

Select Board Meeting
Monday October 27, 2025
6:30 PM
Nowak Room, Town Offices
Final Minutes

1. Call Meeting to Order

Members present: Chair Niko Papakonstantis, Clerk Nancy Belanger, Dan Chartrand, and Finance Director Corey Stevens were present at this meeting. Julie Gilman and Molly Cowan were not present. The meeting was called to order by Mr. Papakonstantis at 6:30 PM.

2. Non-Public Session

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to enter into non-public session under RSA 91-A3:II(a). Mr. Chartrand seconded. In a roll call vote, the motion passed 3-0. The Board entered into non-public session at 6:30 PM.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to exit non-public session. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 3-0 by roll call vote and the Board exited non-public session at 6:40 PM.

3. Board Interviews

- a. Kenneth Berry for the Train Committee
- b. Robert Hall for the Train Committee

4. Public Comment

- a. Shawn Rickard, a student at Phillips Exeter, and four other members of the Cross Country Team were present to give public comment. Mr. Rickard said they are concerned about the spring on Oak Street being inactive. It's no longer flowing, and it appears a PVC pipe has been inserted. The land belongs to the Exeter Rose Farm LLC, so we assume they turned it off or there was some issue, but it would be in the best interest of the town to preserve access to the water. The town should rebuy or reclaim ownership of the spring.

Mr. Papakonstantis said he will be responding to Mr. Rickard via email on this issue.

5. Proclamations/Recognitions

- a. There were no proclamations/recognitions at this time.

6. Approval of Minutes

- a. Regular Meeting: October 14, 2025

- i. Corrections: Mr. Chartrand line on 250, page 6, it should read "*Ms. Roy* said we're not asking for both days."

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the Select Board regular meeting minutes of October 14, 2025 as amended. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

- 45 b. August 18, 2025 Final Minutes Rescission
46 i. Mr. Papakonstantis said minutes needed to say “Interim Town Manager,”
47 not “Acting Town Manager.”

48 **MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to rescind the August 18, 2025 Select Board regular meeting
49 minutes. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 3-0.
50

51 **MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to amend the minutes to say the Board named Melissa Roy the
52 Interim Town Manager, not the Acting Town Manager. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion
53 passed 3-0.
54

55 7. Appointments

56 a. Alternate to Voting Member – Sustainability Advisory Committee
57 **MOTION:** Mr. Chartrand moved to appoint Julie Gaunt as a regular voting member of the
58 Sustainability Advisory Committee, term to expire April 30, 2028. Ms. Belanger seconded. The
59 motion passed 3-0.
60

61 b. Resignation - Historic District Commission
62 **MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to accept the resignation of Verity Boyer from the Historic
63 District Commission. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 3-0.
64

65 c. Resignation – Exeter Housing Authority
66 **MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to accept the resignation of Renee O’Barton from the Exeter
67 Housing Authority. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 3-0.
68

69 d. Train Committee
70 **MOTION:** Mr. Chartrand moved to appoint Kenneth Berry to the Train Committee, with a term to
71 expire April 2027. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 3-0.
72

73 **MOTION:** Mr. Chartrand moved to appoint Robert Hall to the Train Committee as a regional
74 resident non-voting member, with no term. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 3-0.
75

76 Ms. Belanger nominated Mr. Chartrand as the Select Board
77 representative to the Train Committee. He said he’s already been attending and
78 would be happy to accept the position.
79

80 8. Discussion/Action Items

81 a. RSA 41:14-a Groundwater Easement 1st Public Hearing – Stephen Cronin,
82 Public Works Director
83 **MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to open the public hearing under RSA 41:14a, Groundwater
84 Easement first public hearing. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 3-0.
85

86 Mr. Cronin said the Town has been working on a new groundwater
87 source since 2020. Between 2020 and 2022, groundwater exploration program
88 with 22 borings in 3 target zones, and the most promising site was on Phillips

Exeter property off of Drinkwater Road. In 2022, a test well was installed at the site, with a positive result. The preliminary well siting application was submitted to NH Department of Environmental Services [DES]. In 2023, they issued preliminary approval if we obtained an easement for the new well and all the associated infrastructure, and in 2024, we negotiated the purchase of the easement. A 12" production well installed and we did a 7-day pumping test. In May 2025, we submitted the final application and report to NH DES. They completed their review and are prepared to issue the permit once the Town provides documentation of the easement. Per RSA 41:14-a, the Board has the authority to accept easements. This has been referred to the Conservation Commission, Planning Board, and Heritage Commission, and all voted in favor.

Ms. Belanger said both the Conservation Commission and Heritage Commission asked for language changes in the deed. Mr. Cronin said one of the Conservation Commission members works for DES and discussed the case of another town where the deed didn't explicitly include the right to draw water. Counsel will be making a small modification to bring back to PEA for approval. The Heritage Commission wanted to make sure we protect Jude's Pond during and after construction, which is specified in the bid documents.

Mr. Papakonstantis said the second public hearing will be November 10.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to close the public hearing. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

b. Request for Winter Construction – Westside Drive – Stephen Cronin, Public Works Director

Mr. Cronin said this is a request to perform winter work for the Westside Drive project. This project has had a number of delays. We opened bids in June; the project went through review and went to DES, but it took quite a while for them to issue an authorization to award, which was done in October. Typically we don't do winter construction, but this is an exception because we're fully reconstructing the road, including utilities. The contractor has provided references for winter work and the consultant is comfortable with doing it. Our road opening permit specifies no construction after November 15, we're looking for the approval of the Board.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked for public comment.

Nicholas Metz of 1 Tilton Ave said Westside residents think this approach is prudent given the delays.

Mr. Cronin said there will be a neighborhood information meeting Thursday at 6 PM at the Library to answer resident questions.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to authorize N. Granese & Sons, Inc. to perform winter construction for the Westside Drive Drainage, Water, and Roadway Improvements Project, and to further authorize the Interim Town Manager or their designee to sign and issue the Notice to Proceed. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

c. Tax, Exemption & Credit Advisory Committee Recommendation

133 Mr. Papakonstantis said the committee is here to give a presentation, but
134 the Board won't deliberate until November 24 when we have a full Board.

135 Committee Chair Chris Soutter was present to discuss their work, as well
136 as Vice-Chair Jeanee Wright and Committee members Mark Furlong and Gerry
137 Hamel. Ms. Soutter said the committee has been meeting for a year to go over a
138 variety of credits available to residents. We focused on what we'd like to see
139 presented on the 2026 ballot. It's been a number of years since any changes
140 have been made to the tax credits.

141 Ms. Soutter said regarding Elderly Exemptions, the committee
142 recommends increasing the valuations on the homes and a small increase on
143 income limits. When we had the revaluation done, everyone saw an increase in
144 their home values and a decrease in the tax rate, but there was a
145 disproportionately higher amount of increase for the lowest-value properties in
146 Exeter. We recommend a 30% adjustment to the property value levels. The NH
147 Social Security benefit is \$23,712 annually for one person and \$47,424 for a
148 married couple. We recommended modest increases to the income threshold.
149 We'd like to get on the 2026 ballot to help those who need it most.

150 Mr. Hamel said when we're looking at the elderly, the revaluation hurt
151 people. If someone is in an \$80,000 manufactured home, that value could have
152 risen to \$250,000. Stick-built homes mostly weren't under that \$200,000. We
153 would have had to go up 50% to equal what we had before.

154 Ms. Soutter said she's also on the Budget Recommendations committee,
155 and this will be a difficult year for us. She's always wearing the hat of "let's be
156 careful, is this necessary," but she does support this.

157 Ms. Soutter said we recommend increasing the Blind Exemption from
158 \$15,000 to \$25,000. Exeter is on the low end and the new number would be in
159 line with other communities. Mr. Chartrand asked if this is a credit on the value of
160 the home. Mr. Stevens said yes, an exemption is a reduction in the value of the
161 home for tax purposes.

162 Ms. Soutter said Veterans Credits are complicated because of changes in
163 laws and benefits. The committee started with the Disabled Veterans tax credit; it
164 is \$2,000 now and we recommended it move up to \$2,500.

165 Ms. Wright said there was a legislative bill that passed mid-year where if
166 a veteran qualifies for the service-disconnected [sic] disability credit, they could
167 not also get the optional credit for disabled vets. All along they've been able to
168 get both, and now they can't. We recommend an increase to \$2,500 so veterans
169 don't have a loss for the following years. Ms. Soutter said if this credit doesn't go
170 up, disabled veterans would take a loss from the new law. They can't have both.

171 Ms. Soutter said Exeter is one of only three municipalities of Rockingham
172 County that does not have an All-Veterans Tax Credit. We propose that an All-
173 Veterans Tax Credit of \$500 be placed on the warrant. We thought it should go to
174 the voters to decide. This would apply to anyone who had served over 90 days.
175 The committee members have different opinions but everyone respects and
176 honors our veterans.

177 Mr. Furlong said he reviewed the Department of Revenue Administration
178 data on this issue. In Rockingham County, 34 of 37 communities have adopted
179 the All-Veterans Credit, with a \$675 average credit. He looked at how many
180 credits were granted Statewide and in Rockingham County. When you compare
181 them to the number of standard and optional credits granted, it was 13%
182 Statewide, and 12% in Rockingham County. Exeter currently grants 465 optional
183 Veterans Credits; 13% of that means about 56-60 veterans would qualify, for a
184 cost of \$28-30,000. Ms. Soutter said that wouldn't be a big impact to the town.
185 Mr. Stevens asked if the 465 number is of Disabled Veterans Credits. Mr.
186 Furlong said no, those are the optional credits. The standard credit is \$50, and
187 the optional increases it to \$500, but it's for combat-related veterans only. Mr.
188 Stevens asked if a resident could get optional plus All-Veterans, and Mr. Furlong
189 said no. The legislature just changed that so they no longer qualify for both.
190 There's no double-dipping. Ms. Wright said we have 39 disabled veterans
191 currently. We're asking voters to approve All-Veterans credit. Ms. Soutter said we
192 don't want to see a negative impact to disabled veterans.

193 Ms. Belanger asked regarding the All-Veterans credit, is the bottom line
194 number estimated at \$500? Mr. Furlong said yes. The statute requires that if the
195 town adopts the All-Veterans Credit, it has to be the same amount as the optional
196 credit. Ms. Belanger said Rockingham County average was \$675, but that would
197 have to be part of a warrant article. Ms. Soutter said the max is \$750.

198 Mr. Hamel said he was one of the people who did not want the All-
199 Veterans credit. He's pro-military. Everyone that's a veteran goes in willing to
200 serve, but 40% never get deployed. About 60% are deployed, but only 20% of
201 those see combat, so only 10-15% see combat. He likes the \$500 goes to those
202 who have seen conflict. He's been talking to older vets about whether everyone
203 deserves this, and he hasn't met anyone that has said yes. The town will have to
204 vote on this. If you're against this, it doesn't mean that you're anti-veteran. Mr.
205 Furlong said the committee was very divided on the recommendation, but agreed
206 to bring it forward to the ballot so the voters can decide.

207 Fred Bird of 84 Kingston Road said 100% of us served. For the 20% of
208 combat vets, the 80% makes sure they get their equipment and supplies. He will
209 only get a grave and a plot, but he's turning them down. He's been hearing that
210 veterans get other benefits, but the committee hasn't clarified what benefits there
211 are.

212 Keith Whitehouse of 61 Westside Drive said he's talked to other people
213 that served that aren't seeking money. He and some others wouldn't take the
214 credit, but they don't want to be denied the credit. He may take it in the future,
215 but it's not about the money.

216 Ms. Soutter said her rationale was 100% fiscal. She had suggested
217 putting it off for one year to get through this budget cycle. Exeter does give to its
218 residents and non-profit organizations, but it's not the town's job to do everything
219 for everyone. We'll dig ourselves into a financial hole we can't get out of.

Mr. Bird said he agrees the government shouldn't be helping everyone with everything, and he isn't looking for a rebate, but there's some guys out there who could use it. It's \$28,000, which is a teardrop in the budget.

Ms. Wright said the scope they were given to work on was to make recommendations. The homeowners, taxpayers and voters should be deciding for the town.

Mr. Chartrand said he would like to hold his comments until the full Board is present on November 24.

Mr. Papakonstantis said he appreciates that the committee came to a consensus. He thinks this should go to the voters, but we should keep sight of what we're asking them to vote on. We should decide on the credit, not what makes a veteran.

d. E911 Committee Member Addition

Mr. Papakonstantis said the E911 committee is made up of town staff. They're recommending the Board add the Town GIS Coordinator, which he thinks makes sense.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to add the town of Exeter GIS Coordinator or their designee to the E911 Committee as a voting member. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

e. Use of Fund Balance Discussion – Corey Stevens, Finance Director

Mr. Stevens said we're about to set the tax rate with DRA. We use Fund Balance to smooth the tax rate. A fund balance of 5-17% is recommended. \$74,539,000 is the total of all appropriations for the town, schools, and county. He considered the use of \$600,000, \$650,000 and \$700,000 to bring down the tax rate. We ended 2024 with \$5.993M, which was up \$750,000 from the year before. We voted to use some to buy items in the March elections. He's recommending using \$650,000 of fund balance, which is \$4.48/1,000 of property value; with a property value of \$500,000, it would be about \$140 more. We may want to apply more fund balance next year.

Mr. Chartrand said for "appropriations general," the recommendation is to have an undesignated fund balance that is a certain percentage of the total. Why not just the town's portion? Are we holding money for all of these entities? Mr. Stevens said yes, we pay the schools and the community at the end of the year.

Ms. Belanger asked about past years. Mr. Stevens said two years ago we used \$300,000. We've done up to \$1M. We use \$300,000 - 500,000 every year for warrant articles. Smoothing the tax rate each year is separate.

Mr. Chartrand said he's comfortable with Mr. Stevens' recommendation.

Mr. Stevens said revenue projected for 2025 is \$8.7M, about \$200,000 less than the prior year. This helps us mitigate how much fund balance we need to use. The Land Use Change Tax is down \$365,000 from the prior year due to fewer projects coming up. Building permits are estimated at \$600,000 in 2025, an increase of 200,000. Investment interest is starting to decline based on lower interest rates.

264 Mr. Stevens presented a summary of warrant articles and appropriations
265 from March 2025.
266 Ms. Belanger asked if the Board can get an update on outstanding grants
267 coming in. Mr. Stevens said it's settled down, but he can give an update at the
268 next meeting.
269 **MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to use \$650,000 of fund balance for tax rate setting purposes for
270 the 2025 tax rate. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

271
272 9. Regular Business

273 a. Tax Abatements, Veterans Credits and Exemptions

274 **MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve a Timber Tax for 91/42 in the amount of \$2,647.50
275 for tax year 2025. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

276
277 b. Permits & Approvals

278 i. Police Station/Fire Substation Construction Management Contract

279 Mr. Stevens said Eckman Construction Inc is close to 100%
280 design drawings and is putting together their construction management
281 contract. We need to get sitework going on this project. We're not ready
282 to go with the large contract yet, we're still talking with Legal. We're
283 looking for a "notice to proceed" letter to start on the sitework. It will take
284 four weeks between approval and putting them on the ground.

285 **MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to allow Eckman Construction Company Inc to move forward
286 with sitework on the Police Station/Fire Substation project, and to authorize the Select Board
287 Chair to execute the enclosed letter for delivery to Eckman Company Inc on Tuesday, October
288 28, 2025. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

289
290 c. Town Manager's Report

291 Mr. Papakonstantis said Ms. Roy is at the International City County
292 Management Association conference but put together a Town Manager's report,
293 which Mr. Stevens read:

- 294 i. We have welcomed our new HR director, Kelly Corea. Ms. Roy is working
295 with HR on a transition plan.
296 ii. Ms. Roy attended meetings for the Police/Fire Substation project.
297 iii. She's working with Parks and Rec to finalize 10 Hampton Road. There
298 will be a grand opening in mid-November. Mr. Bisson will be coming to
299 the Board with a furniture donation request from RiverWoods.
300 iv. She attended the BRC subcommittee meetings and the all-day General
301 Government meeting.
302 v. She attended Tax Exemption and Credit meeting.
303 vi. She ran the Ops meeting on Wednesday for all Departments.
304 vii. She met with the Library to work on their budget.
305 viii. Mr. Stevens is working with her to identify budget reductions of any kind.
306 ix. Mr. Stevens is meeting with her and DRA to work through tax rate setting.
307 x. She went to the Phoenix Tailings grand opening.

- xi. She attended to various personnel matters.
- xii. There is a Westside Drive Public info meeting October 30 6 PM at Exeter Public Library.

d. Select Board Committee Reports

- i. Ms. Belanger didn't attend her normal meetings in person, but caught up afterwards. At the Rec Advisory Board, they heard an update on 10 Hampton Road; the department is moving there in November. They heard an update on ADA changing tables, as well as paving of the parking lot and connector path. At Gilman Park, they're having work done on the infield and addressing drainage issues. They're doing work on the Dan Healey Pool. The town was awarded a grant from Exeter Hospital of \$38,000. 30-50 seniors are attending senior luncheons, which will stay at the Town Hall. They're planning a meeting about the budget in January. They discussed changing their meetings from monthly to quarterly. The Planning Board heard an application, case #25/3, from J Caley Associates for 97 Portsmouth Ave. The applicant agreed to another extension, to November 6. The Planning Board voted to give consideration for the PEA groundwater easement. They discussed proposed zoning changes. There is a new law in NH for ADA, but we're already doing what the law says. At the next Housing Advisory Committee meeting, Housing Authority member Tony Texeira will speak about Section 8.
- ii. Mr. Chartrand said the Sustainability Advisory Committee held a styrofoam collection event which was very successful.
- iii. Mr. Papakonstantis attended the Swasey Park Trustee meeting, where they went through their usual placeholders. They will meet in November to go over bids on maintenance. He attended part of the all-day BRC meeting. He attended the Coastal Resiliency committee, and we're ready to hold our first public meeting on steps forward. They're lobbying for Town Hall to be the venue, but it's booked on our preferred dates. The Pairpoint Park Committee meeting had a lack of quorum. He attended the Phoenix Tailings event along with the Interim Town Manager. He also met with the Library Director and Chair of the Library Trustees on the budget.

e. Correspondence

- i. An abutter notice from the town of Stratham for a Planning Board meeting November 5 for Stonybrook.
- ii. A memo from Rockingham Planning Commission regarding Hampton Beach Casino.
- iii. An email from a resident expressing their opposition to the budget, and his response.

- 350 iv. Correspondence from a resident about leaf blowers. Mr. Papakonstantis
351 said noise restrictions are very difficult for the Police to enforce. He will
352 discuss this further with Ms. Roy.
353

354 10. Review Board Calendar

- 355 a. The next Board meetings are November 10, November 24, December 8, and
356 December 22.
357 b. Ms. Belanger said Ms. Gilman's mother Mary Ellen Dupre passed away this
358 morning. Mr. Papakonstantis called for a moment of silence to honor her.
359

360 11. Non-Public Session

- 361 a. There was no non-public session at this time.
362

363 12. Adjournment

364 **MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to adjourn. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 3-0,
365 and the meeting was adjourned at 8:28 PM.
366

367
368 Respectfully Submitted,
369 Joanna Bartell
370 Recording Secretary
371
372
373
374