

Select Board Meeting
Monday February 2, 2026
6:40 PM
Nowak Room, Town Offices
Draft Minutes

1. Call Meeting to Order

Members present: Chair Niko Papakonstantis, Clerk Nancy Belanger, Julie Gilman, Dan Chartrand, and Interim Town Manager Melissa Roy were present at this meeting. Vice-Chair Molly Cowan was absent. The meeting was called to order by Mr. Papakonstantis at 6:40 PM.

2. Non-Public Session

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to enter into non-public session under RSA 91-A3II(l). Ms. Gilman seconded. In a roll call vote, the motion passed 4-0 and the meeting entered non-public at 6:40 PM.

The Board reconvened in the Nowak Room at 7 PM.

3. Proclamations/Recognitions

a. Police Department Awards

Police Chief Stephan Poulin recognized School Resource Officer Rya Khan and Lieutenant Devin West for their recent awards.

4. Public Comment

a. There was no public comment at this time.

5. Approval of Minutes

a. Regular Meeting: January 20, 2026

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the minutes of January 20, 2026 as presented. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

6. Appointments

a. Housing Authority Appointment

Mr. Papakonstantis said there were two good candidates for this position. Ms. Belanger said Kevin Fleming was our first applicant and isn't currently on another Board, whereas Megan Spencer is.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to appoint Kevin Fleming to the Exeter Housing Authority as a full member, term to expire April 30, 2026. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

7. Discussion/Action Items

a. Deliberative Session Review -

Town Moderator Kate Miller was present to give a recap of the Deliberative Session. Attorney Miller said we had about 100 voters in attendance, which is about what's expected. The tone was respectful and engaged, with good

45 questions. There were questions about the changes to the Veteran's Tax Credit,
46 but that's happening across New Hampshire because of a change in the law. The
47 Supervisors of the Checklist used the electronic poll pads to check in voters,
48 which sped up the process. The Select Board, Town staff, and Budget
49 Committee worked hard to trim the budget prior to the Deliberative Session. The
50 interim Town Manager did an excellent job of presenting things, without any
51 technical glitches. Finance Director Corey Stevens also did a good job supporting
52 her.

53 Mr. Chartrand thanked Public Works Director Stephen Cronin for
54 addressing the bond articles for the water projects and the street sweeper.

55 Mr. Papakonstantis thanked Ms. Miller and asked her to come back to a
56 Select Board meeting prior to the election.

57
58 b. Exeter Country Club (ECC) Discretionary Easement

59 ECC President Marc Carbonneau and Attorney Chris Hilson of
60 O'Donoghue, Tucker, and Ciandella were present to discuss this request, as well
61 as Laura Spector-Morgan from Mitchell Municipal Group who was representing
62 the Town of Exeter.

63 Attorney Hilson said the Country Club was created in 1889 and is a public
64 golf course. The leadership has striven to keep membership fees down and the
65 greens fees as low as possible. Only 40% of the revenue is from the members;
66 60% is from the community. There's a conservation easement on a large portion
67 of the course, at the upper end. There is also a discretionary easement per RSA
68 79E on the lower end of the course. The remainder of the course and the
69 clubhouse are subject to ad valorem taxation. The clubhouse was built in the
70 1950s and needs to be replaced or upgraded. The club can't afford to do it
71 through conventional debt in order to keep the greens fees low. The plan is to
72 sell a portion and use the revenue to renovate the clubhouse. Under 79E, you
73 need 10 acres to be eligible. If we sell the portion, it will leave 7 acres. This land
74 still meets the 79E criteria of being for the public benefit because the course is
75 public. We are looking to "stack the easements" to bring the remaining portion
76 above 10 acres. There's nothing that says the easement can't be on already
77 encumbered land. There's already an additional Town easement on the land
78 currently part of the discretionary easement. This would allow the club to sell the
79 land and use the proceeds to restore the clubhouse, without taking on obligations
80 that would make the fees beyond the ability of public members to pay. The
81 easement expires March 31 and has to be renewed, so there needs to be a
82 decision on this. The renewal is for a minimum of 10 years, but it could be longer.
83 If the Board were to grant the easement, you could remove it upon finding a
84 hardship, but there's a penalty associated with that.

85 Mr. Chartrand asked if the discretionary easement has to be contiguous.
86 Attorney Spector-Morgan said the definition of golf course is a parcel of 10 acres
87 or more of land used in the playing of golf; it does not say "contiguous." Mr.
88 Chartrand asked if the developer would accept 7 acres instead of 10. Mr.

89 Carbonneau said they're looking to put in between 9 and 11 homes. It's possible
90 we could end up selling less acreage if they don't need it for density reasons. We
91 would like to maintain an easement to the third tee box, as it's our only par 5 and
92 losing it would change the whole rating of the course. Mr. Papakonstantis asked
93 if they have an interested developer. Mr. Carbonneau said yes, we're finalizing a
94 purchase and sale.

95 Ms. Belanger said she would like to keep the conservation land out of this
96 deal if possible. Since it doesn't have to be contiguous, is there another three
97 acres somewhere that we can use to compensate? Attorney Hilson said the
98 entire north area of the course has already been eased. There's no more land to
99 submit. The conservation easement could be expanded into the land that's
100 currently a discretionary easement, but that would entail developing land that's
101 currently conserved. In Hampton, we have to make a lot line adjustment in
102 conservation land, and the Department of Charitable Trusts is getting involved as
103 they feel they have jurisdiction. Submitting a new portion to the conservation
104 easement would be reducing the flexibility that the ECC has, which we'd like to
105 avoid. Ms. Belanger asked where else they could find the other three acres, and
106 Attorney Hilson and Mr. Carbonneau said there are none. Ms. Belanger said
107 she's not comfortable with stacking three acres that are already in conservation.
108 Mr. Carbonneau said the conservation land would have to remain a golf course.
109 You wouldn't want to bring the conservation land right up to the line of the
110 clubhouse in case you ever wanted to extend it or build something.

111 Attorney Spector-Morgan said she met with Attorney Hilson and Mr.
112 Chartrand [she later clarified that she meant Mr. Carbonneau] and they had an
113 alternative idea. The benefit you get with the discretionary easement that you
114 don't get with the conservation easement is that this has to remain a public golf
115 course. If you're stacking with three acres, why not stack with the entire golf
116 course, and ensuring that the whole course remains public for the next ten
117 years? Mr. Chartrand asked if that's ok, and Attorney Spector-Morgan said it's
118 legal. The conservation easement requires that it remains open space and open
119 to public recreation, but does not require that it remain a public golf course. Mr.
120 Carbonneau said conceptually we're ok with that, but we're still getting legal
121 advice and haven't voted on it. It would allow us to continue running as a golf
122 course, which is the #1 goal. Mr. Chartrand said he thinks the Jady Hill
123 Neighborhood would appreciate it continuing as a public golf course. He is a
124 neighbor, and a delighted neighbor. There's sledding and cross-country skiing on
125 the course in the winter. They're open to people walking their dogs in the winter.
126 They're a great neighbor. Putting that second layer of easement on almost the
127 entire course will win some points with the neighbors and the Land Use Boards.

128 Ms. Belanger asked if they would consider a term longer than ten years.
129 Attorney Hilson said he would recommend a longer term, but he wouldn't
130 recommend it in perpetuity. Ms. Belanger asked them to bring back to the next
131 meeting what term they would consider.

132 Ms. Gilman said she wanted to clarify that this is related to RSA 79C, not
133 79E. We repealed 79E so she didn't want to confuse folks at home.

134 Mr. Papakonstantis asked when the next ECC Board meeting is, and Mr.
135 Carbonneau said on Monday. Mr. Papakonstantis asked them to come back on
136 Tuesday February 17th. Attorney Spector-Morgan said she could not be present,
137 and Ms. Belanger asked if she could confer with Mr. Carbonneau following their
138 Board meeting.

139 Ms. Belanger said if this comes before the Planning Board, she would
140 recuse herself there, as she's part of this conversation at the Select Board.

141
142 c. Water/Sewer Capacity Request and Proposed Funding Partnership for High
143 Street Sewer Improvements - Lindt/Sprungli

144 Public Works Director Stephen Cronin, Water/Sewer Advisory Board
145 Chair Bob Kelley, Lindt Director of Environment, Health, and Safety Melanie
146 Peyeur, Lindt VP of Operations Giovanna Maurer, and Mark Stevens, the
147 Manager of the Stratham Industrial Park, were present to discuss this proposal.

148 Mr. Cronin said Lindt has been a water/sewer customer of the Town since
149 1988, and over time their growth has put them up against the industrial park's
150 sewer capacity limitations of 75,000 gallons per day. Lindt jointly funded a sewer
151 capacity study with the Town; addressing those defects found was the reason we
152 brought forward the High Street Cross-Country Sewer Project in the CIP. Lindt is
153 proposing a funding partnership that would advance those improvements.

154 Ms. Peyeur gave a presentation about Lindt. They have been a
155 water/sewer customer since 1988 and have had a discharge permit since 2010.
156 They rely on water to clean [chocolate] molds and tanks as well as to cool their
157 buildings. Their discharge is limited not only by the permit but also by the park-
158 wide capacity of 75,000 gallons per day. Although the park remains within the
159 limit, Lindt has outgrown its allocation. In 2020, Lindt funded a study with
160 Underwood Engineers that identified hydrologic constraints on Hampton Road
161 and High Street which have prevented the allocation of additional capacity to the
162 industrial park. Completing the High Street Bridge portion of the improvement
163 plan would unlock additional capacity. Lindt is prepared to invest \$1.8M to
164 complete this work. This increase would support Lindt through the maximum
165 production level expected at this facility.

166 Mr. Chartrand said Lindt has 1,300 employees; what would that go up to
167 with further expansion? Ms. Peyeur said we don't anticipate an increase. Ms.
168 Maurer said there would be additional headcount, because there could be
169 additional lines with this significant increase in capacity.

170 Mr. Kelley said Lindt came to the Water/Sewer Advisory Committee
171 meeting in September of last year. There were some legalities to work out so we
172 didn't vote, but they came again in January 2026 and we voted 4-0 to support
173 this project. This is a singular agreement for a very special case, and should not
174 be construed as a precedent for development. This would allow us to partially
175 fund a project on the CIP that has been deferred for a number of years.

176 Ms. Gilman asked if she should recuse herself, since she lives on High
177 Street. Mr. Papakonstantis said he doesn't think there's a conflict of interest.
178 **MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve Lindt USA's Water/Sewer capacity request and the
179 proposed funding partnership with Stratham Industrial Park for the High Street Sewer
180 Improvement Project, and further to authorize Town Staff to finalize the agreement documents.
181 Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

182
183 d. Great Bay Estuary Intermunicipal Agreement - Stephen Cronin, Public Works
184 Director

185 Mr. Cronin said we are looking to renew our agreement with the Municipal
186 Alliance for Adaptive Management (MAAM). They were formed in 2021 in
187 response to the EPA Great Bay general total nitrogen permit. This allowed for a
188 regional management approach rather than requiring individual facility upgrades.
189 This amendment would extend the agreement term through June 30, 2031.

190 Ms. Belanger said on page 3, there's one paragraph where they redacted
191 "no more than \$500,000." What is the reason for that? Mr. Cronin said the costs
192 vary from year to year depending on grant funding. In the past two years, we've
193 exceeded the \$500,000; collectively it was \$642,000 in 2025 and we're projecting
194 \$652,000 in 2026. The permit expires in February but they are extending it
195 administratively so we don't expect new regulation in the short term, but when it
196 is renewed there may be new requirements so that dollar figure will rise. Each
197 town pays a portion of that based on their permitted wastewater treatment plant
198 flow. In 2026, we would pay roughly \$89,000.

199 **MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve the amendment to renew and update the
200 Intermunicipal Agreement for development of an adaptive water quality management plan for
201 Great Bay Estuary and to further authorize the interim Town Manager or their Designee to sign
202 the amendment. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

203
204 Mr. Papakonstantis thanked the Public Works Department for their work
205 during the recent snowstorm.

206
207 e. 79E Extension - Mario Ponte

208 Economic Development Director Darren Winham and property owner
209 Mario Ponte were present for this discussion item.

210 Ms. Belanger recused herself from this discussion and vote.

211 Mr. Chartrand apologized to Mr. Ponte for a statement he made at the
212 last meeting that was incorrect.

213 Mr. Winham said at the previous meeting, we were asking for an
214 extension on 79E because Mr. Ponte was given six years but the construction
215 project has gone long. He suggests going long enough that we don't have to
216 come back.

217 Mr. Ponte said we're in the sheetrock/painting phase. We've had
218 problems with neighbors holding us up. Until made him pay to relocate a utility

pole in the back. He also had to pay for Alan's electrical work because he refused to do it and it was holding up the project.

Mr. Papakonstantis said the last time, they were requesting March 31, 2026. Mr. Ponte said the contractor said it would be done by then, but the project has been delayed multiple times. Mr. Winham said Mr. Chartrand suggested June 30.

Ms. Roy said one legal question from last time was if it were allowable for Mr. Ponte to change these from apartments to condos. Town Counsel told us that it is allowable under 79E; we can't make it stay apartments. She added that this is the last 79E project that we have. If something like 79E were to come back, it would be in a different form and would have to go through Town Meeting again.

MOTION: Mr. Chartrand moved to extend the 79E incentive for 72/29 until June 30, 2026. Ms. Gilman seconded. Ms. Belanger was recused and did not vote. The motion passed 3-0.

8. Regular Business

a. Tax Abatements, Veterans Credits and Exemptions

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve an abatement for 104/79/132C in the amount of \$270 for tax year 2025. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve a Veterans Credit for 86/49 in the amount of \$2,000 for tax year 2026. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve a Current Use Application A10 for 113/5 for 7.5 acres for tax year 2026. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

b. Permits & Approvals

i. There were no permits or approvals considered.

c. Town Manager's Report

i. Ms. Roy thanked Moderator Miller for a great Deliberative Session.

ii. She's been working on various projects the Board heard about tonight, such as the Country Club and Lindt Chocolate.

iii. She and Finance Director Stevens have been working on the Public Safety Complex. They are removing a lot of snow. They are planning to start the foundation in the next few weeks.

iv. She and Mr. Stevens worked on the budget report given at the Deliberative Session.

v. Mr. Stevens has been working on W2s and end of year reporting.

vi. We're getting ready for voting on the second Tuesday in March.

vii. Mr. Papakonstantis said in the past, we've done videos about projects like the Public Safety Complex or the Revaluation. Can we do one about the budget and get it out to Exeter TV? Ms. Belanger asked that we include something about the budget process in the video.

d. Select Board Committee Reports

263 i. Ms. Gilman attended a Heritage Commission meeting where the Chair
264 proposed starting a Town Preservation Award. The Heritage
265 Commission's only budget is for a Recording Secretary, so the award
266 would be pretty small. She also attended a Tax Exemption and Credit
267 Advisory Committee meeting where they talked about what comes next.
268 ii. Ms. Belanger attended a Planning Board meeting where Ms. Roy gave an
269 update on the Police Station and Fire Substation. They also heard an
270 application for Phillips Exeter to build an addition onto the gymnasium.
271 RiverWoods came for an extension on an application approved in
272 February 2025, and they were granted an extension through February
273 2029. The Planning Board also had a Master Plan discussion; the Master
274 Plan subcommittee is reviewing final comments for the Complete Streets
275 design and will come before the Planning Board at a future meeting.
276 iii. Mr. Chartrand attended a Facilities Advisory Committee meeting. They
277 are in the final phases of putting together an RFP for the building use
278 assessment. It will be ready in a few weeks.
279 iv. Mr. Papakonstantis attended a Swasey Park Trustee meeting, but there's
280 not much going on in the wintertime. The Coastal Resiliency group met
281 and will be holding a public meeting in March.
282 e. Correspondence
283 i. The NHMA Legislative Update
284
285 9. Review Board Calendar
286 a. The next meetings are Tuesday February 17, March 2, March 16, and March 30.
287 The election is March 10. On February 9 at 6 PM, we will hold a public meeting
288 for folks to come in and talk about their hopes for the next Town Manager. Ms.
289 Belanger said the SAU 16 Deliberative Session is Wednesday.
290
291 10. Other Business
292 Mr. Papakonstantis said this year's annual report is dedicated to Rob Ficara, who
293 is a decades-long community leader.
294
295 11. Non-Public Session
296 a. There was no non-public session called at this time.
297
298 12. Adjournment
299 **MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to adjourn. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 4-0 and
300 the meeting was adjourned at 8:40 PM.
301
302
303 Respectfully Submitted,
304 Joanna Bartell
305 Recording Secretary