

Select Board Meeting  
Monday January 8, 2024  
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, and Nancy Belanger. Town Manager Russ Dean, Assistant Town Manager Melissa Roy, and Finance Director Corey Stevens were also present at this meeting.

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Papakonstantis at 6:50 PM and the Board went downstairs to the Wheelwright Room for an interview.

2. Board Interviews

- a. Mark Lemos for the Zoning Board of Adjustment and Energy Committee.

The Board reconvened in the Nowak Room at 7:06 PM.

Mr. Papakonstantis thanked the Public Works Department for their work during the snowstorm the previous day. He also asked for a moment of silence for Paul Binnette, a long-time volunteer for the town.

3. Bid Opening - Septage Equipment

- a. SaveCo North America of Gurney, IL: \$259,466.

- b. Claro Environmental Technologies of Montreal: \$288,200

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to forward the bids to the Public Works Department for review. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

4. Bid Opening – Webster Avenue Pump Station

- a. Northeast Earth Mechanics LLC of Pittsfield NH: \$4,481,230

- b. Albanese D&S Inc. of Dracut MA: \$4,916,750

- c. DeFelice Corporation of Dracut MA: \$4,902,345

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to forward the bids to the Public Works Department for review. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

5. Bid Award – Kingston Road Project

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to award the bid to the low bidder, DBU Construction Inc, in the amount of \$1,589,205 and to further authorize the Town Manager to execute the amended project agreement. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to award the Construction Phase Engineering to CMA Engineers in the amount of \$23,465 and to further authorize the Town Manager to execute the amended project agreement. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to award the Construction Phase Engineering to Wright Pierce in the amount of \$110,027. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to authorize the Town Manager to execute the amended project agreement. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

6. Public Comment

- a. Jaye Garnett of 2 Stoney Water Road said she represents a group of residents concerned about Pickpocket Dam, the “Friends of Exeter River.” She said that the Brentwood Select Board, the Brentwood Conservation Commission, The Exeter-Squamscott River Local Advisory Committee, and abutters in Exeter and Brentwood were not notified that there would be a meeting in which consequential decisions would be made. The River Advisory Board and Select Board leaned towards dam removal. VHB said the water would drop by 10 feet, impacting the environment in ways that had not yet been studied at the time of the vote. If this water level goes down, she’s worried about what’s going to happen to her house. This will have a significant impact. Has Brentwood been notified of the meeting February 27?

Mr. Dean said we plan to notify Brentwood prior to the meeting. We’re also making efforts to notify Exeter abutters. Ms. Garnett said anyone along the river hasn’t been notified. It was decided with the grant that this was the way the town is going to go. The studies came after the decision. She’s looking for more transparency and information for the public.

Mr. Papakonstantis said the only thing that was decided was to apply for a grant. In order for anything to happen, there will have to be public hearings. The feasibility study will be ready at the end of January and public notice will be given.

Ms. Garnett asked that the report be made public before the meeting on February 27. Paul Vlasich said it will be on the town website prior to the public information meeting; the plan is to post it February 20th.

Mr. Chartrand said we applied for a grant but no decision has been made and he would appreciate it if she would stop saying that it had.

- b. Bob Collier of 9 Connie Road said the dam was built for a purpose and it’s used quite a bit. The town should reconsider its position on taking the dam down. He would like them to repair it, not elevate it, since there would be more pressure created if it were elevated. It should be made functional.
- c. Jeff Saunders of 167 Pickpocket Road in Brentwood indicated that he wished to speak. The Board agreed to allow him to speak as a non-resident. Mr. Saunders said the wetlands are an effective filter for water quality. He has a well and he’s concerned about the impact on his water quality for himself and the hundreds of other well owners, as well as the recreation and wildlife habitat.

#### 7. Proclamations/Recognitions

- a. Stephen Cronin, the new Public Works Director, introduced himself to the Board.

#### 8. Approval of Minutes

- a. Regular Meeting: December 18, 2023

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve the minutes of December 18, 2023 as presented. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

#### 9. Appointments

- a. Madison Bailey

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to appoint Madison Bailey as Health Officer. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

- b. Mark Lemos

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to appoint Mark Lemos as a ZBA alternate member, term to expire April 2026. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

**MOTION:** Ms. Gilman moved to appoint Mark Lemos to the Energy Committee, with no term. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

10. Discussion/Action Items

a. FY24 Operating Budget & Warrant Articles

Mr. Dean said the budget increase is 8.13% over FY23. It's a people-focused budget and we have worked hard to retain and incentivize employees. We're faced with cost increases across the board, and health insurance is up 10%. Debt service is up \$600,000 due to approved projects, such as the Solar Array project. We're proposing a revolving fund to track the Solar Array.

Mr. Papakonstantis said there are five bond articles: The Police Station/Fire Substation, the School Street Area Design Reconstruction, the Webster Ave Pump Station, the Surface Water Treatment Plant design and engineering, and the excess construction proceeds Police vehicle purchase. Mr. Dean said regarding the latter project, the Finance Department looked at previous bond issues and there were dollars left over from the 2011 Great Dam design, the Water/Sewer Line replacement project of 2010, the 2012 Wastewater Treatment Design, and the Jady Hill utilities project. We have \$213,970 left over. We recommend reassigning the excess proceeds and buying two Police Cruisers, and applying the remaining \$94,000 to the Great Dam removal bond that we're still paying principal and interest on.

Mr. Papakonstantis said the warrant article for the Capital Reserve Fund for Parks Improvement is historically \$100,000. This year, the draft request was \$50,000 to bring costs down, but the BRC debated and came to a compromise of \$75,000. Annually it's been spent at \$100,000.

There will be one citizen's petition, regarding the Rugg property, which the Board discussed December 18.

Mr. Papakonstantis said there's a recommendation to use ARPA funds in the amount of \$50,000 for the new Tree Committee equipment. Also the \$150,000 from Road Aid for paving could be increased to \$250,000. We shouldn't expect these numbers from Road Aid in the future.

Mr. Chartrand said regarding the Swasey paving portion, \$85,000, he was swayed by Jenn Martell's memo. Mr. Dean said he's looking at a proposal from Ironwood Design. Mr. Papakonstantis said we should wait until the springtime to decide on that project. Mr. Dean said the sewer contractor from the siphon project expressed interest. There's no timeline to spend the Road Aid. Regarding the ARPA funds, there is \$122,851 remaining. This must be committed by 2025 and spent by 2026. For Planet Playground, the \$60,000 is to purchase the land, and we've applied for a grant to rebuild the playground.

**MOTION:** Mr. Chartrand moved to expend \$50,000 from ARPA funds for the Tree Committee's new equipment, \$60,000 from ARPA towards Planet Playground, \$120,000 from the unused construction fund for the Police cruisers, \$85,000 from Road Aid for Swasey Paving, and \$150,000 from Road Aid towards highway paving. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

Mr. Dean said the gap between the default budget and the operating budget is now \$288,186.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to expend \$166,240 from the Sidewalk Fund towards the Kingston Road project. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to reduce Highway line item 57006, Capital Outlay Equipment, by \$50,000. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

**MOTION:** Mr. Chartrand moved to reduce Highway line item 55251, Paving line, from \$700,000 to \$550,000. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

Bob Collier of 9 Connie Road said the town has agreed to plow Connie Road. When it rains it creates potholes and a serious rut. Could it be paved? Mr. Papakonstantis asked for a written request that the Board can pass to Public Works.

b. Audit RFP Recommendation

Finance Director Corey Stevens said we received three bid proposals for 2024 audit services. Staff met with each of the candidates and recommends Plodzick and Sanderson. The bid was in line with what we pay now. It would be a one-year contract.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to award the audit services 2024 to Plodzick and Sanderson PA with the option of coming back to the Select Board at the end of 2024 to review a possible three-year option. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

c. Utility Easement Approval – Solar Array Project

Town Planner Dave Sharples was present to discuss the easement request. He asked the Board to authorize an easement for Unitil to install three poles on town property at the Cross Road Landfill to support the solar array project. Unitil did an interconnection study and they need to add five poles to bring three-phase power into the property and then underground to the site. Unitil will maintain the first three of those poles, we maintain the last two. They requested an easement to install and maintain the three poles. This project went through the warrant process and was approved by the voters. Construction should start in the spring.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to authorize the Town Manager or his designee to execute any documents including the easement deed to Unitil Systems Inc. and take any and all actions necessary to complete the solar array project within the available funding. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

d. Boards & Committees Update

Mr. Papakonstantis said he and Lovey Roundtree-Oliff looked at all the Boards and Committees to find any committee or board that may need help meeting a quorum. He has continued this work with Mr. Chartrand, and they have a couple of recommendations.

The Water/Sewer Committee has seven voting members, including the Select Board member, and needs four members for a quorum. Ms. Cowan said that's been difficult. Mr. Papakonstantis said one option is to reduce it to three people with alternates. Another option is to decrease it to five members but increase the voting Select Board members to two. Mr. Chartrand said he prefers the latter option. Five members is better. Having two Select Board members voting makes sense. Mr. Dean said back in 2005, this committee had three members. The 2011 Town Meeting voted for seven members including a Select

Board member. There's no precedent for a committee to have two Select Board members, but it can be done. The Select Board are the Water/Sewer Commissioners for the town. Ms. Cowan said it's an important committee. What they do is advise the Select Board, so she doesn't know how useful it is to take a subset of the Board, but she also doesn't want to have full discussions at the Select Board about abatements. Ms. Gilman said the Select Board members can back up the decisions of the other members. Mr. Papakonstantis asked Mr. Dean to draft a warrant article reducing the number of members from seven to five, with two members being Select Board members.

Mr. Papakonstantis said that another suggestion is to merge the Sustainability Advisory Committee and Energy Committee into one. Ms. Gilman said they have different audiences and communication. Mr. Chartrand said that Sustainability considered this but did not affirm it. They wanted to talk further about what that would look like. Mr. Papakonstantis said Kristin Murphy is the staff for both committees. She could work with the entire group to draft a new charge. Mr. Chartrand said the Sustainability Committee wants to meet first, as they're not sure they want to move forward. Mr. Papakonstantis said the Chairs and Select Board reps could sit down with Kristin as a first step. The Energy Committee has been one of the most productive committees. Sustainability had difficulties with a quorum and decided to meet every other month.

Mr. Papakonstantis said we also looked at the Heritage Commission because of quorum issues. Ms. Gilman said either decreasing the number of members or combining the groups would require a warrant article. Reducing the number of members to five would be helpful. Mr. Chartrand said there's a letter in our packet regarding the Heritage Commission, was this taken into account? Mr. Papakonstantis said he and Ms. Cowan met with the author of the letter and have had written correspondence.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked Mr. Dean to write up two warrant articles and have Kristin Murphy begin work on the merger.

Mr. Chartrand asked how many warrant articles there will be. Mr. Dean said 22 not including Citizens' Petitions.

## 11. Regular Business

### a. Tax Abatements, Veterans Credits and Exemptions

**MOTION:** Ms. Gilman moved to approve an abatement for 110/2/94 in the amount of \$318.68 for tax year 2023. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

**MOTION:** Ms. Gilman moved to approve an educational exemption for 86/11/11 in the amount of \$110,600 for tax year 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

Mr. Chartrand asked what this is. Mr. Dean said it's an educational institution that has applied for an exemption under RSA 72:23(c). It's been reviewed by the Assessors and determined that it qualifies.

**MOTION:** Ms. Gilman moved to approve an educational exemption for 86/11/12 in the amount of \$109,300 for tax year 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

**MOTION:** Ms. Gilman moved to approve an educational exemption for 86/11/14 in the amount of \$109,300 for tax year 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

**MOTION:** Ms. Gilman moved to approve an educational exemption for 86/11/15 in the amount of \$110,600 for tax year 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

- b. Permits & Approvals
    - i. There were no permits or approvals considered at this meeting.
  - c. Town Manager's Report
    - i. We're working on town meeting preparations.
    - ii. The Siphons drilling begins tomorrow. We have notified people who signed up through our listserv.
    - iii. The Christmas tree pickup will be delayed until next week due to the storm.
    - iv. CPCNH set the new electric rates, which are very favorable.
    - v. The Pairpoint Park closing happened without any issues. The key is being held in the Town Manager's office. Primex said since it's vacant land, they'll add it automatically to the town's insurance, but won't be identified separately. Fencing is in process.
    - vi. He thanked DPW and Police and Fire for their responses during the storm. There were 10 accidents yesterday. We're anticipating another storm this week.
    - vii. Ms. Belanger thanked him for including the Helpsy report. She noted that it went from 6,821 pounds in 2022 to 15,000 in 2023.
  - d. Select Board Committee Reports
    - i. Ms. Belanger said the Housing Advisory Committee recommended to the Planning Board potential zoning amendments. One would make it more equitable for ADU's vs conversions. Dave Sharples is looking to expand the MUND C2 district along Portsmouth Ave and Epping Road. There will be two public hearings on those potential amendments on Jan 11 and Jan 25.
    - ii. Mr. Chartrand said he attended the special Select Board meeting on Dec 28 but recused himself.
    - iii. Ms. Cowan had no report.
    - iv. Mr. Papakonstantis attended the River Advisory Committee, where they heard a presentation on advanced septic systems. There were some folks for public comment on Pickpocket Dam.
    - v. Ms. Gilman had no town report but gave an update on State issues.
  - e. Correspondence
    - i. A letter of thanks from CASA for a contribution
    - ii. A letter from the citizen talking about boards and committees
    - iii. Data on Helpsy
    - iv. The NHMA Legislative Update
    - v. Several pieces of correspondence regarding the Rugg property and Pairpoint Park. Mr. Papakonstantis said many more came after the packet was put together. He tried to personally respond to everyone.
11. Review Board Calendar
- Mr. Papakonstantis said Tuesday is the Bond and Warrant Article budget meeting. The next regular meetings are Jan 29, Feb 12, Feb 26, March 4, and March 18. The Presidential Primary is January 23. Deliberative Session is Feb 3.

Town Election is March 12. The All Boards and Committees meeting was scheduled for Feb 7, but the Board agreed to postpone that to after the goal setting session in April. Mr. Dean said that Deliberative Session has a snow date of Feb 6 in the evening.

12. Non-Public Session

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

13. Adjournment

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to adjourn. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0 and the meeting was adjourned at 8:50 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Joanna Bartell  
Recording Secretary