

Select Board Meeting
Monday July 8, 2024
6:00 PM
Nowak Room, Town Offices
Draft Minutes

1. Call Meeting to Order

Members present: Chair Niko Papakonstantis, Vice-Chair Molly Cowan, Clerk Julie Gilman, Dan Chartrand, Nancy Belanger, 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-A:3II(a,d,l). Ms. Cowan seconded. In a roll call vote, the motion passed 5-0.

The meeting entered non-public at 6 PM and the Board went downstairs to the Wheelwright Room. The Board reconvened in the Nowak Room at 7 PM.

3. Recognitions

Mr. Papakonstantis recognized Public Works employees Joseph Pelchat and Jay Perkins, Sr., both of whom have served the town for 45 years.

4. Fire Department - Swearing In

Justin Pizon introduced Fire Department Captain Matthew Slattery, FD Lieutenant Ryan Hart, and FD Lieutenant Michael Morin, and Assistant Town Clerk Jennifer Shupe swore them in.

5. Public Comment

- a. There was no public comment at this time.

6. Approval of Minutes

- a. Regular Meeting: June 24, 2024
Corrections: Ms. Belanger on page 5, "Conney Road" should read "Connie Road."

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the Select Board minutes of June 24, 2024 as amended. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

7. Appointments

- a. There were no appointments made.

8. Discussion/Action Items

- a. Squamscott River Siphons Update

Stephen Cronin, Public Works Director, said the project is rapidly nearing completion. The outlet structure installation and connecting sewer mains on the

Swasey Parkway side have been completed and inlet structure has been installed on the Mill side of the river, and crews have begun sewer main installation in the direction of Jady Hill. Crews have been working through the remnants of an underground tank. He expects the crews will continue to complete the installation of a connection to Jady Hill. On Wednesday, a second crew will arrive to clean up Swasey Parkway and the road will be open to foot traffic for the Independence Festival. We don't have a firm date for decommissioning the existing siphons, but the project is on track to be completed by mid-August. He will notify the Board about when the final connection will be made.

b. Economic Development Update

Economic Development Director Darren Winham was present to give an update.

On Epping Road, at 22 and 24 Continental Drive, which are owned by Tom Monahan, one company is looking to combine the two properties. At 85 Epping Road or 2 Meeting Place, the Meredith Village Savings Bank will have a ribbon cutting next week. A brewery is still interested in Scott Carlisle's property which is behind Jon Shafmaster's property, but there is some legal wrangling going on. At the Gateway at Exeter, sitework is ongoing. They hope to have the paving done by the end of the summer, and begin vertical construction when the agreement with a partner is finalized. Optometrist Sarah Hudson opened at 164 Epping Road, the former Exeter Decorating Building. At 19 Continental Drive, Singh Realty Group purchased a property for a warehouse for frozen food. A company which remains confidential is looking to subdivide the Gourmet Gift Baskets parcel. The Rinks at Exeter is looking to expand into lacrosse. American West Surplus is renting 41 Industrial Drive.

On Portsmouth Ave and Hampton Road, CA Design continues with Osram Building B at 131 Portsmouth Ave. They received site plan approval for a 40,000 square feet addition. They have their access on Holland Way completed. The Blanchard property behind Osram has a purchase and sale with Saxon Brothers. There will be access and contamination issues from the Sportsman's Club for the town to deal with. It would require a variance. Regarding Donut Love, the Goodwin Family management closed its facilities. At 1 Hampton Road, the former courthouse was sold for \$14.53M. Syndero said they would like to focus on just medical tenants. At 76 Portsmouth Ave, which is a 7 acre lot, constructing three four story buildings with apartments at the former Federated Auto Parts. Newburyport Bank is constructing a new building in the Hannaford parking lot.

Mr. Chartrand asked if there will be through traffic to the new apartment buildings from Portsmouth Ave through Haven Lane. Mr. Winham said he believes yes, but Dave Sharples has been handling it.

Mr. Winham said downtown, at 45 Water Street or the Ioka, progress continues. He had a tour and it's unbelievable inside. There were concerns by

other nearby businesses about parking, and we've mostly solved the issue by ensuring the vehicles aren't where they're not supposed to be. 23 Water Street will become Pairpoint Park. At 93-97 Water Street, Allan Sweet, who owns the building Capital Thai is in, has two potential buyers. Chris Hajar at 13 Front Street would like to put light commercial on the bottom. He went to the HDC for consultation. He doesn't think they'll get any variances, but if they use the MUND [Mixed Use Neighborhood District zoning] and can provide parking he thinks they'll look at it again. Ms. Gilman said they just came in to HDC to ask what we thought and they heard plenty. It was too big. Ms. Gilman asked if we'd had any feedback about putting retail on that side of the street. Mr. Winham said he hasn't heard anything, but businesses are worried about parking. He continued with his update about downtown saying that Sync, a coworking space, is open on Front Street.

On Lincoln Street and the west side, Flamingo's Coffee Bar is open at 56 Lincoln Street and they're doing well. At 150 Front Street, Fat Hen Brewing, will be opening at the former Charlie's Ice Cream location. The Island Vibes Cafe at 97 Lincoln Street opened. Supreme Pizza reopened after the fire.

Regarding the business outreach program, there are 1,300 businesses in good standing. People can sign up via email or the website. Soho Creative Studios, the company that the Seacoast Economic Development Stakeholders hired, agreed to do a presentation at Town Hall. The TIF Advisory Committee is back up and running. The business retention and expansion group is a group of volunteers last convened in 2018. He provides training on reaching out to a variety of businesses and asking them questions about how the town can help their business. He spoke at the New Hampshire Homeownership conference. He put on a "Housing Academy" at Exeter Town Hall and around town. He is involved with an Exeter Station DownEaster focus group on upgrading our train station and amenities.

Amtrak Ambassador Bob Hall, who is not a town resident, indicated to the Board that he would like to speak. Mr. Papakonstantis said there is no objection.

Mr. Hall said last time he asked them to do something about bathrooms at the train station, and that issue is still there. The train is carrying 4-5,000 people every month. We're on our way to 50,000 riders this year in and out of Exeter. We need to help this gateway. It's been 22 years and very little has changed. There's no signage about getting to downtown. Exeter is the only stop in Maine or New Hampshire that has no services provided by the community. It's time to step up.

Mr. Chartrand asked what they're asking for. Mr. Winham said we want to find a solution going forward, whether it's two years out, four years out. He knows there's a lot of requests in the CIP, but we should put in a placeholder without a dollar figure. Mr. Hall said NNEPRA [the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority] operates the train on behalf of the state of Maine, and that entity has federal money called "A State of Good Repair" for station stops, requiring a match of 10%. There are heating strips at the station, which are required by

CRX, that are not working. The tactile strips at the platform edge are lifting up from moisture and are tripping hazards. Those are liabilities to the town.

Mr. Papakonstantis said they should come in with everything they're requesting, the price tag, and what grants or funding are available, as well as a maintenance plan. Mr. Winham mentioned that Steven Cronin said he would add some station items into the maintenance inventory.

Ms. Belanger said that the original plan was to buy the former train station building there for facilities, but that fell through.

Mr. Hall said the town has voted three times favorably to the train station. Portland is in the process of building its own station because usage has grown so much. Mr. Papakonstantis asked if they're back to pre-pandemic ridership levels, and Mr. Hall said yes. Ms. Roy asked when they do a proposal, to note short-term and longer-term projects.

Ms. Belanger asked about parking downtown. The pedestrian and parking study group was supposed to talk to the Department of Public Works about parking enforcement. We can give variances for no parking, but if we don't enforce our laws, we'll have a big problem. Mr. Winham said with recently approved residential buildings, there will be issues. Dave Sharples did this study and he's saying that we have more parking that people don't know about. Mr. Chartrand said the study had recommendations about enforcement. There's more work to be done by the vendor and it will come back to us. Ms. Roy said she and Russ had conversations with the Police Department about enforcement options. She'll come back with more information on that.

9. Regular Business

a. Tax Abatements, Veterans Credits and Exemptions

MOTION [not voted]: Ms. Gilman moved to assess a Jeopardy Tax for 87/8/A/08 in the amount of \$544 for the year 2025. Ms. Belanger seconded. Ms. Roy said this is for 2024, not 2025.

Ms. Gilman withdrew her motion and Ms. Belanger withdrew her second.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to assess a Jeopardy Tax for 87/8/A/08 in the amount of \$544 for the year 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

b. Permits & Approvals

i. There were no permits or approvals considered.

c. Town Manager's Report

i. Ms. Roy said she was on vacation last week.

ii. She's been working with various employees in HR meetings.

iii. We're continuing with the Police and Fire Staff Committee, and plan to be doing interviews in the next two weeks.

iv. We're continuing our Leadership and Executive Team meetings.

- v. MRI will attend the July 22 Select Board meeting to discuss the revaluation process

d. Select Board Committee Reports

- i. Ms. Belanger attended a Planning Board meeting June 27. RiverWoods came in for a preliminary site plan consultation. No actions were taken. There were a lot of abutters there. On June 28 there was a Housing Advisory Committee meeting. We did a storyboard with Rockingham Planning Commission just before Covid happened, and we're looking to update it with current data. It shows density and explains the value of it. She attended the Rec Advisory meeting June 26 where they discussed the 10 Hampton Road request for quotes, which have a deadline of July 10. They're looking to fundraise for Planet Playground.
- ii. Ms. Gilman had no report. She described the agenda for the upcoming Energy Committee meeting and a meeting with the Preservation Alliance, which is looking to hold their 2025 convention in Exeter. The Independence Festival is Saturday July 13 from 10 - 4, as well as fireworks.
- iii. Ms. Cowan had no report.
- iv. Mr. Chartrand attended the Facilities Advisory Committee meeting.
- v. Mr. Papakonstantis attended the first Pairpoint Park Committee meeting, which was productive. They elected officers and will be meeting on the third Thursday of every month in the Nowak Room from 5-6 PM. He is willing to continue as the rep but would need to give up another committee. Ms. Belanger agreed to take over the Arts and Culture Committee.

Mr. Papakonstantis said he attended Officer Colson's 100th anniversary ceremony.

Mr. Papakonstantis said the RFPs have been returned and interviews are set for the Architects [for the Police Station/Fire Substation project]. Ms. Roy said we had 6 responses.

Mr. Papakonstantis thanked Finance Director Corey Stevens for stepping up as Acting Town Manager while Melissa was away.

e. Correspondence

- i. A Comcast programming advisory
- ii. A document from Public Works on curbside collection

10. Review Board Calendar

- a. The Budget Recommendations Committee kickoff meeting is July 24. The next Select Board meetings are July 22, Aug 5, Aug 19, Tuesday September 3, September 16, and September 30.

11. Non-Public Session

- a. There was no non-public session at this time.

12. Adjournment

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to adjourn. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0. The meeting was adjourned at 8:07 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary