

Select Board Meeting  
Monday May 22, 2023  
6:50 PM  
Nowak Room, Town Offices  
Final Minutes

1. Call Meeting to Order

Members present: Chair Niko Papakonstantis, Vice-Chair Molly Cowan, Clerk Julie Gilman, Dan Chartrand, 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. James Darden Rives for the Budget Recommendations Committee

The Board reconvened in the Nowak Room at 7:02 PM.

3. Public Comment

- a. Gerry Hamel of 12 Oaklands expressed concern about motorized vehicles on Swasey Parkway. He heard at previous meetings that the Parkway will allow non-motorized vehicles only except for maintenance and emergency vehicles. He would like a copy of the relevant RSA to see where it says we can bring vehicles into a closed area like this. Also, RSA 79-E was supposed to be a vehicle to spur investment in the town, but we always have development in the area. The Economic Development Director gave a long list of things going on in Exeter at the last meeting, and when he was asked if there would be more restaurants downtown, he said no, there's no place for one. We should be looking into what we're losing on a taxable basis. The downtown is doing quite well so we should sunset 79-E because it's not needed in Exeter.
- b. Don Clement of Thelma Drive, who was attending remotely via Zoom, said that last week the Board granted 79-E tax relief to two buildings downtown, but he doesn't believe the spirit of the statute was met. 10 years ago he was an advocate for 79-E. Now, the 79-E concept is being slightly abused. We're granting exemptions to projects already underway which would have happened without 79-E approval. We're rewarding, not incentivizing.

4. Proclamations/Recognitions

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

5. Approval of Minutes

- a. Regular Meeting: May 15, 2023

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve the minutes of May 15, 2023 as presented. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

## 6. Appointments

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to appoint James Darden Rives to the Budget Recommendations Committee. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to accept the resignation of David Mirsky from the Zoning Board of Adjustment. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

## 7. Discussion/Action Items

### a. Squamscott River Siphons Project Financing Plan

Mr. Dean said the gross cost of the sewer siphons project is now \$7.7M. There are several approved funding sources: a \$1.6M SRF loan approved at the 2020 town meeting, \$180,000 in State ARPA Funds, \$600,000 in Federal Congressional Direct Spending Funds, \$420,000 in local ARPA funds, \$500,000 in additional local ARPA funds, and \$2.1M in Sewer Reserve Funds that were approved by the Select Board. Since the approval of the second local ARPA fund allocation of \$500,000 and the Sewer Reserves allocation of \$2.1M, the town has received notice from DES that up to \$5.3M in additional SRF funding would be available as needed. For the SRF funding, we would amend the loan agreement for \$1.6M already in place, but special Town Meeting approval is also needed for the additional SRF amounts.

There are four funding options we're proposing. Option #1 would not use any of the second allocation of local ARPA funds or the Sewer Reserves, but it would incorporate the \$113,986 in local ARPA funds already spent. With this option, the SRF loan amount would be \$5,206,014. Option #2 would additionally include the local ARPA funds of \$420,000, so the SRF loan would be \$4.9M. Option #3 would use half of the second allocation of ARPA funds, \$250,000, and \$650,000 of Sewer Reserves, so the SRF would be \$4M. For Option #4, all funding sources identified are included, with the \$2.1M Sewer Reserves. With this option, the SRF would be \$2.3M.

Mr. Dean said we recommend an option that uses less of the Sewer Reserves and ARPA funds. We can use SRF funds at a favorable interest rate, which would assist in maintaining a more stable sewer rate.

Mr. Chartrand asked the interest rate. Mr. Dean said we're contemplating keeping the 10 year loan at 2%. Going to a 15 year would mean a higher interest rate and more interest total. He added that we may get 10% debt forgiveness through the SRF program.

Mr. Papakonstantis said option 2 returns the ARPA money and Sewer Fund reserves. This is a job that needs to get done and we need a 60% favorable vote, so would \$4M look better on the ballot than \$4.9M? It would show the voters we're using other resources that we have.

Mr. Chartrand said the easiest option would be #4.

Ms. Cowan asked if we could put the options on the ballot. Mr. Dean said we need to use the article language as prescribed by statute, but the amount could be amended at Deliberative Session.

Don Clement of Thelma Drive, who was remote via Zoom, asked how much money the voters authorized for the siphon project to date. Mr. Dean said \$1.6M. Mr. Chartrand said there was a \$1.6M original SRF loan approved at the 2020 town meeting, plus \$180,000 in State ARPA funds, \$600,000 in Federal Congressional Direct Spending Funds, \$420,000 in local ARPA funds, \$500,000 in additional local ARPA funds, and \$2.1M in Sewer Reserves. The last two were just approved. Mr. Clement said the project went from \$1.6M to \$7.7M. Mr. Papakonstantis said the cost of the second siphon is \$2.3M. The \$4.9M now is because the SRF funding is now available, so we could return some or all of the ARPA and Sewer Reserve Fund.

Gerry Hamel said the original package was three barrels, two 10" and a 12". What are the sizes of the two barrels that they're going to do now? Mr. Dean said they are both 12".

Ms. Gilman said option 3 will keep more money in the Sewer Fund Reserves. Mr. Papakonstantis and Ms. Cowan agreed. Ms. Cowan suggested having further discussion at Deliberative Session.

Finance Director Corey Stevens said he agrees that option #3 makes the most sense. It would be nice not to have to spend the Sewer Reserves. Scaling back the ARPA gives the Board the flexibility to do something else with it.

Ms. Belanger asked where the loan forgiveness funds would go. Mr. Stevens said it gets applied to the first payments you make on the loan.

Mr. Chartrand asked about the current level of the Sewer Reserve Fund. Mr. Stevens said it's just over \$6M, but we have a \$3M+ payment at the end of the year for the Wastewater Treatment Plant which comes out of the reserve. Mr. Chartrand said there would only be \$900,000 in the fund after that, which is tighter than he thought. He'd rather have the SRF in the \$3.5 to \$4M range, rather than option #3. Mr. Papakonstantis said that would mean adding another \$500,000 of Sewer Reserves. Mr. Chartrand said that would leave just under \$2M in the reserves after the end of year payment. Mr. Dean asked if the Board was comfortable with a \$250,000 reduction in the ARPA funds, and Mr. Papakonstantis said yes.

Ms. Belanger asked what we have left for ARPA. Mr. Dean said after the \$500,000 authorization, we had \$236,000 left.

Mr. Chartrand suggested "option #3A," using \$1.15M from Sewer Reserves. The Board agreed.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve the Siphon Project financing plan under option #3A, which adopts option #3 in our packet but with an additional \$500,000 from the Sewer Fund Reserve for a total amount of \$1.15 M which would bring the amount of SRF needed to \$3.5M. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

Mr. Dean said we received a memo from Paul Vlasich regarding the drilling as of May 18, they are progressing without major issues. As of today [May 22], they've completed 400 feet, about halfway across. Things seem to be going well.

b. Town Hall Chairs

Mr. Chartrand recused himself from the discussion.

Scott Ruffner of the Arts & Culture Advisory Commission was present to discuss the chair proposal. Mr. Ruffner said we're looking to purchase 240 chairs, in 60 4-packs, for a total of \$7,198.80. We'll continue to raise funds from the community. We have \$3,810 raised, which met our goal to raise half of the funds. The chair dollies are currently out of stock until mid-July. The Arts & Culture Commission recommended purchasing the chairs and starting with the additional fundraising through the sale of the older chairs. We can purchase the dollies when they become available. There's not much going on at Town Hall this summer, which gives us time.

Ms. Gilman said she received a letter from a resident who wondered if we should also be ordering chairs for 10 Hampton Road for a larger reduction. Mr. Ruffner said there would be no reduction in price. Mr. Bisson said we don't need them for 10 Hampton Road, as we have 75 chairs already.

Ms. Belanger said she wants to get enough dollies for all the chairs we're buying. Mr. Ruffner said it would be 4 dollies. Ms. Belanger said we also want to make sure that the dollies will fit in the elevator.

Mr. Papakonstantis said the difference could come from the Town Hall Revolving Fund. Mr. Ruffner said there will also be additional fundraising from the old chairs, \$100 per chair if they're in good condition.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to accept the donations from the following to be contributed towards the purchase of the Town Hall Chairs: Water Street Bookstore \$1,000, Kiwanis Club \$1,000, Pine Street Players \$500, Exeter LitFest \$360, Nancy Phillips and Elliot Berkowitz \$250, TEAM \$100, Ruffner Real Estate \$100, Vino e Vivo \$100, Exonian Properties LLC \$100, Exeter Station Properties LLC \$100, Bay State Financial \$100, and the Word Barn \$100. Ms. Gilman seconded. Mr. Chartrand was recused and did not vote. The motion passed 4-0.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve spending \$5,709 from the Town Hall Revolving Fund to go towards the purchase of chairs for Town Hall and chair dollies to hold the chairs. Ms. Gilman seconded. Mr. Chartrand was recused and did not vote. The motion passed 4-0.

c. Parks/Recreation Micro Grant

Greg Bisson said we learned of a grant opportunity from Darren Winham. The Economic Development Group has a microgrant for events or projects that would impact the community. They awarded us \$1,500 to start a children's showcase this summer, with three great musicians and a magician to cap it off. It would be a \$3,000 cost, with the \$1500 offset. We're looking to do it outdoors but

we have a rain site in Town Hall. He added that an intern raised enough money to pay for all of it.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to accept the grant offered by the Seacoast Regional Collaborative Economic Development Region in the amount of \$1,500 to be used by Parks and Rec for the Exeter VIBE summer music series. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

d. Tax Deeds

Mr. Dean said the Board received a list of the properties on the tax deed list. There will be a notice from the Tax Collector's office to the property owners with intent to deed before we go to the deeding process.

Mr. Dean said regarding the memo on manufactured homes, there's a different process we're looking into where the town goes to small claims court. Newmarket does this and it's very successful. They recover quite a few tax dollars doing that.

Mr. Chartrand asked if the owners of deeded properties were be contacted personally prior to this. Mr. Dean said he thinks previous contact was via mail.

8. Regular Business

a. Tax Abatements, Veterans Credits and Exemptions

**MOTION:** Ms. Gilman moved to deny a tax abatement for 65/113 for the tax year 2022. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

**MOTION:** Ms. Gilman moved to approve a tax abatement for 104/80/1 in the amount of \$2,107.80 for the tax year 2021 and \$2,024.55 for the tax year 2022. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

b. Permits & Approvals

Greg Bisson said he's looking for permission to purchase four security cameras for the tennis courts. Staff will be able to monitor the courts, and we can also livestream them so that residents can see if the courts are being used. It will allow us to identify any vandalism or independent contractors teaching lessons there. We have our own instructors and the contractors are making money on fields that we own. The biggest issue with the independent contractors is our liability, we would need a certificate of insurance.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked what would be left in the Rec Revolving Fund. Ms. Roy said it changes on a day-to-day basis, but we have enough, around \$180,000.

Mr. Bisson said these cameras will be solar powered.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to allow Parks and Recreation to expend no more than \$6,800 from the Recreation Revolving Fund on the necessary equipment for video monitoring of the courts with the assistance of the Town of Exeter IT Department. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

- c. Town Manager's Report
  - i. Mr. Dean said for the Memorial Day parade, the Board should meet in the regular spot behind the FD at 9:30.
  - ii. He's exploring Omniballot options for the Special Town Meeting.
  - iii. There's a Health Trust Board meeting this Thursday.
  - iv. We're continuing work on the classification study.
  - v. The CIP work begins this week, and he's checking in with the different departments.
  - vi. There have been some vandalism problems in the public restrooms at Town Hall. We do have cameras so we're looking into what happened. We're limiting the number of hours by closing them at 7PM.
  - vii. The Perambulation with Kensington is this Wednesday at 9 AM at Kensington Town Hall.
  
- d. Select Board Committee Reports
  - i. Ms. Belanger had no report. She thanked the DPW for running a good Zoom meeting for Westside Drive. She added that the Parks and Rec Senior BBQ is this Thursday.
  - ii. Ms. Gilman had no report.
  - iii. Ms. Cowan had no report.
  - iv. Mr. Chartrand had no report.
  - v. Mr. Papakonstantis attended a Swasey Park Trustees meeting. He gave them an update on the Siphons project. They're planning a site walk for their next meeting in June. As an update on the Tree Committee grant, the trees will be planted at LSS on June 7 after school.
  
- e. Correspondence
  - i. A memo from Greg Bisson on the Pickleball and Tennis programs.
  - ii. A memo from the Exeter Community Power Aggregation Committee to the NH Public Utilities Commission asking them to incorporate net metered customers.
  - iii. A copy of the letter that the Board authorized Mr. Papakonstantis to write regarding the AARP grant.
  - iv. NHMA Legislative Bulletin
  - v. A letter from the NH Municipal Bond bank, informing us that the loan application for 20 years is approved.
  - vi. A letter of appreciation from Big Brothers Big Sisters.

9. Review Board Calendar

- a. The next meetings are June 5, 12, and 26.

10. Non-Public Session

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to enter into non-public session under RSA 91-A3II(c). Ms. Gilman seconded. In a roll call vote, the motion passed 5-0. The meeting entered non-public at 8:14 PM.

11. Adjournment. Selectman Chartrand moved to seal the non-public minutes indefinitely. Selectwoman Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0. Selectwoman Belanger moved to adjourn the regular meeting. Selectwoman Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0. The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Joanna Bartell  
Recording Secretary