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**Town of Exeter
Swasey Parkway Trustees Meeting
with the Select Board
January 3, 2022
Draft Minutes**

- 7 • **Call Meeting to Order:** Chair Staples called the meeting to order at 7:20 PM.

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9 • **Introductions:**

10 **Present were:** Chair Dwane Staples and Darius Thompson and Town Manager Russell
11 Dean

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Select Board members present at their meeting were: Chair Niko Papakonstantis, Vice-Chair Molly Cowan, Julie Gilman, Clerk and Lovey Roundtree
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14 • **Swasey Discussion, Roadway, with Selectboard**

15 Chair Staples summarized that the Trustees met with the Select Board Chair at the Trustee's
16 last meeting on December 30, 2021 to discuss the roadway at the Parkway and he has been
17 following the last few Select Board meetings and correspondence.

18 Chair Staples noted that the Trustees that were present at that earlier meeting, himself and Mr.
19 Short, liked the idea of installing speed tables, which were previously there. He reviewed the
20 proposals in the letter provided by Jay Perkins concerning the sidewalk and other ideas and
21 they liked the idea of some sort of delineation down the side of the road, rather than the
22 sidewalk. Delineation could be some sort of painted pathway with a broken line and symbols of
23 pedestrians for a walking path. The Trustees did not want to see the Parkway road closed
24 permanently.

25 Darius Thompson noted delineation makes the most sense and is economical. He questioned
26 whether they would impede plowing or a need to redirect traffic in an emergency. He is not in
27 favor of closing the roadway or taking away from the green space, which is limited.

28 Select Board Chair Papakonstantis noted that he met with DPW, and speed tables will not
29 impede plows and would be similar to the speed tables at the Lincoln Street school.

30 • **Public Comment**

31 Select Board Chair Papakonstantis opened the meeting to the public for comments and
32 questions at 7:44 PM.

33 Ann Surman of 14 Cullen Way recommended getting an answer from Charitable Trusts before
34 putting action before the voters in the form of a Warrant Article. She opined it would be
35 frustrating to the voters to vote yes and then be told they couldn't do it anyway. The Select
36 Board should find out before putting it to a vote.

37 Chair Papakonstantis noted the Board had not gotten that far ahead yet and were still in
38 discussions as to whether there would be a Warrant Article or not, but Town Counsel had

39 advised the Board what the order should be with Charitable Trusts. Mr. Dean noted that he
40 understood Charitable Trusts would work with the Town and Select Board Chair Papakonstantis
41 added that he understood Town Counsel has already spoken with Charitable Trusts. Town
42 Counsel has submitted draft language contingent on that so the voters would understand that is
43 another step in the process.

44 Gerry Hamel of 17 Little Pond Lane noted many enjoyed the Parkway when the roadway was
45 closed but a lot did not enjoy it. He noted prohibiting people from getting into a portion of the
46 Parkway goes against the purpose set by the Trustee. Other solutions should be looked into so
47 people can get into the Parkway. He would like to see it remain open.

48 Bill Campbell of 111 High Street noted he would like to see the Parkway accessible to the whole
49 Town. Speed tables, similar to those at Lincoln Street School, were there before and did slow
50 things down. If the Town were to start digging things up there would be considerable mess and
51 associated costs with drainage and sewerage underneath. He would like to keep the Parkway
52 open with speed tables and see how it goes. He noted he would like to see the Parkway
53 accessible to families with small children who often have to park and lug gear and go back and
54 forth to their car.

55 Jackie Bodsí of 8 Lincoln Street noted she was in favor of closing the roadway. She used as an
56 example children sledding while a parent was flagging cars and noted the pathway is narrow
57 during the snow and cars go faster than 40 mph. With a stroller on the sidewalk there is no
58 room for people to pass. There are a lot of parking lots near the entrance. A big financial
59 investment would not be in the interest of the community. Painting would not be clear enough to
60 those driving there. There are other ways cars could go in the event of an emergency. She
61 recommended immediate closure for safety reasons and noted there are not signs to slow
62 traffic.

63 Select Board Chair Papakonstantis explained the Select Board had the authority to close the
64 road during the emergency order but when it was lifted no longer had the authority. They
65 agreed reopening just after Labor Day would pose a safety concern.

66 Lovey Roundtree reminded the biggest priority is safety. She noted cars could cut through
67 when the Parkway is closed to pedestrians, after hours. She had no issue with cars wanting to
68 come in park and sit to utilize the recreation space for that purpose.

69 Select Board Chair Papakonstantis noted there are concerns with the present class of the
70 roadway. Ms. Roundtree noted the hurdles would be less than battling the needs of everyone
71 involved. Mr. Dean asked what that would look like. Select Board Chair Papakonstantis noted
72 it could be open only for those who are not able to walk in. Ms. Roundtree noted it would cause
73 to question who that would be, such as if you sprained your ankle.

74 Ms. Cowan noted the Board was here to decide if there would be a Warrant Article and the
75 wording of that Article would come pretty soon after. She stated she would like to close access
76 to thru traffic and is not interested in speed tables. There could be, for example four parking
77 spaces on the right, access via Newfields Road and a turnaround before the gazebo with it
78 closed after and exiting the same way. She noted she is not interested in spending a lot of
79 money in fairness to the taxpayers who are already burdened by the improvements to the
80 Wastewater Treatment Plant. Ms. Roundtree noted if there is not enough space for a round-a-

81 bout, there could be three point turning. Mr. Dean will check to see if they would still have to go
82 before the Charitable Trust for that proposal to work.

83 Florence Ruffner of 5 Pine Street asked about the driveway to the storage shed and using that
84 space as a turnaround. She noted the sidewalks are narrow resulting in a lot of people in the
85 road with the speeding cars. She noted the police department can't be expected to monitor the
86 area as they are too busy.

87 Select Board Chair Papakonstantis clarified that the Warrant Article would specify that change
88 to the roadway would go to the Charitable Trust as part of the process.

89 Don Clement noted a lot of enthusiasm for prohibiting vehicles in the Parkway but while a lot
90 enjoyed that closure, many did not. Those with mobility challenges would have difficulty walking
91 from Water Street. It is important not to close the road and not to exclude people. He raised
92 the goals of "Complete Streets" project which was for vehicles to share access with pedestrians
93 and bicycles. If the road is closed, then that spirit is not honored. He liked the idea of some sort
94 of delineation. He noted parking for more than three or four cars would be needed. How it is
95 now is working but it can be made better inexpensively. Mrs. Ruffner noted there could be room
96 for parking for more than 3-4 cars by the storage shed.

97 Ms. Roundtree noted she would like to see a visual representation of the Parkway and noted
98 frustration with talking in circles for the past two years and not having this information to make a
99 decision and not know what is and isn't feasible. Select Board Chair Papakonstantis and Mr.
100 Dean noted there have been many conversations and cost estimates and they are memorialized
101 in the meeting minutes. At the end of November/early December the Board talked about the
102 possibility of a Warrant Article. Conversations were had with Town Counsel when the
103 emergency order was lifted in June of 2021. The Highway Department noted concerns with the
104 Newfields location and the time it would take for approval for changes by the water. The Board
105 found reopening the roadway completely to two-way traffic a safety concern right after Labor
106 Day because everyone was so used to it being closed. Ms. Roundtree stated she would like to
107 see the notes.

108 Ms. Gilman noted she would be concerned with taking away green space and affecting utilities.

109 Ann Surman of 14 Cullen Way asked if the Town would have to agree to change the wording of
110 the trust language to eliminated "pleasure vehicles." Select Board Chair Papakonstantis noted
111 that was not what Town Counsel advised. Ms. Cowan noted she was interested in what Town
112 Counsel would say.

113 Don Clement noted it was an interesting idea and asked about cost estimates and Mr. Dean
114 noted in April or May of 2018 Public Works obtained an estimate of \$26,000 which may be more
115 five years later.

116 Mr. Clement opined that making a 180 degree turn against traffic to get into the Parkway would
117 be dangerous; access via Water Street would be much safer. Select Board Chair
118 Papakonstantis noted most people walking access via Water Street so that could be the access
119 for pedestrians and cars can do the loop.

120 Darius Thompson read from the 1929 Trust language which indicated the Right of Way was to
121 be used solely for park purposes, only for pleasure vehicles, not as a cut-thru disenfranchising
122 individuals. Jersey barriers could be used to delineate and slow down traffic. He expressed

123 concerns about rushing to put a Warrant Article together without looking at the long-term
124 solution and seeing what works. He expressed concerns with changing the essence of the
125 Trust and recommended seeking clarity from Charitable Trusts. He stated this needs to be
126 about the best interests of the Trust and accessible to everyone. Chair Staples agreed with
127 concerns about changing Trust language. Another option he proposed is looking into widening
128 the sidewalk. Delineation would be on one side of the road. Chair Staples asked if the Town
129 even knows if they can do any of these things as it is a Class V Road, not a Class VI road.
130 More research needs to be done to make sure the Town can do it before it moves forward. Mr.
131 Dean noted Town Counsel noted concerns with making changes to the Class V Road

132 Mr. Thompson noted the Town's syphon project will disrupt the road this year. Ms. Gilman
133 noted he made a good point and the closure for the syphon project could be our test and the
134 turnaround design could be implemented as part of that. Mr. Thompson stated that he
135 understood that the Farmer's Market would be moved by the Pavilion and there may be limited
136 access on Water Street and Newfields Road with a turnaround at the block building during the
137 syphon construction project which could be a good time to put some ideas into place; while the
138 construction is going on.

139 Chair Staples noted sledding was brought up and he recommended that was not a good idea
140 anyway, to sled into a roadway at any time, and the fence needs replacing – he wouldn't want
141 anyone to end up in the river.

142 • **Swasey Discussion, Roadway, with Selectboard**

143 ***Ms. Cowan motioned to work with Town Counsel and the Town Manager to discuss the***
144 ***draft Warrant Article at the January 18, 2022, budget hearing specific to the idea to close***
145 ***off Swasey Parkway from Water Street to the pavilion to allow traffic to come in and park***
146 ***and turn around, for a period of one-year. Chair Papakonstantis seconded the motion.***

147 Ms. Gilman noted the cul-de-sac idea started in 2016 and is in the minutes. She is caught by
148 what Ms. Surman said about consulting Charitable Trusts to see if the Town will be violating
149 anything and traffic will be cut off anyway later this year.

150 Ms. Cowan asked when the Town was allowed to be out of the Trust and Mr. Dean noted since
151 1979. Ms. Cowan called the question.

152 ***A vote was taken, Ms. Gilman voted nay, Ms. Cowan voted aye, Ms. Roundtree voted aye***
153 ***and Chair Papakonstantis voted aye. The motion passed 3-1-0.***

154 Chair Staples noted he would like to see the Class V Road classification checked on to see
155 what we can do with the road. He noted he is in favor of keeping it one-way. Construction can
156 initiate the idea of closing the road off.

157

158 • **Adjourn**

159 ***Chair Staples motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 PM. Mr. Thompson seconded the***
160 ***motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.***

161 Respectfully submitted,

162

163 Daniel Hoijer
164 Recording Secretary
165 (via *ExeterTv.com*)