

Select Board Meeting
Monday September 11, 2023
6:50 PM
Nowak Room, Town Offices
Final Minutes

1. Call Meeting to Order

Members present: Chair Niko Papakonstantis, Vice-Chair Molly Cowan, Dan Chartrand, Nancy Belanger, Town Manager Russ Dean, and Assistant Town Manager Melissa Roy were present at this meeting.

Members Absent: Clerk Julie Gilman

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Papakonstantis at 6:52 PM. The Board went downstairs to the Wheelwright Room for an interview.

2. Board Interviews

- a. EC Heath for the Historic District Commission

The Board reconvened in the Novak Room at 7:04 PM.

3. Public Comment

There was no public comment at this time.

4. Proclamations/Recognitions

Mr. Papakonstantis thanked and recognized Public Safety and first responders and asked for a moment of silence for the victims of September 11, 2001.

5. Approval of Minutes

- a. Regular Meeting: August 21, 2023

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the regular meeting minutes of August 21, 2023 as presented. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

- b. Special Meeting: August 29

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the special meeting minutes of August 29, 2023 as presented. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

- c. Special Meeting: September 1, 2023

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the special meeting minutes of September 1, 2023 as presented. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

6. Appointments

MOTION: Ms. Cowan moved to appoint E. Carrington Heath to the Historic District Commission, term to expire in April 2025. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

7. Discussion/Action Items

a. ADA Capital Reserve Funds (Changing Table for Public Restrooms)

Mr. Dean said this is a request to put an adult changing table in the public bathroom at Town Hall. This idea came from Amanda Kelly and would use ADA funds. We've been working with Doug Eastman in his role as ADA Coordinator as well.

Amanda Kelly of 24 Prospect Street said this issue affects up to 4% of the population over age 3, and nearly 100% of those under 3 would use it. It's a "universal" changing station and would be safe for infants. The specifications comply with NH law for new construction, although this building is not required to address those requirements. This provides a place for visitors to any downtown shops and restaurants whose restrooms are too small for this. This is a resource businesses can tell their patrons about, and it's centrally located. The placement will allow any gender to use it and we'll only need to have one station for minimum fiscal impact.

Maureen Rashidifard of 4 Fox Chapel Court, the Co-Chair of the NH Chapter of the Changing Spaces campaign to get universal changing tables for all communities. She's in support of using the ADA revolving fund. It's important that Exeter shows they care about the health and safety of this community and to be an accessible and welcoming place to residents and visitors. This will allow for more families to participate in downtown events. Right now, they have to change on floors or in the backs of cars, with no privacy and dignity. Exeter would be one of the first places in NH and across the country with these facilities.

Mr. Papakonstantis said it's exciting and rewarding to become welcoming to everyone and for Exeter to be in a leadership position on that.

Mr. Chartrand asked how much we're proposing. Mr. Papakonstantis said up to \$11,000 out of the ADA Fund.

Ms. Belanger said there is a choice of manual vs electric, is electric more user friendly? Ms. Kelly said yes, the hydraulic power allows it to lower down to the height of a wheelchair for the transfer. Ms. Belanger asked if the power goes out there, is a hand crank so it can still be used? Ms. Kelly said that's her understanding.

Ms. Belanger suggested putting signs up around town. Ms. Kelly said there's pre-approved signage that shows the restroom has a universal changing table. Ms. Belanger said she would also like to see signs around town and on the Parkway.

Mr. Dean said it's \$8,000 for the purchase and up to \$3,000 for the installation. He thanked Jeff Beck and the Maintenance team who got the space set up for this.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to authorize the use of up to \$11,000 from the ADA Capital Reserve fund for the purchase and installation of a powered folding changing table in the public restroom located at 9 Front Street. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

b. Town Clerk Funding Request: Voting Machines

Town Clerk Andie Kohler said we're requesting funds for four new ballot counting machines from LHS and 35 new voting booths from Franklin. We started a fundraising program by selling the copper plates and collected \$1,550, enough for one voting booth. We're also requesting 36 curtains, 35 for the new booths and one for the older voting booth in the lobby. Each booth will hold 4 voters. They're circular and one section is for the handicapped, although anyone can use them. They will accommodate 144 voters instead of 77 as now. We could put out the voting booths we have now to other towns, but they're falling apart and there are no replacement parts. The total is \$46,943.97 for 35 booths and 36 curtains. The voting machines are \$25,200 for 4 machines. There's also a maintenance plan of \$300 per year, which is what we pay now. Mr. Papakonstantis said ARPA funds. Mr. Dean said there is \$254,751 in ARPA funds available. That does not include the cost of the Swasey turnaround, which is TBD.

Ms. Cowan said she's in support of new ballot counting machines. Are these the ones recommended by the Secretary of State? Ms. Kohler said he has not approved either one of these machines. It comes down to whether the Ballot Law Commission will approve one or both, but this would likely be the one that will be approved. The other company is from out of State and hasn't been tested in a town election beyond a pilot. Mr. Chartrand said there's a minimal risk related to the approval and we need time to get these up and running before the 2024 general election. Ms. Kohler said we're hoping that by the end of this month the State will approve, but maybe in October. She added that we would wait for their approval before purchasing.

Mr. Chartrand asked if the Town Moderator is in support of this, and Ms. Kohler said yes.

Mr. Papakonstantis said regarding the TBD cost for the turnaround, is there any estimate? Mr. Dean said no, we don't have one yet. Mr. Chartrand said he thinks this is a higher priority than the turnaround. Voting is the foundation of everything we do.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to authorize \$25,200 from ARPA funds for 4 ImageCast Precinct ballot counting machines and \$46,700 for 35 Franklin Voting Booths and 36 Franklin Booth Curtains. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

c. Public Hearing on Water/Sewer Rates

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to open the public hearing on Water/Sewer rates. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

Keith Pratt and Megan McCowan of Underwood Engineers were present to discuss the findings of their update of the 2016 Water/Sewer Rates study.

Mr. Pratt said the new study looked five years ahead to support the Water & Sewer Budgets and Capital Improvement programs (CIPs). Costs are increasing, but there's some decrease in consumption. The existing rate structure has three tiers, which promotes conservation.

They recommend implementing AWWA meter ratios for meter charges. As meter sizes increase, charges would increase. They cost more to buy and maintain.

They also recommend increasing the General Fund contribution to the Water Fund for fire suppression. This can range from 5% - 40% of the Water Fund Budget. Exeter would fall in the 31% category but we're recommending 15%. This would mean \$100,000 in 2024 increasing \$50,000 annually to \$300,000 by 2028, which is not yet 15%. For sewer, they're not proposing a General Fund contribution.

They recommend a recalculated assessment fee, and to rebrand it as a "system development charge." There were about 30 minor fees that they recommend adjusting or adding.

They recommend a Water rate increase of 20% and a Sewer increase of 4% ASAP. The average Exeter user uses 111 gallons per day, so they would go from a current charge of \$550 to \$640 in 2024. A large commercial user might go from 19,412 to \$23,401.

They recommend that the rates be reviewed every two years with a major overhaul every five years. Future considerations are looking at irrigation and deduct meters, additional or accelerated General Fund contributions to offset Water rates, and a Surface Water Treatment Plant which is not built into the proposed rates.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked for Public Comment.

John Grueter of the Sterling Hill Condominium Association said that Sterling Hill has one meter per building with 32 units. Even though the average per unit is 67 gallons, and in the last few years we have reduced usage, we're in the third tier. He doesn't know how we would do a meter retrofit; it would cost a fortune to put in 128 separate meters. He would like a break on the rates.

Mr. Pratt said the town asked us to look at multiple units. We said if you look at the alternative method and put meters in there, because they have so little consumption they are currently paying less than the potential meter charges. He recommends continuing to treat everyone the same but to pay more attention going forward.

Mr. Papakonstantis said it doesn't make sense for the town to put in separate meters. Mr. Dean said in the overall study, the consulting team is suggesting coming back every few years to look at this. We feel like we treat everyone equally in the system. Mr. Chartrand said he's reluctant to start pulling apart the recommended model now. Mr. Grueter said he doesn't want to wait another two years to review this again.

Bob Kelly, Chair of the Water/Sewer Advisory Committee, said we haven't changed rates in two years. Up until recently, it hasn't been a problem, since our reserves have been strong. He recommends not making such a large increase right away. The Water/Sewer Committee was not able to discuss this because they didn't have a quorum in August; they have a meeting on Wednesday and can give recommendations following that. In view of what the voters and rate

payers have had to deal with in the last few months, it seems worthwhile to give people a break.

Mr. Papakonstantis suggested a second public hearing to hear what the Water/Sewer Committee recommends.

MOTION: Mr. Chartrand moved to close the public hearing. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

Ms. Belanger said she'd also like to have a second hearing to hear the Water/Sewer Committee weigh in.

Mr. Chartrand said he's reluctant to ignore professional advice. He's going to be skeptical of other recommendations. Mr. Papakonstantis said we owe it to the Committee to hear their recommendations.

Mr. Dean said these rates wouldn't be scheduled to go into effect until the first billing in January 2024, so there's time to figure out the direction we want to go in.

d. CMP Station Equipment Replacement

Interim Public Works Director Paul Vlasich and Interim Water and Sewer Supervisor Steve Dalton were present to discuss the Court Street Pump Station Upgrade. Mr. Vlasich said the town approved \$400,000 for replacement of pump equipment. The Department received three vendor quotes. He recommends awarding the bid to Advanced Pump Company in the amount of \$221,583.06. They were the lowest bidder and had the most inclusive package.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked if we've worked with this company before. Mr. Dalton said we've bought parts from them before, but they haven't done actual work for us.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to award the pump replacement project from Article 8 of the 2023 Town Warrant to Advanced Pump Company in the amount of \$221,583.06. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

e. Septage Receiving Station Update and Construction Proposal

Mr. Vlasich said last year, the Department of Labor visited the septage receiving operation and said there was the potential of unauthorized personnel entering into the building. We had to shut down that operation. In Dec 2022, a contract was awarded to Wright-Pierce to design upgrades to septage receiving. We were getting over \$200,000 a year of revenue for the septage. The plan was to design the project and use Sewer Reserve Funds to finance it; that was before the siphons project. We applied for SRF Funding for this project but were not awarded so we're looking at the Sewer Reserves again. We'd go to bid in early 2024 with completion in October 2024.

Mr. Dean said the projected end of year balance in the Sewer Reserve Funds is \$4.5M.

Mr. Chartrand said getting this project done would allow us to begin accepting septage and getting the revenue. This is a source of funds. Mr. Vlasich

said it will be a four or five year payback for the project. Mr. Dean said we'll be looking at septage rates when the facility is close to coming online.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to authorize up to \$802,000 from Sewer Reserves for the purpose of renovations and upgrading the septage facility at 13 Newfields Road. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

8. Regular Business

a. Tax Abatements, Veterans Credits and Exemptions

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve an abatement for 64/105/82 in the amount of \$504.96 for tax year 2019, \$596.31 for 2020, \$588.82 for 2021, \$605.36 for 2022, and \$537.08 for 2023. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve an intent to cut for 5/1 for one year. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

b. Permits & Approvals

i. MS232 - Siphons Additional Funding

Mr. Dean said this is the amended form of the appropriation that includes the recent vote on the Sewer Siphons.

ii. MS535 - End of Year Report for NHDRA

Mr. Dean said this was a report prepared by the Finance Department for 2022.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to accept the MS535 financial report on the budget for the period ending Dec 31, 2022. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to accept the MS232 for the year 2023. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

- iii. Mr. Papakonstantis said there's a special event application for Parks and Rec Murder Mystery Dinner at Town Hall which involves alcohol. Ms. Roy said all Parks and Rec permits go before the Board because they can't approve their own permits.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the special event application for the Murder Mystery Dinner to be held at Town Hall October 27 from 5 PM to 11 PM held by the Exeter Parks and Rec Department. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

Mr. Dean said regarding the tennis courts, Parks and Rec would like to table this request as they are reworking the estimated costs.

c. Town Manager's Report

- i. He's working on the pedestrian and traffic analysis work. He's had two online meetings with the consultants and they were out last week doing traffic counts.

- ii. There's a Department Head meeting August 30 and a smaller group meeting September 5.
 - iii. New fuel contracts are in place: \$3.09 for unleaded, \$3.49 for diesel.
 - iv. Budget meetings continue.
 - v. The Trustees of Trust Funds held a meeting this morning which he attended. There was discussion about defining capital improvements.
 - vi. He attended a Housing Advisory meeting where the subject was 79E. There is a recommendation forthcoming from staff. We're talking about suggesting it be repealed.
 - vii. We had to execute one tax collector deed, on 78 Old Town Farm Road. It's rare, but when it happens you're looking at a buy-back agreement. They have 90 days to redeem the property. The Deputy Tax Collector is doing a great job.
 - viii. He's meeting with Paul Vlasich tomorrow regarding Pickpocket Dam. There's a grant opportunity from NOAA if we move forward with dam removal. VHB is doing work on the options.
 - ix. Exeter Town Hall will have political events October 9 - 15. This will be a primary-type exercise where candidates have roundtable-style events.
 - x. The Powderkeg Festival still needs volunteers.
 - xi. At Town Hall, we have some railings that have been put up. We're working closely with Ms. Gilman on that. The new chairs are in and the dollies have been ordered. Mr. Chartrand asked if the balconies are now usable. Ms. Roy said a single railing was installed as a test, but it had to be removed to bring it back to the fabricator. We're hoping to have them all installed by the end of the month. At that point, the balcony can be used.
- d. Select Board Committee Reports
- i. Ms. Belanger had a Planning Board meeting with their second CIP public hearing. They stressed their support for the facilities for the Police Station and Fire Department substation. Subdivisions were approved for 24 Powdermill Road, 18 Beech Hill road subdivision, and 45 Pine Street. . There was a Public Hearing to amend section 9.9 on wetland shoreland buffers by eliminating the wetland waiver process, which was duplicative. The company Glerups, which decided not to build, asked for a year extension which is a positive sign. The Planning Department is working on returning unspent funds for projects such as Sterling Hill. Mr. Sharples talked about the Facility Assessment report, which he felt was invaluable. There's a Planning Board sitewalk in Dover this week.
- The Housing Advisory Committee discussed the pros and cons of 79E. It was originally put there in 2014 to develop a downtown that was struggling, but ours is no longer struggling. There are other ways to incentivize development. The Department heads will come up with a presentation on ways to do better for the taxpayers, such as the MUND.

The Historical Society has a presentation on past to present until Mid-November, including the Select Board photo.

- ii. Ms. Cowan had a Parks and Rec Advisory meeting. They talked about field rental usage rates, which have not been increased in at least 20 years. Nothing to report yet but there was a robust discussion. They also talked about tennis court repair, but it sounds like that's on pause now.
- iii. Mr. Chartrand had a Facilities Committee meeting. He encouraged Ms. Gilman to continue attending as an alternate because of her expertise. They received the report on Facilities Assessment, which is incredibly informative.

At the Sustainability Advisory Committee meeting, there was further conversation about their idea of rotating Chairs in meetings. He discouraged that idea and suggested meeting quarterly or six times a year instead. They discussed voluntary composting initiatives, such as collecting pumpkins at Laney & Lu; the response was overwhelming last year so they're going to see whether Laney & Lu wants to do it again. The Committee is also sourcing composting buckets for those who would like to take their compost to the transfer station.

- iv. Mr. Papakonstantis attended a Swasey Park Trustee meeting. They talked about doing tree work and lawn care now that the siphons project is paused. There was a proposal where a citizen offered a piece of art to be displayed on the Parkway. The Trustees were open to accepting it, but it could be construed as a bench, and the Trustees have a "no additional benches" policy. They found a place outside Swasey Parkway for it. It will come before the Select Board to accept.

e. Correspondence

- i. A letter from DES for alleged violations on a property.
- ii. An advertisement for the Powderkeg Beer and Chili festival
- iii. A program of meetings for Exeter Historical Society
- iv. A letter from resident Rob Ficara regarding traffic, which has been forwarded to Mr. Sharples
- v. A letter of thanks from Exeter Historical Society for the pictures of the Select Board.

9. Review Board Calendar

- a. September 18 at 5 PM is the public hearing for the Procedural Defect Meeting. The Defect Meeting itself is September 29 from 9 AM - 9:30, with voting from 9:30-10:30. The next Select Board meetings are September 25, October 2, Oct 16, and Oct 30. Mr. Dean and Ms. Roy will not be present on October 2 as they are attending ICMA.

10. Non-Public Session

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to enter into non-public session under RSA 91-A:3II(a). Ms. Cowan seconded. In a roll call vote, the motion passed 4-0, and the meeting entered non-public at 8:47 PM.

MOTION: Mr. Chartrand moved to exit non-public session. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

MOTION: Mr. Chartrand moved to seal the non-public minutes indefinitely. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

11. Adjournment

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to adjourn. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary