

Select Board Meeting
Monday October 24, 2022
6:50 PM
Nowak Room, Town Offices
Final Minutes

1. Call Meeting to Order

Members present: Julie Gilman, Molly Cowan, Lovey Roundtree Oliff, Niko Papakonstantis, Nancy Belanger, 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 6:50 PM.

The Board went downstairs to the Wheelwright Room for an interview.

2. Board Interviews

- a. Chris Zigmont for the Communications Committee

The Board reconvened in the Nowak Room at 7 PM.

3. Police Department - Swearing In

- a. Chief Poulin introduced Connor Kennedy, and Town Clerk Andie Kohler swore him in as a Police Officer.
- b. Chief Poulin introduced Sergeant Devin West, and Town Clerk Andie Kohler swore him in as Lieutenant.

4. Public Comment

- a. There was no public comment.
- b. Mr. Papakonstantis mentioned that this is the last Select Board meeting before the election on November 8th.

5. Proclamations/Recognitions

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

6. Approval of Minutes

- a. Regular Meeting: October 11, 2022

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the minutes of October 11, 2022 as presented. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

7. Appointments

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to appoint Chris Zigmont to the Communications Committee, term to expire April 2025. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

8. Discussion/Action Items

- a. Police Station/Fire Substation Discussion

Town Planner Dave Sharples, Fire Chief Eric Wilking, Assistant Fire Chief Justin Pizon, and Police Chief Stephan Poulin were present to discuss the proposal. Mr. Sharples said he has been assisting with this process, but the Chiefs have done most of the work with our architects, Lavallee Brensinger Architects (LBA).

Mr. Sharples discussed the history of the project. There was a Fire Infrastructure Study report in 2001 which looked at fire response times and the need for an additional fire station. This study recommended a second station on Epping Road and a possible third station in the western area of town. The second station proposal was voted down in 2003. A study done in 2007 looked at staffing levels and whether a second fire station was needed. This study recommended acquiring land on Epping Road for a future station. In 2010, the town purchased 6 Continental Drive specifically for Public Safety use. In 2018, the town adopted the Master Plan, which had two relevant action items: determine how to resolve issues with the Public Safety facilities through an evaluation, and, based on those findings, move forward with the top priority recommendations. In 2019, the town voted to fund a Public Safety department analysis. This work was done in 2020, and looked at response times in various parts of town as well as at facilities. The analysis identified several challenges with existing facilities and recommended conducting a space needs assessment. In 2020, the town voted to conduct a program and site evaluation for the Public Safety Complex. The town issued an RFQ and selected Lavallee Brensinger Architects (LBA) for this work. LBA developed a programmatic needs assessment for both Fire and Police.

Mr. Sharples said that the 2020 census showed a population in Exeter of 16,049, an increase of 46% over 1980. In 1979, the Police Department had 31 employees and the Fire Department had 13; today, the PD has 37 employees and FD has 35, a total increase of 64%. We've made multiple renovations to 20 Court Street to make more space, such as installing partitions to make smaller rooms and converting a closet into a kitchen.

Chief Wilking said we were predominantly a call volunteer Fire Department in 1980. 12 Firefighters fit into the four bunkrooms well. The department grew incrementally over the years due to more call volume; we've gone from 4 people per shift to 7 people per shift. Now we handle 4,000 calls a year with 35 people. We have had to make our EOC and training room smaller to accommodate bathrooms. In 1980, the fire apparatus was 8 feet tall, 8 feet wide, and 30 feet long. Today, the apparatus is 9.5 feet wide, 10.5 feet tall, and 33-35 feet long. The bays built in 1979 barely fit them. We can't work on the trucks inside the buildings. We need a building that meets our space needs for personnel and equipment.

Chief Wilking said regarding the proposed Fire substation, the Center for Public Safety Management study of 2020, using 2019 data, reinforced the idea that most calls are in the center of town, finding that 84% of calls could be reached in 4 minutes or less. The target is 90% within 4 minutes. In 2022, the

percentage of calls downtown dropped to 78%, and we're seeing more calls on the periphery of town. There are more housing proposals on Epping Road at Gateway and Ray Farm, and we're making more medical responses to the housing in that area. We're trending in the direction of growth on the outskirts of town. The substation is important to the delivery of service and would maximize space downtown. Moving staff and equipment out to the substation would give Court Street some breathing room and allow us to pause prior to making changes to the building.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked for further details about decreasing the call time in certain parts of town. Chief Wilking said currently, to get from the Court Street station to Epping Road/Brentwood Road/Watson Road, we have to travel through the congested downtown area and over railroad tracks where we can be delayed. Even without any delay, it takes over four minutes to get there. Park Street Common is normally the four-minute mark. Putting a Fire substation on Continental Drive allows us to get to the High School in the 4-5 minute mark. We could also work back to Park Street Common from Continental. With the substation, we could do 93% of calls within 4 minutes or less.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked about additional staff. Chief Wilking said there will be no additional staff for now. The town voted for 7 on both shifts, and we're currently at that level. The goal is to run two stations with 7 people. Due to time off and other issues, there will be a significant portion of the time with only 6 people, but 3 and 3 will work. The study said what would be best down the road would be an 8 person shift. With this substation proposal, each station would have a flex space to staff with an extra person.

Ms. Belanger said she's been asked about response times. Can trucks go underneath the railroad bridge on Newfields Road? Chief Wilking said everything but the ladder truck can go under there. We've tried different routes, but the shortest distance to 101 is still Epping Road.

Police Chief Stephan Poulin discussed the proposal. Policing is the highest liability department of any municipality, and the current building has high liability. There have been changes in the types of evidence and records retention requirements. In the study by MRI, there were concerns about witness privacy rights during interviews, juvenile privacy rights, and evidence such as firearms, drugs, money, and jewelry. He read the conclusion to the MRI report, which said that a study of Court Street revealed that every workspace is overcrowded. The security and safety of employees and visitors to the PD is not assured with the current structure. Compliance with current best practice is not assured. Chief Poulin said we're asking for a place to do things the right way and with low liability. Regarding concerns about moving the Police out of downtown, there will still be patrols downtown, and we will still have a small office at 20 Court Street for Detective Page or other Officers.

Mr. Dean said the PD is operating in 6,728 square feet, which is woefully undersized for a modern Police Department. Mr. Sharples said the square footage should be more like 16,000-20,000 feet.

Mr. Sharples said we looked at four different sites for a new Police station: the existing site at 20 Court Street, a town-owned parcel at Holland Way/Portsmouth Ave near the Gun Club, 6 Continental Drive, and 30-32 Court Street, which is the site of the Rec Department and Senior Center. Holland Way had access issues, and in 2000, a surface water treatment plant was designed for that site. Also, a Fire substation doesn't work there. Regarding 30-32 Court Street, at first it was occupied by Parks and Rec, but then 10 Hampton Road came up and the town voted to purchase the property. However, 30-32 Court Street is too small for the Fire Department; it could fit the Police only. The Select Board decided not to pursue putting the Police there. The Select Board supported looking for a site with a Fire substation option. The Facilities Advisory Committee held a public workshop on the options in March 2022, and a public forum at Town Hall in May 2022. The most desirable option was a new Police station and Fire substation at 6 Continental Drive, and either renovating or building a new main Fire station at 20 Court Street. This would happen in two phases: phase one would start with a \$15,950,000 warrant article in 2023 for a new Police station and Fire substation at 6 Continental Drive, and phase two would be to renovate 20 Court Street or raze it and build a new Fire station.

Mr. Papakonstantis said the Board received correspondence from the Chair of the Energy Committee, supporting the net zero option for the proposed Public Safety Complex. The letter stated that the 4% additional cost will be more than recovered over the life of the project. The Energy Committee will look into grants, rebates, etc.

Mr. Sharples presented the architectural proposal and conceptual level drawings. The proposed building will meet or exceed the current energy code. It will incorporate sustainable materials, low flow fixtures, and LED lights. Regarding sustainability, we will have more flexibility of materials outside of the Downtown Historic District.

Ms. Oliff asked how far you would walk into the building before seeing someone, and Mr. Sharples said the secure desk is about 20 feet in and you can see it from the entrance.

Chief Poulin said he wanted to emphasize the community room. The public and town staff could reserve that room for civic groups and meetings.

Mr. Sharples mentioned the shared fitness space. Ms. Oliff asked how much bigger this will be than the current space. Chief Poulin said currently, the PD has no fitness facility. Chief Wilking said there's a 12x12 space for FD behind the bays. Chief Poulin said PEA will let them use their gym. Mr. Sharples said the difference is about 600 square feet.

Dr. Zwaan said regarding the space for Dispatch, is that Police Dispatch only or all Dispatch? Chief Poulin said we would move all communications for both Police and Fire. He added that we currently have a female locker room with only five lockers, and need more space.

Ms. Oliff asked about the juvenile interrogation room. Chief Poulin said it would be in the first floor holding area, and would be sight- and sound-secure.

From the first floor booking area, people can only go back out, they can't get into other parts of the building. Right now, we're walking prisoners past Clerks and Admin Assistants.

Ken Berkenbush of 75A Newfields Road asked if there will be an elevator in this building, and Mr. Sharples said yes, it's all ADA accessible. It's also very secure.

Mr. Sharples mentioned that the space over the lobby is open in the design, but could potentially be turned into offices in the future.

Mr. Sharples discussed the costs. The proposed warrant article would be for \$15,950,000. LBA hired a cost estimator, who is confident that the project cost would be between \$12,929,000 and \$13,870,742 in today's dollars. With inflation, he adjusted the cost to between \$14,868,895 and \$15,951,353. The warrant article asks for \$1M more than the low-end estimate adjusted for inflation, because we are hopeful that inflation won't continue at the same rate. If we have the funds, we could also add covered parking for Police Vehicles or the implementation of a net zero approach.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked about the life estimate of the building. Mr. Sharples said until the year 2050 or so. Mr. Papakonstantis asked how much bigger equipment will get in 30 years. Chief Wilking said we did consider that, but we don't believe with the current road structure that the Federal Transportation Administration guidelines will allow us to exceed 9'6". In the proposed design, we have an 8-10 foot area to work between apparatus and 20 foot ceilings. It would have a 50 foot deep engine bay, and the engine is 33 feet long.

Chris Zigmont of 22 Crestview Drive, a member of the BRC and the Sustainability Advisory Committee, said the Master Plan says we should focus on natural resources and environmental concerns. He's concerned that net zero is an add-on to this design. "Net zero ready" is the lowest possible acceptable level you could put into a 30-50 year building. Construction projects rarely, if ever, come in on budget, and net zero could easily be scratched off.

Mr. Sharples said he shares those concerns. During the process, the Energy Committee wanted to ensure that this building will be sustainable. If the cost does come in exceeding what we have approved, we will have to make choices, but we don't have to cut net zero. We could make trade-offs with materials but keep the building envelope energy-efficient.

Mr. Sharples said he has been looking for funding for energy efficiencies. There's \$150,000 from Riverwoods from 2008 to fund a Fire Substation at their facility off of Kingston Road; he wrote to the CFO of Riverwoods and asked if they'd be willing for us to use this towards this project, and received a letter back saying that they would. The Planning Board will consider amending the agreement on Thursday. There may also be some energy grants through the new IRA [Inflation Reduction Act], but we're waiting on the rules.

Dr. Zwaan said 4% on \$15,951,000 is around \$600,000. We have to be judicious on what we ask for from the voters, but in an ideal world we'd include energy initiatives. Mr. Sharples said if you take the low-end estimate plus 4%

plus \$375,000 [for covered Police Parking], it will fit within \$15,951,000. We're hopeful that it doesn't escalate to the high end.

Dr. Zwaan said that when he was on the Planning Board, there was a lot of concern about emergency calls to Riverwoods, and there was discussion about putting an ambulance station there. Mr. Sharples said the latest analysis never suggested putting a station at Riverwoods, so the town was not going to put it there. We asked Riverwoods if we could move it and they agreed.

Mr. Zigmont said behind this proposal will have to be some money to renovate or raze 20 Court Street. We should try to come up with some language for the warrant that is clear and transparent that there's some additional number for 20 Court Street.

Judy Rowan of the Budget Recommendations Committee said the current Police Station doesn't feel safe or secure, and it must be a challenge to keep evidence safe. She asked for details on the Fire Department staffing plans. Chief Wilking said if we build a substation, we would split the forces and send 3 people to Epping Road. Three people make a company on an engine that can actually work. The station downtown could also respond. For a medical call, 2 people could go from each station, which would leave a third person behind. We have a callback policy to bring in off-duty personnel, so we can call in two off-duty people, and we would have another crew of 3 to man the engine. With this policy, we're only paying for time utilized, we're not staffing at 10 people. There will be a future time when we ask to move to 8 people per shift, but not in the next 2-4 years. We're not going to buy new fire apparatus, but perhaps we would not trade in the ambulance we have in order to keep a third ambulance. We're only getting \$8,000 in trade for the old ambulance. This year, we've asked our mutual aid partners to assist us in calls worth \$40,000, and we could recover most of that revenue if we had space for the third ambulance.

Dr. Zwaan said during the discussion, we've spent fairly little time discussing the PD, since it's so evident that we're due for a new Police facility. Also, if this were a private entity the Planning Board would be talking about pedestrian and bike access to the facility, so we should keep that in mind in the long run. Ms. Belanger said regarding sidewalks, the Town Planner has been working on the sidewalk plans out there. Mr. Sharples said that Epping Road has a consistent lack of sidewalks. He secured a TAP grant that put sidewalks from Brentwood Road to Aroma Joe's. Ray Farmstead Road has sidewalks down to Epping Road. The Gateway project and Nouria Energy will build sidewalks on their frontage. We're planning to use TIF money to provide a sidewalk from Gateway to the lights, but we're working through some right of way issues there.

Ms. Cowan said she wants to be sure we incorporate the net zero approach into costs. We're all supportive of this plan, but we should be thoughtful about how it's presented to the public. She disagrees that it's clear to everyone that the Police Station needs to be rehabbed. We'll have to have a compelling argument for it. The liability we would face could be compelling. It might be worth looking at what other towns have faced.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked about the debt service. Mr. Dean said it would be a 20 year bond with an estimated 4% interest rate, for a tax rate impact of 64 cents per thousand or \$192 for a \$300,000 home. A few hundred thousand dollars of debt service will come off the books in the next four years.

Chief Wilking said there is a Fire Department open house November 15 at 4:30 PM. He added that outcomes aren't great when the Fire Department is more than four minutes away. We've had great successes downtown within that limit. There's a compelling reason to have services further outside of town.

Mr. Dean asked for the Board to email in suggestions about how to better engage the public on this project.

b. Police Department Operations Update

Chief Poulin said that the Police Department is now fully staffed, but with one Dispatcher in training and two Officers in training. The two Officers in training will attend Police academy in January and won't be solo until May, so we're still incurring overtime expenses. We're awaiting body camera funding. For accreditation, we enrolled in CALEA, which is a 3 year process. Devin West was promoted to second Lieutenant, so Lt. Bolduc will focus on professional standards and accreditation. K9 Officer Maple and Detective Texiera are working well together.

c. 2022 Fund Balance Discussion

Mr. Dean said the 2022 recommendation is to apply \$1M to lower the town's share of the tax rate. This would result in a town tax rate of \$6.02 per thousand for the next tax billing cycle, an increase of 23 cents per thousand, an increase of \$69.94 for \$300,000 home. There may be an additional tax rate increase from the schools and county. The net taxable value of Exeter has increased 0.85%. Gross General Fund appropriations in 2022 are \$20,917,800, up from \$20,153,701 in 2021. FY 22 revenues were relatively flat. We didn't have the Health Trust Surplus or Primex Dividend this year. He compared effect on the tax rate and fund balance of using \$800,000 or \$1M. He recommends using \$1M.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to apply \$1M from the available Fund Balance to lower the town's share of the 2022 tax rate. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

d. Town Office Second Floor Renovations

Ms. Roy said the HR office is a shared office space for the HR Assistant and HR Director, which makes it challenging to have confidential conversations. We reviewed lots of different options in the building. We decided that using the lobby area in front of the HR office and Town Manager's office and space over the stairwell would be the best option to keep the HR office next to the Town Manager's office. We met with maintenance and Emmanuel Engineering, and there were pilot holes drilled to ensure the area would support the work. Two offices would be constructed, one of which would span the open space over the stairway while maintaining code head height. In front of Town Manager's office, there would be a hallway with

entrance to two offices. There's \$35,000 left in this year's Maintenance project budget. The cost is estimated at \$35,000 from this year and \$15,000 from the FY23 project budget, which would cover building the two structures, updating the HVAC, and making the addition look like it is part of the original building. We don't have final numbers because not all of the quotes have come in yet.

Ms. Belanger asked how long the construction would take. Ms. Roy said that's part of what we're waiting for with the quotes.

Ms. Belanger asked if using \$35,000 from this year and \$15,000 from next year is a logical approach. We could cover the shortfall with ARPA funds rather than dip into the Maintenance budget. Ms. Roy said it would make things easier for the Maintenance Department not to split it between the years.

Ms. Belanger asked how office traffic would be affected by the construction. Ms. Roy said our goal is to find a contractor who could do work on the weekends.

Ms. Gilman said she doesn't like this but she doesn't have an alternative for them. This is much better than what was previously put up. She asked about having some daylight come in. Ms. Roy said we were talking about looking for some salvaged antique transoms.

This issue will be discussed again at the next meeting.

9. Regular Business

a. Tax Abatements, Veterans Credits and Exemptions

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve a Veteran's Credit for 52/37 in the amount of \$2,000 for tax year 2023. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

Ms. Gilman said the Board needs to sign the MS1.

b. Permits & Approvals

- i. The Exeter Area General Federation of Women's Clubs would like to use small lawn signs advertising the annual Women's Club Yuletide Fair. The would be up November 13 - November 20. There would be one larger sign at the corner of Guinea Road and Hampton Road. Ms. Gilman said we approve this every year. They're good about removing their signs.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve the Exeter Area General Federation of Women's Clubs to place their small signs as requested along the roadsides in the Exeter area as well as the larger sign at the corner of Guinea Road and Hampton Road, to be placed on November 13 and removed on November 20. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

- ii. Tonry Tree Farm would like to place a sign at the end of Route 88 from November 24-December 24.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to authorize Tonry Farm to place a Tonry Christmas Tree sign at the end of Route 88 from November 24 - December 24. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

On behalf of the E911 Committee, Assistant Fire Chief Justin Pizon presented eight residential address changes to fix non-standard numbering. He reached out to all owners, and everyone's on board, including Deep Meadow Variety. Mr. Papakonstantis said these are all voluntary changes of address for emergency responders to easily locate the property.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the application for voluntary change of address from 93 Linden Street to 1 Deep Meadow Lane. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the application for voluntary change of address from 1 Deep Meadow Park to 103 Linden Street. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the application for voluntary change of address from 2 Deep Meadow Park to 101 Linden Street. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the application for voluntary change of address from 3 Deep Meadow Park to 99 Linden Street. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the application for voluntary change of address from 4 Deep Meadow Park to 97 Linden Street. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the application for voluntary change of address from 97 Linden Street to 105 Linden Street. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the application for voluntary change of address from 103 Linden Street to 107 Linden Street. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the application for voluntary change of address from 103A Linden Street to 109 Linden Street. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

c. Town Manager's Report

- i. Mr. Dean attended the Budget Recommendations Committee General Government meeting on Friday, where there was a thorough discussion. The next BRC is this Wednesday for Police and Fire.
- ii. Interviews are being conducted for the full time HR Assistant Position and Deputy Tax Collector.
- iii. He will attend the NH Housing Solutions conference tomorrow in Concord along with the Human Services Director.
- iv. He's reviewing the financial policy with the Finance Director.
- v. The MRI Classification study got underway last Friday.
- vi. Trick or Treat is Monday 4-7 PM, and the Parks and Rec Halloween Parade is on Saturday the 29th.
- vii. There's an open house for Public Safety on November 15th from 4-6 PM.
- viii. The Linden Street project is currently getting paving and new sidewalks.

- ix. We have secured all the easements for the Kingston Road sidewalk project. Everything's into the State for approval. Work on that could start in the spring.
 - x. A petition has been filed by Counsel with Charitable Trust regarding Swasey Parkway.
 - xi. Mr. Papakonstantis asked about the search for new DPW Director. Mr. Dean said we have candidates and should be interviewing next week.
- d. Select Board Committee Reports
- i. Ms. Oliff had no report.
 - ii. Ms. Cowan said haven't been able to meet Communications Advisory. We want to rethink the Committee.
 - iii. Ms. Gilman had an Historic District Commission meeting where they considered an adjustment to a previously approved application for the building next to Citizen's bank. They are changing the building to put in retail, and would like to change the configuration of the windows. The new plan is actually more historically appropriate.
 - iv. Ms. Belanger attended a Planning Board meeting, where they discussed the TIF issue on Epping Road. The Public Hearing was closed and there was a motion to continue the conversation at the Nov 10 meeting. This Thursday the Planning Board is meeting to discuss a lot line adjustment on Hobart Street. On Oct 13 Mr. Sharples gave an update on the rezoning project. She also attended a webinar on RSA 91-A compliance, which she encouraged everyone to attend.
 - v. Mr. Papakonstantis attended the all-day BRC meeting, as well as a River Advisory meeting where Paul Vlasich gave updates on the siphon project. All easements have been completed and the project should be done by May of 2023. The Pickpocket Dam study contract was signed with VHB, paid for using grants and ARPA funding. In spring or early summer we'll invite folks from Brentwood to that meeting for an update. For the Exeter reservoir, VHB put in application for a \$172,000 grant to study discharge capacity. We received a grant for watershed assistance and survey work for stormwater. The revised MS4 is posted on the town website.
- e. Correspondence
- i. A letter from the Energy Committee regarding net zero at the proposed Public Safety building.
 - ii. A memo from Martha McEntee, the Chair of the Communications Committee, about their issues with getting a quorum.
 - iii. A notice of property liability insurance and worker's comp info from Primex. Our liability rates went down but worker's comp went up slightly.
 - iv. A notice from the NH Public Utilities Commission regarding the request for approval of the Exeter Community Power Plan.
 - v. An NHMA notice regarding disposition of legal files.

- vi. A memo from Paul Vlasich regarding the Exeter Reservoir Dam.
- vii. An announcement from NH Local Welfare Administration on Covid emergency rental assistance.
- viii. A letter from a citizen to the Chair of the Exeter Heritage Commission. Ms. Gilman said she would discuss it at the next Select Board meeting.

10. Review Board Calendar

- a. The next meetings are November 14, November 21, December 5, and December 19. Election Day is Nov 8.

11. Non-Public Session

- a. There was no non-public session.

12. Adjournment

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to adjourn. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0 and the meeting was adjourned at 9:43 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary