

Select Board Meeting  
Monday December 20, 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, Town Manager Russ Dean, and Assistant Town Manager Melissa Roy 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 per RSA 91A-3:2(a). Ms. Oliff seconded. In a roll call vote, the motion passed 4-0 and the Board entered non public at 6:45 PM.

The Board reconvened at 6:56 PM.

3. Board Interviews

- a. There were no interviews at this meeting.

4. Bid Award - Water/Sewer Chemicals

- a. Bid item 1, Sodium Hypochlorite 15%, is recommended to Harcros Chemicals of Nashua NH at \$1.805 per gallon
- b. Bid item 2, Activated Carbon, is recommended to George S. Coyne of Croydon PA at \$1.6972 per pound
- c. Bid item 3, Potassium Permanganate, is recommended to George S. Coyne at \$2.0150 per pound
- d. Bid Item 4, Sodium Hydroxide, is recommended to Borden and Remington of Fall River, MA at \$1.4924 per gallon

**MOTION:** Ms. Gilman moved to approve the four bid items as recommended by the Public Works Department. Ms. Cowan seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed 4-0.

5. Public Comment

- a. There was no public comment at this meeting.

6. Proclamations/Recognitions

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

7. Approval of Minutes

- a. Regular Meeting: December 6, 2021

**MOTION:** Ms. Cowan moved to approve the minutes of December 6, 2021 as presented. Ms. Gilman seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed 4-0.

8. Appointments

- a. There were no appointments at this meeting.

9. Discussion/Action Items

- a. Covid-19 Update

Fire Chief Erik Wilking said Covid numbers in NH continue to rise. DHHS predicts the Omicron variant will cause a marked increase in cases throughout the State. This new strain is more transmissible, but we're not yet sure if it's more or less deadly than the Delta. In Exeter, 71 residents tested positive over the last week. This number has been steady over the past three weeks. There have been 1521 cases total. There are 79 active cases in Exeter. Statewide, there have been over 1,200 new cases a day. There have been 53 deaths over the past week, 8 in Rockingham County, but he's not aware of any in Exeter. The FD has been delivering booster shots at pop up and onsite clinics, as well as to town employees. There were two clinics at LSS, and over 300 children were vaccinated. During the "booster blitz" at Stratham Coop Middle School, over 2,200 people received the booster, which was double the next highest vaccination site in NH. Plans are underway for another booster blitz mid-January at the HS.

Health Officer James Murray said we had some successful clinics, including the 5-11 year old clinic and the booster blitz. He went to the HS today for a site visit for the next booster blitz, where we're looking to do 5,000. More info will be available at [covid19.nh.gov](https://covid19.nh.gov). Cases are increasing, so we recommend wearing masks indoors, getting vaccinated, and minimizing exposures. The State will be giving out the free at-home tests again to 100,000 more homes.

Ms. Gilman said the hospitals are at critical maximum use. On Thursday, there was only one ICU bed left in the area. Everyone should get vaccinated to bring this down. Mr. Papakonstantis said folks are exhausted by the pandemic but the reality is it's not going away, it's getting worse. The tools to combat it are vaccines, masks, social distancing and using common sense when gathering in public places. The State is leaving it up to local Governments to decide what's best in our communities, with public input.

Mr. Dean read a statement from Mark Whitney, a VP at Exeter Hospital.

Ms. Cowan said she would be in favor of another mask ordinance if it comes up tonight.

Don Clement of Thelma Drive said he and his wife have had the boosters, but we're still worried. Omicron is 70% of new cases and it replicates rapidly. He strongly advocates that the Board implement a mask mandate in town. Roughly 25-30% of people he sees when out are unmasked. Keene implemented a mask mandate today and Exeter should follow.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked what other towns in the area are doing. Mr. Murray said Nashua is having their conversation tomorrow night. Portsmouth hasn't started the conversation. Ms. Gilman said Lebanon has reinstated the mask mandate as well.

Ms. Oliff said we were one of the first towns to implement the mask mandate, and it proved to be beneficial. It makes it easier for business owners that the town would take the lead on it for them.

Ms. Gilman said we shouldn't call it a mask mandate, it should be referred to as a mask ordinance as before.

Ms. Cowan said she would support the ordinance requiring wearing masks only inside, since Covid doesn't seem to spread in the same way outside. Do we still have access to PPE? Chief Wilking said we have a good stock of face coverings. Masks are a mutual protection because my mask protects you. If we go down the road of an ordinance, there should be some form of enforcement beyond the educational piece. Ms. Oliff said she's not inclined to make this the responsibility of the Police. Just having the ordinance encourages those who are on the fence about masking. The town is telling them what they need to do. Mr. Papakonstantis said the Police can carry masks and hand them out rather than something punitive. Ms. Cowan said there should be places where if you don't wear a mask, you don't go in. Ms. Oliff said the Hospital requires it and there aren't fights outside the Hospital. In schools, retirement facilities, and town buildings, people should wear a mask. Mr. Papakonstantis said being able to say "per town of Exeter ordinance" gives teeth to a business's policy. Ms. Cowan said we should extend this to those who participate in Town of Exeter Rec activities. Mr. Papakonstantis said that's already being done.

Mr. Papakonstantis said we need to keep our community safe. This shouldn't be an opportunity to call people out on social media or otherwise.

**MOTION:** Ms. Cowan moved to put an indoor mask ordinance in place in all buildings in Exeter effective December 21, 2021 through March 21, 2022, with the understanding that we can revisit it at any time; it is the same as the previous ordinance with the exception of the outdoors. Ms. Oliff seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed 4-0.

b. Sight Easement - 66 Newfields Road

Ben Anderson, the applicant, said the Planning Board was unanimously in approval of this easement, so they and the DPW have no problem with this.

Mr. Dean said Town Counsel created an easement deed. Counsel said LCHIP will also have to sign off on this.

**MOTION:** Ms. Cowan moved to approve, pending LCHIP authorization, the sight easement for tax map 24-29 the Word Barn at 66 Newfields Road and authorize Mr. Dean to sign. Ms. Gilman seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed 4-0.

c. Financial Report - FY21 Third Quarter through 9/30/21

Mr. Dean discussed the finances through Sept 30, 2021. In General Fund Revenues, Property tax revenues were \$6.7M through the 3rd quarter. We have now collected the December tax billing, as of Dec 8. Motor vehicles are up from the prior year at \$2.4M, up by \$135,500. It was a good year for building permits, with an increase YOY of \$189,900, or 54% over the prior year. This includes the new PEA dormitory, Riverwoods addition, a new daycare facility, and the EHS

Cancer Center. In FEMA revenues, we received \$5,500, and we're expecting \$61,500 more in FY21. Chief Wilking said it could be around \$100,000 total. Mr. Dean said the GOFFER grant was one-time revenue in FY20, so wouldn't count in FY21. Other state grants were at \$17,400, a decrease due to one-time first responder stipend in 2020. Income from Departments was at \$779,000 due to insurance reimbursements from Primex and an increase in blue bag revenue. This doesn't include the Health Trust refund, which put it over forecast. Interest income went down due to lower interest rates during the pandemic. For town rental revenues, we're not renting 149 Kingston Road, so there was a decrease. For ARPA, we received \$801,600, and we're due to receive another \$800,000 in May 2022.

General Fund expenses were at \$14M, or 70% spent against the current budget. Expenses were at \$331,000, which is 2% higher YOY. General Government was 75% spent. The Finance group was 70% spent. Assessing was only 54% spent because of a one-time upgrade charge to VISION in the prior year, as well as the timing of MRI contract payments. Planning/Inspection/Code Enforcement was 64% spent. The Police Department was at \$2.6M or 67% spent, mostly due to position vacancies in Patrol, which was only 63% spent. There were decreases in fuel and investigations. Communications was 68% spent. The Fire Department was at \$67M or 69% spent. There was a decrease in Fire Suppression due to employee turnover, partly offset by increase in Fire Administration due to a reorg. Emergency management was 68% spent. The Health Department was 73% spent; the budget there was \$15,500 less than the prior year due to savings on the mosquito contract. Public Works was 64% spent. The DPW Administration had vacancies. Solid waste was only 53% spent, but that's mainly due to payments from the disposal contract being off-cycle. Maintenance and Town Buildings was 64% spent. Maintenance projects were curtailed in 2020 due to Covid. There was a \$24,000 increase to contracted janitorial services due to a temporary staff shortage in the department. Parks and Rec was 68% spent. Parks expenses were at \$140,000 or 63% expended. Wages, Taxes and Benefits were decreased due to two vacancies, one of which is now filled. Contract Services were increased by \$7,000. Equipment Purchases of \$3,000 and Miscellaneous Expenses of \$1,000 offset the decrease. The Library was 77% spent, at \$833,000, and expenditures were up \$148,000 over prior year. Debt Service expenses through Sept 30 were \$1.4M or 100% expended. Debt payments for library addition and renovations commenced in 2021. There was a General Fund deficit of \$3.1M vs prior year at \$2.4M. The net deficit for the 3rd quarter is typical, as there has been ¾ of expenditures but only half of the revenues have been received. The expenses are what we'd expect for the third quarter.

The Water fund had revenues of \$2.9M, or 71% collected. Revenues were down \$8,700 from the prior year. Water consumption was at \$2.4M or 70% collected, flat YOY. Water service charges were 78% collected. Water impact fees were \$6,500, vs \$25,000 in the prior year. Other Water service fees were

\$42,000, an increase of \$14,000. Water Fund receivables were \$512,000, which includes current year receivables of \$508,000. Water Fund expenses were 72% spent against a \$4M budget. Expenses have increased by \$154,000 or 6% YOY. We have paid 100% of the debt service budget in the Water area. The Water fund had a net deficit of \$40,100, vs a net income of \$322,500 in prior year. Rates were increased in July 2021 to begin covering operating expenses. Revenue streams will be slightly less than the budget.

Sewer Fund revenues were at \$4.9M, or 71% collected, flat YOY. We were 67% collected in Sewer Usage charges, which was on target. Sewer Fund receivables were \$1.07M. Current year receivables were \$1.03M and \$43,000 were from prior years. Sewer liens have been effective, and we're no longer seeing receivables drop. Payment plans have more than doubled since the prior year, with 16 active plans vs 8 last year, but some were carried over from last year. That's out of 3,400 Water/Sewer accounts. Sewer Fund expenses were at \$2.3M, a decrease of \$37,000. Admin was 79% spent, Sewer Billing was 78% spent, Sewer Collection was 53% spent, and Sewer Treatment was 67% spent. The Debt Service budget is \$4.1M for the year, but the Debt service expense for the first  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the year was \$515,000, because we don't pay Wastewater Treatment plant debt until December. Capital outlay has a budget of \$215,000, with YTD expenses of \$13,500. We deferred work because of seasonal issues. For appropriations from Sewer Reserve, the Board voted to use \$65,000 to buy out the lease of the solar array used for Sewer operations. There was an increase of \$229,700. There's a proposed House Bill to fund Exeter's share of the Wastewater Plant, \$700,000-800,000.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked about updates on projects submitted to Reps Pappas and Shaheen. Mr. Dean said the money is still in the budget, but the Federal Government is working on a continued resolution, so we don't yet have it. Ms. Roy said there hasn't been an update

In the CATV fund, there are budgeted revenues of \$137,500, and we collected \$73,600 as of September 30th. Comcast pays us once a quarter but we get the Q4 payment in the next February. Expenses are budgeted at \$201,800, and expenses were \$113,000, or 56% expended. We're looking for ways to cut back in that fund, and will come back with recommendations at the end of the year. That deficit is getting better. The Rec Revolving fund was \$382,000 or 66% collected vs the prior year at \$95,000 or 14% collected. Most Rec programs were curtailed in 2020 due to the pandemic. In the EMS fund, Ambulance revenue was at \$382,700, vs \$384,500 in prior year. Expenses were budgeted at \$377,000, and were 39% expended. We look to return 95% of this revenue to the General Fund to pay for Firefighters and EMTs. Expenses were at \$148,000 or 85% expended, a 4% decrease.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked how many job openings the DPW has. Mr. Dean said he thinks they're down to 3 but he can send a list of all vacancies to the Board.

d. FY21 Encumbrances

Mr. Dean presented the encumbrance list. From the list, he said to delete Internet Services for AHA Consulting on Municode. He listed the remaining projects. The Police cruisers from McFarland Ford have not been built yet. In Water Capital Outlay, there's the sludge removal at the Surface Water Treatment Plant and other projects. On the Sewer side, there's manhole maintenance, pipe relining, pump control maintenance, and the SCADA software. Landfill monitoring is an ongoing project with the DPW. There's Education/Training money for the Health Officer, which expenditure was delayed due to tornadoes impacting Mr. Murray's college in KY. Chief Wilking said we got Mr. Murray's scores today so we should be able to process it now. Mr. Dean said for warrant articles, there's groundwater/surfacewater exploration work, Pickpocket Dam, and the Public Safety Complex alternatives analysis which is ongoing. The total of the top encumbrances is \$706,239.50. Warrant articles are another \$257,553.81.

**MOTION:** Ms. Gilman moved to approve the 2021 Encumbrance request for the year ending 12/31/21 in the amount of \$706,239.50 as presented by the Town Manager on Dec 20, 2021. Ms. Oliff seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed 4-0.

**MOTION:** Ms. Gilman moved to approve the 2021 Warrant article encumbrances of \$257,533.81 as presented by the Town Manager on Dec 20, 2021. Ms. Oliff seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed 4-0.

e. Third Reading: Speed Limit Ordinance

**MOTION:** Ms. Gilman moved to open the public hearing. Ms. Cowan seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed 4-0.

There was no public comment.

**MOTION:** Ms. Oliff moved to close the public hearing. Ms. Gilman seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed 4-0.

**MOTION:** Ms. Gilman moved to adopt the Exeter Town Ordinance amendment to Chapter 2 Speed Limits with the adoption date of 12/20/2021. Ms. Gilman seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed 4-0.

f. Swasey Parkway Discussion

Mr. Dean said that Jay Perkins from DPW was supposed to Zoom in, but he's not on the line. Mr. Papakonstantis said the Board received a letter from the Town of Exeter Arts and Culture Advisory Commission. That group unanimously voted to support the permanent closure of Swasey Park to vehicular traffic, because the closure has had an overwhelming positive effect on the overall quality of life in the region.

g. FY22 Budget and Warrant Articles

Bob Kelly, the Chair of the Budget Recommendations Committee, was present for the budget discussion. Mr. Dean presented a draft of the Town Warrant 2022. There is one Petition Article, regarding a Zoning Amendment, to revise the definition of "bed & breakfast." It has the requisite amount of signatures, so it will go on the warrant. The Planning Board will also have a hearing on this soon. The Webster Ave pump station, 10 Hampton Road purchase, and Westside Drive design are other warrant articles; all are contemplated as bonds. There are three Operating Budget articles. We will have three collective bargaining agreements to vote on: Police is a 4-year contract, Fire 3 years, and Public Works 3 years. There are the Engine 5 replacement, Fire SCBA lease purchase, and Police body-worn cameras, which are all lease purchases. We were able to secure \$44,000 through the DOJ to offset the cost of body-worn cameras. For the Raynes Barn Improvements, we got the \$100,000 LCHIP grant this year, so we will be able to add that to the warrant article. There's the Sewer Capacity Rehab at \$200,000, for engineering services related to the main sewer line. Pickpocket dam is at \$185,000. For Parks Improvements, the BRC recommended \$100,000 vs the initial \$50,000. There's the Highway Truck 9 replacement and the DPW hotbox. There's the Intersection Improvements plan article. The Public Works Facility garage is at \$50,000. There's an article to replace Car 3 in the FD, a 2010 Ford expedition to be replaced with a pickup. There's the Facilities Condition assessment. We're replacing DPW jeep 65. There's the Bike/Pedestrian Improvement plan at \$25,000. There are two customary articles, the Sick Leave Trust Fund at \$100,000, and the snow and ice deficit at \$50,000, as well as the appropriation to the Swasey Fund. For the Town Hall capital reserve fund, the article will be for the Arts and Culture commission to be named as agents to expend the old fund. There's one citizens petition from Andrew Elliot for improvements on Washington Street. The deadline is Jan 11 for citizens petitions.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked about the change to the Parks and Rec Capital Improvement Fund, where the Department head recommended \$50,000 but the BRC revised it to \$100,000. Mr. Dean said there is an \$116,000 balance in the fund. Mr. Kelly said Ms. Soutter discussed this change at length. With everything that the Department has gone through, she felt that 10 Hampton Road saves money on future Parks and Rec expenditures. We can give them programmatic money to do the programs they're doing. We've been flat funding different things, and it might be time to update those.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked about warrant articles be paid with ARPA funds or the General Fund balance. Mr. Dean said any project to do funding through ARPA would come to the Select Board, not Town Meeting. We've been talking about Covid-19 filtration systems for Town Offices and Town Hall, which may be an ARPA fund project. Nitrogen projects are not on the Town warrant, and could be paid through ARPA. Mr. Kelly said the BRC recommended that Pickpocket Dam be funded by ARPA. Mr. Dean said we're evaluating that project before we say it can be funded through ARPA.

10. Regular Business

a. Tax Abatements, Veterans Credits and Exemptions

**MOTION:** Ms. Gilman moved to approve a Veterans Credit for 47/8/108 in the amount of \$500 for the 2022 tax year. Ms. Cowan seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed 4-0.

**MOTION:** Ms. Gilman moved to approve a Veterans Credit for 47/8/108 in the amount of \$2000 for the 2022 tax year for Disability. Ms. Cowan seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed 4-0.

**MOTION:** Ms. Gilman moved to approve a Veteran's Credit in the amount of \$500 for 71/44 for tax year 2022. Ms. Cowan seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed 4-0.

**MOTION:** Ms. Gilman moved to approve an abatement for 71/44 \$1128.47 for tax year 2021. Ms. Cowan seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed 4-0.

b. Permits & Approvals

Mr. Dean discussed a request for relief of interest billed. The request comes from a citizen who bought a condo in May and believed that taxes were paid as part of the closing process. They did not receive a tax bill. There was interest of \$144.62. Mr. Dean said if the bill was sent to the prior owner, the prior owner would have been responsible for getting it to the current owner. The bill went out right around the time of the closing.

Ms. Cowan said she would feel comfortable waiving the interest if the resident has now paid the bill. Ms. Oliff said we should do something to avoid this in the future. Ms. Gilman said it's the responsibility of the buyer to find out what's outstanding. Mr. Dean said we create a tax warrant twice a year with the current owner of record listed, that's what we bill. The taxes are supposed to be picked up in the closing process. Mr. Dean said it's rare. Ms. Cowan said maybe there's a realtor education piece that should happen.

**MOTION:** Ms. Cowan moved to approve a waiver of the interest for 68/6/528. Ms. Gilman seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed 4-0.

Ms. Cowan described a situation in the welfare office in Exeter. There's an applicant who's in the address protection program, and the authorization form to furnish information includes authorization of the welfare officer in Exeter to contact a number of different people. We should authorize removing if necessary the language in our authorization form that furnishes information to a relative, in case the relative presents harm to this person. That lets the Welfare Officer do her job while offering protection, safety, and access to services.

Mr. Dean said that everything that's in the application is to protect the integrity of the process. We do this work with all of our applicants. It takes a lot to go through the assistance process with an individual.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked if this is town language or State language. Mr. Dean said it's a town form that's part of our welfare guidelines. The Select Board



has the ability to update it. Ms. Cowan said we should change it tonight, then ask the NH Welfare Department if there's better language to use.

Mr. Dean said all welfare files are confidential. By striking that out, how do you control outside sources of funding? Ms. Cowan said this would only be struck out in cases where there was a demonstrated need for this protection. We don't want to deny someone services or put the Welfare Officer in charge of having to make those calls.

**MOTION:** Ms. Cowan moved to approve the ability, in a small limited circumstance where the address protection program is implemented, to strike the "relative" portion from the Town of Exeter's welfare application. Mr. Papakonstantis seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed 4-0.

- c. Town Manager's Report
  - i. We're continuing to work on Omniballot, an electronic system to help disabled voters vote. We hope to move that purchase forward and have it ready for 2022.
  - ii. There's ongoing work at Town Hall.
  - iii. The Town Offices are closed on Friday for the holiday and Monday for employee appreciation. They're also closed Dec 31st for New Year's Eve.
  - iv. Christmas tree pickup is the first week of January.
  - v. Ms. Gilman thanked the town for sending \$10 gift cards to town volunteers. Mr. Papakonstantis thanked Pam McElroy who came up with the idea.
  
- d. Select Board Committee Reports
  - i. Ms. Gilman said the Heritage Commission conducted a public hearing after a subcommittee demo review of 43 Front Street, the former Baptist Church. They want to demolish part of the roof, which the HC determined wouldn't be that big a change. They heard from the same project at the HDC next night, but questions on that one pushed it to another meeting. The other property was brought forward by PEA, which would like to demolish a property by the observatory. The HDC had questions about whether it was the original building or a newer building on the same foundation as the original. They have the authority to deny the demolition until they approve what will take its place.
  - ii. Ms. Cowan had a Planning Board meeting. 50 Newfields Road used to be a dry cleaner, and they investigated whether they did dry cleaning on site and therefore there may still be chemicals there. It was determined that it did include dry cleaning on site so the Planning Board requested an environmental study
  - iii. Ms. Oliff said the Housing Advisory Committee met to discuss the Jan 21 meeting they're hosting at the library, the Regional Housing needs assessment. This meeting is by invitation only. The Arts & Culture

Commission sent the Board a draft letter re Swasey Parkway, but she was not there.

- iv. Mr. Papakonstantis said the River Advisory will meet again in Jan.
- e. Correspondence
  - i. A notice from Xfinity regarding changes to service.
  - ii. A memo from Scott Marsh at Municipal Resources regarding the DRA sales ratio survey, which had similar results to what was expected. Mr. Dean said the median ratio is 79%, so we may come back to request a look at mobile homes and condominiums, which are the most off.
  - iii. A continuation of correspondence from Major Shriver regarding Remembrance. Mr. Dean said we're still working out the final details.
  - iv. A final assessment schedule from Exeter COOP and Exeter School District for FY21-22.
  - v. Correspondence regarding the National Opioid settlement. Mr. Dean said this is from a law firm in Manchester, which asked the town to sign onto a settlement offer. There is \$21B from drug companies to settle opioid related claims. There's no reason that he can see that we would not do this. There were no objections from the Board.
  - vi. Ms. Oliff asked what happens to the vehicles we're replacing. Mr. Dean depending on the type of vehicle, we'll trade in or transfer it to another department.

#### 11. Review Board Calendar

- a. The next meetings are January 3 and January 31st. January 18 is the budget hearing. Deliberative session is Feb 5 at 9 AM. The meetings in February are Feb 7 and Tuesday Feb 22nd. The next meeting, March 14th, is after the election.
- b. Mr. Papakonstantis thanked town staff and volunteers for their work in 2021.

#### 12. Non-Public Session

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

#### 13. Adjournment

**MOTION:** Ms. Oliff moved to adjourn. Ms. Gilman seconded. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 9:16 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Joanna Bartell  
Recording Secretary