

Select Board Meeting  
Monday August 19, 2024  
6:40 PM  
Nowak Room, Town Offices  
Final Minutes

1. Call Meeting to Order

Members present: Chair Niko Papakonstantis, Vice-Chair Molly Cowan, Clerk Julie Gilman, Nancy Belanger,

Members absent: Dan Chartrand

Town Manager Russ Dean and Assistant Town Manager Melissa Roy were present at this meeting.

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Papakonstantis at 6:40 PM and the Board went downstairs to the Wheelwright Room for an interview.

2. Board Interviews

- a. Mark Furlong for the Tax Exemption and Credit Advisory Committee
- b. Gerry Hamel for the Tax Exemption and Credit Advisory Committee

The Board reconvened in the Nowak Room at 7 PM.

3. Public Comment

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

4. Proclamations/Recognitions

- a. There were no proclamations or recognitions made at this meeting.

5. Approval of Minutes

- a. Regular Meeting: August 5, 2024

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve the Select Board meeting minutes of August 5, 2024 as presented. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

6. Appointments

- a. There were no appointments made at this meeting.

7. Discussion/Action Items

- a. BSA Troop 323 Eagle Project

Eagle Scout James Haney discussed his proposal for a flag retirement dropbox at Gale Park.

Ms. Belanger suggested locating the box in front of the Town Offices instead. Mr. Haney said that was his secondary choice of location. Ms. Gilman

agreed since it is more prominent, accessible, and honors all of our service people.

Ms. Cowan said she'd like to see additional box designs. Low-key may be better than bright and flashy.

Ms. Gilman asked if there will be information on the box about flag disposal. Mr. Haney said he thinks that's a good idea.

Ms. Belanger suggested doing an educational video with EXTV.

Mr. Dean said DPW staff can get involved to support the project.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to authorize Eagle Scout Troop 323 to work with Town staff to place a flag box on the property in front of Town Office for the citizens of the Town of Exeter, and further, that a representative from Eagle Scout Troop 323 will come to the Board with the final box design. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

Judy Lamphere of Greenleaf Drive in Exeter asked what happens with the flags when the container is full. Mr. Haney said we'll empty and store it. We might check it every month or so. We'll host a burning in partnership with the Knights of Columbus which will be open to the public.

b. 2024 Revaluation

Mr. Papakonstantis showed a short video regarding the revaluation. Mr. Dean said it will be posted on the Town website and social media tomorrow.

Ms. Belanger said it's been a goal of the town to find better ways to communicate. She's proud to see this come together.

c. Comcast Franchise Amendment

Kate Miller of DTC [Donohue, Tucker, and Ciandella Law Offices] said we've been trying for a couple of years on the Comcast agreement amendment and giving us a higher definition channel for EXTV. They've finally come around and there will be an amendment to the current agreement. There were also some changes in the law that will be incorporated into the amendment. Comcast has approved the amendment; if the Board approves, the next step would be to schedule a public hearing. We can't negotiate on the prices, the selection, or the tiers. We can't control that there is only one cable TV company in the town. A lot of folks are dropping their cable packages and turning to streaming. This would be valid for 10 years following the amendment and would lock them into providing services for at least that time period.

Mr. Dean said the public hearing will be on September 16th.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to schedule a public hearing to discuss the proposed amendment to the Comcast TV Cable Franchise renewal. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

Ms. Gilman asked about the cable drop locations. Parks and Rec is listed at 32 Court Street, can that be changed to 10 Hampton Road? Attorney Miller

asked if they have completed the move, and Ms. Gilman said no. Attorney Miller said the new property can be added. It's not a list that can't be added to.

d. Parks and Recreation Senior Update

David Tovey, the Asst. Director Parks & Recreation, and members of the Exeter Senior Council were present. Mr. Tovey said the Senior Council has been talking about the Senior Resource Guide. We continue to refine that guide and work on other areas of liveability. We meet monthly and talk about programming, events, alternative funding, social opportunities, and ways to get information out to older adults. We received a \$30,000 grant for Senior programming from Exeter Hospital. We'll have new programs, monthly luncheons, and a Senior resource fair.

Joan Sovay of Sterling Hill said she's noticed that we have a problem with senior transportation. If the doctor tells people not to drive anymore or they have mobility issues, they lose their independence. Transportation and a mobility van for Parks and Rec would be wonderful to work on. It would have three handicapped seats in the back of the van. When we're not using it, that van would be available to disabled children for getting to camp or physical therapy appointments.

Phyllis LeMay of 6 Meeting Place Drive said Parks and Rec puts a tremendous amount of activity into events for Seniors. There should be a part time-person, that would turn into a full-time person, welcoming the Seniors and giving them information. Parks and Rec has organized some great events and we should give them the funds for a part-time person.

Barbara DesJardins of Brookside Drive said she's proud to be on the Exeter Senior Council and we want to do what will be best for all of the Seniors in Exeter. Everyone should be included. There should be a part-time person to do programs inside the Senior Center so that people have something to do every day. At the Portsmouth Senior Center, there was something going on all of the time. Hampton and Newmarket also have lots of activities for Seniors.

Anne King of 20 Chestnut Street said her husband has mobility issues and depends heavily on the Senior Center. It's only 2 hours a day 2 days a week, and she would like to see that increased.

Mr. Papakonstantis said having a part-time position in this area is a requirement of the grant. Mr. Tovey said in his memo, he said that this person would work 32 hours per week, but he meant 29 hours per week.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked if they'd talked about what it would cost to get a van. Mr. Tovey said there are a few different options: new, used with limited miles, and alternative funding. Mr. Papakonstantis said he'd like to come up with some creative ways to finance that without a warrant article.

Mr. Papakonstantis said it's important for Seniors to be around young kids. The pandemic got in the way of a multigenerational Community Center but when 10 Hampton Road became available we started moving towards that again.

Ms. Belanger asked if there is a match for the grant. Mr. Tovey said no, it's a one-time \$30,000 grant. We will spend the funds starting in September 2024 through September 2025.

Ms. Gilman said she would like the Council to propose how the van will work, whether it's on call or goes out once a day, etc.

Lynn Wallace of Exeter asked who will be driving the van. If it's an occasional use it doesn't make sense to have someone full time.

Ms. Cowan said this would be an important resource. We want to be responsive to the needs of the community.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to accept the \$30,000 grant for Senior Programming through Exeter Hospital Community Grant Funding, contingent on approval by Town Counsel; the focus of the grant will include health, wellness, and fitness programs, monthly luncheons, trips, and a part-time Senior Coordinator. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

- e. 10 Hampton Road Renovations – OPM – David Tovey, Asst. Director Parks & Recreation

Mr. Bisson asked the Board to authorize a contract with CHA Consulting for OPM [Owner's Project Manager] services for 10 Hampton Road. Last time, the Board approved a contract with HDC [Hampshire Development Corp], who recommended an Owner Project Manager to oversee the project. The project must be 100% completed by August 2025. We'd like to rely on the Police Station/Fire Substation vetting process and retain CHA.. They have time and are willing to be the OPM on this project.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to authorize the Town Manager or their designee to negotiate and execute a contract with CHA Consulting for Owner Project Manager Services for 10 Hampton Road, for a price not to exceed \$35,000. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

Mr. Bisson said we will be breaking ground with a "golden sledgehammer" for a photo opp for the Community Development Finance Authority. The Board will be invited.

- f. Permits and Approvals

Mr. Bisson said October 5th is the date of this year's Powderkeg Beer and Chili Festival. The Chiefs and Health Officer have signed off on it. This is an economic driver for the town, and other businesses are organizing events around it. It benefits Parks and Rec and the Chamber of Congress.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked if the Swasey Parkway Trustees are aware. Mr. Bisson said they may not be aware of the date but it's always the first Saturday of October. We donate \$2,000 to the Parkway for the use.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve the special event application for the Powderkeg Beer and Chili Festival for October 5, 2024, start time 7 AM and end date 8 PM at Swasey Parkway. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 4-0

g. Keegan Report Update

Assistant Town Manager Melissa Roy and Finance Director Corey Stevens were present to discuss the Keegan Report. Ms. Roy said a year ago the Board contracted with Keegan and Associates to review different items within the town, such as efficiency and succession planning. The Welfare Position, which was tied with the Senior Assistant to the Town Manager function, is now separate, which has given Pam more bandwidth to help Russ. We now have weekly Operation meetings with all Department Heads, as well as a Leadership team that meets biweekly. There's also Corey, Russ, and herself meeting weekly on the administration of the Town.

The Town Manager has a significant number of direct reports. Bill Keegan's recommendation was to reorganize the reporting structure. The Town Planner would become the Land Use Director. The Human Resource Director would be split from the Assistant Town Manager. Finance should oversee Tax and Assessing. The Town Manager would have fewer direct reports and more time for strategic planning. We're looking to implement those changes in Q4 of this year. We've started communicating with the staff that would be affected and they are on board for the most part. We've started updating job descriptions.

We would create a Land Use Director position, but leave Building Inspections by itself. The Keegan report recommended a Zoning Administrator or Coordinator, but we felt that could wait a few years.

The Human Resource Director and Assistant Town Manager position is a lot for a single person to split time with. The recommendation is to have a stand-alone HR Director. She would still oversee HR, as well as Parks and Rec, Welfare, Communications, and EXTV. This would be in the 2025 budget for BRC review.

In Finance, we have an unusual tax set-up due to a town warrant in the 80s. The tax collector is the Town Manager, but the Deputy Tax Collector functions as a Tax Collection. We would put any financially-based department under Finance and Corey, as well as Assessing and IT. Ms. Gilman asked about Water/Sewer Billing and Collections. Ms. Roy said that would still be under DPW.

These changes will reduce the number of direct reports to the Town Manager. The Welfare Department stands alone from the Town Manager's Office. These recommendations allow us to make each position more sustainable for a single person.

Ms. Gilman asked if we want to make these "Divisions" instead of "Departments." Ms. Roy said we will consider that.

Ms. Roy said the Keegan Report had a lot of additional recommendations. This won't be the last time we talk about this.

Mr. Papakonstantis said the organization was not growing with the needs of the Town. This work couldn't be done by the Board or Town Staff, so we brought in an expert consultant, who spent a lot of time here with everybody and presented a very thorough report. This was part of the Board's April goal setting

meeting and we've accomplished a lot of this work. This has been a significant improvement to how this organization runs.

Mr. Dean said no action is necessary tonight, but there will be classification adjustments coming forward at a later date.

h. Permits and Approvals: Ambulance Write-off Policy

Mr. Stevens said we are seeking to implement recommendations from the audit, specifically an ambulance formal write-off policy. Over time, the bills become uncollectible, and we need to clean them up and maintain them. He worked with Justin Pizon and our billing company to come up with a formal write-off policy. This gives us a roadmap and who is responsible for making the call on what is collectible. This has been reviewed by the auditors, our billing company, and the Town Manager.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to adopt the ambulance write off policy, 2024-01, and authorize the Select Board to sign the policy document. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

i. Sestercentennial Non-Capital Reserve Fund – Julie Gilman, Selectwoman; Russ Dean, Town Manager

Ms. Gilman said she met with Mr. Dean about the committee and how to pay for events. Ms. Belanger suggested funding in 2025. There would be a lapsing fund, anything not spent by April 30, 2027 would go back into the General Fund. The proposal is for \$15,000 but we want to have fireworks at the end of the year, on December 31, so that would be in the 2026 budget. We can reduce the ask to \$5,000 this year. This is a bigger thing than the Select Board special events fund.

Ms. Belanger said since it's a lapsing fund, it's fine to put the \$15,000 in there. If there were grant matching money it would come from that fund. The Board agreed.

8. Regular Business

a. Tax Abatements, Veterans Credits and Exemptions

**MOTION:** Ms. Gilman moved to approve an intent to cut for 46/7 for the tax year 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

b. Permits & Approvals

i. This was discussed under regular business.

c. Town Manager's Report

- i. The Police Department is applying for more radar stealth equipment.
- ii. Jen Shupe got her Deputy Town clerk certification.
- iii. The Webster Pump Station pipe was arriving last week, so that project will be starting soon.
- iv. Drillers are at PEA working on the groundwater well.

- v. The Economic Development Department will talk with SAU 16 about possible train station parking at the LSS lot
- vi. We've been working on the budget meetings.
- vii. The Police Station and Fire Substation had 4 geotech proposals.
- viii. The CIP will be presented to the Planning Board on Thursday night.
- ix. Mr. Papakonstantis asked about getting an update for a member of the public, John Greuter. Mr. Dean said he is scheduling a meeting with him.

d. Select Board Committee Reports

- i. Ms. Belanger had a Housing Advisory Committee meeting August 9. Someone tried to Zoom in but we aren't filmed or supported. We scheduled a work session on short-term rentals. There was some discussion about the revaluation. We have vacancies on the Housing Advisory Committee. Mr. Papakonstantis said he'd like to discuss ideas for changing the HAC into a work group. Ms. Belanger said the Planning Board will have their second public hearing on the CIP and regular business this Thursday.
- ii. Ms. Gilman attended National Night Out, which was hosted by the Police Department. The HDC meeting Thursday was canceled due to lack of a quorum. At the Heritage Commission this Wednesday, we'll review the status of the Pine Street historic area that we got a grant for. Our Certified Local Government Grant will be spent on a consultant who will look at the defining characteristics of each building in our Historic District.
- iii. Ms. Cowan had no report.
- iv. Mr. Papakonstantis thanked Detective Page for organizing National Night Out. This was the second year that it was held at Town House Common which seemed much better than Swasey Parkway. The Tree Committee saw a presentation of an app approved in last year's budget that will allow folks in town to take a tree inventory. The goal is for them to have a stand at the town election on September 10th. They'll also give a presentation to the Select Board. On August 15, the Pairpoint Park Committee met. They'll be working with Mr. Sharples to develop ideas for fencing.

e. Correspondence

- i. Leslie Haslam's email regarding Senior Council
- ii. A memo from our Health Officer regarding mosquitos. Mr. Dean said there have been positive hits for EEE in the area. We're beginning a spraying program tomorrow.
- iii. A memo from Comcast about a price increase for Starz
- iv. A memo on voting in NH

9. Review Board Calendar

The next meetings are Tuesday September 3, September 16, September 30, Tuesday October 15, October 28, Tuesday November 12, and November 18. September 10 is the State Primary election.

10. Non-Public Session

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to enter into non-public session under RSA 91-A3II (a) and (b). Ms. Gilman seconded. In a roll call vote, the motion passed 4-0, and the meeting entered non-public session at 8:48 PM.

11. Adjournment

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to exit non-public session. Ms. Cowan seconded. By roll call vote, all were in favor. The Select Board stood adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Joanna Bartell  
Recording Secretary