

Select Board Meeting
Monday May 31, 2022
6:50 PM
Nowak Room, Town Offices
Final Minutes

1. Call Meeting to Order

Members present: Julie Gilman, Lovey Roundtree Oliff, Niko Papakonstantis, Nancy Belanger, and Molly Cowan. Town Manager Russ Dean, Assistant Town Manager Melissa Roy, Public Works Director Jennifer Perry, Town Planner Dave Sharples, Fire Chief Eric Wilking, and Health Officer James Murray were also present at this meeting.

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Papakonstantis at 6:50 PM, and the Board went to the Wheelwright Room for an interview.

2. Board Interviews

- a. Bob Dudra for the Rec Advisory Board

The Board reconvened at 7:02 PM.

3. Public Comment

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

4. Proclamations/Recognitions

- a. Mr. Papakonstantis thanked the members of the Memorial Day Parade Committee and Public Safety for a successful parade.
- b. Mr. Papakonstantis recognized several tree companies which came to do pro bono work on Swasey Parkway for Arbor Day: Cornerstone Tree, Curtis Tree Care, Piscataqua Landscaping, and Northeast Tree Care and Landscaping. This work would have totaled almost \$20,000. He also thanked the current and former members of the Swasey Parkway Committee who helped out.
- c. Mr. Papakonstantis attended an awards luncheon for the New England American Public Works Association where Jennifer Perry was presented with an award.

5. Approval of Minutes

- a. Regular Meeting: May 9, 2022

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the Select Board meeting minutes of May 9, 2022 as presented. Ms. Oliff seconded. Ms. Cowan was not present for the vote. The motion passed 4-0.

6. Appointments and Resignations

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to accept the resignation of Dick Matthews from the Recreation Advisory Committee. Ms. Oliff seconded. Ms. Cowan was not present for the vote. The motion passed 4-0.

7. Discussion/Action Items

a. COVID 19 Update

Public Health Officer James Murray said Covid-19 numbers are on the rise. Reported numbers are probably lower than actual numbers, due to a high level of home testing. Exeter Hospital reported increased pressure on their resources. According to the PEA Covid dashboard, there are 7 cases in isolation on campus. There are 84 active cases in Exeter. The guidance for Covid-19 has not changed. There's a new tool, Paxlovid, which is a prescription drug for those with symptoms of Covid-19.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked if children 5-11 can now get a booster. Mr. Murray said yes, with the Pfizer vaccine. Mr. Papakonstantis asked if the Hospital has brought back masks, and Mr. Murray said he thinks masks have been required there all along.

Fire Chief Eric Wilking said the Covid data sources are becoming more and more scattered. NH has dropped to a weekly analysis of numbers, so we're relying on the WMUR dashboard and we're not sure how reliable that is. He will continue to present updates, but with caveats about reliability.

b. Community Power Update

Lew Hitzrot of the Community Power Aggregation Committee discussed the timeline and steps for the Community Power project leading up to the intended launch in April/May 2023. He will bring back the JPA Amendment and the Electric Aggregation Plan Amendment to the Select Board next month.

c. Intersection Evaluation Report

Town Engineer Paul Vlasich said that in 2019, the town approved an intersection study at \$50,000. The study started in 2020 around the time of Covid. He introduced Project Manager Greg Bakos from VHB Engineering, who gave a summary of the findings.

Mr. Bakos said that VHB considered traffic operations and collected crash data regarding the intersections listed in the 2018 Master Plan and 2019 Warrant Article. For traffic operations, they looked at any intersection delay, based on historical peak hour data, field observations, town input and historical Google Maps images. For safety analysis, they ranked 88 intersections based on 5-year crash data.

Ms. Cowan arrived at this time (7:35 PM).

Mr. Bakos said the #1 intersection is at 101 and Epping Road, but this area is State-owned. #2 is Front Street and Water Street. Crash data doesn't necessarily bear out the intersections named in the 2018 Master Plan. They did not get crash severity data, which would be important. They decided to focus on the four Warrant Article intersections: Water/Front Street, Front/Pine/Linden Street, Water/High/Clifford/Franklin Street, and Winter/Railroad/Columbus Ave.

Regarding Water/Front Street, the turning movements by the bandstand and heavy volume lead to frustration and risk taking. The bandstand impacts sightlines. Diagonal parking on the north side is very close to the travel lane.

Crashes are high but the severity is probably low, due to low-speed conditions. It's laid out well. It's limited on possible improvements without totally revamping it. For small improvements, the striped area could be cobbled to force cars away from the bandstand when turning. There's also the option of re-stripping the diagonal parking at more of an angle, but we may lose 1-2 parking spaces.

Regarding Front/Pine/Linden Street, coming out of Pine and Linden there's a wide paved area with conflicting movements. It's likely that this would have more severe crashes since Front Street is free-flow and cars are going faster. VHB proposes a roundabout here, which would provide better crosswalk locations and slow down people on Front Street. They don't believe signals would be warranted here. This would be a fairly expensive solution, estimated at around \$550,000 in 2021, and the cost likely has escalated. A low-cost alternative was not found. There would be some right of way acquisitions, but the park would not be impacted.

Ms. Gilman said she's wanted a roundabout here forever. It looks like it fits well in this space. Mr. Bakos said this is at the small end of recommended sizes, but it's compatible with this area. There would be a cobblestone area around the middle to accommodate tractor trailers. Mr. Papakonstantis asked how the construction of a roundabout would impact school access. Mr. Bakos said the construction would likely involve phasing, night work, and summer work. Ms. Belanger asked how access to the Church will be affected, and Mr. Bakos said the impact should be minimal. There would still be on-street parking outside of the area of the roundabout.

Regarding Water/High/Clifford/Franklin Street, there's an awkward geometry coming into the main road. Crashes here are due to conflicts, unusual angles, and high volumes of traffic on High Street. For low cost alternatives, VHB suggests bumping the corner at High and Clifford to slow traffic, and bumping out Franklin to shorten crosswalks. The report also looked at reversing the directions of the two side streets, but Public Works Director Jen Perry pointed out that the directions used to be reversed and cars would try to take a left on High Street to come down Clifford, causing delays.

Regarding Winter/Railroad/Columbus Ave, there are difficult geometries and a high speed access. The severity of crashes is likely high. For low cost improvements, moving the curb lines would allow the Winter Street drivers to move up a little and deflect the Winter Street vehicles approaching Columbus. For larger improvements, a roundabout would fit here and provide safer and better access for all approaches. VHB estimated the cost at \$630,000 in 2021. The town could also change the geometry of Winter Street to a TEE intersection, which would be less costly than the roundabout (\$350,000 in 2021).

Mr. Papakonstantis opened the discussion for public comment.

Leslie Haslam of Columbus Avenue asked why the process with changing the Brentwood Road/Columbus Ave/Epping Road intersection was so different from this process. Will there be any outreach to the abutters with these projects? Mr. Papakonstantis said if any of these went on the CIP, we would have public

meetings for comment. We've learned from the Brentwood Road project to communicate with abutters and the larger town. Ms. Haslam said she's in favor of the roundabouts, and spoke of her positive experiences with them.

Robert Ficara of 6 Columbus Ave asked about putting stop signs on both Railroad Ave and Winter Street to slow that traffic down. Mr. Bakos said it's not a bad idea. We don't usually put stop signs in for speed control, but it could be put in to help Columbus. It would likely be a decision for Public Works. Ms. Haslam said having people from Winter stop before Columbus would be huge. We should also put a sidewalk on Railroad Avenue.

Mr. Papakonstantis brought the discussion back to the Board.

Ms. Belanger said the intersection from the end of Railroad Ave to Front Street is also dangerous.

Ms. Cowan asked if the roundabout slows traffic down, and Mr. Bakos said yes, it will calm traffic in all directions.

Mr. Dean said we will take this set of recommendations and turn it into a CIP request, then go through normal CIP and budget process, unless the Board feels strongly about a particular idea. Mr. Papakonstantis said we should have a Select Board meeting where we invite public input on these proposals before making it a CIP proposal. Mr. Dean said possibly involving the Communications Advisory Committee. Ms. Belanger asked if abutters and affected neighborhoods can be notified, and Mr. Dean said we can look into it. Mr. Papakonstantis said he would like to find some postage in the budget to communicate with people about this. Mr. Dean suggested a survey. Mr. Papakonstantis said we should bring this back some time in July.

Mr. Vlasich said we got the Phase 2 of the intersection improvements program last year, so we have funding for the consultant to carry this further, or we can use a portion of this money to look at other intersections, such as the Master Plan intersections that were not addressed. Mr. Dean asked if some of these lower cost improvements could be done with the \$50,000; he also mentioned that they could potentially be done with ARPA funds. Mr. Papakonstantis asked for an estimate at the June meeting of how much the study of the next four intersections named in the report would cost.

d. Westside Drive Project Update

Paul Vlasich, the Town Engineer, said the Clean Water SRF planning portion of the Westside Drive project is just about complete. To close it out, we have to provide the Governor and Council with our funding. He introduced Cole Melendy of Underwood Engineers to discuss the project further.

Mr. Melendy said that Westside Drive is a loop road off of 111, near Brickyard Pond. This is part of the Phase III Infiltration and Inflow evaluation of 2013, which has been studied since 2013. This is an area with significant private I/I, or stormwater that goes into the sewers. Sumps and drains are connected to the sewer systems, which takes up sewer capacity and increases WWTF treatment and user costs. The project funding of \$100,000 consisted of \$75,0000

from the NHDES CWSRF loan with principal forgiveness and \$25,000 from the Town Sewer Fund. There was a topo survey of road centerlines, a geotechnical evaluation, a condition assessment of the sewer, water, drainage and roadway, and building inspections for illicit sewer connections. There was public participation and involvement: We distributed a questionnaire to the neighborhood and held public meeting #1 in 2020 and public meeting 2 in 2021.

The recommended project components are drainage improvements, new sump pump collectors, water main replacements, and roadway improvements with pedestrian safety considerations. Rough estimates for the project are roadway and sidewalk at \$2,200,000, I/I and Stormwater at \$1,500,000, and Municipal Water Improvements at \$2,600,000, for a total project cost \$6,300,000. The project could go to Town Meeting in March 2023; if approved, there could be construction in FY 2023/2024. We will know more about the Clean Water SRF funding in July/August.

Mr. Dean asked about Grant Funding. Mr. Bakos said the stormwater component ranked #5 on the last ARPA round. We could mitigate stormwater impacts by reducing the impervious area.

Ms. Cowan asked if it would be worthwhile to have an education campaign about not hooking sump pumps up to the sewer. Mr. Bakos said that's certainly something we recommend. As part of the CSO long-term control plan update of 2017, the town did a resident mailer on that issue. Mr. Dean said we have an ordinance prohibiting sump pumps from connecting to the sewer, but the question is how to address it.

e. FY22 Paving Contract

Ms. Perry presented Bell & Flynn's proposal for paving in 2022. Jay Perkins and Paul Vlasich developed this list, and John Bell of Bell & Flynn has been able to propose the same unit pricing for all paving materials, but would be using an index adjustment used by NH DOT.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to authorize the Town Manager to extend the contract with Bell & Flynn for 2022 at \$71.90 per ton for binder course, \$72.90 per ton for surface course, and \$73.90 per ton for urban compact course. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

f. Public Safety Complex Discussion: Fire Substation

Town Planner Dave Sharples said when he talked with the Select Board in April about using 30-32 Court for a Police Station, it wasn't supported, so he's been focusing on the existing station at 20 Court Street and on 6 Continental Drive, which the town purchased in 2010, for a new Police Station. The next step is where the Fire substation would go. The Fire program needs 21,000 square feet to operate for the next 20-30 years. If there's a 6,000 square foot substation at 6 Continental, that would reduce the need for the square footage at 20 Court Street. We held a public forum May 4, which had about 12 attendees.

Fire Chief Eric Wilking said the current facility was completed in 1979, when Fire had 3 shifts of 4 members, for a total of 13 people; there are now 35 people working in this facility. The equipment is larger today. In 1980 Fire did 762 calls; last year, we had 4,000 calls. Three studies have indicated the need for some form of Fire presence in a portion of town that's not adequately served. We're looking for a response time of 4 minutes or less. CPSM analyzed the 2018-2019 statistics, and we met the 4 minute response time 1,600 times of 1,800 calls, or 84%. If we had a substation, 95% of calls could have had a 4 minute response time, and 94% of EMS calls. In recent years, there's been growth on the Epping Road corridor with 615 new living units and 400,000 square feet of industrial and commercial development added. The town's population has increased 50%, to just over 16,000. We do not propose hiring any new Firefighter/EMTs for the substation. Constructing the substation on Continental is critical and would raise the 4 minute response time from 84% to 95%.

After discussion, Mr. Papakonstantis said the consensus of the Board is that the town should continue pursuing the Police Station and Fire Substation on Continental Drive.

g. Bike/Pedestrian Plan

Dave Sharples said a town warrant article of \$25,000 was approved for a Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan for Exeter. He's looking to come up with a mini-CIP for these projects for the next 6 years. The cost would be \$27,000 but RPC is willing to bring \$4,500. He suggested approving the Town Manager to spend up to the \$25,000 in case we need more community outreach or other funding needs.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to authorize the Town Manager to execute a contract with the Rockingham Planning Commission and to take any and all other action necessary to complete the Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan for an amount not to exceed \$25,000. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

8. Regular Business

a. Tax Abatements, Veterans Credits and Exemptions

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve a solar exemption for 85/71 in the amount of \$19,500 for FY 2023. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

b. Permits & Approvals

Greg Bisson, the Parks and Rec Director, said the Select Board acceptance on May 9 of the donation from TEAM was conditional on the approval of the HDC, but there was no quorum at the HDC meeting. There's also an additional expense on concrete. Ms. Gilman said the HDC's approval isn't necessary because it's a governmental project.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to accept the donation of a pre-fabricated gazebo from TEAM without the approval of the HDC. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve additional \$1,500 in addition to the previously approved \$5,825 from the Parks Improvement Capital Reserve Fund. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

Mr. Bisson said an irrigation company will install our new water fountains, at a cost of \$12,000 for five fountains. One new water fountain will go in at Townhouse Common.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve an expenditure of \$12,000 from the Parks Improvement Capital Reserve Fund to complete the water fountains installation by Day's Landscaping. Mr. Papakonstantis seconded. Ms. Gilman had stepped away and was not present for the vote. The motion passed 4-0.

Mr. Bisson said we're planning to put in ADA compliant fencing at the lower tennis courts with AAA Fencing at a cost of \$1700. This work can be done in July.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to expend \$1,700 from the Parks Improvement Capital Reserve Fund to complete the ADA gate expansion on the lower tennis courts by AAA Fencing. Mr. Papakonstantis seconded. Ms. Gilman had stepped away and was not present for the vote. The motion passed 4-0.

Mr. Dean said

c. Town Manager's Report

- i. The Friends of Coastal Waters are proposing a new school in the public technology park zoning district. The Select Board has the authority to hold a public hearing on the proposed use. The Planning Board held their public hearing May 26. Would the Board like to have a separate hearing? Ms. Belanger said there was a Planning Board concern about that intersection at High Street, the site of the old Tyco building. Their school day starts at 8:15, and the school will keep an eye on congestion. Some residents of that area were concerned about traffic and noise. There are no school buses, only parent drop off and pickup. There could be up to 325 students. There were two people from Acadia Lane present at the hearing. After discussion, Mr. Papakonstantis said the consensus is to have a separate public hearing.
- ii. We're working on the Town Offices building project, which involves the internal building of walls on the second floor.
- iii. He attended Jennifer Perry's award luncheon on May 18.
- iv. He is meeting with Public Works on the CIP review.
- v. At the State level, SB 401 passed, which will double our highway aid. \$1M for Police Body Cameras also passed. HB1221, State Retirement

Contribution, will make a 7.5% contribution, estimated at \$300,000 for the town this year. This contribution is just for one year.

- vi. The audit continues with field work.
- d. Select Board Committee Reports
- i. Ms. Oliff had no report.
 - ii. Ms. Cowan had a Water/Sewer Advisory meeting, but they are having trouble getting a quorum to vote on abatements. The Committee had initial conversations to do a project similar to the work done in Jady Hill in another part of town. We had a person from a large apt complex talk about the rate at which they are charged. Mr. Dean said in the old water/sewer rate system, we used to charge more for meters based on size, but now they pay the same rate and have a tier system. Mr. Papakonstantis asked if the committee can hear from the applicants without a quorum, then present before the Select Board. Mr. Dean said yes, he thinks they can still make a recommendation. Ms. Gilman disagreed, saying they couldn't make a recommendation without a quorum. Mr. Dean suggested having the DPW make those recommendations to the Board. Mr. Papakonstantis suggested having the committee give a summary, rather than a recommendation, or having Ms. Cowan as the Select Board rep give a summary. Mr. Dean said to change the composition of the committee, we'd have to go back to Town Meeting.
 - iii. Ms. Gilman had no meetings. On the State level, HB307 would have prohibited towns from regulating the use of guns on public property, but it failed in committee. The Governor has vetoed a few things, including a policy prohibiting the requirement of facial coverings for schools. A 10 year transportation plan was approved.
 - iv. Ms. Belanger said the Conservation Commission talked about the Exeter Trail Race June 18, which has an average of 100 participants. There was trail work done; the volunteers repurposed some wood from donations for the bridging and the town only paid \$113 for screws. PS&H talked to this committee and the Planning Board; the Conservation Commission recommended approval and the Planning Board approved it. One trail will have to be closed down. At the Alewife Festival, the alewives were running. She didn't attend but it looked like a successful event. The Raynes Farm RFP barn work had no bids come in, so Kristin Murphy will reach out to LCHIP regarding next steps. At the Planning Board, there was a public hearing on the PEA multifamily site review. The biggest concern was fertilizer close to the riverbank. Approval was granted for 1 year, and the work has already started. A lot line adjustment for 14 Riverbend Circle was approved. There was an Election of Officers, but the positions remain the same. She attended the Communications Advisory meeting for Ms. Cowan, where they discussed a website refresh project which is in progress. We need to be ready to go with our social media policy. Mr. Papakonstantis asked if the committee can come to the

Select Board prior to the launch. Mr. Dean said it could possibly go live July 1. Each department will post its own material. The Library is separate. Mr. Dean acknowledged Mr. Glowacky's work on this project. Ms. Belanger said at the Housing Advisory Committee, there was a recap of regional conversation on housing and we talked about next steps, which include a Rockingham Planning Commission listening session. We're looking to unveil our storyboard map. At the Planning Board meeting, we heard about a minor subdivision on Drinkwater Road, PS&H, and Coastal Waters Charter School. The new former Baptist Church on Front Street was approved, with 11 condo units but no parking. There's no clear data on parking usage in this area. It could be a cumulative problem. We should consider issuing permits or other measures at a future Select Board meeting. A Senior BBQ is this Thursday at Swasey Parkway. RPC has a regional sustainability and resiliency program, which is having a webinar on Friday afternoon. The Planning Board voted to recommend to the Select Board to move forward with a parking study.

- v. Ms. Oliff left at this time.
- vi. Mr. Papakonstantis had no report.

e. Correspondence

- i. A letter from Exeter Sportsman's Club related to fulfilling the Director's obligation to come before the Board. Mr. Dean said the Director hasn't been here in years. Mr. Papakonstantis suggested having him come in September.
- ii. A US EPA letter regarding the Great Bay total nitrogen permit.
- iii. A notice from Xfinity on a cost increase for AMC+ on demand.

9. Review Board Calendar

- a. The next meetings are June 13 and 27.

10. Non-Public Session

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

11. Adjournment

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to adjourn. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0 and the meeting was adjourned at 10:01 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary