

**Town of Exeter
Swasey Parkway Trustees
Meeting with Select Board
July 12, 2021
FINAL Minutes**

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7 **1. Call Meeting to Order:** Chair Staples called the meeting to order at 7:08 PM.
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9 **2. Introductions:**

10 **Present were:** Chair Dwane Staples, Vice-Chair Darius Thompson, and Dave Short.
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Select Board members present at their meeting were: Swasey Trustees Liaison Lovey Roundtree Oliff, Molly Cowan, Julie Gilman, Daryl Brown, Chair Niko Papakonstantis
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13 **3. Meeting with the Exeter Select Board**
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15 **• Role of Trustees**
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17 Select Board Chair Papakonstantis noted it was the goal to work collaboratively with the
18 Trustees for the benefit of the Parkway. Lovey Roundtree Oliff is the Liaison to the
19 Trustees. The purpose and task have shifted quite a bit during the last 12-18 months,
20 but it is important to discuss what is necessary and not having the full history she does
21 not have the full picture.
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23 Ms. Cowan agreed there should be discussion to bring clear focus concerning the role
24 the Trustees and Select Board play in the Parkway.
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26 Ms. Gilman noted the role of the Trustees is the care of and natural aspects of the
27 Parkway and that is going to be part of the Master Plan to be developed. The Trustees
28 will decide where the African American monument will go.
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30 Mr. Short pointed out that the Trustees often hear from the public and that information is
31 often passed along to the Select Board.
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33 Chair Staples referred to a MOU from 1997 between the Select Board and the Trustees.
34 The Trustees oversee the maintenance, care and upgrades. One reason this question
35 came about was when the Trustees voted concerning the proposed kiosk. Parks &
36 Recreation asked the Trustees if they had gone to the Select Board.
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38 **• Closure of Parkway**

39 Select Board Chair Papakonstantis noted the road closure is through the end of this
40 week, on Friday. The Select Board has exhausted its authority to keep it closed any
41 longer because the emergency order expired. The Board has to have a safety reason,
42 project or event as cause for temporary closures otherwise it must go to a vote of the

43 public. He has received emails all year from those who want to close it, those who want
44 to keep it open and recommendations for a hybrid. He has had discussions with Town
45 Counsel. Chair Staples noted there is an event on Saturday, so it didn't make sense to
46 open it on Friday and close it on Saturday and recommended waiting until after.

47 Chair Staples asked if it could be made a one-way in the interim and SB Chair
48 Papakonstantis noted that per Town Counsel not without a Town vote, unless it is a
49 safety issue.. Chair Staples referenced a 1997 letter from Town Counsel to the Town
50 Manager which determine the Select Board could not close it permanently without going
51 to the voters. Chair Staples noted that when he worked down there with his landscaping
52 crews it was a safety issue. While the Trustees are not all in about how to handle it, they
53 feel the Select Board has the power to open it up and make it one way. Some Trustees
54 would like to see a portion closed for a turnaround. There is nothing in the Trust that
55 says it has to be two ways just open for pleasure vehicles. Chair Staples referenced an
56 incident where a car went into the river years ago and the Trustees closed it.
57 Personally, Chair Staples stated, he would like to see it open as a one-way from Town
58 to Newfields Road. He has had residents come to his home and discuss how they
59 would like to see it open to seasoned residents of the community. Mr. Short noted public
60 safety gives the Board a leg to stand on with making it one-way. The area could be
61 closed at the north end as more are likely to speed heading out than in, and reminded
62 that the Parkway is closed to people at dusk but not traffic.

63 Select Board Chair Papakonstantis stated he would personally like to see that access
64 and will go back to Town Counsel and get back to the Trustees tomorrow. Ms. Cowan
65 agreed and was in favor of revisiting it with Town Counsel.

66 Ms. Gilman noted the Select Board only changed parking to one side. She is inclined to
67 open the Parkway partially to vehicles and would like to see older folks and others with
68 mobility issues have access via rethinking the configuration.

69 Mr. Brown stated that he would like to see data driven results. Mr. Brown noted that with
70 the Parkway closed for so long a period, he has concerns about just opening it back up
71 without providing education and information to the public to transition. Ms. Oliff agreed
72 and proposed using the digital sign to communicate any change.

73 Select Board Chair Papakonstantis asked Chair Staples to get them a recommendation
74 by Thursday or Friday.

Ms. Gilman motioned that the Select Board keep the road closed to vehicular traffic through July 23, 2021 seconded by Ms. Cowan and passed unanimously.

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76 **Public Comment concerning Closure of Parkway**

77 Florence Ruffner who is a resident and former Trustee stated that the Parkway was
78 formed by the grantor Ambrose Swasey, for pleasure vehicles to use which at that time
79 vehicles travelled at about 5-10 mph and now travel between 35-40 mph. She is very
80 concerned about the safety of a child for instance who may have been used to going
81 back and forth while the road was closed to suddenly discover they can no longer do
82 that. The Parkway is being utilized now as never before with visitors come at 6:30 AM to

83 5 PM. She supports this going to Warrant Article and the Newfields end having parking
84 for handicapped persons and seniors and requested a better looking gate than the bright
85 orange one that is there now. Mrs. Ruffner suggested making the speed limit there five
86 mph.

87 Ann Surman who is a resident and former SB liaison to the Trustees stated she agreed
88 public safety concern is huge but in addition to consulting with Town Counsel
89 recommended reaching out to the Director of Charitable Trusts to see how much of the
90 wording of the Trust concerning the roadway be followed and respect the words of this
91 Trust that the Parkway be for pleasure vehicles.

92 Select Board Chair Papakonstantis agreed there were other steps prior to a Warrant
93 Article. The Select Board will consult with Town Counsel, the code enforcement officer,
94 and Parks & Recreation and respond to the Trustees.

95 **Use of the Parkway**

96 **i. Fees**

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98 Chair Staples noted he is not requesting that fees be raised but they are not raising
99 enough to support the maintenance of the Parkway. SB Chair Papakonstantis noted
100 fees were reduced 50% this year to help residents and Chair Staples noted he
101 supported that but would like to see the fee work for the purpose.

102 Electricity

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105 Chair Staples noted the Trustees are spending over budget for electric costs. Mr.
106 Thompson asked if electric use could be passed on as a service fee for use of the
107 Parkway in the permitting process.

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109 Select Board Chair Papakonstantis noted the Trustees have in their budget \$950 per
110 year for electricity and in 2019 the cost was \$1,445 so this is something that should be
111 discussed.

112 **ii. Permitting Process**

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115 Ms. Gilman noted the permitting process has changed over the past 18 months and
116 there needs to be further review concerning what is working for us and what isn't.

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118 Chair Staples noted he receives event schedules twice a month, for example the first of
119 the month for the coming month, so June 1st but some events have been scheduled 10-
120 12 months prior. If he could get notified earlier he could better plan work in the Parkway,
121 such as addressing the turf maintenance across from the Pavilion. Work often needs to
122 be scheduled more than a month in advance and often gets pushed back to
123 accommodate an event.

124
125 Chair Staples noted the Trustees are not interested in taking back the permitting process
126 just being better informed. SB Chair Papakonstantis noted the reason for Parks &

127 Recreation handling permits is that they can do it in real time where the Trustees meet
128 only once or twice a month. He will get in touch with Parks & Recreation to see if
129 scheduling information can be improved so that the Trustees are better informed. The
130 website is not user friendly and needs upgrade also.

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132 Chair Staples stated that documents are different and can be confusing.

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134 **iii. Commercialization**

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136 Ms. Gilman referenced Portsmouth as an example of commercialization and how they
137 work with a production company for a long-term lease in Prescott Park. This may not be
138 a reasonable comparison with Exeter.

139
140 **iv. Consideration of the neighborhoods during events**

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142 Chair Staples reiterated that the Trustees often receive feedback from the public over
143 issues they have no control over and have to explain that it's not in the Trustees' purview
144 but must pass on the information and be part of the solution. Chair Staples noted one
145 such email stuck with him, the resident stated that bands who play in the Parkway need
146 reminding that they are playing to the Parkway and not the Town.

147
148 Ms. Gilman agreed the Select Board needs to be active in relieving that problem. SB
149 Chair Papakonstantis stated he has had conversations ongoing with Town Manager
150 Russell Dean about a noise ordinance.

151
152 **• Renovation of the Parkway/Master Plan**

153 Select Board Chair Papakonstantis noted it all starts with the Master Plan and with short
154 term, mid and long-term plans including CIP projects.

155 Ms. Gilman noted the Master Plan may not be done in a month or even a year and the
156 Trustees and Select Board must work with each other in the interim and collaborate so
157 their goals match. There may be funds through a grant that Rockingham Planning
158 Commission could assist with.

159 Select Board Chair Papakonstantis recommended having Parks & Recreation, Public
160 Works and the Town Manager work with the Trustees to help them, as a resource, to
161 develop the Master Plan. Chair Staples recommended a committee be formed with
162 resident input. Exeter TV can be a good resource to involve the public.

163 Chair Staples noted the Parkway does need to be renovated. The Trustees have spent
164 \$2,000-\$3,000 pruning plants and invasives that need to be removed. The plants were
165 not invasives when they were planted but are now and the Trustees do not want to pull
166 them out leaving bare areas. The turf across from the Pavilion gets used frequently and
167 there is not enough time to do that. Ms. Gilman recommended working with
168 Conservation on the invasives and noted Public Works can help inform neighborhoods.
169 Chair Staples noted he had consulted with Chip Osborne and Kristen Murphy about
170 organic substitutes for fertilizers to improve the soil.

171 • **Other**

172 Current Maintenance Issues

173 Mr. Thompson asked the status of the repair to the roof of the Pavilion and whether
174 scheduling of the repair changed due to events. Parks & Recreation Director Greg
175 Bisson stated that repairs will commence to the roof and posts the week of August 26th
176 so that the summer concert series will not be interrupted.

177 Mr. Bisson reminded the 1993 grant with LWCF for Brickyard, Oaklands and the
178 proposed kiosk and that renovations be run by Park Services. Mr. Thompson asked him
179 if funds allocated for the kiosk were still available and he replied that he did not know.

180 Safety Concern/Use of Outlets

181 Mr. Thompson raised concerns with lamp posts that had open panels with no lock and
182 recommended the outlets be secured. Mr. Thompson recommended having code
183 enforcement look at them and bring them up to code. The outlets are being used during
184 events and long extension cords run which pose an additional safety hazard aside from
185 someone opening an outlet and being shocked. Some outlets appear to be secure and
186 others not and it is not understood by the Trustees who has keys for the locked outlets.

187 Select Board Chair Papakonstantis stated that he would ask the code enforcement
188 officer to look at them. Select Board Representative Brown raised a point of order for
189 discussion of items not on their agenda. Select Board Chair Papakonstantis noted the
190 Trust is billed for the electricity use in their budget and there may be a need to address
191 this further.

192 **4. Adjourn**

193 **Next Meeting Date:** Wednesday, July 21, 2021 at 6:00 PM

194 ***Mr. Thompson motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:06 PM. Mr. Short seconded the***
195 ***motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.***

196 Respectfully submitted,

197

198 Daniel Hoijer
199 Recording Secretary
200 (via *ExeterTv.com*)

201

202 *Zoom link for this meeting: 865 7642 7965*