

Select Board Meeting
Monday October 16, 2023
7 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, and Town Manager Russ Dean were present at this meeting. The meeting was called to order by Mr. Papakonstantis at 7 PM.

2. Bid Opening: Kingston Road Sidewalk Grant

Mr. Dean said work on this project will begin in the Spring of 2024.

- a. Berg Contracting and Construction of Fitzwilliam NH bid \$1,860,307.55
- b. S.U.R Construction of Rochester NH bid \$1,956,490
- c. DEU Construction of Epsom NH bid \$1,589,205
- d. Earth Mechanics of Pittsfield bid \$1,996,395

MOTION: Mr. Chartrand moved to send these bids to the appropriate department for recommendations on which to accept. Ms. Belanger seconded. Ms. Cowan was not yet present. The motion passed 4-0.

3. Public Comment

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

4. Proclamations/Recognitions

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

5. Approval of Minutes

- a. Regular Meeting: October 2, 2023

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve the Select Board minutes of October 2, 2023 as presented. Ms. Belanger seconded. Ms. Cowan was not yet present. The motion passed 4-0.

6. Appointments

- a. There were no appointments made at this meeting.

7. Discussion/Action Items

- a. Water Sewer Rates Hearing

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to open the public hearing. Ms. Gilman seconded. Ms. Cowan was not yet present. The motion passed 4-0.

Ms. Cowan arrived at this time.

Mr. Dean said the town commissioned Underwood Engineers to do a public study. The rate recommendation was made in the public hearing on

September 11. The recommendation was to raise the rates as well as some metering fees.

John Grueter of 3 Sterling Hill Lane said we [the Sterling Hill condos] are treated like a commercial customer in Tier 3. He's hoping to straighten that out. We don't need 32 meters in the building, but we're paying one bill for 32 people, 5 bills for 128 people.

Mr. Chartrand asked how many other customers are in a similar situation and what impact this would have on revenues. They had a developer that made a choice to put one meter in, instead of one for each unit. The Board has to be careful and not make exceptions.

Mr. Papakonstantis said we will consider the options, but can't make a decision tonight. We need to know how many other properties are in the same situation.

Mr. Dean said we decided in 2006 to go to the tiered system to encourage water conservation, which it sounds like Sterling Hill is doing. He agrees that we need to look at multiple properties and see what the ramifications would be.

Bob Ryan of 1 Sterling Hill Lane said we [the Sterling Hill condos] are budgeting \$105,000 for Water/Sewer. We're nervous about the projections. We're an over-55 community. Our first quarter showed 190,000 gallons of usage; that's less than 6,000 gallons per unit, which would be a Tier 1 rate. At Tier 1, our bills would come down 25%. We're a nonprofit corporation.

Mr. Chartrand said doing the math, your average person's bill is \$205 quarterly. I pay more than that quarterly as a tier 1.

Ms. Belanger asked if they have laundry facilities. Mr. Ryan said yes, in each condo.

Bob Kelly of 59 Columbus Ave, the Chair of the Town's Water/Sewer Advisory Committee, said the committee looked at the study's recommendations on September 13. It's difficult to predict what expenses and revenues will be. We have not revised the rates for over two years because what we set then worked out pretty well. We lost about 10 million gallons last year in consumption due to drought restrictions. We should be better next year. Instead of doing a 20% increase on water, the committee recommended scaling that back to 15%, which we voted 5-0. We support the 4% increase on the sewer side as well as the other items recommended in the Underwood Report.

Mr. Chartrand asked if there was discussion about future years, or just 2024. Mr. Kelly said yes, and there are significant water capital projects between now and 2026. If we get 10 million gallons of revenue back, we probably won't need to raise the rates again until the end of next year.

Mr. Papakonstantis said we had a crisis last year into this year, and this year we won't have ARPA funds or congressional funds. Moving forward, we have to keep that in mind when looking at our reserve.

Mr. Chartrand asked how many projects similar to Park Street need to be renewed. Mr. Kelly said dozens. There's one every year. On Washington Street,

we had an emergency four or five years ago, but never did the paving. There are a lot of projects ongoing like that. Westside Drive was \$6 million.

Ms. Cowan said we thought about what the landscape looks like with an eye towards making this less painful.

Mr. Kelly said the difference between 15% and 20% is \$315,000 in revenue. We will get \$80,000 of that back on the fire suppression and the revenue from 10 million gallons of non-drought usage.

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

Mr. Chartrand said he thinks it's a miracle that he [Mr. Chartrand] gets clean water for \$280 a quarter. This is the essential thing to living in civilization. If the Water/Sewer Committee says 15% instead of 20%, he'll go with that.

Mr. Chartrand asked Keith Pratt of Underwood Engineers, who was present, what he thinks of doing 15%. Mr. Pratt said it creates less revenue, but you look at these rates every year and can adjust accordingly.

Mr. Papakonstantis said we can't keep going to our citizens in an emergent way at the 11th hour. He respects that the Water/Sewer Committee were able to meet the 20% halfway at 15%, rather than 10%, and we can live with the 15% for the next year.

Mr. Dean said at 15%, Tier 1 is \$10.72/1,000 gallons, Tier 2 is \$13.41/1,000, and Tier 3 is \$16.08/1,000. The Sewer rates stay the same. The new rates would appear on the January 31st billing for the first time.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved that the Select Board adopt the following Water/Sewer rates, effective with the January 2024 billing cycle: for the Water Rates, the ¾" meter charge is \$46.75 per quarter; the 1" meter charge, \$65.45 per quarter; the 1.5" meter charge, \$84.16 per quarter; the 2" meter charge, \$135.58 per quarter; the 3" meter charge, \$514.29 per quarter; the 4" meter charge, \$654.54 per quarter. The Tier 1 consumption charge is \$10.72/1,000 gallons; the Tier 2 consumption charge, \$13.41/1,000 gallons; the Tier 3 consumption charge, \$16.08/1,000 gallons. For the Sewer rates: the ¾" meter charge is \$38.48 per quarter; the 1" meter charge, \$53.80 per quarter; the 1.5" meter charge, \$69.26 per quarter; the 2" meter charge, \$111.59 per quarter; the 3" meter charge, \$423.28 per quarter; the 4" meter charge, \$538.72 per quarter. The Tier 1 Sewer consumption charge is \$16.99/1,000 gallons; the Tier 2 Sewer consumption charge, \$21.24/1,000 gallons; the Tier 3 Sewer consumption charge, \$25.49/1,000 gallons. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved that the Select Board adopt an increase in the Sewer flat rates of 4%, effective January 2024. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved that the Select Board adopt a schedule of miscellaneous fees and system development charges effective January 1, 2024 as outlined in the Water/Sewer rate study. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

b. Request for 15 minute parking limit

Mr. Papakonstantis said there's a request for 15 minute parking on Front Street. This is the first of three public hearings.

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

Mr. Papakonstantis said this request would involve the Select Board amending section 103.7 of the town parking ordinance. Currently there are four spaces in town near the post office with a 15 minute limit. After three public readings, the Board could take up this request.

Ms. Gilman asked how many spaces this would affect. Mr. Dean said he believes this is just one space. Mr. Chartrand said it's proposing an additional space in front of 152 Front Street.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked if the business owner requesting this could be present at the next hearing.

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

c. MRI Revaluation contract

Mr. Papakonstantis said this is the cyclical revaluation contract to review and sign. This is for revaluation between now and April 1, 2024. This is included in the fee we're already paying MRI, so no additional funding is required.

Mr. Dean said it's a requirement of the DRA that this contract be signed and sent to them for approval.

Ms. Gilman said there is a bill proposed that makes sure the valuation is at 100% for the properties that we're looking at. We've been going for 90% - 110% of market value.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved that the Board authorize the signature of the MRI Revaluation contract. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

d. Riverwoods Tax Agreements

Mr. Chartrand and Ms. Belanger recused themselves.

Mr. Dean said last year, RiverWoods brought the Woods, the Ridge, and the Boulders into a single agreement.

Ms. Gilman read the Riverwoods agreement:

Now comes the Town of Exeter, by and through its Select Board (hereinafter "Town") and The RiverWoods Company at Exeter NH (formerly Life Care Services of New Hampshire Inc.), d/b/a RiverWoods at Exeter (hereinafter "RiverWoods"), and agree as follows:

By December 1, 2023, RiverWoods will pay to the Town real estate taxes for land and buildings owned by RiverWoods and located at the three campuses known as The Woods, The Ridge and The Boulders, which, collectively comprise The RiverWoods Company, at Exeter, New Hampshire ("the Land and Buildings").

The real estate taxes will be calculated by multiplying the tax rate times the assessed value of the Land and Buildings owned by RiverWoods as follows:

- *The residential units will pay the full tax rate (state, municipal, county, and school);*
- *The buildings for health care residents will not pay any tax (state, municipal, county, or school);*
- *The remainder of Land and Buildings, including the land used for the final calculation of density under the land use ordinance of the Town of Exeter and outbuildings, will pay the full tax rate (state, municipal, county, and school);*
- *The land not needed for the final calculation of density under the land use ordinance of the Town of Exeter, which is in current use, will pay taxes at the full state, municipal, county, and school rate for current use property.*

The parties to this Agreement recognize that those portions of the development that support both the buildings for health care residents and the residential units will be taxed on a pro rata basis.

This agreement on principle shall not preclude either party from questioning the precise percentage amounts allocated to the taxable and nontaxable portions, nor the assessed value of the taxable portions of the land and buildings.

In witness whereof, the parties hereto have entered into this Agreement this 16th day of October, 2023.

Ms. Gilman mentioned that this language hasn't changed over the years.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to enter into the PILOT agreement for the 2023 tax year incorporating the three RiverWoods campuses, the Woods, the Ridge, and the Boulders, and authorize the Select Board to sign the agreement. Ms. Cowan seconded. Mr. Chartrand and Ms. Belanger had recused themselves and did not vote. The motion passed 3-0-2.

e. Committees Discussion

Mr. Papakonstantis said he and former Select Board member Lovey Roundtree-Oliff looked at the committees and if any need to be combined or sunsetted. We've had problems with meeting quorums in certain committees, which we've already addressed in the case of the Communications Committee. Changes to some committees have to go on the warrant. Mr. Chartrand offered to continue this work with Mr. Papakonstantis. Ms. Gilman said the Energy and Sustainability Committees have commonalities. Mr. Dean said the Board should make recommendations by mid-December/January to get them on the warrant.

Ms. Belanger said the Conservation Commission bylaws say a full member can only serve two terms then becomes an alternate, but it's not clear for how long. Is that still necessary? Mr. Papakonstantis asked Mr. Dean to look into it.

8. Regular Business

- a. Tax Abatements, Veterans Credits and Exemptions
 - i. There were no abatements or exemptions considered at this meeting.

- b. Permits & Approvals
 - i. E911 Recommendation.

Mr. Dean said the ordinance says that a public hearing is required for a change like this, so we will schedule a public hearing to notice people in accordance with the change being made. These are new proposed roads, not just a change. The hearing will be November 6th.

- c. Town Manager's Report
 - i. The Leadership group of Department heads discussed engagement.
 - ii. The E Team had a meeting on the budget Oct 6.
 - iii. He attended Town Counsel's retirement party.
 - iv. The General Government Subcommittee of the BRC met Oct 12.
 - v. He attended a Health Trust Board meeting for rate setting purposes. Our health insurance is up 10%.
 - vi. The Pickpocket dam grant application was submitted today.
 - vii. The FD held a burn of a house on Epping Road as a training exercise.
 - viii. He thanked Kristin Murphy, who secured an ECGB grant of \$200,000 for weatherization and improvements on manufactured homes.
 - ix. The Deliberative session will be Feb 3, 2024.
 - x. He thanked the Police Department for the simulator exercise last week.

- d. Select Board Committee Reports
 - i. Mr. Chartrand had no report.
 - ii. Ms. Cowan had a Communications Advisory meeting. There are reasonable requests coming forward.
 - iii. Ms. Gilman said regarding the Energy Committee, people should look at their website to review the rebates available. There's a "Window Dressers" program where a volunteer goes out and measures people's windows, and a company comes and does plastic inserts. They want to hold the session in town hall but she's concerned about floor damage.
 - iv. Ms. Belanger attended a public parking and traffic stakeholder meeting and public input session with 30-40 participants. There were 325 participants in the survey. She attended the All-Boards meeting, and we're making strides. She also attended a Police simulation training. At the Planning Board meeting October 12, they heard two applications: one for 8 Commerce Way for a 2 story addition, and one for 158 Epping Road for a minor subdivision. Both were approved.
 - v. Mr. Papakonstantis attended the All-Boards meeting, and he thanked the volunteers who attended. At the Police simulation training, they went through real-life events and debriefed us on the laws. They can only do

this training at the DPW, but the proposed Police station has an area for this.

e. Correspondence

- i. Mr. Papakonstantis said a group of citizens put together a petition. Chief Poulin and Mr. Dean responded immediately with ideas on moving forward. They suggested closures, which Chief Poulin agreed would not be a problem. For any permitted event at Swasey, Parks and Rec would work with the Police Department to do temporary one-way parking.
- ii. Ms. Belanger said the DPW gives a report on Helpsy numbers on their FB page. Could she get a report for the entire year? Mr. Dean said he would get that information.

9. Review Board Calendar

- a. The next meetings are Oct 30, November 6, November 20, December 4, and December 18. The meeting the week between Christmas and New Years is TBD. The BRC All Day meeting is this Friday at 8:30 AM.

10. Non-Public Session

- a. There was no non-public session at this time.

11. Adjournment

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0 and the meeting adjourned at 8:47 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary