

Select Board Meeting
Monday December 22, 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 Dan Chartrand, and Interim Town Manager Melissa Roy were present at this meeting. Board
10 member Julie Gilman was absent. The meeting was called to order by Mr. Papakonstantis at
11 6:40 PM.

The Board went downstairs to the Wheelwright Room for interviews.

2. Board Interviews

- a. Megan Spencer for the Exeter Housing Authority
- b. Kevin Fleming for the Exeter Housing Authority

19 The Board reconvened in the Novak Room at 7 PM.

3. Public Comment

a. There was no public comment at this time.

4. Proclamations/Recognitions

- a. There were no proclamations or recognitions.

5. Approval of Minutes

a. Regular Meeting: December 8, 2025

29 **MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve the Select Board regular meeting minutes of
30 December 8, 2025 as submitted. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

6. Appointments

a. There were no appointments made.

7. Discussion/Action Items

a. 79E Extension Request

Economic Development Director Darren Winham and owner of 85-87 Water Street Mario Ponte were present to discuss this request. Ms. Belanger recused herself from this discussion and vote.

Mr. Winham read his statement:

Mario A Ponte, Sr., Trustee of the Mario A Ponte, Sr. Revocable Trust, owner of 85-87 Water Street, received from the Town of Exeter six years of tax relief through the Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive (RSA 79-E). In his application, Mr. Ponte expected to spend \$2.4 million; his costs have risen and

will likely end up closer to \$3 million. As part of receiving 79-E relief, Mr. Ponte, as all recipients do, needed to provide a Covenant to Protect Public Benefit (attached). In addition to requiring the project remain a public benefit for the term of the incentive, the document also dictates that "the contemplated tax relief shall be null and void if proposed work is not completed by August 31, 2025." Due to construction delays, the Select Board on August 11, 2025 granted Mr. Ponte an extension until the end of the year as that is when his builder stated the project would be finished. Unfortunately, the project has run even longer. The newest issues causing delays include: a financial and logistical dispute with a neighbor over the relocation of a telephone pole that provides power to both buildings; a variety of framing details not depicted in the original plans were added and/or altered because of the uncommon preexisting building conditions of the 1800s building; leaks in the walls and basement causing a retail tenant issues with remaining fully open for the holiday season, and; a vendor error with bathtubs which, upon arrival, was found to be another model and thus had to be reordered. This last issue pushed back the drywall schedule. Therefore, Mr. Ponte is respectfully requesting an extension on his 79-E incentive until March 31, 2026.

Mr. Chartrand asked if that is enough time. Mr. Ponte said the project should be done by February. They're in the sheetrock stage now. Mr. Chartrand said he would like to give them longer, like June 30.

Ms. Roy said the Assessor mentioned that the units would be sold as condos, where in the application it was apartments. Does that need to be reviewed by Legal? According to the covenant it needs to be kept in the same format as approved in the 79E. Mr. Ponte said it will be apartments. After three or four years he may condominiumize them. Mr. Winham said if he keeps them for six years, Legal wouldn't have to be involved. Mr. Chartrand said in a previous project, the loka, we allowed the tax benefits to go forward to those that purchased condominiums, which was not intended. The tax benefit for the six years should remain with you alone. Mr. Ponte said he can keep them for six years. Ms. Roy said she doesn't know whether the Board can determine whether they are apartments or condos. We should go to Legal.

Mr. Papakonstantis suggested extending this request until January so we can get the matter reviewed by Legal. He said Mr. Ponte will not have to come back. Ms. Roy said the Board should extend this until January 30 and she will try to get Legal to review it by the January 5 meeting. Mr. Papakonstantis asked if extending it to the meeting of February 2 is ok. Mr. Chartrand suggested extending until February 3rd to cover that meeting.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked for a motion to extend the 79E for 72/29 until February 3, 2026 to allow the Board to further review the request for an extension into June 30, 2026, but the motion was not made. Mr. Chartrand suggested adding “tax relief incentive” to the motion.

87 **MOTION:** Ms. Cowan moved to extend the 79E tax relief incentive for 72/29 until February 3,
88 2026 to allow the Board to review the request for an extension to June 30, 2026. Mr. Chartrand
89 seconded. Ms. Belanger was recused and did not vote. The motion passed 3-0.

90
91 b. Complete Streets Update

92 DPW Director Stephen Cronin and Scott Bogle of the Rockingham
93 Planning Commission were present to give this update.

94 Mr. Cronin said the Master Plan stated that streets should be safe for all
95 users. The Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan was completed in March 2025, and
96 states that the Town should adopt a Complete Streets policy, designing roads
97 that are accessible to all modes of transit. Earlier this year, Dave Sharples
98 engaged with Scott Bogle at RPC to conduct this study.

99 Mr. Bogle gave a presentation on the Complete Streets project, which
100 included four elements: reviewing policies from similarly sized towns, community
101 engagement, developing a policy statement, and developing policy guidelines.
102 Regarding community engagement, he met regularly with the Master Plan
103 Oversight committee and held two focus group conversations, one with Town
104 staff and one with residents and business owners. Themes of outreach included
105 ensuring that people understand streets aren't just for vehicles; an emphasis on
106 connectivity; designing for all ages and abilities; and traffic separation wherever
107 possible. He discussed the different types of streets in Exeter and what Complete
108 Streets would look like in each.

109 Mr. Bogle said the next steps include having further conversations with
110 business owners and for the Master Plan Oversight Committee to finish
111 reviewing the draft for the meeting of January 8th. Their approved draft should be
112 coming to the Board in the new year.

113 Ms. Belanger said on Washington Street, cars park across from each
114 other, and it becomes a one-lane road. What can we do about a bike lane there?
115 Mr. Bogle said he used to live on Washington Street and deliberately parked
116 across from his neighbors for traffic calming purposes. Generally speaking, bike
117 lanes wouldn't be appropriate on a neighborhood street. Adding the striping
118 would channel traffic and give automobiles the sense that they own the road,
119 rather than it being shared space.

120 Mr. Cronin said with this policy, we're getting recommendations for certain
121 roadway classifications. What happens with those roads goes through a design
122 review process. We could have a more robust public participation policy for
123 roadway design and pedestrian access.

124 Ms. Belanger said regarding the intersection at Front Street and Railroad
125 Ave, we have trucks that will take a right onto Railroad Ave. Is there a reason
126 that corner is more squared-off and not angled? Mr. Bogle said that's a way of
127 slowing people down. This was a concept as part of the bike and pedestrian
128 master plan. The actual turning radius will come out of the design process.

129 Mr. Chartrand said he loved that streets with a certain typology such as
130 Winter Street and Washington Street may require special features. He thinks

131 that's the long-term solution. He also appreciates that Mr. Cronin wants to
132 engage the public and neighborhoods more when we are planning projects.
133 When we've had problems in the past, it's because we didn't engage.

134 Resident Silas Richards of Lincoln Street said he supports the adoption of
135 Complete Streets in Exeter. Epping Road is a major missed opportunity for
136 Complete Streets. There are safety gaps in the bicycle and pedestrian master
137 plan. Mr. Chartrand asked if the Kingston Road sidewalk extension is an example
138 of what Mr. Richards is looking for. Mr. Richards thanked the Board for extending
139 the sidewalk network, but said we should be thinking beyond sidewalks into a
140 multi-purpose pathway that is 10 or 11 feet to accommodate both walkers and
141 cyclists. He has benefited from Kingston Road sidewalks, but from a cycling
142 standpoint it's a narrow lane. Mr. Chartrand asked how we did on Drinkwater
143 Road, where we intentionally narrowed the road and broadened the shoulders.
144 Mr. Richards said it's not separated but it's a rural road. Still, every extra inch can
145 make a difference between life and death.

146 Ms. Belanger thanked Mr. Richards and his brother Ben for coming to the
147 Planning Board meetings and having good discussions.

148

149 c. 2025 Year-End Encumbrances Review

150 Finance Director Corey Stevens was present to discuss the
151 encumbrances. Mr. Stevens said this is an annual exercise where he reaches out
152 in December to departments to encumber funds they have contractual
153 obligations on before year end. The total is about \$903,000, which is a bit lighter
154 than the last four or five years. At the BRC, there was a desire by the committee
155 to soak up some of the Capital Outlay funds and obligate them on things we
156 could get started with, especially in the Water/Sewer Department.

157 **MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve the 2025 total encumbrances of \$902,786.53. Ms.
158 Cowan seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

159

160 d. Amendment to PD/FD Substation Contract

161 Mr. Stevens said the Police Station/Fire Substation project is going well.
162 We have a weekly meeting with the Construction Manager and things are moving
163 along. A month ago, he asked the Board to authorize an amendment to our
164 Architect's contract. The fourth amendment needs a further revision to it
165 regarding a carport. In value engineering the building, we shrunk the footprint
166 down. To meet our net zero obligations, we're looking to build a carport to give us
167 another surface to put solar panels on. We considered a pre-built canopy
168 structure or one built in place. The original amendment was for pre-built, with the
169 Engineer only designing the platform, but we decided that we want to build it in
170 place instead. This will cost about \$20,000 more. This amendment allows the
171 Architect and Engineer to do the design work so that our Construction Manager
172 can build it in place.

173 Ms. Roy said a pre-engineered kit is one that has already been designed
174 by an Architect, but those kits are not available so we need to have our own
175 Architect design it.

176 Mr. Stevens said this will deplete some of the contingency but will not
177 cost the project any more.

178 **MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to authorize the Interim Town Manager to execute contract
179 amendment #4 revision 1 with TGAS Architects for addition design and engineering services
180 related to the solar canopy. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

181
182 e. 2025 Annual Report Bid Acceptance

183 Ms. Roy said every year we put out to bid the printing of the annual
184 report. We received one bid this year, but the person has done it for many years.
185 We are comfortable with going with them.

186 **MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to award the bid for the 2025 annual report printing to Select
187 Print Solutions of Sutton MA in the amount of \$4,245, with the provision that any additional
188 pages over the specified 225 pages would be charged at a price of 3.2 cents per page. Ms.
189 Cowan seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

190
191 f. FY26 Budget Discussion

192 Mr. Papakonstantis said the Board will discuss the budget today and at
193 our January 5 meeting prior to the Budget Hearing of January 20. One of the CIP
194 warrant articles reviewed at CIP night was presented by the Pairpoint Park
195 Committee. They're looking for \$35,000 for design and engineering. There was a
196 robust discussion, but the BRC decided to not recommend the \$35,000 to go on
197 the warrant article. This park has presented a unique situation. The Board was
198 asked to accept a donation at short notice without doing due diligence, but the
199 Board made a motion to accept the donation and it would get in line for CIP. The
200 Board had many people come forward with ideas and requests for immediate
201 action, and implemented a committee to come up with ways it could be designed
202 and funded. Part of their mission statement was to reach out to the public and
203 ask folks what they'd like to see, and they put out a survey and talked to folks in
204 person about the park. They came before the Select Board and made a
205 recommendation. At the BRC, they pledged that if they get \$35,000 on the
206 warrant, they would fundraise for the money to develop and build the park. The
207 committee has done everything we've asked them to do and more. He's not
208 advocating for the \$35,000 warrant article, but the Board should discuss it and
209 consider meeting them in some way.

210 Ms. Belanger said she felt that some comments at the BRC didn't have a
211 good understanding of this committee's mission and role. There were comments
212 about maintenance that isn't part of their mission. They're working so hard to
213 raise funds to get to the next step. Mr. Chartrand said he's inclined to let this roll
214 through to the voters, given that the committee will raise the funds to build the
215 park and not go back to the voters. Would we have a revolt on the BRC in that
216 case? Mr. Kelly said no. Our charge is to recommend a budget, and what the

217 Board does from there is your call. Understanding the committee's mission
218 statement wasn't our purview, we look at the budget. It was our understanding
219 that this was too much too soon. Everyone wants more green space in town, but
220 this was put on us without proper due diligence, so let's wait a year to allow them
221 to do some fundraising. If they can raise \$350,000, they could raise 10% more.
222 They're asking the town in a very bad year for money that we don't want to put
223 onto the taxpayers.

224 Mr. Chartrand said he wants voters to decide because time is of the
225 essence. It would be better if this happened now than a year from now. Mr. Kelly
226 said he disagrees and time is not of the essence.

227 Ms. Cowan said we have a really tough budget this year and things that
228 we have to pay for. She could fundraise from a picture. The financial crunch that
229 people are going to be feeling is worrisome.

230 Mr. Papakonstantis said the committee deserved the respect of the
231 conversation with this Board, even if we decide to follow the BRC
232 recommendation. It was a tough budget this year and will be a big request of the
233 voters. 90% of the increase is health insurance, wages, collective bargaining,
234 and the Public Safety Complex. A warrant article would give the legislative body
235 the ability to decide if they want that to impact their taxes. That gives the
236 committee time to fundraise and for the town to see if there's money in other
237 budgets for this. When the original motion was made, it was clear that this would
238 go to the back of the line, but volunteers have stepped in to move it forward. Ms.
239 Cowan said she values the work they've done. Mr. Papakonstantis said three
240 Board members would have to approve it for it to go on the warrant.

241 Mr. Kelly said we cut \$160,000 off the General Fund budget for a \$27M
242 budget. Adding \$35,000 back in isn't a huge deal, but what happens if the
243 committee can't raise the rest of the money? Or maybe they will knock it out of
244 the park and raise the entire amount, and don't need the \$35,000.

245 Mr. Kelly said re Water Fund, encumber funds \$200,000 for a variety of
246 projects, our fund balances are already high. Finance and DPW put together
247 \$103,000 to be encumbered.

248 The Board will discuss the budget again at the January 5 meeting.
249

250 8. Regular Business

251 a. Tax Abatements, Veterans Credits and Exemptions

252 **MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve a solar exemption for 24/31 in the amount of
253 \$17,000.00 for the tax year 2025. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

254 b. Permits & Approvals

255 i. Pairpoint Park Stakeholders Advisory Committee Park Logos

256 Pairpoint Park Stakeholders Advisory Committee Chair Steven
257 Jones was present to discuss the committee's logo. Mr. Jones said we
258 are requesting the Board approve a single-use logo already created for
259 the fundraising video for the park and a permanent "flying heron" logo.
260

We are also asking the Board to approve a round and square version of the permanent logo.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to adopt the revised logo for the one purpose of fundraising designed by Joe Stagnone. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the two versions of the Pairpoint Park logo for use in all promotional literature, images, and swag. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

ii. 911 Voluntary Change of Address

Deputy Chief Jason Fritz was present. E911 committee had three voluntary change of address requests.

1. 81 Front Street Units A-F

Deputy Chief Fritz said this building was recently remodeled into a multi-family.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to adopt the change of address for 72/195 to 81 Front Street: 81 Front St. Unit A, 81 Front St. Unit B, 81 Front St. Unit C, 81 Front St. Unit D, 81 Front St. Unit E, and 81 Front St. Unit F. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

a. 77 Newfields Road

Deputy Chief Fritz said 75A Newfields Road would like to be 77 Newfields Road. When we accepted Magnolia Place, that freed up the number 77.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to accept the change of address 22/7/2 from 75A Newfields Road to 77 Newfields Road. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

b. 120 Front Street, Units A, B, C

Deputy Chief Fritz said 120 Front Street currently has a storefront and two apartments, but the address was never changed to reflect those. We called the State and they recommended 120 Front Street, Unit A being the storefront, B behind the Storefront, and C on the second floor.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to accept the change of address for 73/17 from 120 Front Street to 120 Front Street, Units A, B, C. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

c. Town Manager's Report

- i. Ms. Roy said Town Offices will close at noon on Christmas Eve, Christmas and the day after.
- ii. She worked with Corey Stevens, Paul Vlasich, and the Police and Fire Substation team to get the project going.
- iii. She's been working on personnel issues
- iv. She's been drafting potential warrant wording for Legal review.

d. Select Board Committee Reports

- i. Ms. Belanger said the Planning Board had their second zoning meeting. All the proposed amendments were approved. There were changes in the language she will discuss at the Select Board's next meeting. She missed the Rec Advisory Board meeting but watched it later. They voted to change the meetings to quarterly next year. There will be a financial workshop on January 28 to talk about the coming year. David Tovey and Carolyn went to a seminar in 2023 and are trying to implement what they learned. She attended the Senior Luncheon, which the community really appreciated.
- ii. Ms. Cowan had no report.
- iii. Mr. Chartrand had no report.
- iv. Mr. Papakonstantis said the Tree Committee, River Advisory, and Swasey Parkway Trustees meetings were all cancelled. He attended the employee appreciation lunch.

e. Correspondence

- i. Letter regarding snow removal
- ii. Letter regarding Pairpoint Park

9. Review Board Calendar

- a. The next meetings are January 5, Tuesday January 20, February 2, February 17, and March 2. Deliberative Session is Jan 31 at 9 AM, and Town Election is March 10.

10. Non-Public Session

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to enter into non-public session under RSA 91-A:3II(a). Ms. Cowan seconded. In a roll call vote, the motion passed 4-0. The Board entered non-public at 8:32 PM.

MOTION: Mr. Chartrand moved to exit non-public session. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

MOTION: Mr. Chartrand moved to seal the minutes until the matter is resolved. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

11. Adjournment

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to adjourn the Select Board meeting at 8:57 pm. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary