

Select Board Meeting
Monday December 6, 2021
6:45 PM
Nowak Room, Town Offices
Draft Minutes

1. Call Meeting to Order

Members present: Julie Gilman, Molly Cowan, Lovey Roundtree Oliff, Niko Papakonstantis, Assistant Town Manager Melissa Roy, and Town Manager Russ Dean were present at this meeting. The meeting was called to order by Mr. Papakonstantis at 6:45 PM.

2. Non Public Session

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to enter into non-public session under RSA 91-A:3II(a). Ms. Cowan seconded. In a roll call vote, all were in favor.

The Board went downstairs for the non public session and reconvened in the Nowak Room at 7:27 PM.

Mr. Papakonstantis said with Daryl Browne stepping down at the last meeting, the Board has the option to appoint someone from now until the election, but it's only three months away. The Board concluded that it was not enough time, and we should continue with a four-person Board. He and Mr. Dean spoke with legal counsel, who advised that it's the Board's option. Mr. Dean said the filing period for candidates is even less than three months. Mr. Papakonstantis said the person elected would serve the remaining one year of Mr. Browne's term.

3. Public Comment

- a. Don Clement said he is concerned about Covid. The trend seems to be going in the wrong direction, to the point where Exeter Hospital is filled to capacity. The Board should consider re-instituting the mask mandate in town to stem Covid.

4. Proclamations/Recognitions

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

5. Approval of Minutes

- a. Regular Meeting: November 22, 2021

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve the minutes of Nov 22, 2021 as presented. Ms. Oliff seconded. All were in favor.

6. Appointments

- a. There were no appointments made.

7. Discussion/Action Items

- a. HB 79 Report and COVID 19 Updates

James Murray, the Health Officer, was present to give the HB 79 report and discuss Covid updates. Mr. Murray said as of Friday, Exeter has 69 active

Covid cases, for a total of 1,403 all-time cases. The numbers continue to rise across the State, which is leading the nation in the rate of new Covid-19 cases. Some hospitals are at capacity. The Omicron variant has been detected in MA, CT, and NY; it can spread more easily than the original virus, but the CDC said that it may be less severe in terms of illness. The CDC expects vaccinations to prevent hospitalizations and deaths. The FD will do a booster clinic for town staff tomorrow and a “booster blitz” this weekend in Stratham. We have been helping other Seacoast communities with their vaccinations. There will be a second dose clinic for 5 - 11 year olds this weekend; 306 children were given the first dose. Residents who are not sure about the vaccine should talk to their doctors. People should also social distance, wear masks, and find alternatives to large gatherings and meeting in person. He’s looking for at-home tests for Exeter town staff.

Ms. Cowan asked if there have been any orders from the Governor’s office to slow the spread of Covid. Mr. Murray said just the “booster blitz.” Ms. Cowan asked if we could impose a mask ordinance without the State having one. Ms. Gilman said yes. She asked if Mr. Murray had heard about the National Guard helping with the hospitals, and Mr. Murray said no. Mr. Papakonstantis asked about other communities putting indoor mask ordinance back into place. Mr. Murray said other communities are considering it. He hasn’t heard the request from Exeter businesses.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked about masking for town employees. Mr. Dean said it seems to be working out well. There hasn’t been a continued rise in positive cases, although there have been a few more.

Mr. Murray said HB 79 requires every NH town to hold a “Board of Health” meeting annually about the Health Department’s functioning. The local Health Department is himself and Deputy Fire Chief Jason Fritz, who is the Deputy Health Officer. The Covid 19 pandemic is the greatest threat to the town’s health, and he has already described the tools they’ve been using on that. Other health threats are vector borne diseases (ticks and mosquitos), foodborne illness, and environmental health threats. He’s been here for a little less than five years and that’s what the Department has been responding to. In 2022, he will continue coordinated efforts to reduce the spread of Covid 19; train the Deputy Health Officer in Food Safety Inspections and increase those inspections; and conduct a community health assessment to determine the broader needs of the community. He will continue to build relationships with local businesses and agencies, in partnership with Darren Winham. He will provide updates as the Board requests. On request he can provide a “Readiness Report” per RSA 128 and 147, he is trained and ready to respond in those fields. He asked the Board to think about where the needs of the community are and what the Health Department should address in the future.

Ms. Gilman said he should take a look at the NH State Legislative requests and give his input.

Ms. Cowan said she would like to see statistics on housing and food insecurity.

b. BRC Recap

Bob Kelly, the Chair of the 2022 Budget Recommendations Committee, was present to discuss the Committee's work. Mr. Kelly said this year we looked at the CIP first to take a broader view of the next several years. In the General Fund, there were a few items we deliberated on. The BRC recommended funding for two new Firefighters, coming from the recommendations of the Public Safety analysis. The Fire Department did a great job with their budget, with a general increase of only 1%, much lower than normal, so this is a good year to be doing that. We're seeing regulatory issues for stormwater and wastewater, with increases well into the six figures due to regulatory constraints. Public Works has tried to work with the State and DEA on these.

In the General Fund, the Facilities Committee has requested doing a Facilities Condition Assessment by hiring a consultant to review facilities in our town, which would help with planning replacements and repairs. Folks on the Water/Sewer side have been working with a consultant on a similar effort for years, and we recommend leveraging this experience and making sure Public Works is on board, since most of the ongoing effort will fall on our staff. The BRC fully supported this assessment.

The Water and Sewer Funds were not up by as much as we anticipated. DPW expanded the metering replacement program; 10 years ago, we took out a bond to replace half the meters in town, and have accelerated the program to replace the rest since even the replacement meters are aging. There have been significant increases in lab testing, equipment, supplies, and general management of these programs. The BRC supported a 10 year management contract for extending the life of equipment at the Surface Water Treatment Plant. We're already using this contractor for one of the water towers and it's worked out well.

In the CIP, there is the critical purchase of a replacement for Fire Engine #5, which is 20 years old and has significant deterioration. There's a 16 month waiting period between placing the order and getting the equipment, so the earliest we could get the new vehicle is Fall of 2023. It would be bonded for 10 years. The other item is the purchase of the 10 Hampton Road Property for a new Parks and Rec operations center. It seems like a home run for the town. It could shave \$5-10M from future purchases for Parks and Rec. This purchase was unanimously recommended.

For final recommendations, there are three projects that it's time to move on: the Pickpocket Dam modification project, the Stormwater and Nitrogen Mitigation Project, and Raynes Barn. The Parks Improvement Fund allocation we increased from \$50,000 to \$100,000. There was also a DPW truck and Fire Command Vehicle replacement. These projects were to be taken out of the General Fund Balance.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked Mr. Dean to speak more about using ARPA funding prior to the budget hearing.

Mr. Dean said the budget is a 2.35% increase over FY2020. The conversation will be around funding sources, the strategy of drawing the funding for some warrant articles from the General Fund, some from Fund Balance, and some from ARPA funds.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked if there were personnel additions other than Firefighters. Mr. Kelly said we are looking to move two part-time positions to full time, the Natural Resources Planner and HR Assistant.

Mr. Papakonstantis recognized and thanked the 2022 BRC members.

c. Community Power Plan

Community Power Aggregation Committee members Lew Hitzrot, Nick Devonshire, and Cliff Sinott were present to discuss the Community Power Plan; member Stephanie Marshall was present remotely via Zoom. Henry Herndon of the Community Power Coalition was also present. Mr. Hitzrot said the Committee has created a brochure, had a panel discussion, and put together an electric aggregation plan. Climate change is here, and a real concern, and hopefully this effort, along with the effort of other communities, will alleviate the issue somewhat. There's no burden on the taxpayers and no money the town will have to put in up front, and it could bring in money over the years.

Mr. Sinnott said it's a small bullet but an important one because it uses the marketplace as a solution to move us toward renewable energy. It aggregates electric customers into a large group that has a market force behind it, and creates an additional market for renewable energy. Community power allows municipalities to aggregate their energy demand to get lower costs for energy and expand access to renewable energy. It was enabled in the 1990s, but changes in 2019 make it more feasible. Community power is a buying cooperative and allows towns and cities to join together to create a larger market. Unitil continues to provide power and maintain the grid. Participation in community power is voluntary, but residents must choose to opt out. He discussed the required steps to enacting this per RSA 53-E, including putting it to town meeting for a vote.

Mr. Sinott presented the Electric Aggregation Plan. He said we will not launch unless the default rate is at or below the current Unitil rate.

The CPAC's second public hearing is on Dec 13. If the Select Board decides to move forward, they would put a warrant article to approve the Energy Aggregation Plan and program.

Ms. Cowan asked about the reception at the recent forum. Mr. Hitzrot said there were 12 - 13 questions that came in. Mr. Sinnott said there were about 15 people present.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked about other costs to the proposal. Mr. Sinnott said there may be legal costs and notification costs.

Sheri Nixon of 17 Thornton Street, via Zoom, said NH is suffering from a lack of climate leadership, and it's imperative that action come from the local level. This is an equity opportunity for the town, because you can opt into higher

levels of renewable energy, opening that option to all residents rather than just those with solar panels or other equipment. Other sustainability initiatives have been supported by the town.

Mr. Sinnott addressed why, if PUC hasn't completed the rules, we should still do this now. There's a small risk that we have to go back and change the plan, but if we delay this, we delay a year and three months. There's no cost to approving it now and modifying it in response to the rules.

d. Town Hall Survey Results and CRF Proposal

Tony Callendrello of the Arts and Culture Commission was present to discuss the survey of residents and those who have used Town Hall to see what was needed there. Heating, air conditioning, and an improved sound system had the highest ranking of "important". In the comments, many people mentioned a bathroom accessible to the first floor. Mr. Callendrello said Mr. Dean has discussed a warrant article to get things in place. Mr. Papakonstantis said the Commission should solicit donations. Mr. Dean said we're looking at setting up a dedicated funding source for the Town Hall, which we haven't had before. Mr. Dean said the initial quotes for HVAC improvements were around \$120,000.

Mr. Papakonstantis said this work is a great start and he's excited to move forward.

e. Swasey Parkway Discussion

Ms. Oliff showed and described a rendering of Swasey Parkway with a parking lot at the far end and a path, not a road, built out around the gazebo. Mr. Papakonstantis said this image has been in Mr. Eastman's office for many years. He heard from Mr. Perkins that on the Newfields Road side, it would be difficult to construct that design because of the bridge and the drainage. You could do a parking lot on the other side, but because of the River we would need a permit from the State, which could take years. One thing that could be done now, is to keep road open one way and the Public Works Department could put in speed tables for minimal expense; or we could add a sidewalk with a cross walk on the Newfields Road side.

The Swasey Parkway Trustees will come back to a January meeting. Ms. Oliff said she would like to hear from DPW which options are feasible prior to that meeting. Mr. Dean said the last date to add a warrant article is Jan 18th, the day of the Public Hearing. We could bring Public Works to the Dec 20th meeting. Ms. Cowan said she would like to see as little disruption and spending on this project as possible while keeping the character of the Parkway the same.

f. Speed Limit Ordinance - Second Reading

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to open the public hearing. Ms. Oliff seconded. All were in favor. There have been no changes since the previous reading.

There was no public comment

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to close the public hearing. Ms. Oliff seconded. All were in favor.

The third reading will be December 20th.

8. Regular Business

a. Tax Abatements, Veterans Credits and Exemptions

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

b. Permits & Approvals

- i. There were no permits or approvals considered at this meeting.

c. Bid Opening - Water Chemicals

- i. Univar Solutions of Morrisville, PA: 1) Sodium Hypochlorite per gallon \$1.85 2) No Bid 3) Potassium Permanganate per pound \$2.36 4) Sodium Hydroxide per gallon \$1.56.
- ii. Borden and Remington Corp of Fall River, MA: 1) Sodium Hypochlorite per gallon \$1.9750 2) No Bid 3) Potassium Permanganate per pound \$2.3990 4) Sodium Hydroxide per gallon \$1.4924
- iii. Harcros Chemicals Inc of Nashua NH: 1) Sodium Hypochlorite per gallon \$1.8050 2) No Bid 3) Potassium Permanganate per pound \$2.2000 4) No Bid
- iv. Coyne Chemical of Croydon PA: 1) No Bid 2) Activated Carbon per pound \$1.6972 3) Potassium Permanganate per pound \$2.0150 4) No Bid
- v. Shannon Chemical Corp of Malvern PA: 1) No Bid 2) No Bid 3) Potassium Permanganate per pound \$2.57 with minimum delivery of 36 bales. 4) No Bid

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to forward these bids to the DPW for review and recommendation. Ms. Cowan seconded. All were in favor.

d. Town Manager's Report

- i. We had a fire in town near Mill Street, and Supreme Pizza and a multifamily home were damaged. Everyone escaped unharmed and there were no injuries to our Firefighters. We're looking to reach out to the displaced families.
- ii. Tax Bills are due on December 8th.
- iii. He thanked the organizers of the holiday parade. He heard quite a bit of good feedback.
- iv. He suggested Town Offices and other buildings might be closed on December 27th in appreciation of our staff. The Board agreed. Mr. Papakonstantis said Police, Fire, and essential services would still be available. Mr. Dean said he hopes that if anyone has to work that day we can award them a floating holiday for 2022.

e. Select Board Committee Reports

- i. Ms. Gilman met with the Facilities Advisory Committee, which reviewed where they are in their goals. We saw a demo of PeopleGIS, a potential

software for the Facilities Condition Assessment. The ADA Study came up, and we heard the Town Planner has a draft of one. Mr. Dean said he will make sure the committee members get it. The Heritage Commission is having a public hearing Dec 15th to look at a proposal by Exonian properties for the partial demo of a roof at 43 Front Street in order to make balconies for residential units. On Dec 16 the Historic District Commission is hearing from the same group on their proposal, as well as a continued hearing on the demo of the 8 Gilman Lane property.

- ii. Ms. Cowan had no report.
- iii. Ms. Oliff had no report.
- iv. Mr. Papakonstantis had no report. It was fun to march in the parade and see how well attended it was.

f. Correspondence

- i. A notice from Xfinity on programming
- ii. Several emails on Swasey Parkway.
- iii. An email from US Army Major Andrew Shriver, requesting consideration for trees and a plaque, which would be grant funded. The Board was in support of Mr. Dean looking into it.

9. Review Board Calendar

- a. The next meetings are December 20, Jan 3, Jan 18, and Jan 31st. Feb 5 is the Deliberative Session. The meetings in February are tentatively Feb 7, 21, and 28.

10. Non-Public Session

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

11. Adjournment

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to adjourn. Ms. Cowan seconded. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 9:37 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary