

Select Board Meeting
Monday July 13, 2026
6:45 PM
Nowak Room, Town Offices
Draft Minutes

1. Call Meeting to Order

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

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Papakonstantis at 6:45 PM and the Board went downstairs to the Wheelwright Room for an interview.

2. Board Interviews

a. Train Station Committee – R. Cary Einhaus

The Board reconvened in the Nowak Room at 7 PM.

3. Proclamations/Recognitions

a. Parks and Recreation Professionals Day – July 17, 2026

Ms. Belanger read the proclamation for Parks and Recreation Professionals Day:

Whereas, The Town of Exeter Select Board recognizes that the parks and recreation field is a diverse and comprehensive system that improves personal, social, environmental and economic health:

And Whereas, The Town of Exeter Select Board recognizes the importance and benefits of parks and recreation services that enrich the lives of its citizens, and help make this community a desirable place to live, work and visit;

And Whereas, The Town of Exeter Select Board supports the skilled work of parks and recreation professionals to strengthen community cohesion and resilience, connect people with nature and each other, and provide and promote opportunities for healthful living, social equity and environmental sustainability;

And Whereas, The Town of Exeter Select Board values the essential services that parks and recreation professionals and volunteers perform to provide recreational and developmental enrichment for our children, youth, adults and older adults; and to ensure our parks and recreational spaces are clean, safe, inclusive, welcoming and ready to use:

Now, Therefore, our Select Board Chair, Niko Papakonstantis, Town of Exeter, hereby proclaims and affirms July 17, 2026 as Parks and Recreation Professionals Day within the Town of Exeter. NH and hereby extend gratitude, respect and support for all of our Parks and Recreation Professionals.

4. Public Comment

- 45 a. Keith Whitehouse of Westside Drive said the construction workers did an
46 excellent job on Westside Drive. He also wants to promote the Raynes Barn
47 grand reopening on Saturday July 18. He added that today is the 926th day that
48 Pairpoint Park is not open.

49
50 5. Discussion/Action Items

- 51 a. Community Power Coalition (CPC) 2026 Period 2 Rates

52 Cliff Sinnott and Nicholas Metz from the Energy Committee were present
53 to give an update on the CPCNH rates. Mr. Sinnott said it's good news for
54 Community Power. There was a gap between Unitil and CPCNH rates, which is
55 now much narrower. The CPCNH rates for August 1 2026 through January 31
56 2027 increased by 0.4 cents per Kilowatt Hour, an increase of 2.7%. This means
57 the average bill will have a \$2.60 increase. There has been an energy cost raise
58 and a reserve adder as they try to rebuild their reserves, but they are tapering
59 that. The Unitil rate increased 2.29 cents per kWh, or 19%, because they were
60 charging less than the energy was costing in 2024-2025. That means the
61 average bill will have about a \$15 increase. Unitil's rate is still lower than CPCNH
62 by 1 cent.

63 Mr. Sinnott said we did a "Power Hour" at the Library, with six people in
64 attendance. They really appreciated the information.

- 65
66 b. Park Street Bridge Update (Neighborhood Petition – Mark Furlong)

67 Mr. Papakonstantis said at the June 15 meeting, we agreed that we want
68 to work with the neighborhood and maintain transparency. He has met with Sally
69 Ward, and plans to have an ongoing conversation.

70 Mark Furlong of 20 Forrest Street said he represents the group that has
71 formed in the Park Street/Oak Street neighborhood regarding the bridge. He read
72 the residents' petition:

73 *We, the undersigned residents, neighbors, property owners, and*
74 *concerned members of the Exeter community, respectfully request that the Town*
75 *of Exeter work with the New Hampshire Department of Transportation, CSX, and*
76 *all other parties to develop and present a clear public plan to repair, replace, or*
77 *otherwise restore safe access over the Park Street Bridge. The bridge has been*
78 *closed and needs repair. While safety must come first, the continued indefinite*
79 *closure leaves residents without a clear path forward. Our Request:*

80 *1. Formally prioritize restoration of safe access over the Park Street*
81 *Bridge as a public safety, neighborhood connectivity, and quality-of-life issue.*

82 *2. Work with NHDOT, CSX, and any other interested parties, including*
83 *ambulance services and police departments, to determine ownership,*
84 *responsibility, funding options, design requirements, and a feasible timeline.*

85 *3. Publicly present a written action plan identifying the steps needed to*
86 *repair, replace, or restore the bridge, including responsible agencies, milestones,*
87 *and opportunities for public input.*

88 4. Ensure that any plan considers safe access for emergency vehicles,
89 everyday traffic, pedestrians, Exeter's west side, and communities west of
90 Exeter.

91 5. Evaluate interim measures to improve safety and appearance while a
92 long-term solution is developed.

93 6. Keep residents informed through regular public updates at Select
94 Board meetings and on the Town website until a final solution is approved and
95 implemented.

96 We urge the Exeter Select Board to create a timely and transparent plan
97 to repair, replace, or restore the Park Street Bridge. Indefinite closure or
98 permanent removal without a replacement plan would create lasting harm to
99 emergency preparedness, pedestrian safety, and vehicular access to Park
100 Street. We ask the Select Board to treat this matter with urgency and to ensure
101 that residents have a voice in the decision-making process.

102 Mr. Furlong said the group has collected 133 signatures.

103 Mr. Cronin said following the meeting, NHDOT reached out to the town
104 regarding additional information. We haven't been able to locate a report in our
105 files, so DOT reached out to Klinefelter to see if they can get a copy directly. We
106 held a site meeting with VHB last Tuesday, where we discussed the feasibility of
107 a replacement bridge there. We held a virtual meeting with Town Counsel last
108 Wednesday, where we provided the documentation we had. We were able to
109 locate the water main license agreement that was missing. Counsel is evaluating
110 our options. We created a Park Street Bridge page on the DPW page of the
111 Town website.

112 Mr. Cohen said if you go to that website, there are 24 documents on that
113 site already. We will provide the information we receive in real time. Our next
114 focus is continued discussions with NHDOT to understand the State's role in this
115 effort, and then we will have a more informed discussion with CSX.

116 Ms. Roy said we reached out to Congressman Pappas's office, but the
117 two grants he had in mind were not applicable to this project. Regarding the
118 website, we have about five more documents to upload, as well as updating the
119 timeline.

120 Mr. Papakonstantis asked if Counsel has indicated whether CSX can
121 come in and take the bridge away. Mr. Cohen said Counsel felt that CSX would
122 need either the approval of the State or the Town of Exeter. They would need the
123 Town's assistance with the removal because of the limits of the right-of-way. The
124 Town also has a water main there. The Town has the ability to petition for the
125 replacement of that bridge. Any crossing would have to be roughly six feet higher
126 than what is there now.

127 Ms. Belanger asked if the State is aware of our process. Mr. Cohen said
128 yes, we're maintaining a dialogue. We want a detailed conversation with Counsel
129 and the NHDOT and then connect with CSX again.

130 Sally Ward of 72 Park Street said the petition indicates that there's a lot of
131 support for having a bridge. We haven't had anyone say they wouldn't sign

132 because they want the bridge to go away. We have reached out beyond our
133 neighborhood and support for the bridge is widespread. CSX says safety is of
134 utmost concern, but our concern is due diligence and making sure there's a plan
135 in place, which is not going to happen within six months.

136 Eileen Flockhart of 7 Jacks Court said walkable communities are
137 important. Main Street School is just blocks from the base of that bridge. People
138 walk down to the river using the bridge. We're sacrificing a walkable community
139 for a corporate interest.

140 Mr. Chartrand said in the Master Plan of 2017, walkability and
141 connectivity are important.

142 Doug Flockhart of 7 Jacks Court said he's glad someone is aware that
143 there's a water main going over that bridge. The bridge is unsafe, but you can fill
144 a pothole. If there are more serious issues, the bridge is only 26 years old and
145 steel bridges are supposed to last longer than that. Mr. Cronin said the deck itself
146 might be that old, but the bridge is older. Ms. Gilman said the bridge has been
147 there since the 1800s. Mr. Flockhart said it was red-listed just recently by the
148 State. Who made that decision, and why? Mr. Cohen said there's a structural
149 analysis on the website. It's not just the decking that's failing. Mr. Flockhart said
150 they can't take away the street from the Town. This is where masts were taken
151 out of the forests for the King's Navy - maybe it could be declared a historic
152 street.

153 Mark Furlong of 20 Forrest Street said he's glad to hear that removal in
154 the middle of the night could not occur. What is the process for CSX to come into
155 town and do the work? Do they need a building permit? As a Historic Structure,
156 does this need to be reviewed by the Heritage Commission? Regarding the water
157 main, he heard a year ago that they made provisions for redundancy, but there
158 were additional provisions that needed to happen. CSX twisted that into "it's
159 redundant, we can just take it out." That didn't sit well with him. Mr.
160 Papakonstantis said their comments didn't sit well with the Board either.

161 Ms. Flockhart said the current State standard is 22 ½ feet. Mr. Cohen
162 said the current bridge is about 17 feet.

163 Ms. Cowan said she wants to work with the State to come up with the
164 best solution possible. If this posed the threat that CSX says it does, they would
165 have been banging down our door, so that doesn't resonate.

166 Ms. Belanger said she was not happy with the presentation from the train
167 company at the last meeting.

168 Ms. Gilman said there's a historic survey from 2003 where they found it
169 could possibly be named to the National Registry of Historic Places. It's on the
170 website.

171 Mr. Papakonstantis said this is a priority for all of us. We're committed to
172 working with residents and continue meeting offline. We will post everything on
173 the website for review.

174
175 c. Community Business Engagement Presentation

176 Economic Development Director Darren Winham and Nate Bernitz of
177 UNH were present to give an update. CBE Community Business Engagement,
178 we engaged with Exeter's HS business program on doing "man on the street"
179 interviews and data analysis, although we didn't use their work in the final report.
180 The CBE is Exeter's document and it is dynamic; it will be further customized to
181 meet the Town's needs. Exeter is the CBE Pilot Program. When this interview
182 data came back, we used a team of people from Town and the schools. The
183 Select Board could set up a group with this team.

184 Mr. Bernitz said there were several students that participated informally in
185 the project. There was an Exeter Public TV segment and an article about it.
186 There were intercept surveys where students talked to people at the Farmer's
187 Market. He added that the student data was not used in the final report.

188 Regarding Business Retention & Expansion (BRE), this is a program that
189 we did in 2018-2019 as well as an ongoing practice. You focus on the
190 businesses that you have first. Sometimes economic development focuses on
191 recruiting large businesses, but increasingly it's focused on quality of life and
192 relationships with businesses. We ask, as a business, what are you trying to do?
193 Many businesses have no desire to expand, or would like to expand only by
194 adding a new staff member or product line. We're looking for success in what a
195 business views as their goals. Potential businesses looking at Exeter would see
196 a thriving business community. Community and Business Engagement is a form
197 of BRE where we determine what businesses want the goals to be and develop
198 an engagement plan, intercept surveys and key informer interviews with business
199 leaders. We used an online survey; conducted one on one interviews; focus
200 groups; and intercept surveys. We began in January 2025 with an MOU and
201 worked with a steering committee to develop goals. Summer and Fall we did
202 data-gathering, and Fall and Winter 2025 we did data analysis. We finalized the
203 report in Spring 2026. The next step is to begin and sustain implementation,
204 which has not yet started. We heard from businesses that they value the local
205 quality of life; they think there is local growth potential; and they appreciate the
206 Town's investment in the community, including the Economic Development
207 Office but also Fire, Public Works, Public Safety, and other municipal staff. There
208 are regional advantages where institutional anchors and organizations such as
209 the Hospital and Phillips Exeter Academy help to support businesses. There are
210 challenges with workforce and labor, although it's not a universal rule. Many
211 businesses don't have a succession plan. In the short term, the town could form
212 a group or economic development committee, something action-oriented rather
213 than planning-oriented. They should spend more time talking to businesses.
214 There was a desire for more focus groups and bringing businesses together. We
215 could also initiate dialogues between businesses and the frontline town
216 departments. In the medium-term, we could formalize these dialogue processes.
217 We should do outreach to businesses facing acute challenges. Businesses
218 complained about the uneven application of codes and regulations. A new town
219 website is a great opportunity to consider how the Economic Development

resources could be strengthened. Parking is a sensitive issue in the downtown. There was a parking study, but it's taking some time to implement. Businesses want to see some action and communication. Businesses value the downtown events, but feel that the effects of those events could be felt more. Can businesses be more involved in the planning of these events? Regarding workforce issues, there's work to do in education. If an employer needs employees with a certain skill and there's no program to teach that skill, there's a gap. Regarding communication, we should continue to identify and share success stories. We should continue to leverage regional Economic Development initiatives. We'd like to have deeper engagement with the healthcare industry cluster, which we weren't really able to engage.

Mr. Chartrand asked if there was any mention of upgrading the train station platform to a full station. Mr. Winham said there wasn't, but it wasn't a question that was asked. Mr. Bernitz said the charette and train station committee is exciting. The investment should benefit local businesses.

Mr. Winham said the charette process will have a public session on Friday August 7.

d. Front Street/Pine Street/Linden Street Roundabout Proposed Detour

Public Works Director Stephen Cronin said he's requesting a temporary road closure. Baillargeon Construction proposed a different method; instead of maintaining traffic through the work zone, they're proposing a temporary detour and closing approaches to the intersection in all directions. This offers significant advantages, reducing the construction schedule by up to two months, as well as improving safety and allowing for better paving and a higher-quality finished product. We're hoping to complete the project before the start of the school year and the September 8th primary election. If approved, the contractor will post signs this week, and have a public information meeting on July 21 at the Library. We're still working on the traffic management plan. Exeter TV will put it out through their social media channels. There would be a temporary modification to make Gill Street a two-way road and limit on-street parking. We will also do mailings. The contractor estimates this will take 4-6 weeks.

Steven Jones of 23 Linden Street said the alteration of Gill Street will be controversial. People will be concerned about how long the behavior pattern set up will last after the street is one-way again. We already have people going the wrong way on Gill Street. Mr. Cronin said we hope that the roundabout will provide some much-needed relief for Gill Street. There will be some flagging at the beginning of the project, and at the end we'll probably need some additional enforcement.

Mr. Chartrand said he supports moving through this project quickly.

Alex Richards of Locust Ave said the roundabout will have positive impacts on pedestrian and traffic flow. He has some concerns about the detours; for the folks that live on Lincoln Street, could there be some low-cost mitigation efforts to slow the speed down? This is a place where children and families

gather. He suggests using bollards or cones to create a “neck-down” effect to make cars slow down. Mr. Cronin said he can evaluate that with VHB.

Sally Ward of 72 Park Street asked if the proposed detour is in the packet, and Mr. Papakonstantis said yes. Mr. Cronin said we’d close Pine Street at Court Street and only have it open to local traffic.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to authorize the implementation of the temporary traffic detour and road closures for the Front Street/Pine Street/Linden Street intersection improvement project, subject to the final approval of the traffic control plan by the town and the Project Engineer. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

e. Reduction of Drought Restriction Designation

Public Works Director Stephen Cronin was present to give an update on the drought conditions. Rockingham County has experienced prolonged drought, which continued through the winter and into the spring. Staff recommended on May 1st that the town remain in those conditions until there was improvement, but now Rockingham County is divided between abnormally dry and moderate drought conditions. Recent rainfall has increased stream flows. Groundwater levels still remain under seasonal norms. Current conditions support a lessening of restriction from level 4 to level 3. Odd-numbered watering on Mondays and Thursdays, and even numbers Wednesday and Friday, excluding the hours of 8 AM to 7 PM. It also lifts the restrictions on filling swimming pools greater than 100 gallons and washing cars and sidewalks. We’ll continue to monitor week to week.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to reduce the current level 4 water restriction to a level 3 water restriction, effective immediately. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

6. Approval of Minutes

a. June 29, 2026

- i. Corrections: Ms. Belanger asked to update line 59 and 60 to remove #6 that there were no appointments. Mr. Chartrand said in lines 248 and 249, Selectwoman Belanger both moved and seconded the motion.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the Select Board minutes of June 29, 2026 as amended. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

b. June 29, 2026 Non-Public Session

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the Select Board Non-Public minutes of June 29 2026 as presented. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

7. Appointments

a. Resignation – Grayson Shephard – Historic District Commission

- i. Ms. Gilman said Grayson Shephard was the Commission’s Chair. This leaves us tenuous on a quorum.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to accept the resignation of Grayson Shephard from the HDC. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Mr. Chartrand moved to appoint R. Cary Einhaus of Lincoln Street to the Train Station Committee as an Alternate, term to expire in April 2029. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

8. Permits & Approvals

a. Pairpoint Park Donation Acceptance

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to accept the donations received during the month of June 2026, totaling \$2,700 for the design of Pairpoint Park, and direct that the funds be held by the Trustees of the Trust Funds in the Pairpoint Park Fund. Disbursement of the funds shall be made by authorization of the Town Manager or their designee for the purpose of designing and/or constructing Pairpoint Park. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

b. Pairpoint Park RFP

Pairpoint Park Committee Chair Steven Jones said we held interviews with five candidate firms, and they were all outstanding. We chose KZLA, a small firm from Boston with extensive expertise and experience in Exeter, who have worked with the Academy for 17 years. They would do design, engineering studies, and drawings for the park.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to authorize the Town Manager to negotiate and execute a contract with KZLA Services for design services for Pairpoint Park for an amount not to exceed \$35,000 and to take any and all actions necessary to complete the project. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

9. Tax Abatements, Veterans Credits and Exemptions

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve a Jeopardy Warrant for 87/14/5B in the amount of \$618.00 for tax year 2026. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

10. Town Manager's Report

- a. School Street Area Improvement Project - Mr. Cohen said this is public notice that the fourth public information meeting for the School Street project will be held Tuesday, July 28 at the Exeter Public Library.
- b. Parks and Recreation Pool Pump Replacement - The pool pump went down as we were approaching July 4, and it was a coordinated effort to fix it.

11. Select Board Committee Reports

- a. Ms. Gilman said the Heritage Commission awarded the John Merkel Heritage award to Tony Callandrello and the Exeter Apothecary for their restoration of the old apothecary, as well as Keith Whitehouse helping Parks and Rec on projects such as Gale Park and Raynes Farm.
- b. Ms. Belanger attended the Planning Board, where there was a continuation of case #26-3, the J Caley Associates site plan review for the dry cleaner on Portsmouth Ave, which was tabled until August 27. It's a new plan but will keep the same case number. We also had a design review for a proposed 14-acre residential cluster subdivision at the Exeter Country Club. There was a lot of

public comment and the Board voted that the status of the design review is complete. We approved a conditional use permit for 18 Oaklands Road. We had a public comment period that lasted for 45 minutes; Silas Richards asked about adding more bike racks and about the frequency of Master Plan oversight committee meetings due to a lack of quorum. The Town Planner did an excellent job of explaining the process. There will be a site walk tomorrow at 5 Brentwood Road for a redevelopment of eight residential condominium units and a new roadway, case #26-11. The Housing Advisory Committee talked about the charette and worked out the Chair/Vice Chair issue. Lindsay Sonnet will remain the Chair and Megan Spencer will be the Vice-Chair.

- c. Ms. Cowan had no report.
- d. Mr. Chartrand had no report.
- e. Mr. Papakonstantis had no report.

12. Correspondence

- a. A formal letter from DES about the solid waste transfer station
- b. An acknowledgment from Governor Ayotte on the letter we sent
- c. The NHMA legislative bulletin

13. Review Board Calendar

- a. The next meetings are July 27, August 10, Aug 24, September 14, September 28. September 1 is in reserve if the Board needs to meet. The primary is September 8.

14. 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 5-0 and the meeting went into non-public at 9:11 PM.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to exit non-public session at 9:15 PM. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

15. Adjournment

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:16 PM. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary