

Select Board Meeting
Monday July 27, 2026
6 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, 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 PM.

2. Non-Public Session

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to enter into non-public session under RSA 91-A3II(I). Ms. Gilman seconded. In a roll call vote, the motion passed 5-0, and the meeting entered non-public session at 6 PM.

The Board reconvened at 6:45 PM.

3. Approval of Minutes

a. Regular Meeting: July 13, 2026

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the July 13, 2026 Select Board regular meeting minutes as presented. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

4. Town Manager's Report

a. Park Street Bridge Update

Mr. Cohen said there is a neighborhood effort to preserve the Park Street Bridge by applying to the NH Preservation Alliance. There wasn't sufficient time to come before this Board with the application for the "Seven to Save" program, so Mr. Cohen allowed Mark Furlong to use his [Mr. Cohen's] name on the application on behalf of the community. This program was also used for the Ioka Theater. Ms. Gilman said this is just a designation, it doesn't come with any money attached.

b. New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services' Report on June 9, 2026 Annual Site Visit to Exeter Wastewater Treatment Plant

Mr. Cohen said NHDES conducted their annual inspection June 9. The plant is clean, seems to be running well, and all equipment is in good condition. The facility is at a high level of compliance.

c. Chamber of Commerce Community Guide

Mr. Cohen said we received communication from the Exeter Area Chamber of Commerce that the 2026 business guide and directory is now available. It's at their office on Water Street or on their website.

5. Police Department - Swearing In

45 Chief McCain introduced Stephen Bolduc, and Town Clerk Jennifer Shupe swore
46 him in as Deputy Chief.

47
48 6. Public Comment

- 49 a. Mark Furlong of 20 Forrest Street said he is here on behalf of the Park
50 Street/Oak Street neighborhood group. The group met last week and people felt
51 positive about the report from the meeting two weeks ago. They will continue to
52 collect signatures on the petition. He contacted the NH Preservation Alliance,
53 and they will allow us to amend our nomination with additional support. Mr.
54 Papakonstantis said we can put that on the agenda for a future meeting.
55

56 7. Discussion/Action Items

57 a. Elections Update

58 Town Moderator Kate Miller said the primary election is the day after
59 Labor Day, September 8. This is the Statewide primary. It will be held at Talbot
60 Gym. We've had assurances that the roundabout project will be done by that
61 time. The General Election is November 3. We expect decent turnouts for both
62 elections. There is a lot in the news about changes in election laws; the best
63 sources are the Town website elections page and the NH Secretary of State's
64 website, which are up to date. If residents have moved to Exeter and they have
65 turned 18 or will turn 18 on election day, they should register in advance. People
66 can register at the polling place, but lines can be long there. The deadline for
67 registering in person closes between six and thirteen days before the election.
68 People can also register by mail. If people know they won't be able to get to the
69 polls, they may be eligible for an absentee ballot, but they need to apply ahead of
70 time. Regarding students voting, school IDs are no longer valid for identification.
71 The State issues non-driver identification cards that can be used if the student
72 doesn't have a driver's license. We are looking for people who would like to
73 assist at the elections, as "Inspectors of Elections." The term begins in August
74 2026 and lasts for two years.

75 Ms. Gilman asked about the purging of the rolls. Attorney Miller said it
76 applies to voters who have not voted in four or five years. Mr. Papakonstantis
77 asked about absentee ballots. Attorney Miller said you need to have a photo ID
78 and make a copy of that to go with the application, or you have to have the
79 application notarized. There was a law passed to allow people without ID to vote
80 with an affidavit. That was changed recently, but the change was reversed by a
81 Federal court.

82 Ms. Belanger asked how soon we can put our reminder voting signs out.
83 Mr. Cronin said we usually try to get it out a week before the election. Ms.
84 Belanger asked if it could be put out early because of the holiday weekend and
85 construction.
86

- 87 b. August 7 & 8 Plan New Hampshire's Exeter Train Station Charrette

88 Economic Development Director Darren Winham was present for this
89 item. Mr. Winham said there is a 57-page report in the Board's packet. On Aug 7
90 and 8, we'll have a team of volunteers from Plan NH who will meet at Lincoln
91 Street School and walk the area. There will be two public listening sessions; this
92 will consist of break-out groups with topics to work through. This design is about
93 both the Train Station and Lincoln Street. The charette team will put together a
94 report on Saturday using the input from the public. It will cost \$5,500 to do it, but
95 we got a grant and a scholarship, and the Economic Development budget will
96 take care of the rest.

97
98 c. New Police Station and Fire Substation Project Update

99 Project Manager Paul Vlasich was present for this item. Mr. Vlasich said
100 the project was \$15.7M, and is 42% financially complete as of June 30. All issues
101 that came up have been manageable. Progress is going smoothly. The teams
102 that worked on this trimmed it down to a financially feasible project. There are 20
103 stalls under a canopy with solar panels, which was held back. There was an
104 emergency driveway onto Jillian Lane which was withheld. Parking in the front
105 was compacted. We will now roll those items back into the project for
106 construction, and we are still within the budget. We are exploring the
107 commissioning of the HVAC, lighting controls, and security. We are working on
108 landscaping options, although we have limited space for it. Drywall is being
109 installed on both floors; they are roughing in the mechanical and fire protection
110 above the ceiling; they are installing the lattice and gridwork for the lighting; and
111 the windows are being installed. Paving will start tomorrow if the weather is good.
112 In mid-August, the canopy that was on hold will start to be put up. In the fall, the
113 solar panels and siding will appear. In early 2027, we'll be substantially complete.

114 Mr. Chartrand asked if the solar panels allow the building to be net-zero
115 as the voters wanted, and Mr. Vlasich said yes.

116
117 d. New Police Station and Fire Substation Furnishings Contract Award

118 Police Chief Josh McCain was present for this item. Chief McCain said
119 he's happy with how the building construction is going. He's looking for approval
120 for his proposal for a contract with WB Mason, which will be well under budget.
121 The company will come in and install everything. We applied for a grant that may
122 offset some of the money for the trainee room, since it will be the emergency
123 operations center. There is a six-to-eight-week lead time. We should wait until we
124 hear the grant response, which should be at any time. Mr. Chartrand asked if the
125 money for this comes out of the bond for this project, and Chief McCain said yes.

126 **MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to award the procurement of furniture, fixtures, and equipment
127 to WB Mason for an amount not to exceed \$218,662 and further authorize the Town Manager or
128 their designee to sign all appropriate paperwork. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

129
130 Mr. Papakonstantis said National Night Out is Tuesday, August 4. Chief
131 McCain thanked Bruce Page for organizing the event.

e. FY26 Budget Update

Finance Director Corey Stevens was present for this item. Mr. Stevens said we're finishing our 2025 audit. There are very few journal entries that we need to make, which is a good sign. We'll have a \$6.6M unassigned fund balance, an increase of \$590,000 over the prior year. Last week we received our refundable Clean Energy Credit for the solar array. That money goes to pay our debt service, and then the project will generate revenue going forward.

Mr. Stevens discussed the General Fund revenue through June 30, 2026. In May, the Tax Department sent out \$34.5M in property tax bills. 24% of that, or \$8.2M, is allocated to the town; the rest is for the schools and county. There was a 96% collection rate by July 19, consistent with prior years. Other sources of revenue are building permits and fees; we're below where we were at June 30 of last year, but at 82% of the budget projection. Meals and Rooms tax is remitted at the end of the year. The interest income is at 77% of budget, with \$464,000 as of mid-year; we've had good luck with TD Bank. Every budget that we surpass helps us keep our tax rate low. For transfers-in from the solar array, we had \$300,000 budgeted; that is the solar array revenue, credits, and net metering fees. We're slightly below 50% collected. We lost solar production for about 45-60 days this year. Our miscellaneous revenue is 39% of budget, compared to 37% in the prior year.

General Fund expenses were 43% spent of the \$27M budget, about the same as last year. Labor costs were budgeted at \$18M; we spent \$7.7M or 43% of the budget. It's underbudget due to vacancies and staff turnover, including the Town Manager, Planning Department staff, and Public Works. The Snow and Ice budget is overbudget for 2026; we spent \$466,000 out of a \$290,000 budget. Labor challenges have led us to employ outside contractors. We have a Snow and Ice Deficit Fund, and we will likely draw on that. In Debt Service, we've spent 20% so far; we send the bulk of our bond payments in July. 2026 will be the first payment on the Public Safety Complex. We had \$11.7M in operating expenses, or 43% spent so far.

In Water and Sewer, the Water Fund revenue was collected at 50%, the same as last year. Last month the Board approved rate increases, which will take effect in October, leading to an uptick in revenue. In Water Expenses, labor costs are generally in line with expectations. We did have vacant positions, but that is offset with part-time help. He calculates that in the first six months, we saved \$70-90,000 in labor and benefits in the Water Fund. Non-Labor expenses were generally in line. There were some timing differences in when supplies were purchased. Debt service is paid at the end of the year. In Capital Outlay, a planned project has not started. There was \$236,000 net income for the Water Fund.

Regarding the Sewer Fund, revenues are consistent year over year, at 44%. We have the SAG Grant which is part of the revenue, and comes in at the end of the year. We received a letter from the State that their commitment for the

SAGs previously awarded will continue through the life of the project, so he's hopeful we'll see the total of \$18M. In Debt service, we make a \$3.3M payment on the Water Treatment Plant in December, so spending is low at this point. Our net income was \$1.2M; rates are structured to collect through the year.

Ms. Belanger said this is a good report on the solar array, considering it was down for some time.

Mr. Chartrand asked if the check from the US Treasury would have been included on the report of grants. Mr. Stevens said he believes so. Ms. Belanger asked if any other grants are outstanding; Mr. Stevens said the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grant. Ms. Roy said we're hoping to have that signed in the next month or so.

f. Recently Enacted State Laws that Will Significantly Impact the Town

Town Manager Paul Cohen said the Legislative Session is complete. The Governor has signed in 34 bills in the last few weeks. The first is the law that puts a question on the ballot in November 2026 and 2028 regarding a school spending cap, HB 1300. It requires a $\frac{3}{5}$ majority. It would be tied to the inflation index; the most recent figure was 4.3%. It allows a provision for new growth in the assessed value of the community due to new construction. The law requires a cap of 6% of the School Board's budget to be tied to administrative costs. There's no provision for the law to be repealed in that two-year period. This is now in effect across the State. Ms. Gilman said the process of this bill was shameful. It started as something totally different and the Senate did a "replace all" amendment. They wanted to do this permanently, but we got them to do it for two years. She added that towns can already propose a budget cap.

Mr. Cohen also mentioned HB 1010, HB 1588, and SB 564. HB 1010 and 1588 are tied together and allow for housing by right in commercial zones, as long as there are adequate roads, water, and traffic infrastructure. 1588 said the only development restrictions allowed are frontage setbacks and height requirements consistent with commercial developments. If a developer were denied, they could seek attorney fees from the town. 1010 limits the ability to conduct studies on adequate roads, water, and traffic. SB 564 removes the town's ability to limit the length or number of houses on a dead-end roadway, provided it does not violate the Federal fire code. There are concerns expressed in the community about approving these projects, but many of these decisions are directed by State law.

g. New Hampshire Municipal Association 2027 – 2028 Legislative Policy Conference Voting Delegate

Mr. Cohen said the 2027-2028 legislative session will start in January. Incumbents will file bills in September; NHMA will bring forward its proposals on behalf of its member communities. They're seeking community participation in that process. He will be there, but he would be willing to not be the representative. Mr. Papakonstantis said the Town Manager has historically

represented Exeter, but he's willing to do it if needed. Ms. Belanger asked if we have to make that decision tonight, and Mr. Cohen said no, it would need to be made in August. Mr. Papakonstantis asked to have it on the August 10 agenda.

h. Proposed Significant Federal Grant Rules Changes

Mr. Cohen said NHMA gave us notification of proposed changes on Federal Grants. The change would permit Federal Agencies to terminate grant awards after the project begins or change the requirements of the grant even after project completion. Projects would have to comply with current executive orders, regardless of when they are issued. NMHA would like the Board to contact the Congressional Delegation and have them take action. The Board agreed to send a letter.

MOTION [Not Voted]: Mr. Chartrand made a motion to send a letter to all four members of our Congressional Delegation protesting this change to the federal grant rules; he would like the Chair of the Select Board to sign this. Ms. Belanger seconded. Ms. Gilman asked if we should also send this to the Governor and Executive Counsel.

Mr. Chartrand withdrew his motion and Ms. Belanger withdrew her second.

MOTION: Mr. Chartrand made a motion to send a letter to all four members of our Congressional Delegation, as well as the Executive Counselor and Governor, protesting this change to the federal grant rules; he would like the Chair of the Select Board to sign this. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

i. Select Board Recommittal of Tax Collector Warrants – Paul Cohen, Town Manager

Mr. Cohen said this is the "recommittal warrant." The auditors have certified the uncollected tax balances, so the Board needs to have a formal vote to recommit those to himself as the Town's Tax Collector.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the Recommittal Warrant for property taxes having uncollected property taxes of \$26,602,532.39 and unredeemed tax liens of \$1,039,056.27 as of June 15th, 2026. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the Recommittal Warrant for Jeopardy Taxes having uncollected taxes of \$746.00 as of June 15th, 2026. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

8. Select Board Committee Reports

- a. Ms. Gilman had no report.
- b. Ms. Belanger had no report.
- c. Ms. Cowan had no report.
- d. Mr. Chartrand conservation commission, Train Station Committee.

- 263 e. Mr. Papakonstantis said the Tree Committee talked about level three water
264 restrictions and watering trees. Eileen Flockhart met with the new Principal of
265 Main Street School. EXTV is planning videos about the Tree Committee's work.
266 The Swasey Parkway Trustees met but he did not attend. At River Advisory, they
267 had a Pickpocket Dam update; people from Brentwood were there and asked
268 questions which were answered by Mr. Vlasich and the consultant. There will be
269 a public update at the Public Library on August 20. Mr. Cronin gave a DES
270 services flow study update. Tomorrow he will attend the Trustees of the Trust
271 Fund meeting. National Night Out is August 4th, so he will not be at the Pairpoint
272 Park meeting that evening. The BRC kickoff is August 5.
- 273 f. Ms. Belanger said she went to a neighborhood information meeting for the
274 roundabout detours, which was well-attended. Mr. Cohen said the tone was very
275 positive. They were excited about the commitment to have this project completed
276 in August, before school opens. He added that there will be a meeting tomorrow
277 night at the Library for the School Street project.
- 278
- 279 9. Correspondence
- 280 a. A report from NH DES regarding their annual site visit to the Wastewater
281 Treatment Plant
- 282 b. A letter from Chamber regarding the new business guide
- 283 c. A report from Mr. Winham
- 284 d. The petition submitted at the last meeting
- 285
- 286 10. Review Board Calendar
- 287 a. The next meetings are August 10, August 24, September 14, and September 28.
288 September 1 is also available if needed. The Primary is September 8.
- 289
- 290 11. Non-Public Session
- 291 a. There was no non-public session at this time.
- 292 12. Adjournment
- 293 **MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to adjourn. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0 and
294 the meeting was adjourned at 8:34 PM.
- 295
- 296 Respectfully Submitted,
297 Joanna Bartell
298 Recording Secretary