

Select Board Meeting
Monday April 29, 2024
6:10 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 6:10 PM.

Ms. Belanger moved to enter non public session under RSA 91-A:3 2 (a,b and d). Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion carried unanimously. The Board entered non public session.

The Board emerged from non public session. Ms. Gilman moved to seal the minutes until matters are concluded. Ms. Belanger seconded. Motion carried by unanimous vote. The Board then conducted committee interviews.

2. Board Interviews - Pairpoint Park Committee

- a. Jennifer Martel
- b. Amanda Kelly
- c. Keith Whitehouse

The Board reconvened in the Nowak Room at 7 PM.

3. Fire Department - Swearing In

- a. Town Clerk Andie Kohler swore in Justin Pizon as the new Fire Chief.

4. Public Comment

- a. Catherine Edison of 12 Connie Road said there are discrepancies in the NOAA Grant application between the facts and the misstatements and exaggerations. The application says that Exeter has been communicating with stakeholders, but they have not reached out to abutters, the town of Brentwood, the Brentwood Conservation Commission, or the Exeter Squamscott River Local Advisory Committee [ESRLAC]. Only the Exeter River Advisory Committee was involved. The application says that dam removal will result in increased fish passage, but there's no evidence of that. It omits that after the removal of Great Dam, herring are not swimming upstream. There is an incorrect assertion that herring stack up at the base of the fish ladder. It states that the town has decided on dam removal. Exeter should publicly correct the record with NOAA. We know from publicly available records that employees from Public Works know that the dam is not acting as a barrier to fish passage, and they should contact NOAA to correct the record.

- b. Jay Garnett of Stoney Water Road said she now has 226 signatures on a Change.org petition to save the dam.

5. Proclamations/Recognitions

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

6. Approval of Minutes

- a. Regular Meeting: April 15, 2024

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the minutes of April 15, 2024 as presented. Mr. Chartrand seconded. Ms. Gilman and Ms. Cowan abstained. The motion passed 3-0-2.

7. Appointments and Resignations

- a. Mr. Dean said Kristen Murphy will be stepping out of the role of COAST member. Assistant Parks and Rec Director David Tovey has direct experience with COAST and has agreed to serve. There is no term.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to appoint David Tovey to the COAST Board of Directors. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to accept with regret the resignation of Todd Hearon from the Arts and Culture Commission. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

8. Discussion/Action Items

- a. Sewer Siphon Project Update

Public Works Director Steve Cronin was present via Zoom to give a siphon project update. Mr. Cronin said since the last meeting, we met with our contractor and consultants to talk about next steps and gathered information regarding potential property impacts. We don't have an updated completion timeline. The work we plan to conduct over the next week should give us a better idea. They plan to conduct exploratory drilling to gather information on the ledge profile for 4-6 days. We're waiting for a definitive timeline before reaching out to abutters.

- b. Rugg Property Update

Town Planner Dave Sharples gave an update on the Rugg Property. The town raised an issue with the configuration of several parcels. The Ruggs engaged a surveyor to review the area, which contradicted many prior surveys and the town tax maps. The Ruggs must clear them up to engage in any sale. The town engaged legal counsel to deal with the question of ownership. The town holds a "warranty deed" on one parcel, warranting us against 3rd party claims, but the Ruggs do not believe this land was available to be given. The town's goal is to resolve this issue in a timely manner, but title issues can be tricky to navigate. As the town may be involved in the purchase, we must arrive at a resolution that ensures the town is receiving what it bargains for. The warrant article passed overwhelmingly. The proposal is still outstanding and we

can't discuss the terms, but we look forward to discussing it further with the Ruggs. We have a meeting with them on Thursday. He does not believe the town is holding up this issue.

c. Single Use Plastics Implementation Update

Conservation and Sustainability Planner Kristen Murphy and Sustainability Advisory Committee Chair Christopher Zigmont were present to discuss the ordinance.

Ms. Murphy said there was a citizen's petition against single-use plastics passed in March 2022, and there has been some progress since then. Staff events have switched to aluminum can sodas and the water fountain with cups. The last event she attended had compostable utensils. We're using up existing stock, which will be replaced with something not plastic. Parks and Rec has installed water bottle refill stations at some town parks, and provided reusable water bottles to kids in the Rec Camp program. The utility bills for the Rec Park have had only 2 gallons of usage per week, so it's a minimal cost. We hope to put another refill station in at Swasey Parkway. Parks and Rec explored a fountain drink machine, but with the quantity they use, Pepsi was not interested in them as a client. They've been using canned water as it's available. They were able to find a vendor for the summer. Exeter Library attempted to replace bottled water with a pitcher of water and cups but got some pushback. That could be something we tackle through education.

Legal counsel had concerns about the ordinance language, such as "town facility." She recommends an ad-hoc committee including Parks and Rec to sort through how to implement this.

She asked if the town can secure aluminum bottled water that staff can use for events. In discussions, it was about \$3,000 for two flats (3,000 units) of bottled water.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked if Parks and Rec has enough reusable water bottles to give out extras. Ms. Murphy said she would defer to Parks and Rec to answer.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked, if Pepsi isn't interested in installing a fountain machine because it's seasonal, is there another facility that a fountain could be moved to increase the volume? Mr. Zigmont said the reason Pepsi was involved is that they sell a lot of Gatorade there. We can look for donations or people that have access to a larger volume.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked about the ad-hoc committee. Would it be a subcommittee of the Sustainability Committee? Ms. Murphy said it would involve Parks and Rec and Madison from the Health Department, as well as local interest groups that would be affected.

Ms. Belanger said she would like to see the water usage numbers this year and if they go up.

Mr. Zigmont's daughter Corrinne Zigmont read a report on single-use plastics.

d. Gilman Park Management Plan

Ms. Murphy said Gilman Park has a conservation easement to Southeast Land Trust [SELT]. There are some strict requirements within the easement from the original decree which established the park. We need to adopt and formalize a management plan that discusses things like fertilizer, trees, and our long-term plan. When she was trying to put a community garden at Gilman Park, she updated the management plan, but never brought it forward for adoption. It has been reviewed by SELT, and they're ready to sign it, as well as by Greg Bisson.

Ms. Belanger asked if there could be a dog park there, and Ms. Murphy said no, although dogs can be there on-leash. Ms. Belanger asked if there could be a community garden there and Ms. Murphy said no. Ms. Belanger asked if it will prevent anyone from using kayaks there and Ms. Murphy said no. It basically reflects what we're doing today.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the Town of Exeter Gilman Park management plan as required by the SELT Conservation Easement Terms and Conditions and to authorize the Parks and Rec Director, the Select Board Chair, and the Town Manager to sign the proposed document. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

e. COAST Bus Service Funding Request

Brad Nichols of COAST was present to discuss the funding request. He gave a slide presentation. COAST is a non-profit public transit system that has been operating for 40 years. For every dollar spent on COAST operations, there is a \$4 return to the local and regional economy; this year it had a \$31M total economic impact in the region. It helps seniors remain active in the community. It partners with social services, allowing people to access them. It was severely impacted by COVID; service was shut down for a month and a half on the fixed route side, but did continue with some medical appointments. It's now back to full staffing and all services have returned to operation. Route 7 on demand in Exeter has a growth rate of 12% and is at 90% of pre-pandemic levels. 23 presumed Exeter residents took 642 trips in 2023. The route is on-demand, and you must call by the day before to schedule a ride. The costs to operate the service rise as demand increases. COAST has a municipal funding formula, but Route 7 is not included in the formula. We target 50% of the cost to be borne by participating communities. The Federal Transit Commission covers the remainder. The emergency relief funding from COVID will run out soon. There was also a grant that covered funds at 80% rather than 50%. Last summer, COAST hosted a meeting to discuss projected funding shortfalls. We had a 1,000% increase from the State government, and we're hoping for more in the next two years. We're seeking more support from the philanthropic community. We're also seeking increased support from municipal funding, with a 25% increase in our ask for next year, or \$32,000. We can look at reducing our service levels but that's something we don't want to do. The 2020 census redefined the Portsmouth UZA [urbanized area] to exclude Exeter and Stratham and a ride within that area can

not come from the typical funding. We initiated talks with NHDOT on funding this from another source.

Mr. Nichols said COAST requested \$25,760 from Exeter this year and received \$20,000. We are hoping to get the difference through the Exeter Transportation Fund.

Ms. Gilman asked how they would determine a route change. Mr. Nichols said for any change in service, we would need to hear from the people of the town what they want and what they would really use. It would be important to do a survey to find out. Ms. Gilman asked if they could work with Rockingham Planning Commission on this, and Mr. Nichols said that's possible.

Mr. Chartrand asked how someone can qualify for their service. Mr. Nichols said anyone can use the service. Mr. Chartrand said usage seems low. There were 642 trips for \$25,000, which doesn't seem like a good deal. Mr. Nichols said an on-demand service is the most expensive service you can provide. Portsmouth dropped out of funding Exeter services. We had proposed eliminating all service, but we had public hearings and found that there was demand. Mr. Chartrand said this needs to be promoted more to get better value. Mr. Nichols said we just worked with Exeter TV on the system and how to book rides. Mr. Dean said we can use social media and the town website to promote it. The EXTV video will go a long way.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked what other communities are doing to promote. Mr. Nichols said the strongest promotion is word of mouth. We do not have a marketing budget. Mr. Dean said we can work with the Senior Counsel, and Mr. Tovey will be working on the COAST Board of Directors.

Mr. Dean said the request from COAST to fully fund their FY24 request would come out of the Transportation Fund. In the last few years, they've been funded at \$20,000, and the request is \$25,760. In 2023 the Transportation Fund had revenues of \$67,290 and expenses of \$37,939 other than COAST, and \$20,000 for COAST, for an end of year balance of \$9,351. The funds come from motor vehicle registration.

Mr. Chartrand asked what percentage Exeter is paying. Mr. Nichols said 25%; Newmarket pays 25%; there's a small fare for riders; and the federal government pays the rest, until Fall 2025. We're hoping to find another source of federal funds to cover that same percentage, but if we were not successful the request may go up. Next year it will be \$32,000.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to increase the Town of Exeter's financial commitment to COAST for 2024 in the amount of \$5,760 to be taken from the Transportation Fund, and to further commit that the town of Exeter will continue to engage the public to increase the ridership. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

f. Board, Committee, and Commission Appointments

Mr. Dean said we have not heard back from Herb Moyer. Mr. Papakonstantis said we can reappoint him and he can resign if he needs to.

Also, the Swasey Park Trustee Mr. Thompson is elected, so we don't need to reappoint him.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to reappoint Pete Cameron to the Planning Board for a 3-year term. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to reappoint John Grueter to the Planning Board for a 3-year term. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to reappoint Brinn Sullivan to the Rec Advisory Board for a 3-year term. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to reappoint Dan Provost to the Rec Advisory Board for a 3-year term. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to reappoint Bob Dudra to the Rec Advisory Board for a 3-year term. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to reappoint Robert Prior to the Zoning Board of Adjustment for a 3-year term. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to reappoint Esther Olson-Murphy to the Zoning Board of Adjustment for a 3-year term. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to reappoint David Short to the Conservation Commission for a 3-year term. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to reappoint Kyle Welch to the Conservation Commission for a 3-year term. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to reappoint Nick Campion to the Conservation Commission for a 3-year term. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to reappoint Donald Clement as an alternate to the Conservation Commission for a 3-year term. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to reappoint Bill Campbell as an alternate to the Conservation Commission for a 3-year term. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to reappoint Sean Torrez as an alternate to the Conservation Commission for a 3-year term. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to reappoint John Merkle as an alternate to the Heritage Commission for a 3-year term. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to reappoint Pam Gjetum to the Historic District Commission for a 3-year term. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to reappoint Martha McEntee to the Communications Advisory Committee for a 3-year term. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to reappoint Herb Moyer to the Communications Advisory Committee for a 3-year term. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to reappoint Kris Weeks to the Facilities Advisory Committee for a 3-year term. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to reappoint Rob Corson to the Facilities Advisory Committee for a 3-year term. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to reappoint Richard Huber to the River Advisory Committee for a 3-year term. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to reappoint Dan Jones to the River Advisory Committee for a 3-year term. Mr. Chartrand seconded. Ms. Gilman said she had a concern about Pickpocket Dam going forward and a possible conflict of interest. Mr. Papakonstantis said we reviewed Ms. Gilman's concern and based on the precedent of Great Dam removal and the definition of a conflict of interest, we are satisfied that Mr. Jones can continue his service as a volunteer. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to reappoint Chetana Parmar to the Sustainability Advisory Committee for a 3-year term. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to reappoint Bob Kelly to the Water/Sewer Advisory Committee for a 3-year term. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to reappoint Alan Mangan to the Water/Sewer Advisory Committee for a 3-year term. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to reappoint Anthony Callendrello to the Arts and Culture Advisory Committee for a 3-year term. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to reappoint Scott Ruffner to the Arts and Culture Advisory Committee for a 3-year term. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to reappoint Mary-Paige Provost to the Arts and Culture Advisory Committee for a 3-year term. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

g. Select Board Goals 24-25

Mr. Dean said the Board met on April 13 and we were able to document each Board member's goals for 24-25.

Ms. Belanger's goals are to create an implementation plan for the Keegan study; have the Planning Board begin updating the Master plan; and support the Conservation Commission in submitting the Raynes Barn project. Ms. Belanger said this is something that we committed to a few years ago and Kristen Murphy has gone out of her way to get grants. We should get this project done.

Ms. Gilman's goals include deciding if and how the town would like to celebrate the 2026 semiquincentennial. She said if we don't want to, we could donate to another organization to plan something. She is also interested in the redevelopment of 32 Court Street and formalizing a process for training volunteers in 91-A.

Ms. Cowan's goals are to implement the Keegan report; see the town be more proactive than reactive to issues such as the Pocket Park purchase, media engagement, and food truck policies; and to improve proactive support of the State Legislature. Ms. Gilman said staff should track Senate bills that affect Exeter.

Mr. Chartrand's goals are to implement the Keegan report; develop a plan to integrate the Facilities Assessment report with the DPW; support more affordable housing and better 79-E support; and look at how the town can sunset the TIF district and reactivate the TIF Board. Mr. Chartrand said we should incorporate the catch-up we need to do in facilities maintenance into the CIP.

Mr. Papakonstantis' goals are to implement the Keegan report; create an HR Director position and fill the Welfare position; use the \$20,000 we have left for phase 2 of Keegan report; and finalize a policy that addresses employees' communication and use of social media; enhanced communication to citizens. He also recommends that town collaborate with the schools on election day to give the students their own ballot and have them "vote."

Mr. Papakonstantis said these goals are mostly within reach. We brought up the 2023 goals in review, and we either achieved or are on the way to achieving the goals we set last year.

Ms. Belanger said the Master Plan is in the CIP for 2028, but we've accomplished all but one item in the Master Plan.

9. Regular Business

a. Tax Abatements, Veterans Credits and Exemptions

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve Disability Exemptions for 95/64/151, 104/79/105, and 95/64/307 in the amount of \$150,000 each for tax year 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve a Veterans Credit for 86/19 in the amount of \$500 for tax year 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve a Discretionary Preservation Easement Application for 112/9 for a 10-year renewal, starting in 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve an Elderly Exemption for 104/79/204 in the amount of \$152,251 for tax year 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve an Elderly Exemption for 103/6/1 in the amount of \$236,251 for tax year 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to deny an Elderly Exemption for 31/12. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve an abatement for 65/113 in the amount of \$16,833.91 for tax year 2023. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve an abatement for 65/119 in the amount of \$6,451.30 for tax year 2023. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve an abatement for 55/3/3 in the amount of \$26,485.42 for tax year 2023. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve an abatement for 86/13 in the amount of \$51,755.03 for tax year 2023. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve an abatement for 65/127/A in the amount of \$41,249.23 for tax year 2023. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

Ms. Gilman said there are a number of non-profits of which we are confirming their status. They are not in the packet. Mr. Chartrand asked why. Mr. Dean said the assessor's format is to not include them, but we can fix that. It will be included in the next packet.

b. Permits & Approvals

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

c. Town Manager's Report

- i. We continue to hold the weekly operations meetings.
- ii. He had a DPW biweekly meeting with the Public Works Director
- iii. He met with COAST to discuss the on-demand Route 7.
- iv. He attended Chief Wilking's retirement ceremony and thanked Pam McElroy for organizing that.
- v. He held a cash meeting with the Finance Department.
- vi. We released the CIP directive to town departments.
- vii. We're continuing to review welfare applicants.

- viii. The Memorial Day parade this year will be staged at the parking lot next to Swasey Parkway.
- ix. The Auditors are here working on the 2023 town audit.
- x. The OPM [Owner's Project Manager] for the Police and Fire substation is on the ground.
- xi. The Kingston Road project is underway.
- xii. We had a financing hiccup with the Parks and Rec mowers but that's cleared up and they will be here soon.

d. Select Board Committee Reports

- i. Ms. Belanger had no report.
- ii. Ms. Gilman HDC two cases, one with a modification to a previous application which was approved. Open discussion of development of property citizen's bank drive-through, just a work session. It was massive and didn't go over well. The developer got a lot of input. She discussed issues at the State level.
- iii. Ms. Cowan had no report.
- iv. Mr. Chartrand had no report.
- v. Mr. Papakonstantis attended Chief Wilking's retirement party. He met with the Town Manager, Assistant town Manager, Finance Director, and Chair of the BRC to start the budget conversation early. He attended the Arbor Day event at Kids Park with the Tree Committee. He is planning to attend the Exeter Heritage Pocket Park dedication on Saturday at 10.

e. Correspondence

- i. NHMA Legislative Bulletin
- ii. An email exchange from a resident about parking concerns. Public Works responded to this issue and the problem was resolved to the resident's satisfaction.
- iii. An email regarding a resident who is turning 100, we will send a birthday card on behalf of the Select Board
- iv. A draft resolution for the Board to consider, the Board will review at a later board meeting.

10. Review Board Calendar

The next meetings are May 13, Tuesday May 28, June 10, June 24, and July 8. Ms. Belanger said now that we've reappointed our volunteers, it's time to schedule an All-Boards meeting.

11. Non-Public Session

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

12. Adjournment

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to adjourn. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0 and the meeting was adjourned at 8:58 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary