Select Board Meeting
Monday June 29, 2026
6:30 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 Town Manager Paul Cohen were present at this meeting.

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Papakonstantis at 6:30 PM. The Board went downstairs to the Wheelwright Room for interviews.

2. Board Interviews
    a. Ethan Fishbaugh for the Conservation Commission
    b. Ryan Kelly for the Planning Board
    c. Dan Provost for the Trustees of the Robinson Fund

The Board reconvened in the Nowak Room at 7 PM.

3. Police Department - Swearing In
    a. Chief Josh McCain introduced Christopher Dowd, and Town Clerk Jen Shupe swore him in as an Officer.

4. Proclamations/Recognitions
    a. Daughters of the American Revolution – First Place National Video Contest

       Mr. Papakonstantis recognized the Exeter Chapter of the DAR, which placed first place in a National video contest.

5. Public Comment
    a. Mark Furlong of 20 Forrest Street said he has a suggestion for an addition to the agenda: the Board should mention items scheduled for the next meeting. Mr. Furlong also said he appreciates the effort to get the Park Street Bridge meeting on the agenda. He's part of a neighborhood group with 30 members which has appointed a liaison to the Town. The liaison person has already met with Mr. Papakonstantis. The group plans to present the Board with a petition regarding the bridge at the next meeting.

       Mr. Papakonstantis said the Board plans to offer an update on July 13. He will continue to meet either with the liaison or the group as appropriate.
    b. Keith Whitehouse of Westside Drive said he is a member of the Conservation Commission, but he is speaking for himself. He has concerns about the proposed auto dealership on Portsmouth Avenue. There's a proposed retaining wall that's 23 feet high, which he demonstrated with a tape measure. He said it will require hundreds of truckloads to fill that area. Usually you can tell if there's been

flooding by the trash, and the trash has come up pretty high in this area. It's wetlands. He's not sure why we'd allow this to happen when the Conservation Commission is opposed.

c. Megan Ramundo of 71 Park Street said she's very concerned about the train bridge. To get to the meeting, she and her family had to go around the train bridge, which added time to our bike ride. The neighborhood is connected to that bridge. She doesn't want dangerous material to be shipped on the train, or a double-decker train running there. There's no public listing for how many freight trains come through this town, although you can buy it from the corporations. She cringes every time she hears a horn go by. It is a safety issue. We're cut off from the Hospital. She doesn't want to walk down Route 27 and cross the railroad tracks to get her kids to school. She doesn't want Exeter to look like Bergen County and have hazardous waste going through.

6. Discussion/Action Items

a. Water/Sewer Rates Discussion

Finance Director Corey Stevens said we're considering a Water/Sewer rate increase. For the last year, we've been monitoring the Water/Sewer Fund to decide how to set our rates. We've known that a new surface water treatment plant may be in the offing in the next 4-5 years. Mr. Cronin is working with our vendor to suss that out, so we need to look at our rates and our operating budget. We did a $50M Wastewater Treatment Plant several years ago, and we're at that point with Water. The plant may be $40M and needs to be built in the early 2030's. We want to prepare for that now, rather than putting through a big rate increase later. On the Sewer side, we have $18M in projected State Aid grants, but there is no guarantee of that. The next State budget is in 2027. If that grant were to go away, that would be a hole in our operating budget. We did some modeling and put together a 6-year forecast showing expenses and revenue at various increase levels. We have a Water Fund balance that is healthy. On the Sewer side, it's about keeping rates moving forward in tandem with what we expect for budget increases.

Mr. Stevens said he shared this presentation with the Water/Sewer Committee and they agreed to the proposal for 2026, but wanted to see what happens in 2027. The fund balance as a percentage of revenue is higher than 40%, but we're planning for a Water Treatment Plant and that the State Aid grant may not always be there. In Sewer, we are planning to use fund balance when we tackle the High Street Cross-Country Line in 2029 or 2030.

Mr. Chartrand asked when we did the latest rate study. Mr. Stevens said Underwood did it in 2023, and we implemented the first of their rate increases in 2024. We didn't make increases in 2025. Mr. Chartrand said the idea of slow steady rate increases is in line with that rate study. Mr. Stevens said it's in line on the Sewer side. He doesn't believe we had the Surface Water Treatment Plant in mind when they did the 2023 study. Mr. Chartrand said it was probably in the background somewhere. Mr. Stevens said the increases they were modeling don't include the double-digit increases we're looking at.

Ms. Belanger asked if we have to reapply for the State Aid Grant. Mr. Stevens said no, we had a commitment of $18M when the project started. It just renews as part of the biennial budget of the State. As far as we know, we will continue to receive $1M a year.

Ms. Belanger said she appreciates the gradual rate increases.

Mr. Stevens said we're recommending just the 2026 rate increases. The rates would be effective July 1, so the first district that gets billed in October would be the first to realize these new rates. Mr. Papakonstantis said the Water/Sewer Advisory committee recommended unanimously to bring these rates to the Select Board. Mr. Chartrand said there was one individual in attendance who felt very wary, but he feels that if we commissioned a study we'd be fools not to take their advice.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to adjust the Water usage fee by an increase of 6% effective July 1, 2026. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to adjust the quarterly Water service fees by an increase of 23% effective July 1, 2026. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to adjust the quarterly Sewer service fees by an increase of 12% effective July 1, 2026. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

b. Budget v. Actual Results (Unaudited) at 12/31/25 compared to 12/31/24

Mr. Stevens said he gives this update once a year. Going forward he will try to put a presentation together monthly as well. Regarding revenues and expenses, our revenues are fairly stable and we're meeting expectations. In our General Expense lines, in everything other than labor, we do a pretty good job of budgeting. We continue to see surpluses on the expense side due to our labor "savings" because of staff vacancies. In 2025, we billed just over $68M in property tax bills, an increase of $3.8M over the previous year. At the end of the year, we had collected 97% of that billing. Of the $68M, 70% or $47M went to schools; $2.2M went to the county; $3M was retained by the TIF; and the Town received $15.5M in 2025 from property tax revenue. The General Fund also gets income from Motor Vehicles, Meals and Rooms, and building permits; that revenue was $8.2M, which was an increase of $500,000 over the prior year. Motor Vehicles was at $3.7M, an increase of $161,000 or 5%. Building Permits were at $707,000 in 2025, a significant increase over the prior year. The Academy is doing a renovation on Academy Hall which was permitted at $375,000. Meals and Rooms was $1.6M, a modest increase of $34,000. Our revenue from Departments was $1.1M in 2025, about $52,000 more than the prior year; this includes Police Detail, reimbursements, and solid waste fees at DPW. We had a decline in interest income, which totaled $564,000 in 2025, because Interest rates lowered a tad in 2025 and we moved some money around. The EMS Fund turned back $300,000 to the General Fund; it was $260,000. The Sick Leave Trust Fund paid out $158,000 for buyouts when people retired. We used $650,000 of Fund Balance to set the tax rate in 2025. We had $25.4M in General Fund revenue, a surplus over budget of $750,000.

General Fund expenses were $23.7M, or 96% spent. This is consistent with 2024, when we spent 97% of the budget. Personnel costs make up 70% of the General Fund budget. Personnel “savings” was $900,000 in 2025. General Government was 6% of the General Fund at $1.5M or 97% of budget spent. We were looking for a Human Resources Director for much of 2025, which led to a savings. Mr. Chartrand suggested that instead of a savings, it’s “money accumulated but opportunity lost.” Mr. Stevens said the Town Manager’s Department was under budget at 95%. Finance was 5% of the overall budget, and had total spending of $1.2M or 97% of budget spent. IT came in lower; they’ve been searching for a new IT assistant, which saved $43,000 between wage and benefits. Planning and Building spent just under $750,000, or 94% of budget. In Public Safety, the Police and Fire Departments are 19% of the budget each. Police were at $4.6M, or 95% of budget spent. There were some staffing shortages in Patrol, and it was $94,000 under budget. They had three openings at year-end but the Chief has appointed two Officers this year. Fire was $4.5M spent, or 98%. There were some savings in the suppression division. Public Works is 24% of the budget. The total spend was $5.8M, or 92% of budget. We had heavy snow at the beginning and end of 2025. There was $474,000 spent in the snow budget, $185,000 over budget. Despite the overage, we decided not to tap into the Snow and Ice Deficit Fund, given the surplus in the Operating Fund budget. The Snow and Ice Fund has $276,000 in it presently. In Public Works Administration, budget spent was 67%. Both Engineering positions are vacant. Streetlight costs were $30,000 under budget. We continue to see positive gains from our investment in new streetlights. The garage was at 49% of budget spent; they went from two down to one staff member but now are fully staffed at three.

In Welfare, the total spent was $183,000, which was slightly over budget. The greatest demand is housing and shelter costs, which were $37,000 over budget. We have partners in the community that make contributions, so Welfare ended in a positive position

Debt Service was at $1.9M for the year. This was down $111,000 due to retiring debt during the year. Capital Outlay was at $314,000, or 88% of budget, which accounts for purchases of vehicles and equipment. In Payroll Benefits and Taxes, $158,000 was spent for sick leave buyouts.

The Unassigned Fund Balance was about $6.6M - we are going through an audit right now. It was $5.99M in the prior year, about $600,000 less. That puts us at 8%; the DRA’s recommended percentage is between 5% and 17%.

Ms. Belanger said regarding snow removal, we might want to look at the bottom line number this year. People with limited eyesight are having issues moving through downtown. We clear our sidewalks but when the plow goes through again they can’t navigate. Mr. Chartrand said interim Town Manager

Melissa Roy really heard what we said in the ADA input session and followed through with DPW. There were resources allocated to do a better job downtown.

Ms. Belanger asked about expenditures from the ADA Fund. Mr. Stevens said we allocated funds to the Library for an adult changing table, that was the last project.

Water Fund Revenue was $5.1M, an increase of $170,000 or 3% over the prior year. 2024 was the first year we did the rate increase. 310M gallons of water were used in 2025, compared to 306M gallons in 2024, a 4M increase. Our largest revenue source is water rates; water consumption charges were $4M. Impact fees increased to $88,000. Hydrant Maintenance increased to $130,000; this is the contribution the General Fund makes to Water. Expenses were $4.2M, or 90% of budget. It was $474,000 under budget. Labor savings were $200,000. Distribution, which typically runs with eight staff, had two open positions; Treatment, which typically has five staff, had three. There were savings in Chemical Supplies, Utilities, and Consulting Services. $135,000 of the unspent money was encumbered at year end. The Water Fund had $946,000 in net income. Fund Balance was $3.7M at the end of the year.

Sewer Fund revenue was $9M, up $284,000 or 3% from the prior year. $180,000 of that increase was Operations and $121,000 was our use of bond proceeds from projects which came in under budget. This was offset by a $16,000 decrease in the State Aid Grant, at $1M. There were $6.9M in rate charges. The Septage Receiving program came back online at the end of 2025, with $41,000 in income. Expenses were $7.7M, which was $503,000 under budget. There were $360,000 in labor savings: two down in collections, two down in treatment for most of the year. We enlisted the help of an outside contractor on a part-time basis, which offset the surplus. Debt Service increased to $4.6M, a $426,000 increase over the prior year. 2025 was the first year paying on the Sewer Siphon project. The Sewer Fund had $1.3M in net income. The Fund Balance was $6.7M at year end.

In Revolving Funds, Cable saw a decline in Franchise Fee revenues, which is consistent with national trends. In 2021 we had $296,000; that dropped to $232,000 last year. We split that 50/50 between Cable and the General Fund. CATV's allocation of that franchise fee was $116,000. At the end of the year, we made the decision to allocate an additional $46,000 from the General Fund to the Cable Fund. They ended in a $40,000 deficit. The $171,000 fund balance was reduced to $131,000 at the end of 2025. The goal of that fund is to cover major expenses for equipment.

The Rec Revolving Fund had an increase of $126,000 over 2024. There were increases in programming and Impact Fees. We've been able to tap into grant revenue from the Hospital and Riverwoods for Seniors. Expenses went up for programming and staffing. Capital Outlay is below operating results because of the investment the Fund made in 10 Hampton Road in 2025. The Rec Revolving Fund contributed $235,000 to the project. $125,000 from Fund

Balance, $900,000 from a grant, $110,000 in impact fees. The Rec Revolving Fund balance was at $183,000 at end of year.

Regarding the EMS Fund, the department responded to 2,731 calls in 2025, up by 336 from 2024. Revenue increased to $962,000. Cost increased, labor rose by $51,000, and operating expenses increased $25,000. The EMS Fund contributed $150,000 towards a new communications console for the new Public Safety complex.

The General Fund had a $6.6M Fund Balance; the Water Fund was $3.7M; and the Sewer Fund was $6.7M. The funds are strong. We need to keep working on our labor challenges.

Ms. Belanger asked staff to follow up with DPW Director Cronin about whether the leak discovered caused some of the large increase in the water usage. Mr. Chartrand said there's growth but also increasing conservation. He added that 4M out of 310M is not a big number.

7. Approval of Minutes
    a. June 15, 2026

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the minutes of June 15, 2026 as presented. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

    b. June 22, 2026 Goal Setting Meeting

Corrections: Mr. Chartrand said on the final page, he would like to change the wording under item 2, on budgetary constraints for FY27. There's a bullet point "Dan Chartrand doesn't feel that we should limit the FY27 budget." It should read "Dan Chartrand feels that we should not reflexively limit the FY'27 budget to the detriment of our ongoing critical priorities."

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the minutes of June 22, 2026 as amended. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

8. Appointments

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to appoint Megan Spencer to the Exeter Housing Authority, term to expire in 2028. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Mr. Chartrand moved to appoint Ethan Fishbaugh as an alternate member of the Conservation Commission, term to expire April 2029. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to appoint Ryan Kelly as an alternate to the Planning Board, term to expire April 2027. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to appoint Dan Provost to the open voting position on the Trustees of the Robinson Fund, term to expire April 2029. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

9. Town Manager's Report
    a. Master Patrol Officer Designation - Mr. Cohen announced that the Chief completed the Master Patrol Officer designation selection: Detective Bailey Texeira, Detective Michael O'Connor, Officer Michael Ingenito, and Officer John Suglia.
    b. New Town Offices Hours Open to the Public - The Town Offices have new hours as of next week: they're open Tuesday evening until 7 and close Friday at 12:30.
    c. Assessing Office Coverage - With the retirement of Janet Whitten, we've been advertising to secure a replacement but do not have one, so we'll be contracting with MRI for that service on Tuesdays and Thursdays 8-4.
    d. The Planning Board will hold a hearing July 9 at 7 PM for the application of a 14 lot residential cluster subdivision at Exeter Country Club driving range. Mr. Chartrand said we were in conversation with them about the Conservation Easement, did they reach out to us again? Mr. Cohen said we have to secure the agreement, he'll try to get that in front of the Board.
    e. In Public health, over the weekend there was a positive Jamestown Canyon virus mosquito in Exeter. The State does not consider this a significant heath event at this time.
    f. Notification from NH DES that they approved with conditions a waste collection, storage, and transfer facility in Epping located at 270 Exeter Road. Mr. Chartrand said NH DES forced us to build the wastewater treatment plant but now approved this project in the same watershed.
    g. HB 340 pertains to electioneering by public employees. The concern is that this may expose public employees to liability when they are trying to provide information and discussion to the community. We think this will detract from information that should be provided to the public. Mr. Papakonstantis said he wants to authorize a letter to the Governor.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to send a letter opposing HB 340 to Governor Ayotte and authorize the Chair of the Select Board to sign that letter. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

10. Select Board Committee Reports
    a. Ms. Gilman said the 250th celebrations are beginning. There is a calendar online with upcoming events. The Historic District Commission approved a building at Front and Center Street. It will be a 5-unit residential property. The applicants worked with the HDC well.
    b. Ms. Belanger attended the Planning Board, where there was a request for minor site plan parking waiver at 73 Winter Street. The Church has a parking agreement with Shooters. That was approved with conditions. An application from Phillips Exeter was tabled because the ZBA granted a rehearing. An application for Pine Crest Mobile Home park was approved for a building and driveway to store maintenance equipment on site. Two members of the public were there in support. There was an application for Stone Arch development, a

proposed cul de sac off Brentwood Road. There's a sitewalk 5 Brentwood Road tentatively scheduled for July 14 at 5 PM.

c. Ms. Cowan had no report.
d. Mr. Chartrand attended the Facilities Advisory Committee, along with Mr. Cohen. There was discussion and an update on the new Public Safety building. We discussed the Facilities Assessment work. Mr. Chartrand mentioned that a tree was taken out on Water Street by a car, and there's already a new tree there; he thanked Jay Perkins.
e. Mr. Papakonstantis attended a Swasey Park Trustees meeting, which was just a short routine meeting. July 11 is the annual festival at the Independence Center. Admission is free. Ms. Gilman said there will be a kids all-wheels parade with decorations at the YMCA.

11. Correspondence
    a. An email thanking the Board for the CSX presentation
    b. A presentation from Ms. Richards from the same evening
    c. An email from CPCNH regarding utility supply rates
    d. A communication from COAST
    e. The NHMA Legislative Bulletin

12. Review Board Calendar
    a. The next meetings are July 13, July 27, Aug 10, Aug 24, September 14, and September 28. September 1 is a placeholder if an additional meeting is needed.
    b. Ms. Belanger said the Planning Board CIP meeting Aug 13 is the start of the budget process.

13. Non-Public Session

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to enter into non-public session under 91A3:II(a). Ms. Cowan seconded. In a roll call vote, the motion passed 5-0 and the meeting went into non-public at 8:43 PM.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to exit non-public session at 9:17 PM. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

14. Adjournment

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:18 PM. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary

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