Select Board Meeting

Tuesday June 27, 2023

7 PM

Nowak Room, Town Offices

Draft Minutes

1. Call Meeting to Order

Members present: Chair Niko Papakonstantis, Vice-Chair Molly Cowan, Clerk Julie Gilman, Dan Chartrand, Nancy Belanger, and Assistant Town Manager Melissa Roy were present at this meeting. The meeting was called to order by Mr. Papakonstantis at 7 PM.

1. Public Comment
   1. Mr. Papakonstantis said a citizen came before the Board at the last meeting with concerns about the condition of the roof of the Town Offices. The Assistant Town Manager contacted Jeff Beck the following day and Jeff got a contractor up on the roof. There's no evidence that tiles have fallen off or the public is in danger. There was one small area that will be repaired. Mr. Papakonstantis thanked the citizen for coming forward with a potential safety issue.
   2. Gerry Hamel of 12 Oaklands Road said last week’s meeting had a report on the long-term succession and retention of employees. He thinks that needs to be done, but is that going to happen to everyone, just the DPW, or just Department Heads? The whole town could use this. Mr. Papakonstantis said we set a goal to review the entire organization as a whole.
2. Proclamations/Recognitions
   1. Master Municipal Clerk - Andrea Kohler

Mr. Papakonstantis said this is a prestigious award. Ms. Kohler has worked very hard in her tenure in Exeter. He presented Ms. Kohler [who was present] with a plaque designating her as Master Municipal Clerk by the International Institute of Municipal Clerks. Ms. Kohler spoke about her journey to winning the award.

1. Approval of Minutes
   1. Regular Meeting: June 12, 2023

**MOTION**: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the Select Board minutes of June 12, 2023 as submitted. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

1. Discussion/Action Items
   1. Special Town Meeting Bond Article

Mr. Papakonstantis said last Thursday, we attended the court date for the petition for the approval to have the Special Town Meeting. The judge issued an order authorizing the Town Meeting.

Mr. Papakonstantis read the public notice of the bond hearing:

*Legal Notice, Notice of Public Hearing, Town of Exeter 2023 Special Town Meeting Bond Article. The Exeter Select Board hereby gives notice of a public hearing pursuant to RSA 33:8-a on the following project regarding a bond and note as part of the Special Town Meeting Warrant Article: 1. Installation of Two 12 Inch Siphons from Jady Hill to Main Pump Station, $3,500,000. The public hearing will be held on Tuesday, June 27, 2023 at 7 PM in the Nowak Room of the Exeter Town Offices. The public is encouraged to attend. Dated June 20, 2023.*

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to open the public hearing. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

Mr. Papakonstantis said because of the holiday and a misunderstanding of a memo from Legal Counsel, the notice of the public hearing went into the paper one day late. Upon recommendation from Legal Counsel, Selectman Papakonstantis recommends that the Board move to continue the public hearing until July 10th, which is a regular Select Board meeting. We will still be able to have the Deliberative Session the following day.

MOTION [not voted]:Mr. Chartrand moved to continue the public hearing to July 10 and re-notice it by June 30, 2023. Ms. Belanger seconded. Mr. Papakonstantis said we need to close the public hearing first. Mr. Chartrand withdrew his motion and Ms. Belanger withdrew her second.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to close the public hearing. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

**MOTION**:Mr. Chartrand moved to continue and re-notice the public hearing to July 10, 2023. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

* 1. Contract - Downtown Parking and Pedestrian Flow Analysis

Town Planner Dave Sharples was present to discuss the Downtown Parking and Pedestrian Flow Analysis. Mr. Sharples said there was a warrant article that was passed in March 2023 which allowed up to $50,000 from the unassigned fund balance. After it passed, he issued an RFP, and it closed May 26. We received two proposals, one from VHB and one from Stantec. He assembled an interview panel with himself, Nancy Belanger, DPW Interim Director Paul Vlasich, Chief Poulin, and Kristen Murphy. Kristin Murphy hasn’t been through this before, so he wanted to expose her to the process. We interviewed both firms on June 13th; both were qualified, but Stantec stood out as the ideal candidate. They have extensive experience and the Principals will be hands-on. The interview panel unanimously recommended Stantec. He sent the contract to Primex for comment and they recommended a couple of strike-throughs to protect the Town, which he’s noted. The total is $49,901.03, but he’s recommending “up to $50,000”.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved toaward the contract for the Downtown Parking, Traffic, and Pedestrian Flow Analysis to Stantec for an amount not to exceed $50,000 from the unassigned fund balance, and further to authorize the Town Manager or his designee to execute any and all documents and take any any all actions necessary to complete the project. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

Mr. Sharples said we don’t know what their recommendations will be. We’re hoping to get their recommendations in time for the next warrant article. They will engage with downtown businesses and residents.

Ms. Gilman asked if they will take into account the school year. Mr. Sharples said they’ll be finishing up in October, so they’ll see the whole cycle.

Mr. Chartrand said the peak of the parking jam happens between Thanksgiving and Christmas, in his experience. They won’t see that but they should be made aware of it.

* 1. Communications Advisory Committee Report

Communications Advisory Committee Chair Martha McEntee and Town Communications Coordinator Bob Glowacky were present to discuss the work of the Communications Advisory Committee. Ms. McEntee said that since 2021, Mr. Glowacky has been appointed as the Communications Coordinator, and he’s been a resource for town staff. The website was revamped. Mr. Glowacky has been training town staff on the website and social media. He’s prepared news releases for major projects and new developments. He’s produced informational videos and other special purpose videos. He’s expanded the coverage of town meetings. He’s also reviewed the social media policy and proposed revisions.

Ms. McEntee said we could be doing much more with resources we already have. We want the Select Board, town staff, and residents to communicate better and build a culture of communication. Town staff is used to handling communications themselves, and they aren’t always willing to take the time to work with Mr. Glowacky. Work on communication should be made part of their job description. Town staff should ask themselves: “Am I doing something today that residents need to know about?”

Ms. McEntee showed an example video with an update on the Sewer Siphons project.

Mr. Chartrand said the issues with communications aren’t necessarily that we don’t know how to do it, it’s that we don’t know when to do it. Once we realized the Sewer Siphons project was a crisis, we created communications about it. It seems like it has to rise to that level before we jump into action.

Mr. Glowacky said every other Friday, we package video content into a longer video and post it on social media, as well as sending out an email newsletter with links back to the town website.

Ms. McEntee said the Communications Coordinator needs to be closer to the information that needs to be shared. He should be at meetings where things are happening. We should sell Exeter better than we do. The website is the primary source of information, but it’s not the only source. The Communications Coordinator is in the best position to determine whether content can be used on the website and other platforms. We should have a workflow where Mr. Glowacky is looped into information created by town staff.

Ms. McEntee said we’re asking for some money for a town-wide email platform and Canva for visual information. We’ve also done some research into UNH certificate programs for our staff. There's a trade association for communicators that we could join for $160 a year that would allow us to join a webinar with others working on municipal communications. The total ask is about $8,000.

Ms. McEntee said Mr. Glowacky is working on a town-wide newsletter. This is an opportunity for each Department to put in what they think the town should know about. Based on what people respond to, we’ll get a sense of what the town cares about. This would be unified, reliable, and regular. We’re only proposing an electronic version for reasons of cost and saving paper, but if there were demand later we would consider a print version. Mr. Glowacky said he was thinking it could be a biweekly newsletter. We used to do an Exeter Weekly report, but that might be too much. We could consider a print version, but we’d have to modify it because it has a lot of links that wouldn’t work in print.

Ms. McEntee said the committee’s final recommendation is to adopt a communications plan. We’ve gone through the Master Plan and done research on what other towns have done. We’d like to come up with a draft by the Fall but need some input. The Select Board is clearly intent on improving communications, and we’re looking to get the town’s communication abilities into line with its needs.

Ms. McEntee said we’d also appreciate the Board’s help with additional members for the committee.

Mr. Papakonstantis said regarding the town seal, any communication bearing it represents the Town of Exeter, so we have to ensure it’s accurate and legal because of liability issues. Regarding Jason Schrieber’s contributions, the Police and Fire Chiefs review it before posting, so the situation should be the same with the Communications Coordinator running information by the Town Manager’s office. There are some issues that aren’t ready for primetime, so we have to ensure that things are ready to discuss. The Board is dedicated to continue working with the committee on communications. He added that he would like to have something in print, because too much screen-time is bad for the eyes. Ms. McEntee said we’d have to figure out how to pay for that.

Ms. Belanger said we already have money in our budget for training. We should explore additional staffing for this effort. When Mr. Glowacky is on vacation, can the staff step in and do this work? Mr. Glowacky said they can do videos, but not website posting and social media.

Ms. Belanger said we should use the town signboards for town announcements as well. Mr. Glowacky said the Town Manager was in favor of default postings that promote the town website or social media.

Ms. Belanger said we should plan for communication around emergencies, which can happen 24/7. Mr. Glowacky said the Communication Plan could include that information.

Ms. Gilman said she likes the idea of the Communications Coordinator being in Department Head meetings, so at least he could be aware of what’s coming up. We should also highlight projects or applications that go to our different land use boards. Mr. Glowacky said he’s been doing the “Meeting Minutes” series reading the agenda and bits from the meetings.

Ms. Cowan said communications seems like it takes longer at first, but ultimately saves us time, as we’re dealing with less calls and less people who are angry.

Chief Wilking said the Committees and Boards should push information out to town staff. He’d love to be in the loop on updates. Mr. Glowacky said there are ways we could get more info to the staff separately from the public. “Front of house” staff should know everything that’s going on in town.

Mr. Glowacky said the Master Plan is several years old, are those priorities still what the Board would like us to focus on? Mr. Chartrand said the Master Plan was created by the citizens of the town, so we really can’t revise it until we do the process again. It should drive all decision-making.

* 1. Squamscott Siphons Update

Interim Public Works Director Paul Vlasich said since June 19, the contractors are reaming with the 18” reamer and it’s going well. The progress is slow because they’re in the hard part of the ledge. After this is finished, they have to pull the pipe through. Originally it was to be pulled from the Swasey Parkway side, but they may want to do things differently as they get closer.

* 1. Public Works Facility - Master Plan Feasibility Study Contract

Mr. Vlasich said he recommended award of the contract to Weston and Sampson. Article 20 of this last town warrant vote was $50,000 for items related to the Public Works facility at 13 Newfields Road. Weston and Sampson have expertise and were the architects of the Rochester Public Works facility. They are on our qualified Engineers list.

`**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to award the Public Works Facility Master Plan Feasibility Study as passed by Article 20 of the 2023 Town Warrant to Weston and Sampson in the amount of $45,800, and to further authorize the Town Manager or his designee to sign the contract. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

* 1. High Street - Cross Country Sewer Capacity Rehabilitation - Design Services Contract

Mr. Vlasich said this passed on the Town Warrant Article 14 for $380,000 for the design of 5,100 feet of sewer capacity upgrades from High Street at Great Bridge to Gilman Lane at the PEA facility and down High Street cross-country to Drinkwater Road. The consultants that originally did the analysis were Underwood Engineers, and they put together a proposal for $286,800. They have already put in a pre-application for the anticipated funding cost with SRF.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to award the design for cross-country sewer capacity rehabilitation as passed by Article 14 of the 2023 Town Warrant to Underwood Engineers Incorporated in the amount of $286,800, and to further authorize the Town Manager or his designee to sign the contract. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

* 1. Roundabout at Front Street/Pine Street/Linden Street Intersection - Design Services Contract

Mr. Vlasich said there was an intersection study done a couple of years ago, and two intersections out of the four in that study were recommended for town vote last year: the intersections of Front/Linden/Pine with a roundabout and Winter/Columbus/Railroad with minor improvements. Article 5 was approved in the amount of $798,000. VHB, the authors of the previous intersection study, have bid at $104,800.

MOTION [not voted]: Ms. Belanger moved to award the design services contract for the roundabout at Front Street, Pine Street, and Linden Street intersection as passed by Article 5 of the 2023 Town Warrant to VHB in the amount of $104,800 and to further authorize the Town Manager or his designee to sign the contract. Ms. Gilman seconded. Ms. Gilman said one paragraph references Epping Road. Mr. Vlasich said he caught that and called the Engineer to cross that out. Ms. Belanger said she wanted to amend her motion. Ms. Belanger withdrew her motion and Ms. Gilman withdrew her second.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to award the design services contract for the roundabout at Front Street, Pine Street, and Linden Street intersection, as amended per the Select Board meeting of June 27, 2023, passed by Article 5 of the 2023 Town Warrant, to VHB in the amount of $104,800, and to further authorize the Town Manager or his designee to sign the contract. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

* 1. Town Manager Signature Authority

Mr. Papakonstantis said we ran into the situation recently where the Town Manager’s signature was required and neither Assistant Town Manager or the Select Board Chair were authorized the sign the document. We spoke with Attorney Spector-Morgan who recommended that the Select Board formally vote to give the Assistant Town Manager the authority to sign for the Town Manager in his absence and also suggested that the Select Board Chair be given the authority to sign in the absence of either the Town Manager or Assistant Town Manager.

**MOTION:** Mr. Chartrand moved to authorize the Assistant Town Manager and/or the Town of Exeter Select Board Chair to have signature authority on all contracts and documents when the Town Manager is absent. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

1. Regular Business
   1. Tax Abatements, Veterans Credits and Exemptions

**MOTION:** Ms. Gilman moved to approve a tax abatement for 111/5/7 in the amount of $230.20 for the tax year 2022. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

* 1. Permits & Approvals

Mr. Vlasich said the Westside Drive project was approved at the last Town Warrant, Article 4, at $6,020,000 for construction of water, sewer, drainage, and roadway improvements. The Cleanwater SRF loan was approved and we need to put that application in this week. The Cleanwater side deals with sewer and drainage improvements and is for $3.7M with 20% forgiveness.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to enter into and approve a loan agreement with the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services in the amount of $3,700,000 to the Town of Exeter and to authorize the Town Manager, the Assistant Town Manager, or the Select Board Chair to sign the paperwork associated with such agreement on behalf of the Town for the Westside Drive area utility improvement project as passed on Warrant Article 4 of the 2023 Warrant. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

Mr. Papakonstantis said the Board needs to sign the warrant for unlicensed dogs, but no vote is needed.

Mr. Papakonstantis said there is an application to permit the display of fireworks on July 15th at 9 PM, rain date July 16th. Ms. Roy said this is the application for the permit that goes to the Fire Marshall. This is the same company we’ve used for the last two years. The Fire Chief has already signed off on this.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to authorize the Select Board to sign the application for the permit for the display of the fireworks on July 15th 2023, with an alternate rain date of July 16th 2023 presented by American Thunder Fireworks Inc. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

* 1. Town Manager’s Report
     1. Ms. Roy said she attended the Municipal Managers’ Association conference last week, which she got a scholarship to attend. The sessions were informative and the networking was fantastic.
     2. She’s been working with Bill Keegan on the succession planning. He held a kickoff meeting this week and met one-on-one with Department Heads. He will return to continue that process and meet with Mr. Dean.
  2. Select Board Committee Reports
     1. Mr. Papakonstantis said he sat in on the Department Head meeting Ms. Roy mentioned, and the Department Heads were very engaged and seemed excited to collaborate
     2. Ms. Belanger said she attended two interviews for RFPs. She missed the Conservation Commission meeting but Kristen Murphy sent a summary. Eversource is doing work on the lines. There was a recommendation for 14 Hobart Street to include fertilizer use restrictions and the shoreline district maintenance requirements in their condo docs. They voted on officers and the positions are the same. They authorized the Chair to submit a letter to NH DES on a proposed wetlands rules change. She attended a Workforce Housing Coalition presentation; Darren Winham was also present. She attended a Planning Board site walk at Exeter Country Club. They decided they weren’t ready for the Planning Board meeting so that issue was tabled. She attended a 79E webinar where Darren Winham was a presenter.
     3. Ms. Gilman had an HDC meeting and considered a change to a previous approval to 47 Water Street, with a minimal change to their entrance and a change to the back elevation. We found that an appropriate treatment was being done. The Heritage Commission Demolition Subcommittee met regarding a house on Front Street that wants to demolish a barn and side entrance but the owner or contractor didn’t show up. She also gave an update on State issues.
     4. Ms. Cowan had no report.
     5. Mr. Chartrand had no report.
     6. Mr. Papakonstantis had a Swasey Parkway Trustees site walk where they identified places to trim, mow, and prune. They got an update on the Squamscott River Siphons project. The River Advisory Committee met and Director Vlasich gave an update on the Siphons project. The River Advisory Committee is in support of the Warrant Article and want to do whatever they can to help. Kristen Murphy gave an update on the Healthy Lawns project. Residents can promote a healthier lawn by planting natives, mowing higher, letting your clippings lie, testing the soil, and watering wisely, and can get a sign for their lawn.
  3. Correspondence
     1. A letter from Comcast with an increase for the STARZ channel.
     2. A thank you letter from Catholic Charities of NH: New Generations program
     3. The NHMA legislative bulletin

1. Review Board Calendar
   1. The next meetings are July 10 and July 24. Deliberative Session is July 11 at 7:00 PM at the Town Hall.

1. Non-Public Session
   1. There was no non-public session at this time.
2. Adjournment

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to adjourn. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0 and the meeting was adjourned at 9:10 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joanna Bartell

Recording Secretary