

Select Board Meeting  
Monday April 15, 2024  
6:30 PM  
Nowak Room, Town Offices  
Draft Minutes

1. Call Meeting to Order

Members present: Chair Niko Papakonstantis, Acting Clerk Nancy Belanger, Dan Chartrand

Members Absent: Vice-Chair Molly Cowan, Clerk Julie Gilman

Town Manager Russ Dean was also present at this meeting. The meeting was called to order by Mr. Papakonstantis at 6:30 PM. The Board went downstairs to the Wheelwright Room for interviews.

2. Board Interviews - Pairpoint Park Stakeholders Committee

- a. Devon Skerritt
- b. Steven Jones
- c. Judy Rowan
- d. Ann Hohenberger

The Board reconvened in the Nowak Room at 7:08 PM.

3. Public Comment

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

4. Proclamations/Recognitions

- a. Mr. Papakonstantis read the Arbor Day proclamation:

*Whereas, in 1872, J. Sterling Morton proposed to the Nebraska Board of Agriculture that a special day be set aside for the planting of trees, and  
Whereas, this holiday, called Arbor Day, was first observed with the planting of more than a million trees in Nebraska, and  
Whereas, Arbor Day is now observed throughout the nation and the world, and  
Whereas, trees can reduce the erosion of our precious topsoil by wind and water, cut heating and cooling costs, moderate the temperature, clean the air, produce life-giving oxygen, and provide habitat for wildlife, and  
Whereas, trees are a renewable resource giving us paper, wood for our homes, fuel for our fires and countless other wood products, and  
Whereas, trees in our city increase property values, enhance the economic vitality of business areas, and beautify our community, and  
Whereas, trees, wherever they are planted, are a source of joy and spiritual renewal.*

*Now, therefore, I, Niko Papakonstantis, Select Board Chair of the Town of Exeter, do hereby proclaim the 22nd of April, 2024 as Arbor Day in the Town of*

*Exeter, and I urge all citizens to celebrate Arbor Day by supporting efforts to protect our trees and woodlands, and  
Further, I urge all citizens to plant trees to gladden the heart and promote the well-being of this and future generations.  
Dated this 15th day of April, 2024.*

Mr. Papakonstantis recognized Fire Chief Eric Wilking, who is retiring this week.

5. Approval of Minutes

a. Regular Meeting: April 1, 2024

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve the Select Board meeting minutes of April 1, 2024 as presented. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

6. Appointments

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to reappoint the Deputy Fire Chief Jason Fritz as the Exeter Deputy Health Officer, who serves under the Health Officer per under RSA-128, for 2024. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

7. Discussion/Action Items

a. SOS Recovery Center

SOS Executive Director John Burns gave a presentation on SOS Recovery Organization, a peer-based recovery organization started in 2016. Mr. Burns said we're planning to relocate our Hampton location to Exeter. We have a relationship with Exeter Hospital, they dispatch us 24/7 to support patients with substance use disorders. We'll be subletting 92 Portsmouth Ave. It's a peer-based program, not clinical. We do mutual aid support meetings, family support, and parenting programs. We have an opioid abatement fund to provide criminal justice support. We appreciate Exeter's proximity to Brentwood and the drug treatment court. We do harm reduction programming with safer supplies and overdose prevention education. There is also a business development program to help employ those in recovery. We move in next week.

The Board welcomed them to Exeter. Mr. Chartrand said he looks forward to them being a member of the community.

b. Squamscott Siphons Project Update

DPW Director Steve Cronin said we've run into some issues with the project that will lead to delays. Earlier this year, the contractor drilled a 6-inch pilot hole from Swasey to a receiving hole at Exeter Mills side. They planned to follow this up with a 12 inch then an 18-inch reamer. After that, new pipes would be put through at either end, then there would be additional construction to put the pipes together. The expected completion date was June 24, but this has now been delayed. The pilot hole was completed Feb 8, and the 12-inch reamer work was completed Feb 28. On Feb 29, they started the 18-inch ream, and anticipated it would take 3 weeks. On March 19, we had a progress meeting with

contractor, and it was still advancing as planned, although the contractor suggested a further 22-inch ream. Later that day, the drilling rod disconnected from the 18-inch reamer, about 500 feet from the entry point. This was due to a weld failure 160 feet from the drill rig. Several attempts to recouple the drill rods were unsuccessful. On March 22, they decided to push the reamer back to the Swasey side with an air hammer. On March 27, the casing made contact with the reamer. On April 2, a weld on the casing broke. They repaired the casing and tried again but it was unsuccessful. After further discussions, it was decided that the best course of action was to abandon the reamer in place and proceed with a new bore hole. We've adjusted the drilling location based on information we gathered. We could begin April 29 and it could be completed at the end of August. The contractor would also like to bring in a larger drill.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked if this will be covered under the lump sum agreement. Mr. Dean said yes. Mr. Papakonstantis asked if we've notified abutters. Mr. Cronin said we've reached out, but we're still determining where the new location will be. We hope to have more details by Wednesday afternoon.

c. Swasey Parkway Trustees/Select Board re: Swasey Parkway

Chair Dwane Staples convened the Swasey Parkway Trustees meeting at 7:38 PM. He introduced the other Trustees, Vice Chair Darius Thompson and member Dave Short.

Mr. Papakonstantis said the Swasey Parkway warrant article passed several years ago and the Board made the commitment to work through it with the Trustees. From time to time we have co-meetings to work on next steps. The siphon project has been delayed, but it's important that we start to move forward. He would like to work up multiple options for the Parkway's design. We could then have public hearings to hear public input. We should find the best way to work through the warrant article and make it as easy for folks with mobility issues as possible.

Mr. Dean said a coherent approach would be to hire a design consultant to look at all of the issues, such as ADA, the turnaround, stormwater, gates, and fencing. This is one of our most sensitive areas of town and a jewel of the community.

Mr. Short said the proposal describes that the consultant would come up with three conceptual plans and town staff would bring it down to two before the Trustees are involved. Shouldn't trustees be brought in from the beginning? Mr. Dean said that could be done. This was a draft proposal.

Mr. Short said the flooding there will have to be addressed to protect our infrastructure improvements. Mr. Dean said part of the scope of work from this proposal is to reduce impacts from flooding.

Mr. Papakonstantis said he would like the Trustees to be involved at an earlier point than the proposal describes.

Mr. Chartrand said he'd like to find consensus between the Board and the Trustees, with public input.

Mr. Short said Jen Martel raised the issue that we should be sensitive to the original design intent of the parkway.

Mr. Thompson asked, if the design consultant recommends the road be established with things to mitigate the safety issues and concerns, is that something that the Board is open to? Mr. Chartrand said that's a hypothetical that he doesn't want to address. We shouldn't try to pre-conceive this, we should let the professionals do their work. Let's wait and see what they say. Mr. Papakonstantis said if we were inclined to recontinue the road, this is the group to do so, but he would have a hard time doing it without a lot of public input before going against what passed.

Mr. Staples said he would like to see the first point be the flooding issue. It's been getting worse for a lot of years. The brackish water has ruined the turf across from the pavilion and it's affecting the trees. If we don't address the flooding and we do new plantings, we're throwing good money after bad. Mr. Thompson said the fencing needs to be fixed. We could build that up. The high tides and cycles are going to continue. Mr. Short suggested the consultant money should go to an engineering firm to address the flooding. It's coming over by 2 or 3 feet. Keeping it out could have a domino effect on other properties. Mr. Chartrand said the work should be very holistic because some of the most valuable properties are there. Mr. Dean said it could be a CIP item.

Mr. Cronin said Wednesday we're participating in a climate change vulnerability assessment with DES, looking at the wastewater and groundwater aspects. Mr. Papakonstantis asked if we were to engage an engineering firm, what would that cost? Mr. Cronin said he didn't know, but it's probably the right approach. When you try to hold back the Atlantic Ocean, it can get very expensive very quickly. Mr. Staples said it's about more than just keeping water out of Swasey Parkway, it's about the boathouse, Public Works, and the downtown. Mr. Chartrand said before it was donated, this was a swamp and part of the Squamscott River. Mr. Staples said the river will take it back in the future.

Mr. Papakonstantis said he'd like an update following Mr. Cronin's meeting on Wednesday and would like to consider this as a CIP item this budget season.

Mr. Short asked if the Trustees could be involved with the consultant from the beginning. Mr. Papakonstantis said a member of the Select Board would be in the meetings, and we could add a member of the Trustees as well.

The Trustees will come back to discuss this May 28.

MOTION [Swasey Parkway Trustees]: Mr. Thompson made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Short seconded. The motion passed 3-0 and the Swasey Trustees meeting adjourned at 8:11 PM.

d. Trust for Public Lands

Trust for Public Land Project Manager Lynnette Batt was present via Zoom, and Duane Hyde, Conservation Director of SELT, was present in person. Ms. Batt said the Rugg property is 47 acres of land along the boundary with

Newfields. It has miles of existing trails and Exeter residents have been using it as an extension of the Town Forest for many years. The family must sell to settle an estate, and they're giving the town the first crack at it, otherwise they will have to sell for development. We refer to it as the "Newfields-Exeter Community Forest." She showed maps of the property showing the location and trail density. She said Exeter's Article 24 received a strong response. It was an advisory measure that was non-fiscal. It got 88% of the vote. We're moving forward with the project; May and June are the final grant applications and the boundary resolution. The final appraisal would be in late summer or fall. We expect to have a funding decision on the grants and loans this fall. We would be pursuing public meetings and hearings to prepare for a funding vote in March 2025. We have ongoing private fundraising to pay other costs for the project and to create a stewardship fund. We expect the closing to be in the summer/fall of 2025 if the funds are raised. Regarding the boundary issue, the landowners submitted title and boundary work. The town wanted to review it, and we're still waiting for the resolution of that issue; we're asking the Select Board to help move that along. This is critical to the grant funding and the appraisal. For Exeter, the budget is \$1.7M which is the maximum land cost, or about \$35,000 an acre. It's 5% over the June 2023 appraisal. There's a floor price of \$1.3M. There will be a final appraisal to determine the cost. We could look at a town loan of \$1.2M with 20% to be forgiven. Newfields is moving forward with their full application this year. We're asking for Exeter to put in a "pre-application" for an SRF loan in May. It's non-committal until we submit the full application next year. The Board would need to designate an authorized representative to submit the application and submit letters in support. Mr. Papakonstantis said we are presently in ongoing discussions with the Rugg family regarding the boundary.

Ms. Belanger asked about the cost per acre. Ms. Batt said the appraised value was \$35,000/acre in June 2023. The final purchase price would be based on a final appraisal and review. If the appraisal came back higher, the sales price would still be the ceiling. If it came back below the floor, the landowners would have the option not to sell the property.

Mr. Chartrand asked if we're comfortable moving forward with some elements of this property while we're still in discussion with the Ruggs. Mr. Papakonstantis said the voters spoke overwhelmingly that this is a priority. Could we start the grant application process, which would not be binding? Mr. Dean said there's nothing that he can see that would forestall that. We've filed for grants before when we weren't the property owner. We can move forward without impacting that conversation. We're also hoping to hear very soon from the Rugg family on the boundary adjustment.

Ms. Batt said for the Drinking Water & Groundwater Trust Fund Grant and LCHIP, we could be the applicant and we'd be looking for support from the town. For the Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan application, the town would need to be the applicant. We can ghostwrite it but would need to work with a

designated representative to submit it. Mr. Dean said that would be the Natural Resources and Sustainability Planner.

e. Urbanized Exemption Request

Town Planner Dave Sharples said he's here to see if the Board would like to submit for an urbanized exemption from the Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act, a law that applies to great ponds and fifth-order streams like the Squamscott River. It requires a 250-foot buffer from the high water mark. He read Section 483-B:12:

*The governing body of a municipality may, in its discretion, request the commissioner to exempt all or a portion of the protected shoreland within its boundaries from the provisions of this chapter if the governing body finds that special local urbanization conditions as defined in RSA 483-B:4, XXV, exist in the protected shoreland for which the exemption is sought.*

*II. If the governing body of a municipality requests such an exemption, it shall submit evidence of existing and historical patterns of building and development in the protected shoreland in demonstration of the special local urbanization conditions. Such evidence shall address:*

*(a) Current and past building density.*

*(b) Commercial, industrial, or residential uses.*

*(c) Municipal or other public utilities.*

*(d) Current municipal land use regulations which affect the protected shoreland.*

*(e) Designation as a downtown, community center, central business district, or urbanized area or urban cluster as delineated by the United States Census Bureau.*

*(f) Any other information which the commissioner may reasonably require.*

Mr. Sharples presented a map of the district, which includes the downtown along the water, the island crossed by String Bridge, and the Library. The rest of the Squamscott would not be covered. The State recognizes that downtowns that existed when they made the law are impervious surfaces, but there's still a permit that developers have to get. This area is 93% impervious right now. The only green space is town-owned, with Pairpoint Park and Founders Park. There are numerous communities in NH that have received an exemption. He brought this to the Planning Board, which voted in unanimous support of it. It would be one less permit that people have to get. There's no vegetative or woodland buffer left to protect. The Conservation Commission voted 6-1 for it. The Exeter Squamscott River Local Advisory Committee [ESRLAC] did not support the request.

Mr. Chartrand said he understands their concerns, but we want to use our urban core more intensively. We can preserve green space outside our urban core. We want to reduce the cost to developers of our urban core, according to our Master Plan.

Ms. Belanger asked regarding the one member who wasn't in favor, what were their concerns? Mr. Sharples said they felt it was a regulation that protects the shoreland so you shouldn't get rid of it. Those on the committee that work for the State knew it doesn't do anything to protect the environment. It's a point system and there are no points. We didn't get an answer of what would be lost.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to authorize the Town Manager or their designee to submit a request for an urbanized exemption in accordance with NH RSA 483-B-12 as presented. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

- f. Approve SRF Certificates of Authorization - School Street Project, Surface Water Treatment Design, Water Street Project

Public Works Director Steve Cronin said these projects were approved by the voters. Town manager to sign the loan agreements on behalf of the town so we can proceed with these three important projects.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to enter into and approve a loan agreement for the School Street utility and street improvement project with NH DES in the amount of \$4,831,852 to the town of Exeter and to authorize the Town Manager, the Assistant Town Manager, or the Select Board Chair to sign the paperwork associated with such agreement. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to enter into and approve a loan agreement for the new Water Treatment Plant Design with NHDES in the amount of \$500,000 to the town of Exeter and to authorize the Town Manager, the Assistant Town Manager, or Select Board Chair to sign the paperwork associated with such agreement. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to enter into and approve a loan agreement for the Water Street Stormwater Plan with NHDES in the amount of \$100,000 to the town of Exeter and to authorize the Town Manager, the Assistant Town Manager, or Select Board Chair to sign the paperwork associated with such agreement. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

## 8. Regular Business

- a. Tax Abatements, Veterans Credits and Exemptions

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve an abatement for 110/2/81 in the amount of \$66.95 for tax year 2023 and \$61.88 for tax year 2022. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve an abatement for 110/2/83 in the amount of \$88.37 for tax year 2023. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve a Veterans Credit for 80/9 in the amount of \$500 and a Veterans Credit with Disability for 80/9 in the amount of \$2,000 for tax year 2024. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve Veterans Credits for 84/9, 29/19, 47/8/406, 72/98, and 47/8/3213 in the amount of \$500 for tax year 2024. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve a Solar Exemption for 84/9 in the amount of \$17,000 for tax year 2024. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve a Solar Exemption for 60/24/1 in the amount of \$15,000 for tax year 2024. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve an Elderly Exemption for 29/8 in the amount of \$152,251 for tax year 2024. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve an Elderly Exemption for 104/79/911 in the amount of \$236,251 for tax year 2024. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve an Elderly Exemption for 104/79/122 in the amount of \$183,751 for tax year 2024. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

- b. Permits & Approvals
  - i. Neptune Radio

Parks and Rec Assistant Director David Tovey said we'd like to enter into a contract with Neptune Radio. The main reason is to ensure that we have appropriate lyrics and music. It would give the pool a more professional feel and enhance the experience for everyone. There are custom branded messages we can control, such as notices of thunderstorms. These would have a professional radio voice. There's an opportunity to sell ad space to help us recuperate costs of the service and equipment. After a few years it should allow us to recuperate all of the expenses and then it can help with expenses at the pool. For music licensing, the town does pay for one of the four major music licenses, and Neptune covers one more; we have to purchase two others. We have quotes from them. Without these licenses we don't have the right to play music at town events. This will prevent any sort of litigation. It's a one-year contract. He asked Neptune if they plan to increase their fees, and they told him no. They haven't increased in the last five years.

Mr. Papakonstantis said there was a music establishment in Massachusetts that had to pay a hefty fine for not having these licenses. Mr. Tovey said the licenses would apply to all Departments and town events.

Mr. Chartrand asked how we cover the costs of \$3,351.92. Mr. Tovey said the Rec Revolving Fund.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to authorize Parks and Rec to enter into a one year contract with Neptune Radio for a set-up fee, annual price, and equipment which



includes speakers, amplifiers, speaker wire, and surge protector, as well as 2024 music licenses in the amount of \$3,351.92 to be raised through the Rec Revolving Fund. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

ii. Dan Healy Pool Naming

Mr. Tovey said we've been working with Natalie Healy to clean up the memorial by the pool, and she asked us to modify the pool name. He was a "Danny", but "Dan" is a good compromise: "Dan Healy Memorial Pool." We have budgeted for a new sign. This would either come from the Rec Revolving or Park Improvement Fund. Mr. Dean said he didn't have the amount.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to authorize the replacement of the sign of the Daniel R Healy memorial, utilizing to be determined funds from the Rec Revolving Fund, modifying the pool's name to the "Dan Healy Memorial Pool," as requested by the Healy family. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

c. Town Manager's Report

- i. He attended the Police/Fire Substation meeting. Dave Sharples drafted an RFP for an on-site project manager. He will issue the RFP and we expect proposals by May 3.
- ii. He attended a weekly operations meeting April 12.
- iii. He attended the Housing Advisory Committee April 12, where they discussed State legislative updates.
- iv. He attended the Goal Setting Session of the Board on April 13.
- v. He has a meeting with COAST on Wednesday to discuss this year's funding request. They're looking for more money. It will likely come before the Board.
- vi. We've begun resume review for the Welfare/Human Services position.
- vii. Laura Fiorenza is the new HR Assistant.

d. Select Board Committee Reports

- i. Ms. Belanger said the Planning Board was canceled as there were no applicants. She covered the Communications Advisory Committee for Molly Cowan. They reviewed a memo from Bob Glowacky on the Communications Department's progress. They discussed how to use videos on future warrant articles, which was effective with the siphons project and Public Safety building. They discussed the budget process and how to educate about it. They're asking for insight from the Select Board on next steps. At Housing Advisory on April 12, they talked about the logistical issue of workforce housing that requires qualification. We have nothing in place for those qualifications to be "reupped" every year. We will pull together a few people to come to our next meeting. There's a cost to it, so we need to know where it will be absorbed.

- ii. Mr. Chartrand attended the Conservation Commission meeting, but will give his report at the next meeting. He also attended the Select Board goal setting session last Saturday.
- iii. Mr. Papakonstantis said he attended the Tree Committee, where they were continuing to review where they're going to plant new trees. They also talked about the Alewife Festival. Bob Glowacky will be working with them on social media and EXTV. The Arts and Culture Commission met last Wednesday and continued their discussion on the sign in front of Town Hall. They asked questions about using Swasey Parkway this summer, but the siphons will still be there. They will reach out to the Town Manager's office to find a new meeting day as they are having quorum issues. He participated in the Public Safety complex meetings and was impressed with the representation from Police and Fire and other town staff. It's exciting to see them come together for this common goal. The Select Board goal setting session was very productive. We're starting budget talks this Wednesday. He thanked Public Safety and DPW for their response during the storm.

e. Correspondence

- i. An email regarding food trucks from Anne Kenny.
- ii. An annual report from the Exeter Sportsman's Club

9. Review Board Calendar

- a. The next Select Board meetings are April 29, May 13, Tuesday May 28, June 10, June 24, and July 8.

10. Non-Public Session

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to enter into non-public session under RSA 91-A 3II (a) and (c). Mr. Chartrand seconded. In a roll-call vote, the motion passed 3-0. The meeting entered non-public at 9:14 PM.

11. Adjournment. The Board emerged from non-public session. Mr. Chartrand moved to seal the minutes until all matters are resolved. Ms. Belanger seconded. Motion to seal carried. Ms. Belanger moved to adjourn. Mr. Chartrand seconded. Motion carried unanimously the Board stood adjourned at 9:33 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Joanna Bartell  
Recording Secretary