

Select Board Meeting
Monday October 30, 2023
6:00 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 Finance Director Corey Stevens were present at this meeting.

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Papakonstantis at 6 PM.

2. Non-Public

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to enter into non-public session under RSA 91-A:3II(a) and (l). Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0 and the meeting entered non-public at 6 PM.

The Board emerged from non public session. Mr. Chartrand moved to seal the minutes until the action is complete, seconded by Ms. Belanger. The motion carried 5-0 and the minutes were sealed.

The Board reconvened in the Nowak Room at 7 PM.

3. Public Comment

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

4. Proclamations/Recognitions

- a. There were no proclamations/recognitions.

5. Approval of Minutes

- a. Regular Meeting: October 16, 2023
Corrections: Ms. Belanger said on page 6, "Congress Way" should read "Commerce Way."

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the Select Board minutes of October 16, 2023 as amended. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

6. Appointments

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

7. Discussion/Action Items

- a. Request for 15 Minute Parking Limit - 2nd Reading

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

Mr. Papakonstantis said there is a request to amend the Town Ordinance parking regulation 103.7, 15 Minute Parking Limit. Mr. Dean said at the last reading, there was a question about whether it was one space or two; the answer is one. The Board also asked if Chief Poulin had any opinion, and Chief Poulin said the PD would do their best to enforce it. The address is 152 Front Street. He noted that no one representing the applicant was in attendance.

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

b. Replacement of Public Safety Communications Console

Police Chief Stephan Poulin and Fire Chief Erik Wilking were present to discuss this request. Chief Poulin said as we were reviewing Dispatch and the equipment needed for the new building, we found out that a major radio component is out of date. This is the computer tower that acts as a communications hub, the "radio console." Since upgrades and fixes can't be made, this is a dire emergency. It's failed on us several times already. Dispatch, Fire, and Police are working off these handheld portable radios. They don't make the parts for it; there's only one person that can service it; and it's out of warranty. The current price has gone up by 7%, to \$300,670. To get the parts in, it will take 6-8 months, then they have to get it onto our frequencies and get it installed. The total process could be up to a year. Chief Wilking said we need it. Riverwoods gave the town \$150,000 for FD or Public Safety; that plus money from the EMS Revolving Fund could allow us to start the project. If we wait until March, we're already 5 months behind. Chief Poulin said we can take this equipment with us if we get a new building approved.

Corey Stevens said the projected EMS Revolving Fund balance at the end of the year is \$335,000.

Ms. Belanger said this is a good use of the \$150,000 from RiverWoods.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to authorize the purchase of a replacement Public Safety Communications console at a cost of \$301,000 utilizing \$150,000 from the RiverWoods fund and \$151,000 from the EMS Revolving Fund. Ms. Cowan seconded. Ms. Belanger asked if the projected \$335,000 EMS fund balance is before the \$151,000 is taken out. Mr. Stevens said that's correct, that was our starting point. The motion passed 5-0.

c. DAR Sign Donation

Renay Allen and Julie Black, members of the Daughters of the American Revolution organization, were present to discuss the proposed donation. Ms. Allen said in 2026, America will celebrate the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution. The Daughters of the American Revolution is a group of women who work on historic preservation, patriotism, and education. Exeter has been identified at the Statewide level to honor Black American Revolutionary soldiers. The Winter Street Cemetery houses Revolutionary War-era graves, including that of Jude Hall.

Ms. Black said the DAR's project to celebrate the 250th anniversary is to put two plaques in Exeter: a standard "America 250" plaque at the American Independence Museum, and a plaque with custom wording at the Winter Street Cemetery. This cemetery is of the few in NH that has multiple Black Revolutionary War soldiers who are documented. These are forgotten soldiers and we want to honor their sacrifices. Regarding the location, we can work with Exeter to put it in a proper place. We would like it to be prominent. If Exeter approves, she needs a formal letter from the Select Board.

Ms. Gilman asked if this will be part of the Black History Trail. Ms. Black said it's a DAR sign with the DAR insignia. She's spoken to people at the Black Heritage trail and they approve of the idea. She's hoping that they will help come up with the wording for the plaque.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked about the timeline. Ms. Black said we're looking to get grants from DAR National in January, so we would need the approval letter then. We're hoping to do the celebration in the Fall of 2024. We would work with Parks and Recreation to figure out the best place to put the plaque.

Ms. Cowan said that the green space around the cannon is the formal entrance. Ms. Gilman said the plaque should be near one of the entrances. Ms. Cowan suggested bringing it to the Heritage Commission.

Mr. Chartrand asked about the materials for the sign. Ms. Black said it would be a bronze plaque with gold paint. Mr. Chartrand asked if maintenance of the plaque would be minimal, and Ms. Black said yes. Ms. Gilman asked how it would be mounted. Ms. Black said that would be part of the discussion. Her preference would be on a post.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked that this be on the agenda of the next Heritage Commission meeting.

d. Facility Condition Assessment Presentation

Jeff Beck of Public Works was present for the discussion of the Facility Condition Assessment, and Mary Venable of Bureau Veritas was present via Zoom to give a presentation.

Ms. Venable said that most of the facilities in town are "fair," somewhere between failed and brand new. The Facility Condition Index shows the cost to replace the capital items compared to the cost of replacing the whole building. The Public Works campus and the Rec bath house need to be replaced. Costs are fairly moderate within the next three years, as long as maintenance and replacement is kept up. There are 13 town-owned buildings, and the average maintenance needs per year over 10 years totals \$750,000. The current maintenance budget is \$163,000, so it would be a 4.6x increase. Some buildings have exterior finishes that need to be redone. We recommend replacing the fueling station in 2024. The Public Works garages need structural reinforcement to meet current snow load requirements. In capital outlay, there are \$4.3M in needs across 10 facilities in the next 4-6 years, and \$5.9M in 6-10 years.

Facilities will generally be in “fair” condition through the next 10 years. High dollar forecasted expenditures are the fueling station and structural upgrades at the Public Works building.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked if currently there is a \$163,000 maintenance budget, but in order to maintain facilities, they need \$750,000? Ms. Venable said yes.

Ms. Belanger said these buildings are old. If we want to keep them, we have to maintain them.

Mr. Papakonstantis said the Facilities Committee has been lukewarm on replacing anything in Public Works, but now that we have it in writing from an expert we could start moving on it.

Jeff Beck of Maintenance said Bureau Veritas has done an excellent job on this. Some discussion has been about incrementally increasing the maintenance fund. The \$63,000 each year covers custodial costs and systems, while the \$100,000 maintenance projects fund is for major projects. Mr. Papakonstantis said emergencies happen too. Mr. Beck said this year, we had the Department of Labor do an audit. The health and safety of the buildings is key for us.

Mr. Chartrand said we’ve got a big push this year for a new Public Safety Facility, so we’re holding off on other issues for the warrant. We should get to it a year from now and try to increase the amount of money we dedicate.

Mr. Dean said we need to consider what that \$750,000 a year looks like. We should discuss it with the Facilities Committee.

Mr. Chartrand asked if this database will be available to us to update as we make progress with these facilities. Ms. Venable said yes, there's a module where you can show work that has been done and update items that are replaced.

Ms. Cowan said this is the stuff that is not fun to fund, but can become a crisis if we’re not on top of it. Ms. Belanger said it’s more expensive if you keep kicking the can down the road.

e. Fund Balance Discussion

Mr. Dean said it is tax rate setting time. The Board annually reviews that process and makes a determination on how much fund balance to apply to lower the tax rate. The DRA recommends a fund balance preservation of between 5% and 17% of the budget. The budget is driven by the town, schools, county, and the Statewide education tax. That number adds up to the appropriation side as \$72,398,411. The undesignated fund balance is \$3.619M. The tax rate setting fund balance is \$4,858,356. The 2023 town warrant had \$511,771 in warrant articles, which lowered it to \$4.34M. We’re recommending in 2023 using \$300,000 to lower the tax rate, for a new balance of \$4,046,585. This is 5.59%, just over the 5% threshold. If all goes according to plan, we would be looking at a tax rate of \$6.28 per 1,000. 2024 is a revaluation year, so things will look different.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to adopt the recommendation of \$300,000 from fund balance to lower the tax rate, to maintain a fund balance of 5.59%. Ms. Gilman seconded. Mr. Chartrand asked if we do this every year, and Mr. Dean said yes. The motion passed 5-0.

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. There were no permits or approvals considered at this meeting.

c. Town Manager's Report

- i. Mr. Dean thanked Public Works for their work on striping on Epping Road.
- ii. There was a successful Seabrook Drill on October 18. They're looking at a graded exercise in 2024. The Select Board was notified during the drill.
- iii. He attended an RSA 91-A training at the Library. Steve Buckley from NHMA led the training.
- iv. He attended a Leadership Group meeting Oct 19, the BRC all day meeting on Oct 20, and a Department Head meeting on Oct 25.
- v. He attended an REDC [Regional Economic Development Center] meeting at C3I, took a tour of the facility, and connected with other Economic Development personnel.
- vi. Senator Shaheen visited on Friday to honor Kristin Murphy for securing a \$250,000 grant. It was a nice event.
- vii. Deliberative Session will be Feb 3, 2024 at 6 PM, with a snow date of Feb 6.

d. Select Board Committee Reports

- i. On Oct 17, Ms. Belanger attended the biweekly pedestrian parking and traffic study meeting. On Oct 18, she attended the 91-A training. On Oct 19, she took a tour of 44 units of a tiny home project in Dover done by John and Maggie Randolph. The homes are 400 square feet each. The same area would have been nine single family homes. Mr. Winham will give the Housing Advisory Committee more numbers about it on Friday. The trip was organized by the Workforce Housing Coalition. She attended the All-day Budget meeting Oct 20. On Oct 25 she attended the BRC Police and Fire meeting. On Oct 26 she attended the Planning Board meeting, where they tabled both applicants to Nov 16.
- ii. Ms. Gilman attended the event Friday with Senator Shaheen and folks from Unutil, Eversource, the Department of Energy, and others affected by or interested in this grant. The grant was for energy efficiency installations to resident-owned mobile home parks. We're hoping once we have the

funds to set up the flowchart of how it will work. Renay Allen suggested having a “champion” for each park. The Heritage Commission discussed using EXTV to do short presentations on the work we’ve done, like the Historic survey of the Franklin Street area. HDC was canceled.

- iii. Ms. Cowan attended the Rec Advisory Board meeting. They discussed changing the fees for fields, which has not been done in 20+ years. This is making sure we have enough money to cover the cost of maintaining the fields.
- iv. Mr. Chartrand attended the BRC all-day meeting on Oct 20. At the Facilities committee Oct 25, there was a great discussion of the intersection between the Facilities Report and our Capital Improvement projects. We’re prioritizing the new Public Safety building this year. We’re strategizing about how to approach the voters with these. The participation of the Facilities Committee is essential to the word-of-mouth campaign. He also attended the end of the Fire and Police BRC meeting. It was great to hear the BRC review the Public Safety facility proposal.
- v. Mr. Papakonstantis attended the BRC meetings, the 91-A training, and Senator Shaheen’s visit to celebrate the good work the Energy Committee and Kristin Murphy have done. This was one of only 12 such grants awarded in the country. He attended the Swasey Parkway Trustees meeting; they had painted “no dog” signs on the sidewalk, which didn’t work out as well as they thought it would, but they tried. The Arts & Culture Committee will be present at the next Select Board meeting regarding the donation of a statue.

e. Correspondence

- i. A letter from the CEO of Pennichuck Water Works regarding a water rate increase.
- ii. A letter from the Rockingham County Treasurer with the warrant
- iii. A community action report from the Department of Revenue. Mr. Dean said the DRA wants this shared with the Board. It talks about the revaluation conference between MRI and the DRA, which went through the specifics of the 2024 Revaluation and their monitoring procedures and reporting expectations.

9. Review Board Calendar

- a. The next Select Board meetings are November 6, November 20, December 4, and December 18.

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 was adjourned at 8:13 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joanna Bartell

Recording Secretary