

Select Board Meeting
Monday March 15, 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 Russ Dean were present at this meeting, although Mr. Browne left prior to the end of the meeting as noted below. 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. Swearing in of Elected Officials

Town Clerk Andrea Kohler swore in Selectwoman Molly Cowan, who was recently re-elected to the Board.

3. Select Board Reorganization

MOTION: Ms. Oliff moved to nominate Mr. Papakonstantis for Select Board Chair. Ms. Gilman seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

MOTION: Ms. Oliff moved to nominate Ms. Cowan as Select Board Vice-Chair. Ms. Gilman seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

MOTION: Mr. Browne moved to nominate Ms. Gilman for Select Board Clerk. Ms. Oliff seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

Mr. Browne left the meeting at this time.

4. Public Comment

- a. Chetana Parmar of 17 Grove Street said she works at Exeter Power Yoga, which is looking to use Swasey Park for its classes. Yoga is immensely beneficial for

health and having practitioners downtown will help local businesses. Ms. Oliff said she's in favor of allowing small businesses to have access to the park. It's similar to restaurants having sidewalk capabilities.

- b. Joanna Rom of 105 Front Street said she supports what Chetana was saying. Keeping local businesses open is important.
 - c. Scott Ruffner of Levenhall Place said he is in support of yoga studios using public space for their classes.
 - d. Chetana Parmar said the various yoga studios could work out the scheduling of the space amongst themselves.
 - e. Suzanne Stone of 21 Forest Street said she is in support of the proposal. Nearby towns such as Amesbury and Haverhill have been able to make it work.
 - f. Jean Donnelly of 109 Front Street, a teacher at Exeter Power Yoga, spoke in favor of the proposal. The space downtown the studio had last summer was challenging because of noise and traffic.
 - g. David Drouin of 27 Ernest Ave spoke in support of the proposal. Yoga has a positive effect on mental health. The classes don't exceed 20 - 30 people so the impact would be low.
 - h. Tracy Coviello of 50 Putnam Road in Kingston, the owner of Exeter Power Yoga, indicated that she wished to speak, and the Board members had no objection. She thanked the supporters for speaking in favor of the proposal and thanked the Board for considering it.
 - i. Ms. Cowan said she would like to see Darren Winham reach out to similar businesses and other yoga studios. She suggested Raynes Farm as another potential space they could use.
 - j. Ms. Gilman said there are several issues with using Swasey Parkway, and they should consider them together and loop in the Swasey Parkway Trustees. Mr. Papakonstantis said he agreed and would like to see that on a future agenda.
 - k. Chetana Parmar said if the classes were held at Swasey Park, students could go into the local shops afterwards and benefit other businesses.
5. Proclamations/Recognitions
- a. There were no proclamations/recognitions at this meeting.
6. Approval of Minutes
- a. Regular Meeting: March 1, 2021

MOTION: Ms. Oliff moved to accept the minutes as presented. Ms. Cowan seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor and the motion passed 4-0 [Mr. Browne being absent].

7. Appointments - Energy Committee, Arts & Culture Advisory Committee

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to appoint Elizabeth Stevens to the Energy Committee. Ms. Cowan seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor and the motion passed 4-0.

Mr. Papakonstantis said there were some discrepancies in the voting on the appointments to the Arts & Culture Advisory Committee. Ms. Oliff suggested they amend the charter to 9 members, assign the members with the least amount of votes to a term of one year, and revert to seven members at the end of that year. Ms. Cowan said she's more comfortable

with a seven person committee now, and she would prefer to revote. Mr. Papakonstantis said Mr. Browne should be present, and suggested that there could be seven regular members and two alternates.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to have the Town Manager's office revise the charge for the Arts & Culture Committee to have two alternate members, in addition to the seven voting members. Ms. Oliff seconded. By a roll call vote, the motion passed 4-0.

The issue will be revisited in the March 29 Select Board meeting.

8. Discussion/Action Items

a. Election Results

Mr. Papakonstantis congratulated the election winners, including Ms. Cowan. All of the warrant articles passed.

b. Covid-19 Update

- i. Fire Chief Eric Wilking said the Covid front has been busy, and there were also several fires in the state lately, but they were likely a coincidence. The Covid numbers look better, with 1500 positives in the state last week. Vaccination is making a difference. The vaccination site at EHS is still vaccinating around 800 people per day. There have been some rumors about the vaccination site moving, but they will be there until a suitable replacement can be found. Deputy Fire Chief Justin Pizon is coordinating mobile vaccinations; they have already done 277 Water Street and are doing Exeter Mills tomorrow. Gov Sununu and President Biden called teachers a priority, and 1,100 teachers and staff will be vaccinated beginning today. At the Loudon supersite, they were able to vaccinate 11,000 people, and they're planning another session. This was a one and done vaccine from Johnson & Johnson. The goal is that by May the general population will be vaccinated.
- ii. Health Officer James Murray said that according to the Governor's recent order, retail stores may now be open at 100% capacity, there can now be extra functions at bars such as karaoke, and hairdressers and barbers can accept walk-ins. Mask mandates are still in effect in public, but in private settings are not necessary.

MOTION: Ms. Oliff moved to close Swasey Parkway to vehicular traffic for 90 days. Ms. Gilman seconded. Ms. Gilman said she's talked to some people who don't want it closed permanently, so they should have a discussion about it. Mr. Papakonstantis suggested to have it end June 30 rather than a random date in June.

MOTION: Ms. Oliff amended her motion to say that Swasey Parkway will stay closed until June 30, 2021. Ms. Gilman seconded. By a roll call vote, the motion passed 4-0.

c. Public Hearing: RSA 79-E Pairpoint Group, LLC - 23 Water Street

MOTION: Ms. Cowan moved to open the public hearing. Ms. Oliff seconded. By a roll call vote, the motion passed 4-0.

Mr. Winham read a memo about the Pairpoint Group, which has applied for seven years of tax relief per RSA 79-E. They are required to have all work outlined in a covenant, which must be completed before June 30, 2022. Owner Elliot Berkowitz is requesting an extension until June 30, 2024 due to Covid.

Mr. Berkowitz said 23 Water Street is a difficult location, as there is no place to stage construction. He bought another building down the block to use as a staging area, but Covid has disrupted their plans. He's given the owner of Cornicello the use of the lot for the next two years for outdoor dining.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked for public comment, but there was none. He brought the discussion back to the Board.

Ms. Gilman asked why the covenant wasn't completed previously. Mr. Winham said he thinks it got stuck between Mr. Dean and the lawyers, but Mr. Dean is on leave so they haven't been able to track it down.

MOTION: Ms. Oliff moved to grant the two year extension as requested by Pairpoint Group LLC. Ms. Cowan seconded. By a roll call vote, the motion passed 4-0.

MOTION: Ms. Oliff moved to close the public hearing. Ms. Gilman seconded. By a roll call vote, the motion passed 4-0.

d. Public Hearing: RSA 79-E IOKA Properties, LLC - 53 Water Street

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to open the public hearing. Ms. Cowan seconded. By a roll call vote, the motion passed 4-0.

Mr. Winham said Ioka Properties LLC requests consideration for the Community Tax Relief Incentive, 79-E. He received the completed form March 11th, 2021. The Select Board decides if the Public Benefits have been met, as well as the length of the tax relief period and the covenant, which usually run concurrently. This project qualifies for the full 11 years, the largest investment in town since the 79-E program began.

Christina O'Brien showed several slides of the building design. David Cowie, one of the principals of the project, said the 79-E incentive was a large factor in coming to Exeter with this project.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked for public comment, but there was none. He brought the discussion back to the Board.

Ms. Gilman said the changes to the building are so drastic that it no longer qualifies for the National Register, so she can't support giving them the full term. Ms. Cowan suggested nine years. Attorney Somers said the statute said they could award four years whether it's an important building or located in a historically important district. Ms. Gilman said they don't have any recommendations from the State or Federal level that this building is a resource to the Historic District. That's her basis for not recommending the full 4 years for that aspect. Mr. Winham read one of the public benefits for the motion: "The

project will inject commercial activity into a building which has long been dormant. Further, the proposed commercial activity of retail and restaurant use will augment the existing inventory of retail and food service establishments in the downtown waterfront area.” That’s one of the five criteria it meets.

MOTION: Ms. Cowan moved to grant Ioka Properties LLC, owner of 53 Water Street, the Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive, RSA 79-E, for the period of 9 years based on the Economic Development benefit it will have for our downtown. The start date of the covenant will be for two years starting June 30, 2021. Ms. Gilman seconded. By a roll call vote, the motion passed 4-0.

MOTION: Ms. Oliff moved to close the public hearing on Ioka Properties LLC. Ms. Gilman seconded. By a roll call vote, the motion passed 4-0.

e. Re-Open Temporary Dining - Governor’s Emergency Order #40 Exhibit C Section A

Mr. Winham said last year, Exeter allowed temporary outdoor dining between June 1 - December 31 2020, and they should consider reopening that program. This would apply to private and/or public spaces. Ms. Cowan said she would be in favor of something long-term, as outdoor dining has been wonderful for the town.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to allow temporary outdoor dining, in effect through December 31 2021 unless Governor Sununu terminates Emergency Order #40. Ms. Cowan seconded. By a roll call vote, the motion passed 4-0.

f. Mobile Vehicle Vending Permit Process & Application

Mr. Winham said the Town of Exeter Motor Vehicle vending section may need updating. He’s received complaints about mobile businesses taking up spaces and being more visible downtown than rent-paying businesses. He’s also received more interest in the program from businesses submitting applications. Annual permits were given for “Exeter Streets” rather than a specific location, but this runs out in the summer. Mr. Winham read the proposed ordinance, which would limit vendors to the parking lot abutting Town House Common. Spaces will be reserved for mobile vendors according to a schedule posted online, between 8 am - 8 pm. Quarterly applications would be the longest term.

Ms. Gilman said she anticipates that the signage will be a problem. Ms. Oliff asked why they are getting involved in limiting the competition for other businesses. Mr. Winham said it’s not just about one business, many businesses want to be downtown in a mobile truck. The brick and mortar businesses downtown pay an enormous amount to be there and the mobile trucks don’t. Ms. Oliff said they should adjust the fees to even it out but they shouldn’t push the mobile businesses outside the downtown. Mr. Winham said that Portsmouth manages food trucks by having a designated space and fees. If they’d like to look at that, they should push this discussion off until another time.

Scott Ruffner said one potential solution would be designated food truck areas with live music to make them more attractive to the community.

Henry Vance of 364 Beede Hill Road in Fremont, the owner of Czar's Brewing, indicated that he wished to speak, and the Board members had no objections. Mr. Vance said that they should allow downtown businesses to have dedicated parking spaces.

Kathy and Keith Lemerise, the owners of Trends, said the year 2020 was very difficult, and the last thing they need is more competition or having mobile businesses take up parking spaces.

Ms. Oliff said some of these businesses bring more business to the downtown rather than taking it away. Ms. Cowan asked Mr. Winham to explore the Lincoln Street area near the train station as an alternate location for mobile businesses.

g. Economic Development Department Update

Mr. Winham gave an update on economic development projects. Rob Ficara of Shooters Pub is pleased that bar games are back. Tom Monahan's project across from Mobil on the Run on Epping Road has overcome the legal challenges and is back on track. Jersey Mike's at Hannaford Plaza and Anytime Fitness next to the Dollar Store is open and ready for business. Infrastructure on Portsmouth Ave, he will get that into the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. They're trying to figure out what they're going to do with Federal money, and he'll be giving an update on that within the next two weeks.

h. Fiscal Year 2020 Year End Budget Report

Ms. Chester said the General Fund did well in 2020. The collection was at 96.5% of taxes by the end of December, or \$57M collected, and by Feb 2021 they were at 98%. Building permits were way down as building nearly ground to a halt due to Covid; there was a drop of \$207,000 in this revenue in 2020. They had a good interest rate in the prior year of 2.35% for investments, but there was a drop of \$78,000 in that revenue as it was reduced to a 0.4% interest rate. There were some Federal offsets, including \$362,000 from the GOFER funds for Covid expenses, and FEMA provided \$16,000. All Departments held down expenses in 2020, and overall they spent \$1.6M less than the projected budget. There was a net income of \$2.3M which will go back to the Fund Balance.

The Water Fund was strong, with a revenue of \$3.8M. Expenses were held down there as well; they spent \$3.3M but this was \$207,000 below projected, for a net income of \$671,000. In Water and Sewer Collections, there was a moratorium from March through July to not shut off utilities. The current year receivables are looking good. They can't shut off sewer services, but can now put a lien on the property, and that's working. They need to look at a rate increase for Sewer in 2021, as the revenues fell \$2.2M below the projection.

i. MS-232 Voted Appropriations

Ms. Chester discussed the MS-232, which is due March 29, and needs to be signed by the Board members.

j. Select Board Representatives to Town Committees

Mr. Papakonstantis said he'd like to table this topic until Mr. Browne is present.

9. Regular Business

a. Tax Abatements, Veterans Credits and Exemptions

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve an abatement for 95/64/255 in the amount of \$1,339.60. Ms. Oliff seconded. By a roll call vote, the motion passed 4-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to deny an abatement for 103/4. Mr. Papakonstantis seconded. By a roll call vote, the motion passed 4-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve an abatement for 98/25 in the amount of \$1329.81. Ms. Cowan seconded. By a roll call vote, the motion passed 4-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to deny an abatement for 65/8. Ms. Cowan seconded. By a roll call vote, the motion passed 4-0.

Ms. Gilman read the list of solar exemptions: 85/29, 52/53, 73/149/3, 83/1, 64/28/1, 73/117, 89/19, 74/143, 85/34, 52/83, and 70/142/1

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve a Veteran's Credit in the amount of \$500 for 52/96, 70/32, and 83/76. Mr. Papakonstantis seconded. By a roll call vote, the motion passed 4-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve an Elderly Exemption for 69/27 in the amount of \$236,251. Mr. Papakonstantis seconded. By a roll call vote, the motion passed 4-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve a Disabled Exemption 95/64/326 in the amount of \$125,000. Ms. Cowan seconded. By a roll call vote, the motion passed 4-0.

b. Permits & Approvals

- i. Ms. Roy discussed the application for the Exeter Memorial Day Parade. It follows the guidelines of the State, there's no requirement not to have a parade. There's still a mask mandate in public places. They have been in discussions with the applicant, and the event would promote social distancing at the final memorial part.

MOTION: Ms. Cowan moved to allow the Exeter Memorial Day Parade to go forward. Ms. Oliff seconded. By a roll call vote, the motion passed 4-0.

- ii. Ms. Roy said TEAM is proposing a monthly event on Swasey Parkway. They've talked with town departments. They had a Zoom call instead of a sitewalk. One change is the potential for them to come back to the Select Board to request a beer garden in partnership with a local brewery.

Otherwise, the event would consist of art and music vendors and live music. It meets all the protocols currently on the books, and all of the Department heads have signed off. Scott Ruffner said they're waiting to see what happens with outdoor dining and the events before coming back for that piece.

MOTION: Ms. Cowan moved to approve an event for TEAM on Swasey Parkway for Saturday May 22, June 19, July 17, Aug 21, and Sept 18, 2021. Ms. Oliff seconded. By a roll call vote, the motion passed 4-0.

- iii. Ms. Roy said that TEAM is also looking to host First Fridays on the bandstand playing music. This is not really an event with crowds.

MOTION: Ms. Cowan moved to approve an event for TEAM on Friday May 7, June 4, July 2, Aug 6, Sept 3, and Oct 1 for First Friday music on the bandstand from 4 - 7 PM. Ms. Oliff seconded. By a roll call vote, the motion passed 4-0.

c. Town Manager's Report

- i. Ms. Roy said they were contacted by Congressman Pappas' office requesting proposals for infrastructure projects. The State will send 10 proposals to Washington DC. She will be coordinating with the Department heads on this project.

d. Select Board Committee Reports

- i. Ms. Gilman had no report. The Energy Committee would like time at the March 29th Select Board meeting to talk about community power aggregation.
- ii. Ms. Oliff had a Housing Advisory Committee, where they heard three business owners talk about issues that they face in employee retention based on housing affordability.
- iii. Ms. Cowan said that at the Water/Sewer Advisory meeting, they heard about putting forward the Siphon project for the Reinvestment and Recovery Act, as well as the usual abatements. At the Planning Board, there was one application, from McFarland Ford Realty, which wanted to put a parking lot behind their location. They did not have a landscaping plan so the Planning Board sent it back. At the Exeter Police Stakeholders Committee, they heard from the Police Union Rep. Also, the Police Survey is closed and the response was good.
- iv. Mr. Papakonstantis has a River Advisory Meeting Thursday.

e. Correspondence

- i. A thank you note from Big Brothers Big Sisters
- ii. An email update from Jennifer Mates on construction projects for 2021
- iii. Several emails in favor of keeping Swasey Parkway closed to traffic

10. Review Board Calendar

- a. The next meetings are March 29, April 12, and April 26. The goal setting meeting is upcoming but yet to be scheduled.

11. Non-Public Session

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

12. Adjournment

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to adjourn. Ms. Cowan seconded. By a roll call vote, the motion passed 4-0 and the meeting was adjourned at 9:40 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary