

Select Board Meeting
Monday June 14, 2021
7 PM
Nowak Room, Town Offices
Final Minutes

1. Call Meeting to Order

Members present: Julie Gilman, Molly Cowan, Lovey Roundtree Oliff, Daryl Browne, Niko Papakonstantis, and Town Manager Russ Dean were present in person at this meeting. The meeting was called to order by Mr. Papakonstantis at 7 PM. He thanked the town staff and IT Department for their support during the virtual meetings.

2. Public Comment

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

3. Proclamations/Recognitions

- a. There was no Proclamations/Recognitions at this meeting.

4. Approval of Minutes

- a. Regular Meeting: June 7, 2021

MOTION: Mr. Browne moved to approve the minutes of June 7, 2021 as presented. Ms. Gilman seconded. All were in favor.

5. Appointments and Resignations

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to regrettfully approve Carlos Guindon's resignation from the Conservation Commission. Ms. Cowan seconded. All were in favor.

6. Discussion/Action Items

- a. Swasey Parkway Road Closure

Mr. Papakonstantis said that Swasey Parkway is currently closed to vehicles through June 30, 2021. He had spoken with the Chair of the Swasey Parkway Trustees; the Trustees are due to meet later this month, and will come before the Select Board in July. The Board should extend the road closure to July 31 to allow the Trustees time to discuss it. Ms. Gilman said she's had people contact her about opening it partially so that older people can drive down and park, then walk. Mr. Dean said there's a legal question, as the Trust specifies it must be open to vehicular traffic. Mr. Papakonstantis said he would like Mr. Dean to talk to Attorney Mitchell and bring it back next week.

- b. Fire Alarm Box Update

Fire Chief Eric Wilking, Deputy Chief and Fire Inspector Jason Fritz, and Asst Chief Pizon were present to discuss the retirement of the Fire Alarm Box system. Mr. Fritz said in December, customers received a letter regarding the decommissioning of the fire monitoring system. In January, he started working with customers on the phase-out. They expect to wrap up the phase-out by July 1st. Going forward, businesses will be required to send the alarm signal to a

third-party monitoring service, which will coordinate with the Fire Department. Asst. Chief Pizon said the budgetary reduction in overtime and supplies over two years will be \$41,972, including \$20,000 of overtime reduction, although they will lose around \$30,000 in revenue from the monitoring. In 2021, they didn't charge businesses the monitoring fees. He's doing follow-up phone calls and acceptance tests with everyone. 50 phase-outs have been completed, but there are a few still transitioning. They're not going to cut anyone off.

c. Board & Committee Meetings Discussion

Mr. Papakonstantis said that the Governor's Emergency Order #12 has expired, so all Boards and Committees must meet in person. He and Mr. Dean looked at how they could continue to include people who can't appear in person, such as a hybrid meeting. The Select Board will test the hybrid process, and they will reach out to Land Use Board Chairs about it as well.

Bob Glowacky gave a demonstration of the hybrid meetings, which will work similarly to the virtual meetings. They only have this capability in the Nowak Room. The Chair would have Zoom in front of him to see who's raising their hand, and the staff will unmute those who wish to speak. Ms. Gilman asked if running the hybrid meetings will add more work for the IT Department. Mr. Glowacky said the staff will be there in the IT office anyway, this just adds a couple of extra steps. Ms. Cowan asked how many committees were televised before the virtual meetings. Mr. Glowacky said 11-15 meetings a month, which with the virtual meetings nearly doubled to 18 - 24 per month. Mr. Papakonstantis asked how many meetings they could do, and Mr. Glowacky said there could be some increase over the 11-15 meetings, but they're having some short-term staffing issues. However, it could only happen in the Nowak Room, so they must choose one meeting per time slot.

Mr. Papakonstantis said they will plan to start next week. Under 91A, the expectation is that the Board and Committee members will be present unless there's an emergency. Mr. Dean said the law says there needs to be a physical quorum, people can participate electronically only if they can't be in the physical location. Mr. Browne said the hybrid process will make meetings more accessible for the public.

d. Classification Plan Amendment - Assistant Town Manager/HR Director

Mr. Dean said they propose to amend the Classification Plan to delete the HR Director from Grade 11 and add an HR Director/Assistant Town Manager position at Grade 13. This would create a second-in-command for when the Town Manager is absent. 8-10 other communities in NH have this position, including Rye, Atkinson, Claremont, and Lebanon.

Mr. Papakonstantis said that during the goal-setting session, the Board looked at the organization as a whole. This would be a neutral role in the Town Manager's position if the Town Manager is absent. They're not adding money to the budget, so it doesn't need to go before the Budget Recommendations

Committee. This reorganization has been done by Police, Fire, Parks and Rec, and DPW.

Mr. Papakonstantis opened the discussion to the public.

Bill Campbell of 111 High Street said he's not opposed to the position itself, but how can they increase the HR Director's workload? Does the part time person become full time? This is a position at Step 13, not Step 11; should there be positions that high up without formal review? The creation of the Economic Development Director position took much discussion. He wonders how many members of the public read the Select Board agenda. The BRC is the Board's oversight.

Anne Surman of 14 Cullen Way said she's hearing that 15 other towns have this position, but what are the duties in Exeter that are not being done? She's looking for discussion in the Budget Recommendation Committee. Only the Select Board packet even said what the reclassification was about, not the agenda. The Department heads are highly skilled, so the town ran well while the Town Manager was out. HR needs to stand on its own, despite what legal counsel has stated.

Mr. Papakonstantis said that in 2018, the request was for a full time HR Assistant, creating a new position. The BRC decided to start with a part time position. The majority of the BRC recommended eventually having a full-time position, but to start with part time. It's difficult to keep a person in that part time role. When Mr. Dean went out on leave, the Board looked at the succession plan, but there was none. They could have gone externally for an interim person, but they're expensive or there's a reason that they're out of work. Internally, any Department head could have served, but they're still in the middle of a pandemic and the Department heads have been strained. A Department Head serving as the Town Manager would leave that Department void. They looked for a neutral figure. Luckily, they had someone they could tap to step in. The Department heads and their staff stepped up and were fully supportive of the Select Board and interim Town Manager.

Mr. Papakonstantis said the Town Manager's responsibilities since Mr. Dean was hired have grown; not the town's population, but the needs and complexity of the structure. Mr. Dean is doing his job well, but he could be serving better if he had someone to delegate certain responsibilities and projects, while also serving as the HR Director while the Assistant did the day to day. It's currently funded in the budget. The BRC may get a request to make the Assistant position full-time. They recently added personnel when the IT Director said they needed a new position. Mr. Papakonstantis said he doesn't find this to be an added position, and there's no extra money. He sat on the BRC, and any time they looked at a new position, it was an added position for increased money. The precedent was set in the Police Department, DPW, Water & Sewer Dept, and Fire Dept. They're not adding a position. Mr. Dean added that the slotting of this position at Grade 13 is done by Human Resources. The current HR Director

was on board for a reclassification, since it was one of the lowest paid Department heads.

Ms. Oliff said regarding transparency, they could have done a better job about letting people know about the conversation to take place. That said, this is the right decision and necessary. The work the Department Heads did this year was astronomical. The extra work exposed their needs at the Town Offices. Ms. Gilman said this job is heavy on the Human Resources; the work of the Assistant Town Manager is like a Town Manager in Training. It works together well because it's all dealing with personnel. Mr. Dean said he had previously served as an Assistant Town Manager/HR Director, so he has direct experience with these hybrid positions.

Bill Campbell said he's not worried about the cost, but the responsibilities and demands of the job. They need two people, including a full-time helper.

Ms. Cowan said the pandemic has shown the resilience in town, but also the cracks. They should allow some flexibility in restructuring when they see talent, where there are gaps, and when the Departments request help. The DPW and Police and Fire reorgs didn't go before the BRC. This would take advantage of the retirement of a valued town staff member, and make that position meet our needs. If they were adding a new department, such as Economic Development, it would go before the BRC. Regarding the HR Assistant, it was the Select Board that said it should be part-time. This position will increase capacity, will help Mr. Dean be a better communicator, and make things more transparent. They have to have talented people with enough time to do that work.

MOTION: Ms. Cowan moved to approve the classification amendment, adding an HR Director/Assistant Town Manager at Grade 13, eliminating the HR Director at Grade 11. Ms. Gilman seconded. All were in favor.

e. Second Reading of the Animal Control Ordinance Amendment

This change would update the Dog Ordinance to include Kids Park and Townhouse Common. Mr. Dean said Parks and Rec found that dogs were getting into Kids Park, and raised their concerns. The Townhouse Common exclusion was an oversight. Mr. Papakonstantis said the third reading would be June 21st.

7. Regular Business

a. Tax Abatements, Veterans Credits and Exemptions

i. There were no abatements considered at this meeting.

b. Permits & Approvals

i. There were no permits & approvals considered at this meeting.

c. Town Manager's Report

i. Mr. Dean said during the sewer project at Town Hall, Jeff Beck said they were able to televise all the lines, and the sewer lines are in worse condition than they thought. The estimated cost out of Maintenance Projects was \$5,000, but that has grown to \$26,000. They're seeing

savings in a \$20,000 project for roof repairs at the DPW Admin building, so they'll get \$16,000 back from that.

- ii. He received notice of ARPA funds being sent to the State of NH.
- iii. The Committees of Conference are meeting this week at the State House, and they're waiting on final budget action
- iv. He signed the LCHIP grant application.
- v. The Sustainability Needs Assessment which was created with Julie LaBranche is out to the Departments to fill out. Ms. Gilman said there's also a public survey on the Sustainability page.

d. Select Board Committee Reports

- i. Ms. Gilman said she had a Conservation Commission meeting, but has no update for the Board. At the State House, the Committee of Conference is starting; this is when the Senate amends a House bill or vice versa, and the original branch doesn't agree with amendments, so they must negotiate the difference. There are 46 bills, which are included in the packet. They will vote on June 24.
- ii. Mr. Browne had no report.
- iii. Ms. Oliff had no report
- iv. Ms. Cowan said she had a long Planning Board meeting on Thursday. They continued the public hearing on the Griset application and heard about the Carlyle property on Watson Road, a low-density zoning district, and they did approve a yield plan for 12 units.
- v. Mr. Papakonstantis had no report.

e. Correspondence

- i. A list of House Bills and amendments. Ms. Gilman said HB315 would have allowed an aggregation of power for renewable energy up to 5 MW; this amendment returns that to 1 MW. When they voted for the solar array at the Transfer Station, they were looking at 1.5 MW, so they may need to rethink that project. Regarding bills about affordable housing or density, only 1 passed out of 7, to create a 79E to give tax incentives downtown for residential; but this is only rehabilitation, not new building.
- ii. An Xfinity notice on regional sport network fees
- iii. Correspondence from TEAM requesting that fees be waived, which they will take up at the 6/21 meeting.

8. Review Board Calendar

- a. The next meetings are June 21, July 12, July 19, Aug 2, Aug 16, and Aug 30.

9. Non-Public Session

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

10. Adjournment

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to adjourn. Ms. Oliff seconded. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 8:26 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary