

Select Board Meeting
Tuesday January 3, 2023
7 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, and Assistant Town Manager Melissa Roy were present at this meeting. Town Manager Russ Dean was present via Zoom; he stated that he was unable to attend in person and was alone in the room. The meeting was called to order by Mr. Papakonstantis at 7 PM.

2. Public Comment

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

3. Proclamations/Recognitions

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

4. Approval of Minutes

- a. Regular Meeting: December 19, 2022

MOTION: Ms. Oliff moved to approve the meeting minutes of December 19, 2022 as presented. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

5. Appointments

- a. There were no appointments at this meeting.

6. Discussion/Action Items

- a. PEA Updates

Principal Bill Rawson was present to give an update on Phillips Exeter Academy. He gave a brief history of the Academy, which was founded in 1781. They are a non-profit but pay substantial property tax on their residential buildings. Currently masks are optional. They no longer maintain a Covid dashboard as they are no longer doing surveillance testing. They opened a new dormitory in September on Front Street, and he's happy with the result, it looks like it's been there a long time. The 35 High Street development went through the Planning and Zoning process and will have 12 new faculty residential units. Over spring break, they will tear down a dining hall on Spring Street and build a new one. The former Davis Library will be reclaimed as the home of the Classics Department, which will require some construction. The renovation of the main Academy building will start this summer, when it will be converted to geothermal heating; this will help reduce carbon emissions. It's part of their educational mission to be good stewards of the environment. He added that if the Board has any questions or ideas for the Academy to please reach out to him.

Ms. Gilman asked how to find out what's open to the public at the Performing Arts Center. Mr. Rawson said he would have to get that information

for her. Ms. Oliff mentioned that many of the Academy's events are live streamed.

Ms. Belanger asked about the Academy's sustainability efforts. Mr. Rawson spoke about composting, reducing water usage, and LEED certification.

Mr. Rawson mentioned that Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is one of his highest priorities.

b. Health Officer Update/Seacoast Private Well Initiative

Health Officer James Murray was present to give the Board an update per RSA 128:3. On January 11th at the HS there will be a free water-testing program for well owners. There are new Covid variants, but we continue to follow the same recommendations from the State and the CDC. We should continue to use the Hospital as a gauge to see if any action is necessary. We got our newest FDA Food Code; our ordinances are written to automatically adopt the latest food code. There were a few small changes, but they were pretty easy. Handwashing temperatures went from over 100 degrees to 80 degrees. We are now allowed to determine whether pet dogs should be allowed in outdoor seating areas. Ms. Oliff asked Mr. Murray to look into what concerns about this are out there. He said he will be attending a meeting of self-inspecting towns later this month and it will likely be discussed there. He is hoping to bring more public health programs to town. He will be reaching out to Exeter Hospital on their recent needs assessment.

Ms. Cowan asked Mr. Murray to get in touch with the schools to see if we can ensure kids are getting enough to eat now that the Covid-era free lunch program has ended.

c. FY23 Bonds, Budget & Warrant Articles

Finance Director Corey Stevens and Budget Recommendations Committee Chair Bob Kelly were present to discuss the budget.

Ms. Belanger asked if we should increase line item 55170, the Legal budget. She said it's been at \$80,000 for a while and we've come close to going over. In 2021, the actual was \$91,924. As of September, the 2022 actual was \$61,325. Mr. Dean said in any given year, we'll spend the \$80,000. If we wanted to move that to \$90,000, we would probably spend that. In 2021, we did the collective bargaining agreements, so that was high. Mr. Stevens said we've spent \$77,500 YTD in December, but the year is not finalized.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to increase line item 55170, Legal, from \$80,000 to \$100,000. Ms. Gilman seconded. Mr. Papakonstantis, Ms. Belanger, Ms. Gilman, and Ms. Cowan voted aye; Ms. Oliff voted nay. The motion passed 4-1.

Ms. Belanger said regarding Police and Fire Community Relations, which is line item 55043 for both Departments, we've been doing \$5,000 for the Police Department social media budget and the proposal was to include the Fire Department at \$2,500. The social media posts are informative and fun. Mr.

Papakonstantis said Jason Schreiber worked with Chief Poulin on the Police Department social media, and the request came in to expand this to the Fire Department. The BRC recommended only \$2,500, but Ms. Belanger is asking for the full \$5,000. We have a shrinking community newspaper presence. We had a tragic incident a month ago, and the Police Department getting the message out quickly was beneficial to the community. He asked the Town Manager about a quote for Mr. Schreiber working with all town departments, and it would be \$8,000, in addition to the cost of Police and Fire. This would be for 2-3 posts per week. Ms. Oliff said that's a lot of money for that number of posts. Many people are social media savvy and could fill that role. If we posted a part-time social media position we would have quite a few candidates.

Ms. Cowan said if people need the Police they will find them. What really needs communication is information from Public Works and the Town Offices. It's helpful to have someone who knows how to write and communicate. \$18,000 is not a lot for a communications person for the town. Mr. Papakonstantis said a position we create is difficult to get rid of, whereas at the end of the year if this doesn't work out we can move on. There are town committees that want to disseminate information right now and can't because it's under the town seal. A person in this role could sign off on posts.

Ms. Oliff said we should define the need before we fill the position. If you let a person dictate what they will be paid, they will tend to ask for the most they can get. Mr. Papakonstantis said if you break down the number of hours he will spend, he's likely undercutting himself on the cost. Ms. Oliff said we don't have enough information.

Mr. Dean said Mr. Schreiber has years of experience as a reporter and a writer, and knows his way around social media. This kind of writing and publishing would cost a lot more if we were to hire outside. Ms. Roy said Mr. Schreiber originally asked for \$7,500 just for Police because of the amount of hours he's spending attending events in town.

Mr. Kelly said the Police budget for this is still \$7,500. Ms. Roy said that's not just Mr. Schreiber's work, it also pays for National Night Out and other events.

Ms. Belanger asked that Mr. Schreiber to provide more data on his work. Mr. Dean said he can get that for the next meeting.

Ms. Belanger said she also asked the Conservation Commission to come to the Board to discuss the Conservation Fund request.

Mr. Papakonstantis said he would like to add a budget line item under Parks and Rec with a \$1 placeholder for the costs of the water refilling stations. Mr. Dean said that could be added to the Parks and Rec budget as a stand-alone item at \$1, and then charge against it. Ms. Roy said that currently comes out of the Rec Revolving Fund. Mr. Kelly said there are questions regarding the logistics of providing water. The charge may not be part of the Parks and Rec budget, it could be part of the overall town budget. Mr. Papakonstantis said the Board will consider the issue again at the next meeting.

7. Regular Business

a. Tax Abatements, Veterans Credits and Exemptions

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve a Solar Exemption for 51/9 in the amount of \$14,500 for tax year 2023. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve a Veterans Credit for 47/8/303 in the amount of \$500 for tax year 2023. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve a Veterans Credit for 68/6/412 in the amount of \$500 for tax year 2023. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve a Disability Veterans Credit for 68/6/412 in the amount of \$2,000 for tax year 2023. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

b. Permits & Approvals

Mr. Papakonstantis said there were several memos from Deputy Fire Chief Jason Fritz. The first is a recommendation that the Board approve the naming of a private way to Lamont Place. This is in response to confusing numbering on Tan Lane.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the renaming of a private way to Lamont Place. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

Mr. Papakonstantis said similarly the Board was asked to address discrepancies on Gilman Lane, specifically one of the new PEA housing projects. Ms. Gilman said there's also a spur off of Gilman Lane that will be its own road. Mr. Dean said we can wait on this until there's more information.

Mr. Papakonstantis said there's a memo on behalf of the E911 Committee regarding a proposed subdivision on Drinkwater Road.

MOTION [not voted]: Ms. Belanger moved to authorize the change of address from 54 Drinkwater Rd to 52 Drinkwater Road for emergency responders to more easily locate the property. Ms. Cowan seconded. Ms. Gilman said she thought the application was for a subdivision where one address is 52 and one is 54. Mr. Papakonstantis said they will need further information. Ms. Belanger withdrew her motion and Ms. Cowan withdrew her second.

c. Town Manager's Report

- i. The Siphons project is ongoing. Swasey Parkway has been closed for this work to take place. Town Counsel has checked with probate court, but there are no updates on Swasey Parkway.
- ii. Because of the Sunday holiday, trash pickup is on the regularly scheduled day. Christmas tree pickup is the week of January 9th.
- iii. He's meeting with Community Power to talk about the policies that go with the next community power efforts.

- iv. He's meeting with folks from the Downeaster to talk about grant opportunities. Ms. Gilman asked him to ask about requests for a "Quiet Zone."

d. Select Board Committee Reports

- i. Ms. Belanger said the Planning Board met to discuss a case on Beech Hill Road, which reduced their ask to three house lots. That was approved. There was a lot line adjustment on Hillside Ave. Hampshire Development Corporation had a site plan review for a downtown property; they wanted to add some apartments and parking, but that will come back to a future meeting. Gwen English reached out regarding Helpsy, a textile recycling, sustainability-focused company. They would come present at a Select Board meeting via Zoom if the Board is interested. They can't come to Exeter for pickup unless a minimum of 16 people organize a pickup.
- ii. Ms. Gilman had no report.
- iii. Ms. Cowan had no report.
- iv. Ms. Oliff had no report. She said the issue with Helpsy is the communication piece. Having a presentation at a Board meeting doesn't necessarily reach the public. This might be a good thing for the social media person the Police are using. Ms. Roy said we could have EXTV pull out short segments of meetings that are more relevant to the public and post them online.
- v. Mr. Papakonstantis had no report. There is a public meeting on Thursday Jan 5th to review the town zoning update.

e. Correspondence

- i. A letter to the Town Clerk regarding voting in local elections. He is planning to meet these individuals to address their concerns.
- ii. A letter from Chris Zigmont regarding concerns about the hearing on the single-use plastic ordinance.
- iii. A response from Chair Jay Meyers of the Exeter Heritage Commission to a resident concern.
- iv. An update from the Department of Transportation with an update on the sale of State-owned land in Exeter.

8. Review Board Calendar

- a. The next meetings are Monday, January 9th and January 30th. The budget hearing is Tuesday, January 17th.

9. Non-Public Session

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to enter into non-public session under RSA 91-A:3II(a). Ms. Gilman seconded. In a roll call vote, the motion passed 5-0.

10. Adjournment. The Board emerged from non public session.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to adjourn. Ms. Gilman seconded. In a roll call vote, the motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary