or 250 students, chose to stay home for the winter term; they will mostly return in March, when all but 50 students will be on campus for the rest of the spring term. All the students were tested before travelling. 13 students were found positive before coming and stayed home. Everyone was tested on day of arrival with a rapid PCR test before entering the dorms; there were 4 positives on the day of arrival, but they didn't have close contacts. Since then, there has been twice weekly testing for all students and adults on campus using "Pooled Saliva Testing." The Covid dashboard on the website is updated every day. There are six active cases on campus and 3 active cases off campus. 23 students are quarantining, 15 of whom are in the quarantine unit off of Water Street. There will be no interscholastic athletics in the winter term. The PEA trails were open when students were away, but are currently closed again. They continue to not allow students to go into town, but they are ordering food in to support local businesses. The first event that may bring people to campus is graduation, which is scheduled for June 6; they're currently trying to plan the logistics.

Mr. Browne asked for more information about Pooled Saliva Testing. Mr. Rawson said they pool 24 samples to test; if there is a positive in the batch, they narrow down the testing. It's quicker and less expensive than testing each sample, although they have to send it out to a lab rather than do it on-site as with the PCR test.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked how residents can monitor the availability of the PEA trails. Mr. Rawson said he can have the Director of Facilities, Mark Leighton, coordinate with the town.

ii. Fire Chief Eric Wilking

Chief Wilking said that NH was down to 2,700 Covid cases last week, which is moving in the right direction. There was a daily rolling average of 350 new cases. They're hoping that it continues trending downward; the continued vaccinations should help. There were 34 deaths in NH this week, 14 of which were in Rockingham County. Exeter has had 50 - 60 new cases a week recently, but last week it was down to 30 residents. There are also 25 cases they're still monitoring in town. Exeter is by far the town with the fewest positive cases in the top 20 populated towns in NH.

They're continuing the weekly PCR rapid tests at the Fire Department, but have not received a positive test result since the holidays. They will continue to test until the end of March; most first responders have been vaccinated, so the State is winding down that testing program. They have received numerous calls, maybe 20 a day, from residents looking for help with the vaccination process, but they don't have any special connections and can't schedule it for them. EHS is still the regional vaccination site, but there are rumors that the State may be looking for an alternate site after March 1st. Onsite vaccinations will be starting at 277 Water Street next week, and there will be another 8 - 10 facilities that the FD

will be helping with. Some town employees have tested positive, but they are recovering.

iii. James Murray, Health Officer

Mr. Murray said there were low hospitalization numbers in the state, back to a post-Thanksgiving level. There have been some complaints regarding businesses not following the mask ordinance, but overall complaints are very low.

iv. Jennifer Perry, Director of Public Works

Ms. Perry said that Public Works had to quarantine a good percentage of its staff last week. They worked with Mr. Murray to develop a “quarantine in truck” policy so employees could work during the storms and a water main break. All employees returned this week.

b. Public Works & Planning - Solar Array at Public Works

Sarah Greenshields from Revolution Energy and Ned Raynolds from Revision Energy were present to discuss the solar array proposal. Revolution’s offer, which was formalized in December, is an early purchase to the town for \$65,000 now in year 8, a significant savings from the previous offer of \$75,000 in 2022. The life of the panels is estimated to be 40 years. One thing is broken, but they have agreed to address it.

Mr. Papakonstantis said wasn’t budgeted and they proposed using Sewer Reserve Fund monies. Would that be taking away from anything else? Ms. Perry said the reserves are savings in advance of payment for the WWTP, but the town has used reserves in the past for things that were needed on the water or wastewater side. \$65,000 is minor and shouldn’t affect the reserve status or future payments. The sooner they do it, the more savings they’ll have. The solar array is powering the WWTP, so it should come out of Sewer. If the town sells any solar credits, the proceeds will go to the Sewer Fund.

MOTION: Ms. Cowan moved to authorize the Town Manager to expend up to \$65,000 out of the appropriations from sewer reserves to purchase the solar array at the Department of Public Works Facility with the condition that all items listed on Page 2 of 20 in the Revision Energy Maintenance Report dated 1/12/2021 (includes the broken module, wire connectors, two strings not making power, and locks or tags on the AC Meter) shall be addressed to the satisfaction of the DPW Director and the Town Manager prior to purchase. Ms. Gilman seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

c. Public Works - Great Bay Permit

Attorney Adam Dumville of McClane Middleton, the town attorney on environmental issues, was present to discuss the Great Bay Permit. Ms. Perry said the draft general permit was presented last year and was a challenging one for the town to sign onto. It included very low nitrogen water quality goals that would have been difficult to achieve. The towns that discharge to Great Bay wrote comments to the EPA, and they did listen and made significant modifications. Final permit was out in November 2020, and offers an opt-in to the permit, which takes an adaptive approach to improving. The

permit is effective Feb 1, and if the town wishes to opt in it needs to do so before April 1. The town staff and attorney feel that signing onto the general permit is to the town's advantage. The EPA will do away with the administrative order of consent which has been in place for many years. It also provides an opportunity for communities to work together to improve water quality. An Intermunicipal agreement (IMA) would allow 13 communities to work together on water quality monitoring in a collaborative manner. This has been reviewed by the Attorney General, and Attorney Dumville has reviewed it along with Newmarket. Attorney Dumville said they should consider opting into the general permit now but delay the IMA to allow the Board to review the proposal. There's no specific deadline, but there will be an organizational meeting in April that they should be at if they want a seat at the table.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve the town of Exeter to opt into the General Permit and submit the notice of intent prior to the April 1, 2021 deadline. Ms. Cowan seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

Ms. Perry said they will come back on March 15 to discuss the IMA.

d. Public Works - Drought Update

Ms. Perry said drought conditions haven't changed significantly. The region is still considered abnormally dry. Public Works recommends continuing with the level 2 restriction of every other day watering, in order to keep water usage in a reasonable place in spring. They encourage people to be conservative with their water use overall.

e. Public Works - Mr. Fox Composting

Ms. Perry discussed the proposed composting pilot program. Under this partnership with Mr. Fox Composting, residents could bring their compost to the transfer station for free and Mr. Fox would take it to an offsite facility. Commercial composting can handle any food items, including meat and bones. It will cost the town \$120.77 a month for two 64 gallon bins, and Mr. Fox would come weekly to take them. This is cheaper than solid waste disposal.

- i. Chetana Parmar, chair of the Sustainability Advisory Committee, read a statement in support of the proposal:

On Tuesday 02 February 2021 at our monthly Sustainability Advisory Committee meeting, we had Jennifer Perry, DPW to present and talk about Recycling in Exeter. With the need to reduce the amount of landfill waste, the team has been looking at options. Making composting available to Exeter residents would certainly assist in this.

According to the EPA, 30% of waste that is landfilled can be composted. By removing organics from the landfill also reduces the greenhouse gases as well as the waste tonnage fees. Making composting available will allow Exeter residents to reduce the amount of solid waste that is landfilled and thus allow extending the life of the blue bags before

being landfilled. So, residents would not be using as many blue bags as they may be doing currently.

Offering a single place for compostable materials to be discarded will allow the Transfer station to monitor the uptake of the service as well as ensure residents are aware of what types of waste can be placed in the compost bins. Avoiding contamination is key to the success of the program.

Our neighboring towns: Newmarket, Dover, Durham are all offering composting through Mr.Fox. And they all report great success. Newmarket said that the program has been hugely successful and they said that they have on average composted about 38 tons per year. They are adding a 3rd composting bin as the number of residents using the service is increasing.

After a period of time, it would be beneficial to consider another location of a compost bin to allow easy access to residents in different part of the Town.

It is a win-win situation for the town of Exeter and a step to sustainability. It allows individuals to play their part in reducing our waste that end-up in landfill. Please support composting and this program.

The SAC fully supports DPW and will work with them to ensure the program and service offered is used appropriately and is a success.

Ms. Cowan said she feels this is a great opportunity.

Ms. Gilman asked how successful the resident separation of trash versus recycling has been. Ms. Perry said it's an ongoing challenge to keep contamination out of recycling bins.

Ms. Oliff asked if they'd spoken with Adam Webster of Compost Bionics, who was working with PEA. Ms. Perry said they didn't have any other conversations with composting companies besides Mr. Fox, although they could if that was the Board's wish. Ms. Oliff said she didn't feel that wasn't necessary.

Ms. Perry added that regarding recycling, Waste Management is now accepting plastic clamshell containers for produce and other food items. Plastic numbers 1, 2, and 5. Ms. Oliff suggested that the recycling bins should say what is recyclable, perhaps with a sticker.

Mr. Papakonstantis acknowledged the DPW's quick response to emails from residents about Waste Management.

f. Health Department - Tattoo Ordinance

James Murray said he received an inquiry on Feb 16 on the requirements to open a tattoo business in Exeter, which is not allowed per town ordinance. They've had similar inquiries in the past, but this individual asked if the rule could be reassessed by the town.

There was a warrant article in 1998, Article 38, which prohibited tattoo establishments, and the ordinance was passed by the Select Board in 2012,

although they can't find a signed copy. Ms. Gilman, who was on the Board at that time, said there would have been the usual three readings but there may not have been a signing.

Mr. Murray said he looked at what other self-inspecting towns do. Our ordinance is based on a State RSA that only allows a physician to give tattoos, but other towns have changed it and allow their health officer to inspect and license the businesses. Times change, and a lot of other communities allow it. There was concern about tattooing and public health in 1998, but not so much now. There may be private health concerns about sanitary practices, but that doesn't affect the public health of the community.

Ms. Oliff said this ordinance sounds archaic and they should update it. Ms. Cowan asked if that would require a vote, since it was a vote of the town to ban it. Mr. Papakonstantis said it would at least require three public readings. Ms. Gilman said it should be a town vote, as the Board only formalized the decision of the Legislative Body.

Ms. Oliff asked if Mr. Murray would be the contact person for tattoo shops opening up to ensure they're following regulations. Mr. Murray said that would be up to the Select Board. He could draft an ordinance. Other self-inspecting towns do perform inspections, and he can follow up with those Health Officers for more information. Ms. Gilman said they won't be able to bring it up for a vote until next March, so they have time to work on it.

Ms. Cowan said they should also take a look at other things on the books that don't make sense anymore. Mr. Papakonstantis said that should be one of the Board's goals for this year.

8. Regular Business

a. Tax Abatements, Veterans Credits and Exemptions

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve a Veterans Credit for 27/12/4 in the amount of \$5,000 for two disabled veterans. Ms. Oliff seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve a Veterans Credit for 68/6/534 in the amount of \$2,500. Mr. Browne seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve an Elderly Exemption for 64/105/86 in the amount of \$152,251. Ms. Cowan seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

Ms. Gilman read the solar exemptions: 19/16/10, 83/86, 64/72, and 83/34.

b. Permits & Approvals

Greg Bisson of Parks and Rec tey are looking to put a Shed into Brickyard Park. The current shed is from the 1980s; the functionality is no longer there and it's a safety hazard. They're requesting to use Park Improvement Funds for a shed. They received three bids and are recommending JD's Shed to be awarded bid for an 8x10 shed at Brickyard Park.

MOTION: Ms. Oliff moved to approve \$2,400 from Parks Improvement Fund to contract with JD's Shed for the purpose of a storage shed at Brickyard Park. Ms. Gilman seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

Mr. Bisson discussed a proposed renovation to Gilman Park. They will be replacing fencing and adding 10 trees with "TreeDiaper"s. They are working with the Tree Committee to select native trees.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to allow Parks and Rec to expend \$12,500 from the Parks Improvement Fund to contract AAA Fencing Inc from Dover NH to replace the Gilman Park fencing. Mr. Browne seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to expend \$3,500 from the Parks Improvement Fund to contract with Stratham Circle Nursery to purchase 10 trees for Gilman Park. Ms. Cowan seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to expend \$755.88 from the Parks Improvement Fund to contract with Zynovation Inc to purchase 12 TreeDiapers for Gilman Park. Mr. Browne seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

- c. Town Manager's Report
 - i. Interim Town Manager Ms. Roy did not have a report.
- d. Select Board Committee Reports
 - i. Mr. Browne had a Police Stakeholders Committee meeting. They heard a presentation on the One Mind mental health program, in which officers are trained in a suicide gauging system. They're meeting again tomorrow. There's also a Communications Committee meeting tomorrow. Facilities met on housekeeping issues, and talked about the 10 - 15 year scope of building projects.
 - ii. Ms. Oliff said the Housing Committee met Friday, where they discussed affordable housing for Exeter residents. They heard from companies who said if Exeter can't come up with affordable housing for their employees they may have to relocate.
 - iii. Ms. Gilman had an HDC meeting, but there was not much discussed. In the Heritage Committee, there was virtual meeting on the Park Street Heritage Area. She also gave the Board an update on State issues.
 - iv. Ms. Cowan had a Planning Board meeting, where they discussed a yield plan for the Griset property. She encouraged anyone interested in affordable housing to look at the proposal. She asked that the town put info about absentee ballots on the website. Residents are still allowed to vote absentee for Covid reasons. The town election is March 9. Mr. Papakonstantis said Mr. Scafidi will do another PSA about voting on Channel 22, and will be at the Select Board meeting next week.
 - v. Mr. Papakonstantis had no meetings this week.

e. Correspondence

- i. A proposal from the Exeter Women's' Club regarding a donation of a "Little Free Library" to the Rec Park. Mr. Bisson said the club will install and maintain it, as well as sanitize any books inside.

MOTION: Ms. Cowan moved to accept the donation of a Little Free Library from the Exeter Women's Club, Ms. Gilman seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

- ii. A memo from the State about the Windham Election recount.
- iii. A letter from Xfinity on programming changes.
- iv. A letter from web developer Matt Goodwin regarding town website policy. Mr. Papakonstantis said he would like to sit down with IT and Darren Winham to review the letter.
- v. A thank you letter from the Exeter Historical Society.

Mr. Bisson said there are currently 108 registrants for Summer Camp, of a max of 220. They are giving Exeter residents the first chance to register.

9. Review Board Calendar

- a. The next meetings are March 1, March 15, and March 29.

10. Non-Public Session

MOTION: Ms. Cowan moved to enter into Non-public 91-A:3II(a). Ms. Oliff seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor, and the meeting entered non-public at 9:00 PM.

11. Adjournment

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary