

Select Board Meeting
Monday January 5, 2026
7 PM
Nowak Room, Town Offices
Final Minutes

1. Call Meeting to Order

Members present: Chair Niko Papakonstantis, Vice-Chair Molly Cowan, Clerk Nancy Belanger, Julie Gilman, Dan Chartrand, and Interim Town Manager Melissa Roy were present at this meeting. The meeting was called to order by Mr. Papakonstantis at 7 PM.

2. Public Comment

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

3. Proclamations/Recognitions

- a. There were no proclamations/recognitions.

4. Approval of Minutes

- a. Regular Meeting: December 22, 2025

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the minutes of December 22, 2025 as presented. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

5. Appointments

- a. There were no appointments at this time.

6. Discussion/Action Items

- a. Municipal Banking Discussion

Finance Director Corey Stevens was present for this discussion. Mr. Stevens said he wrote a letter to Citizens Bank letting them know we have transitioned to TD Bank. He felt that this needed to happen without being public to maintain the security of our existing accounts through the transition. He's been working with TD for a number of years on least purchase bidding, which has extended to advice on how to put our money to work. We felt it was the right time to move to TD for all of our operating accounts. We started transitioning in September. As of today, they have the lion's share of our assets. We'll continue to be aggressive and expand what we do with idle cash to use it as a source of revenue. He'll be back in the next month for a review of the financials.

Mr. Chartrand said walking away from a long-time relationship with a bank is never easy, but it sounds like it was necessary. Mr. Stevens said it should be done from time to time, and we've never done it. We didn't leave on bad terms with Citizens.

- b. Pairpoint Park Resident Proposal

44 Resident Keith Whitehouse of 61 Westside Drive was present to discuss
45 his proposal. Mr. Chartrand recused himself from the discussion and vote.

46 Mr. Whitehouse said the Board should help all of us come up with a
47 solution to get the Pairpoint Park land in use, at least on a temporary basis until
48 we can raise the money to open it as a park. It would be nice to have extra space
49 downtown for the 250th celebration and have space to raise awareness of the
50 former Great Dam and the river. There should be more outdoor spaces to use
51 downtown.

52 Mr. Whitehouse discussed the specifics of his proposal. The first step
53 would be to install a silt sock to prevent runoff. Then we'd take three parking
54 spots and cone them off. We'd use two trucks and a backhoe/"grade-all" to go to
55 the transfer station and get materials and bring them to the park. There would be
56 two people on the sidewalk helping. We could pull out some of the nicer granite
57 and use it as a bench. We won't touch what's embedded in the banking, only
58 taking stuff that is loose. There will be no digging involved, only filling and
59 grading. We'll use unscreened sand from the dump. It will take about 8
60 truckloads. We don't want to pile material on snow, so we'd have to time it
61 carefully. In the spring we'd plant wildflowers and a grass mix. He has a plan for
62 temporary ADA access so it's inclusive. He needs to work with people who know
63 more about that. He's talked to town staff, including Kristin Murphy and Steve
64 Cronin, as well as the owner of the Chocolatier, and they're in support. People
65 will get involved if we can get a start on this.

66 Ms. Gilman said there's going to be a transfer from the level of the
67 sidewalk to the park - will it be built up? Mr. Whitehouse said it will be a grade
68 that will come off the sidewalk without a gap.

69 Ms. Belanger said she's still concerned because we don't know what's
70 under the ground. She's not happy about filling that lot in without knowing. She
71 would like to have a memo from Steve Cronin on his thoughts and concerns.

72 Mr. Whitehouse said there was a level 1 environmental survey done, not
73 indicating that a level 2 survey was necessary. It would be expensive and would
74 delay something that's not required. It doesn't need to support a building. Many
75 people have been down there over the years. We're further away from an open
76 piece of land than the day we acquired it.

77 Ms. Gilman asked how reversible this work is. Mr. Whitehouse said it
78 would be about the same amount of work. You'd scoop it into trucks and take it
79 away. We would only take out what we put in. Ms. Gilman said she'd want this
80 work to be used in the final design if possible.

81 Ms. Cowan asked about the cost. Mr. Whitehouse said nothing other than
82 some diesel to fuel the truck and the time of town staff to talk to him. He and his
83 wife are going to pay John Bell. Ms. Cowan said that's generous. Mr. Whitehouse
84 said John is an engineer and he had a lengthy conversation with him about this.
85 Ms. Cowan said she's also worried about what we're uncovering and the risks.
86 We could be on the hook for something. She doesn't want us to set a precedent
87 where we're halfway down a road and can't turn around and come back.

88 Mr. Papakonstantis said Primex was ok with opening it from a liability
89 standpoint, but did we ask about liability for volunteers? Ms. Roy said Mr.
90 Whitehouse has the insurance from his business. Mr. Whitehouse said also
91 anyone helping him doing the work or operating the equipment would be self-
92 insured. We're not going to disturb the ground with this, we're just going to put
93 stuff down. There would be nasty stuff under there, after a big fire. Let's not do
94 nothing and let it sit there until the '30s until we get the money.

95 Mr. Papakonstantis asked if Mr. Whitehouse has a timeline. Mr.
96 Whitehouse said it would take a least a month. If there were snow, we may have
97 to wait for spring, maybe starting in March. The loam could be put down in late
98 April. He thinks it could be open by Memorial Day.

99 Ms. Belanger said our Town Planner is not here to discuss this. We don't
100 want to spend a lot of money or pay to have this taken out to do the rest of the
101 work. The committee has done a tremendous amount of work, could this
102 jeopardize their fundraising? Mr. Whitehouse said the fundraising could be
103 enhanced because you could fundraise on site. Let's not let "perfect" get in the
104 way of "much better."

105 Ms. Belanger said if we're going to say the park is ADA accessible, it has
106 to meet that standard. Mr. Whitehouse said it would.

107 Mr. Papakonstantis said the Board members all share similar concerns. If
108 you were acquiring a piece of property, you'd do your due diligence. In life,
109 sometimes an opportunity comes and it's worth taking a gamble. The Select
110 Board was presented an opportunity to take a donation of land without having
111 time to do our due diligence. We had three public hearings and heard that the
112 public was in favor. When the motion was made to accept, it included that we
113 were accepting this with the understanding that we had other projects in the
114 pipeline, so this would get in the back of the line. The Town Planner reviewed the
115 options, and we put together a committee that put in a tremendous amount of
116 work to get us where we're going. We did not accept a donation of conservation
117 land or an existing park. This is a vacant lot that has been the victim of a fire and
118 we don't know what's underneath. We made a quick decision once. He's not
119 comfortable with approving it tonight but would continue the conversation and
120 hear more about the ADA options. We can have more information before March.
121 If he has to do a yes or no tonight, he would vote no. Mr. Whitehouse said he can
122 agree to continue the conversation, but we need to get on it.

123 Amanda Kelly of 24 Prospect Street said she appreciates Mr.
124 Whitehouse's commitment to ADA for this project. As a committee, we preferred
125 to wait for soil and engineering analysis. We voted unanimously against going
126 forward with this plan so we could understand what needed to be dug out and put
127 in. If we could raise the \$40,000 and finish the construction documents, Keith
128 could do this plan and get the park flat and open before doing the second round
129 of fundraising. She doesn't think it would be ready for Memorial Day.

130 Nancy Phillips, the ex-property owner, said regarding the site, when they
131 owned the property, they did a "phase 1 and a half" that included radar

assessment of the property. This was turned over to the town. There were no tanks, substances, or anything else detected underneath. When we bought that property, the person who owned it financed it with the bank and it did have a phase 2 but we got nothing in terms of records. It's had extensive investigation. Ms. Belanger said our Town Planner knew of that history and was still concerned.

Steve Jones, Chair of the Pairpoint Park Stakeholders Advisory Committee, said there's something magical about being down by the river. It's a choice piece of property. It represents an opportunity for the town. The people will have at least ADA or higher accessibility. People come from Keene and Concord for Planet Playground because it's an accessible park. If there were another accessible park, that could bring a little more commerce and enjoyment to the downtown area. He has his concerns about the plan. He didn't know about the radar survey, and he would like to review it again. He read the report from cover to cover and didn't see that piece. It would be nice to know what's underneath first. The ultimate design will involve some scraping. If Mr. Whitehouse would commit to digging it back out, it might make a difference. Mr. Whitehouse said he might be dead by then. He added that at the Front/Pine/Linden intersection, the simple action of removing the shrubs from the park improved that area a lot without an expensive survey.

Dr. Jones said if people see a park that is filled, they may say the park is done. That may make fundraising harder.

Mr. Chartrand rejoined the Board at this time.

c. FY26 Budget and Warrant Discussion

Mr. Papakonstantis read the legal notices:

The Exeter Select Board hereby gives notice of a public hearing on the Town of Exeter Fiscal Year 2026 operating budget and all financial and other warrant articles on Tuesday, January 20th, 2026, at 7:00 p.m., in the Nowak Room of the Exeter Town Offices. This hearing will be held pursuant to RSA 32:5 and RSA 40: 13. Dated: December 23, 2025.

The Exeter Select Board hereby gives notice of a public hearing pursuant to RSA 33:8-a on the following projects requiring bonds and notes as part of the fiscal year 2026 town warrant: 1. Surface Water Treatment Plant Design Phase II; \$2,000,000. 2. Water Treatment Plan Residuals Disposal; \$500,000. 3. Nitrogen Reduction Program Equipment Purchase of Street Sweeper; \$412,000. The public hearing will be held on Tuesday, January 20th, 2026 commencing at 7:00 p.m. in the Exeter Town Offices, Nowak Room, 10 Front Street, Exeter, NH. The public is encouraged to attend. Dated: December 23, 2025.

Mr. Papakonstantis said the outstanding discussion item was the warrant article from Pairpoint Park committee, which the BRC voted not to recommend. The Board gave this the discussion that it deserved and he would be willing to

176 accept the recommendation of the BRC because of the commitment of the
177 committee to fundraising. Mr. Chartrand said he agrees this should not be on the
178 warrant. Ms. Belanger said she was fine with not having it on the warrant until
179 she heard that Amanda Kelly was planning the next phase with Mr. Whitehouse.
180 If we had that on the warrant and it passes, that would line up with early March.

181 Dr. Jones said fundraising has just begun. Our February event that was
182 planned fell through. We have organizations that we're approaching next week.
183 We're starting earnest fundraising this week. Ms. Kelly said she thinks the
184 conversation with Keith could continue to evolve without this being on the
185 warrant. The BRC voted not to recommend it. If we were to have it on the
186 warrant, it would be a lot to campaign for it at this point. We're also excited to say
187 we raised 100% of the money. Dr. Jones said the goal is to take no money from
188 the Exeter taxpayer.

189 Ms. Belanger said the \$35,000 is not a huge ask, but with everything else
190 that's happened this year, she's willing to let the Pairpoint Park committee do
191 their thing.

192 BRC Chair Bob Kelly said Corey Stevens told him that some numbers on
193 debt service and the budget have changed slightly. Does the Board want the
194 report updated? Mr. Papakonstantis said no, the recommendation was based on
195 the information you had and that's sufficient.

196 Ms. Roy said the language is in draft form so it will be going to Legal
197 before being presented to the Board on January 20. There are 21 warrant
198 articles, compared to 38 last year. Ms. Cowan asked how many citizens petitions,
199 and Ms. Roy said it's still open.

200
201 d. Town Manager Update

202 Ms. Roy said the position is ready to post, but it's not yet posted. We're
203 planning to do a national search. Mr. Papakonstantis said he and Ms. Cowan will
204 be working with Town Staff on the search. We will have a public meeting to
205 review the job description and listen to any feedback on what the public may or
206 may not be looking for.

207
208 7. Regular Business

209 a. Tax Abatements, Veterans Credits and Exemptions

210 **MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve a Solar Exemption for 54/5/2 in the amount of
211 \$11,000 for tax year 2026. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

212
213 **MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve a Veterans Credit for 68/6/715 in the amount of \$500
214 for tax year 2026. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

215
216 **MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve Veterans Credits for 103/13/20 and 86/37 in the
217 amount of \$500 for tax year 2026. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

218
219 b. Permits & Approvals

- 220 i. There were no permits or approvals considered.
- 221
- 222 c. Town Manager's Report
- 223 i. Ms. Roy said staff were able to take a break over the holidays due to the
- 224 employee appreciation days approved by the Board.
- 225 ii. Director Cronin said the DPW is aware that due to warming and freezing
- 226 we're seeing potholes. They will be working on that as weather permits.
- 227 iii. She and Corey have been working with Town Engineer Paul Vlasich on
- 228 the Police and Fire Substation.
- 229 iv. She and Corey are working on the legal language for the warrant and the
- 230 default budget.
- 231
- 232 d. Select Board Committee Reports
- 233 i. Ms. Gilman attended the HDC; the applicant was open to suggestions
- 234 and it went very well. She also discussed State-level issues.
- 235 ii. Ms. Belanger had no report.
- 236 iii. Ms. Cowan had no report.
- 237 iv. Mr. Chartrand had no report.
- 238 v. Mr. Papakonstantis had no report.
- 239
- 240 e. Correspondence
- 241 i. The NHMA Legislative Bulletin
- 242 ii. A notification from Eversource on replacing transmission structures
- 243 iii. Rate information from CPCNH on Community Power rates
- 244
- 245 8. Review Board Calendar
- 246 The next meetings are Tuesday January 20, February 2, Tuesday
- 247 February 17, March 2, March 16, and March 30. Deliberative Session is January
- 248 31 at 9 AM, and the election is March 10.
- 249 Ms. Gilman said the Energy Committee window dressers program is
- 250 having an event in January and is still looking for volunteers.
- 251
- 252 9. Non-Public Session
- 253 a. There was no non-public session at this time.
- 254
- 255 10. Adjournment
- 256 **MOTION:** Mr. Chartrand moved to adjourn. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0 and
- 257 the meeting was adjourned at 8:18 PM.
- 258
- 259 Respectfully Submitted,
- 260 Joanna Bartell
- 261 Recording Secretary