

Select Board Meeting
Monday December 8, 2025
6:40 PM
Nowak Room, Town Offices
Final Minutes

1. Call Meeting to Order

8 Members present: Chair Niko Papakonstantis, Vice-Chair Molly Cowan, Clerk Nancy Belanger,
9 Julie Gilman, Dan Chartrand, and Interim Town Manager Melissa Roy were present at this
10 meeting.

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Papakonstantis at 6:40 PM and the Board went downstairs to the Wheelwright Room for interviews.

2. Board Interviews

- a. Caryl Olmsted for the Facilities Advisory Committee/Sustainability Advisory Committee
- b. Tony Callendrello for the Train Committee

The Board reconvened in the Nowak Room at 7 PM.

3. Bid Opening – 2025 Annual Town Report

a. Select Print Solutions of Sutton, MA: 1) \$4,245; 2) 3.2 cents; 3) 1.6 cents.

24 **MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to refer the bid to the Town Manager's Office to make a
25 recommendation to the Select Board. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

4. Public Comment

a. There was no public comment at this time.

5. Proclamations/Recognitions

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

6. Approval of Minutes

a. Regular Meeting: November 24, 2025

35 **MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve the Select Board minutes of November 24, 2025 as
36 presented. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

7. Appointments

39 **MOTION:** Mr. Chartrand moved to appoint Caryl Olmsted as an alternate to the Facilities
40 Advisory Committee, term to expire in April 2027. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed
41 5-0.

44 **MOTION:** Mr. Chartrand moved to appoint Caryl Olmsted as an alternate to the Sustainability
45 Advisory Committee, term to expire in April 2027. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed
46 5-0.

47
48 **MOTION:** Mr. Chartrand moved to appoint Tony Callendrello as an alternate to the Train
49 Committee, term to expire in April 2026. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.
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51 8. Discussion/Action Items

52 a. 250 Celebration Commission Budget Approval

53 250 Celebration Commission Co-Chair Karen Prior was present to
54 discuss the budget request. Ms. Prior said the 250 Celebration Commission has
55 met with the Budget Recommendations Committee. We're not asking for any
56 funding other than the \$5,000 approved by the voters in 2025. The total budget
57 will be approximately \$26,000, and we've half raised of that already.

58 Ms. Roy said the motion should specify that the sponsorships will go
59 through the Town Manager's Office. Ms. Prior said she thought they would be
60 managed by Parks and Rec. Ms. Roy said it will go through the Town Manager's
61 Office, but Parks and Rec will still be involved.

62 **MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve the 250 Celebration Commission budget of \$25,815,
63 and also authorize the expenditure requests to go through the Town Manager's Office. Ms.
64 Cowan seconded. Mr. Chartrand said this would all be sponsorships; it has no tax impact. The
65 motion passed 5-0.

66
67 Ms. Prior said one goal of the commission is to shine a spotlight on
68 Exeter. Is it ok to promote that we are in partnership with the Public Library,
69 Independence Museum, Historical Society, and Exeter Parks and Rec? The
70 Board generally agreed that it was acceptable.

71
72 b. FY26 Budget Presentation

73 Budget Recommendations Committee Chair Bob Kelly was present to
74 discuss the budget recommendations. Mr. Kelly said we had 12 people on the
75 BRC this year. It was an excellent group.

76 Mr. Kelly said the General Fund budget had a significant increase of 12%
77 over 2025. We were able to reallocate some items to get it down a little bit, and
78 over the last few weeks Town staff further lowered it to 11.8%. The final budget is
79 a \$2.9M increase from 2025. \$1.7M of that is the first payment on the Public
80 Safety Complex, which was overwhelmingly approved by the voters in March
81 2024. We have new collective bargaining agreements with the Unions. There
82 were health insurance and property and vehicle insurance increases, with a total
83 increase of \$200,000 in insurance. We've heard more about cyberattacks on
84 public utilities such as water supplies, so we've upgraded our IT infrastructure
85 over the past three years. Vehicle and building maintenance costs went up or
86 were level-funded. We try to maintain aging facilities rather than building new
87 ones.

88 The RSAs dictate that the Library is administratively autonomous with
89 their Board of Trustees. However, when it comes to building and equipment
90 maintenance, they don't have that skill set, and they've had some expense run-
91 ups that they needed assistance with. They need more support than they've
92 asked for in the past. Public Works has knowledgeable folks on the mechanicals
93 of that building. There was a renovation a few years ago, but a lot of the facilities
94 were not upgraded at the time. There is an increase in the Library Public
95 Services line of 20%, or \$40,000, to get them back to square one.

96 There was a Miscellaneous Fire Protection fee instituted in 2023, which is
97 a chargeback from the General Fund to the Water Fund for fire flows. The whole
98 town and the commercial district especially benefit from the water availability. We
99 are below what it should be, but we recommended to keep going in a positive
100 direction, with a \$25,000 increase over the \$130,000 last year. According to
101 AWWA [American Water Works Association], it should be around \$750,000.

102 The Water/Sewer Fund increases were due to CBA [Collective Bargaining
103 Agreements] and chemical increases. Tariffs and supply chain issues have hit us
104 hard. We have to order larger quantities rather than not have the chemicals in
105 time. For the Capital Outlay budget in the Water Fund, there were a number of
106 unexpended items carried over into 2026. We have healthy reserve accounts in
107 Water and Sewer. We need to encumber funds into next year.

108 The CIP had fewer items this year. One project is the design portion for a
109 new Surface Water Treatment Plant. The existing facility on Portsmouth Ave is
110 50-60 years old, and some parts are 100 years old. It's an outdated facility.
111 There's a potential \$500,000 loan forgiveness as well as low-interest loans. The
112 financial impact of waiting could be several hundred thousand dollars.

113 The Library had a Maintenance Fund but it waned a few years ago, and
114 they asked that it be reinstated. They wanted a one-time allocation of \$75,000,
115 but we suggested \$25,000 every year until it's stabilized.

116 There are two aged vehicles that are over 10 years old and a lot of miles
117 recommended for replacement, not including Police Cruisers.

118 Mr. Kelly said the Executive Team did the initial scrubbing of this budget
119 which made the the process easier. He presented a comparison of the CIP year
120 over year since 2020 . Sometimes we've done \$2M in projects, but this year
121 we're under \$500,000 in vehicles and projects.

122 Mr. Papakonstantis thanked Mr. Kelly and the BRC members.

123 Mr. Papakonstantis said the one warrant article that did not pass last year
124 was the street sweeper. Ms. Roy said people thought this was a beautification
125 tool, but it's part of our nitrogen reduction plan. We have a permit for discharge
126 into the river, and when we sweep the streets, we pull that debris out of our water
127 stream. Our current Wastewater Treatment Plant is set up to handle a certain
128 nitrogen load. If we need to reduce that, it would cost us a significant amount of
129 money to retrofit the plant. The street sweeper helps with that process. Mr. Kelly
130 said that piece of equipment runs constantly in a corrosive environment.

Mr. Papakonstantis said the budget hearing is January 20. Prior to that we will have two Select Board meetings, December 22 and January 5. He will put the budget on both agendas. Mr. Kelly said he would plan to attend both meetings.

Mr. Chartrand asked about the cost for the design of the new Water Treatment Plant. Mr. Kelly said \$2M. We allocated \$500,000 last year for preliminary work. We're hoping to get the \$500,000 loan forgiveness. The total would be \$2.5M including the \$500,000 from last year. Mr. Chartrand said that impacts water rates, not the tax rates.

Mr. Papakonstantis said thanks to the changes made per the Keegan Report, the Department Heads were working collaboratively prior to the budget process to understand the needs this year. Hiring has become very competitive out there, particularly for Police, Fire, and Public Works. The collective bargaining agreements were very fair to the employees and the town. It's less expensive to retain Town employees to recruit and train new employees. The increase is going towards staying competitive. Ms. Belanger said if we had kept going with the vacancies, we would have started to see some impacts.

Mr. Kelly said the last four or five years, people have been very supportive of projects. He thinks it's due to the process. We prioritize and organize them so we're not breaking people. Mr. Papakonstantis said we've been trying for the last 10 years to build something at the Rec Park, but it was repeatedly declined in voting. We kept working, and had an opportunity to purchase 10 Hampton Road, and the grand opening today was packed. Mr. Chartrand said that was a project that the voters consistently said no to, so we reconceived it and that's when the voters said yes.

c. Solar Array Renewable Energy Credits Contract

Conservation & Sustainability Planner Kristen Murphy was present via Zoom to discuss the Solar Array. Finance Director Corey Stevens was present in person.

Mr. Stevens said earlier this year the Solar Array came online at Cross Road. We've been vetting renewable energy credit brokers so we can sell the renewable energy credits. This was part of the revenue model when we constructed the array. We looked at different energy brokers, and selected a company from New Jersey called Norwood Energy. We vetted them with Legal and came up with a one-year agreement with an auto-renewal unless we opt out. Start at the first of the year. This company was recommended by Revision Energy. He also spoke to other communities who are using Norwood and recommended them.

Ms. Murphy said when we envisioned the financing and cost to taxpayers, a component of the financing portfolio included selling these credits. It can bring substantial funds back to the community, which would go to pay back the bond. It could be as much as \$80,000 a year.

Mr. Stevens said we also get net metering credits from Unitil in the form of a check each month. It was \$25,000 - \$30,000 per month over the summer. If we get the reimbursable credit next year, that will be \$1M. All of this will go into the revolving fund to pay the bond and do maintenance. Hopefully it will be self-sustaining until we can pay off the debt.

Ms. Gilman asked Ms. Murphy if she heard about a nearby town that made their solar array a pollinator path to do less mowing. Also some towns use grazing animals to cut the grass. Ms. Murphy said there are models of farms that partner with large-scale solar arrays for grazing. Goats aren't good because they climb but sheep could be ok. She'll look into the pollinator pathway idea.

Ms. Belanger said she likes the one year term for the contract. Mr. Stevens said they proposed 3 years but we wanted to vet them.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the proposed sale and purchase agreement between the Town of Exeter and Norwood Energy of Chester NJ to sell Renewable Energy Credits generated by the Town's solar array, and further authorize the Interim Town Manager or their designee to execute all corresponding documents. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

The Board thanked Ms. Murphy, Mr. Stevens, and Dave Sharples for their work on this project.

d. Supplemental Tax Warrant

Mr. Stevens said this is an administrative correction. It's \$108 more than the tax collector will collect.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to accept the supplemental Tax Collector's warrant and to authorize the Select Board to sign the warrant. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

e. Investment Policy Review

Mr. Stevens said the Select Board should review and re-adopt the Town's investment policy once a year. Last year, we revised the policy. He would like to come back in January when we have 12 month data, and have the Board review it in January instead of December going forward. We started investing in 30-day certificates at favorable rates, 4.09% to 3.62%. This year we expanded the program and took \$5M of our TIF funds to invest in 2 and 3 month CDs. We made \$160,000 in interest income, which accrues to the TIF. When the TIF is sunsetted, that money will be distributed out. We also borrowed a bond anticipation note of \$3.5M in 2024 to seed the Public Safety Complex, and we were able to invest that money. We owed \$171,000, but made \$130,000, so our net interest costs were \$40,000. In 2026, we're looking to further expand that program, which will allow us to invest idle funds. This could offset us getting less revenue from the State.

Mr. Chartrand said it sounds like we're forecasting when money is going to be spent. Mr. Stevens said we do that regularly anyway.

217 **MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to readopt the Town's investment policy for investment of public
218 funds under RSA 41:9VII. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0 .

219
220 9. Regular Business

221 a. Tax Abatements, Veterans Credits and Exemptions

222 **MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve an abatement for 111/5/52 in the amount of \$99.00
223 for tax year 2025. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

224
225 **MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve an abatement for 11/18/21 in the amount of \$187.60
226 for tax year 2025. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

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228 b. Permits & Approvals

229 i. Chemical Bid Award

230 **MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to award the chemical bids for 2026: 1) \$1.895 per gallon Univar
231 Solutions Morrisville PA; 2) Coyne Croyden PA \$2.1263 per pound; 3 \$2.3100 per pound to
232 Harcros Chemical of Nashua NH; 4 1.2769 per gallon to Univar Solutions. Ms. Gilman
233 seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

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235 ii. HDRA 2025 Equalization Assessment

236 Ms. Roy said we get this every year. This is to notify the
237 community and the Select Board of the assessment.

238 **MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to accept the DRA sales ratio data and authorize the Select
239 Board to sign the certification form to be submitted to NHDRA. Ms. Gilman seconded. The
240 motion passed 5-0.

241
242 Mr. Chartrand said the current sales price median ratio is 90.8%.
243 Where were we after the revaluation? Ms. Roy said we were at 94%.

244
245 iii. Authorization of January 2026 Bonds

246 Ms. Belanger read the bond authorization notice:

247 *RESOLVED: That under and pursuant to the Municipal Finance Act,*
248 *Chapter 33, N.H.R.S.A., as amended, the New Hampshire Municipal*
249 *Bond Bank Law, Chapter 35-A, N.H.R.S.A., as amended, and other laws*
250 *in addition thereto, and to votes of the Issuer duly adopted on March 12,*
251 *2024 under Article 5 and on March 11, 2025 under Article 3 of the*
252 *Warrants for such annual meetings of the Issuer there be and hereby is*
253 *authorized the issuance of a \$8,478,148 bond of the Issuer (the "Bonds")*
254 *which is being issued by the Issuer for the purposes of financing (i) the*
255 *construction of water, sewer and drainage improvements to the School*
256 *Street area (\$1,678,148) and (ii) the design, engineering and construction*
257 *of a new groundwater source off Drinkwater Road (\$6,800,000). The*
258 *Bonds shall be dated as of their date of issuance, shall be in such*
259 *numbers and denominations as the purchaser shall request, shall mature*
260 *in accordance with the schedule set forth in Exhibit A to the Loan*

Agreement hereinafter described (the "Loan Agreement"), shall bear a net interest cost rate (as defined in the Loan Agreement) of four and three quarter percent (4.75%) per annum or such lesser amounts as may be determined by a majority of the Board. The Bonds shall be substantially in the form set forth as Exhibit B to the Loan Agreement and otherwise shall be issued in such manner and form as the signatories shall approve by their execution thereof.

RESOLVED: That the Bonds shall be sold to the Bond Bank at the par value thereof plus any applicable premium.

RESOLVED: That in order to evidence the sale of the Bonds, the Treasurer of Issuer and a member of the Board are authorized and directed to execute, attest and deliver, in the name and on behalf of the Issuer, a Loan Agreement in substantially the form submitted to this meeting, which Loan Agreement is hereby approved, with such changes therein not inconsistent with this vote and approved by the officers executing the same on behalf of the Issuer. The approval of such changes by said officers shall be conclusively evidenced by the execution of the Loan Agreement by such officers.

RESOLVED: That all things heretofore done and all action heretofore taken by the Issuer and its officers and agents in its authorization of the projects to be financed by the Bonds are hereby ratified, approved and confirmed.

RESOLVED: That the Clerk and the signers of the Bonds are each hereby authorized to take any and all action necessary and convenient to carry out the provisions of this vote, including delivering the Bonds against payment therefor.

RESOLVED: That the useful lives of the projects being financed are in excess of ten (10) and twenty (20) years.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to authorize the town to enter into the loan agreement with and to sell its bond to the NH Municipal Bond Bank, and further authorize the Board Chair to sign each of the four documents. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

- c. Town Manager's Report
 - i. Ms. Roy thanked the DPW, staff, and volunteers who helped with the holiday parade.
 - ii. She and Corey Stevens have been working on the Police and Fire Substation with Town Engineer Paul Vlasich.
 - iii. She's been working with Public Works Director Stephen Cronin on feedback regarding snow removal.
 - iv. She joined the ribbon cutting at Parks and Rec today. We got \$800,000 to rehab the building through CDFA.
- d. Select Board Committee Reports
 - i. Ms. Gilman had no report.

- ii. Ms. Belanger had no report.
- iii. Mr. Chartrand attended a meeting with Kristen Murphy and Director Cronin on coastal resilience for Swasey Parkway. The contractor that ran the program did a great job. They did a tabletop exercise to figure out what it would look like if we resist, moderate, or retreat from the water incursion. He attended a Sustainability Advisory meeting and went with Sustainability members and staff to Waste Management to look at their landfill and recycling operations. He attended the Rec Center open house. He attended a Complete Streets conversation at Rockingham Planning Commission.
- iv. Ms. Cowan said she attended the Communications Advisory Committee this morning. She asked if there are going to be summaries of the warrant articles in plain English this year. This was started as a Communications Advisory Committee task but was taken over by the Town Manager's Office. Ms. Roy said if these are the info sheets, the Executive Team is planning to work on them. Once those are done, they could be sent to the Communications Committee, but the timing might be tricky since they meet quarterly. Ms. Cowan said that was not necessary. She said the committee also talked about understanding the Select Board's and Town Manager's priorities and aligning the strategy on getting the word out. Ms. Roy said the plan was to start a goal tree on how each department can support the Select Board goals. She could work with the Communications Committee after that process is complete.
- v. Mr. Papakontantis said he had internal meetings, including a meeting regarding the item of correspondence. He attended the parade on Saturday and the ribbon-cutting at the multi-generational community center.

e. Correspondence

- i. A letter from a resident which Mr. Papakonstantis addressed.

10. Review Board Calendar

- a. The next meetings are December 22, January 5, Tuesday January 20 which is the Budget Hearing, February 2, Tuesday February 17, March 2. Saturday January 31 is the Deliberative Session, and the Election is March 10.

11. Non-Public Session

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to enter into non-public session under RSA 91-A:3II(a). Ms. Gilman seconded. In a roll call vote, the motion passed 5-0. The Board went into non-public session at 8:29 PM.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to exit non-public session at 9:32 PM. Ms. Gilman seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

349 **MOTION:** Mr. Chartrand moved to seal the minutes until the matter is resolved. Ms. Belanger
350 seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

351

352 12. Adjournment

353 **MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to adjourn the Select Board meeting. Ms. Gilman seconded.

354 Motion passed 5-0.

355

356 Respectfully Submitted,

357 Joanna Bartell

358 Recording Secretary

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