

Select Board Meeting  
Monday October 15, 2024  
6:30 PM  
Nowak Room, Town Offices  
Final Minutes

1. Call Meeting to Order

Members present: Chair Niko Papakonstantis, Vice-Chair Molly Cowan, Dan Chartrand, Nancy Belanger, and Town Manager Russ Dean were present at this meeting. Clerk Julie Gilman was not present. The meeting was called to order by Mr. Papakonstantis at 6:30 PM.

2. Board Interviews

- a. Megan Spencer for the Housing Advisory Committee
- b. Denise Short for the Sustainability Advisory Committee

3. Public Comment

- a. Mr. Papakonstantis discussed correspondence from resident Laurie Zwaan regarding Swasey Parkway. Mr. Papakonstantis said in March of 2022, there was a warrant article that proposed discontinuing the roadway from Water Street to the Gazebo. It passed rather overwhelmingly. It needed to go through legal steps, including going before a probate judge, which happened in January 2023. At that time the road was discontinued. There was a Citizen's Petition in March of 2023 that passed but was not binding because the road was already discontinued. We wanted to come up with a solution to allow folks to come in via Newfields Road and enjoy the Parkway, but it was delayed by the siphons project, which was finished in August 2024. The Public Works Director and Highway Superintendent came up with the plan we heard about on September 30<sup>th</sup>. The Swasey Park Trustees held a sitewalk in mid-September that was an open public hearing. The Trustees joined the Select Board on September 30<sup>th</sup> and were in agreement that this was a good temporary solution. Public Works has designed this in a way that cars will be able to safely turn around and park. The removal of the green space will improve the drainage of that area. Nothing here was sprung on anybody. This is a temporary solution and everything that's being done can be revised later. In terms of financing, the State Road Aid provided to the town during the pandemic will pay for it. Nothing will come out of the General Fund budget.

4. Proclamations/Recognitions

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

5. Approval of Minutes

- a. Regular Meeting: September 30, 2024

Corrections: Ms. Belanger said on Page 5, Transportation should be \$1.00.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve the Select Board meeting minutes of September 30,

2024 as amended. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

## 6. Appointments

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to appoint Megan Spencer to the Housing Advisory Committee as a full member, term to expire 4/30/2027. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

**MOTION:** Mr. Chartrand moved to appoint Denise Short to the Sustainability Advisory Committee, term to expire 4/30/2026. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

## 7. Discussion/Action Items

### a. RiverWoods Pilot Agreement

Mr. Chartrand recused himself from this discussion item.

Mr. Dean said this is the annual tax agreement with Riverwoods. It spells out what ratios Riverwoods pays for each type of building.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve the annual tax agreement between the town of Exeter and the RiverWoods Company at Exeter NH, which includes The Woods, The Ridge, and The Boulders, for the annual tax agreement, and authorize the Select Board to sign said agreement. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

### b. MRI Final Revaluation Report

Scott Marsh, a Contracted Assessing Agent from MRI, gave a report on the revaluation. Mr. Marsh said MRI held hearings from the end of August through early September. We had 382 hearings. Mr. Chartrand asked if that's a lot, and Mr. Marsh said no, 5-6% is standard. Typical concerns are the increase in their property value and the impact it's going to have on their taxes. 36 people could not attend a hearing, so we reached out to them after the hearing process. He's still being contacted weekly.

Mr. Marsh said we looked at 2 years of sales, from April 2022 to April 2024. Overall the town's median ratio for that time period was 102%. The number of sales is slowing down but values are still increasing. The guidelines are COD, the Coefficient of Dispersion, and PRD [price-related differential], measures of how close to the median ratio properties are. The COD should be less than 15%, and we were at 8%; the PRD should be 1.03 and we're at 1.01. The overall equity of properties is in line with what we're seeing. The Town's total value went up 55%. Residential properties went up 61%, condos went up 61%, residential vacant land went up 61%, manufactured homes were 146%, and commercial went up 35%. We've finalized our values and we're waiting for the Board's approval for the MS1 report so we can get the rates set. Ms. Belanger asked when they will stop meeting with people. Mr. Marsh said when we submit the MS1 the values will be locked. If people still have questions, they'll have to go through the abatement process. We're sending letters now to give the results of the hearings.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked how many changes were made. Mr. Marsh said 25% don't see a change, 75% see some sort of change, usually minor.

Mr. Chartrand asked about the increase for manufactured housing. Mr. Marsh said the percentage is so large partly because the valuation was initially

so low. Five years ago they were selling for \$30-40,000. There's a high demand for an entry level property, and a very limited supply. About 20% of the hearings were for manufactured homes and 20% condos; 5% commercial and the rest residential. Roughly 1,000 properties are manufactured homes.

Mr. Marsh asked if the Board could make a motion to accept the valuations so MRI can prepare the MS1. Mr. Chartrand said this would cut off any changes. Mr. Dean said the extended deadline for the MS1 was today.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to accept the 2024 Final Revaluation Summary Report prepared by Municipal Resources Incorporated. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

c. Downtown Parking, Traffic, Pedestrian Flow Analysis Final Report

Town Planner Dave Sharples was present to discuss the analysis. This was completed by Stantec. They presented their findings to the Board on February 12 [2024] and submitted a final report 5 months later which is pretty much the same. He added another strategy because of the Board's concern about paid parking on Water Street, to introduce permit parking in addition. We had a meeting last week on these strategies to give staff input, and he will be providing their recommendations for each strategy.

The first strategy is to share in the private parking supply. The town would identify facilities that could accommodate demand and reach out to property owners about a sharing situation. Staff recommended deferring this until the implementation of other tasks allows us to see how much private supply is needed. In Portsmouth, there are private pay lots, but we're not close to that.

Strategy 2 is to establish short term loading parking spaces. We only have 3 downtown. There is one in front of Otto, but it's only a 30 foot space and tough to get into for a tractor trailer. There's also one at the Town Hall and one where the Juicery just opened. We are in support of that; the next steps would be to engage businesses and propose striping changes, then submit them to the Board and the DPW for review. Some places do something like "loading zone until noon."

Mr. Chartrand said the ramp in front of Town Hall seems to work, he wouldn't want to remove that one.

Ms. Belanger said she likes the idea of timed spots, but businesses start to open at 10, not at noon.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked if the Board felt that it's worth looking into strategy 2, and they agreed. The Board preferred to defer Strategy 1 as recommended.

Mr. Sharples said Strategy 3 is to introduce paid parking. The utilization rates are very high on Water Street and the Municipal Lot, around 85%. That's the rate that experts say warrants paid parking. You price it to reduce utilization down to 85% or lower. They found that average stay lengths were longer because there's no enforcement, and some cars are staying 3.5 hours or more. They may not be patronizing a store but be residents or employees.

Ms. Belanger asked why enforcement is not one of the recommendations. Mr. Sharples said when you get paid parking, you get civilian enforcement, and

the revenue pays for that person. The Police have been clear that they don't want to enforce parking. Ms. Belanger asked how it's enforced, and Mr. Sharples said the person can give them a ticket. Mr. Dean said we'd have to come up with a whole enforcement program.

Mr. Chartrand said there are areas where usage is so high and for extended periods that we need paid parking there. He would also like to see parking for just a short time not be charged.

Ms. Belanger mentioned that the Police Department does enforce the winter parking ban.

Mr. Sharples said Strategy 4 is to expand permit parking. When you have paid parking, those people who aren't just there for a few minutes aren't going to park there anymore. They're going to go somewhere that's close but free. There's a lot of parking on Elliot and Elm Streets. Ms. Belanger asked if it would be the same permit parking process as the Pleasant Street winter parking.

Mr. Chartrand said Phillips Exeter got approval for a large building with parking that's not being used because we're not regulating parking. He's in favor of bringing a consultant on to set up a permit program for these streets and areas.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked if there could be spaces for visitor parking. Mr. Sharples said he'd have to look into how that would work.

Mr. Sharples said Strategy 5 is Wayfinding and Signage. Staff is supportive of this but it's all part of what else we decide to do.

Mr. Sharples said Strategy 6 is parking ambassadors downtown. Staff recommended deferring this strategy until we decide what other strategies we go with. We questioned whether it would be viable given the size of Exeter. Mr. Chartrand said it would be tough in this labor market.

Mr. Sharples said Strategy 7 is improved signage and markings for bicycles. We were supportive of this from a public safety perspective but wanted more details. The Board were generally in support of pursuing this. Mr. Chartrand said we have to find a way to have some street in the downtown that doesn't have angled parking so bicyclists are not in danger of being hit when people are backing out. Mr. Chartrand said the buildings are set and the sidewalks are at minimum width now. Where do you get the space? That's why they thought of sharrows, so you are in the lane acting like a car. The problem is that experienced cyclists can keep up with traffic but families and kids can't. They did put a bike lane in where there is parallel parking.

Mr. Sharples said Strategy 8 is to establish a new truck route. Ms. Belanger said we have four DOT routes going through downtown. Mr. Sharples said it would be a process to work through. Staff thought this strategy should be deferred until we have a clearer picture of a problem, if any. Ms. Belanger said large trucks take up both lanes coming into town by Sea Dog. Mr. Sharples said it's not ideal to have them downtown, but is it worth exploring a new route?

Mr. Sharples said Strategy 10 is to adjust zoning for small-scale development. We were concerned that this could affect MUND developments. It's

up to the Planning Board to do Zoning amendments, so with the Board's approval he could bring it to them. The Board agreed.

Mr. Sharples said Strategy 11 is to revise the winter parking ban. Currently it's December 1 - March 15, or 4.5 months. There are various ways to revise it. We could call for a ban only during a snow emergency. If you're using a storm-by-storm approach, you have to put something like blue lights up to notify people. Manchester does bans on one side of the street. Staff is concerned about doing it right so if there's no need we wouldn't move forward. Mr. Chartrand said there's inertia on this. We've had a straight ban on public parking overnight during the winter. We need to look at a system that allows folks more leeway. It's not a crisis, but we should look at it over the next year or two. Mr. Papakonstantis said there was a Citizen's Petition that passed overwhelmingly to overturn the winter parking ban, but it was reestablished by the Police, Fire, and DPW. He wants to hear from the current Department heads about their concerns about safety. Ms. Belanger said she'd like to hear from the DPW on other options for winter parking. Mr. Sharples said he thinks they're getting ready to make those recommendations.

Mr. Sharples said Strategy 12 is to reconfigure the bandstand intersection. The bandstand would stay, but we would add green space to extend the public space in front of Town Hall. There would be a 4-way stop past the bandstand. There's already basically a 3-way stop. This would remove 8 of the 29 parallel spots that are there. Staff supported the concept but thought further investigation was warranted. It could be put into a future CIP. Mr. Papakonstantis said he likes the green space. Is the 4-way stop going to make that intersection safer? If so, you could sell the loss of 8 spaces. He would like to see more analysis on this. Mr. Chartrand said the voters will have to approve this. This concept would make downtown a gem. To create that public space adjacent to our most important public building would be a home run. There's no doubt it would make that intersection safer. Ms. Belanger said she loves the connection between Town Hall and the bandstand. Ms. Belanger asked if the private roadway opposite the intersection would stay open. Mr. Chartrand suggested it could be made a one-way road going in. It's very hazardous to pedestrians for a car to be poking up there.

Mr. Sharples said although we're saying green space, grass in this area would be hard to maintain, but there are a lot of options for a nice space downtown.

Mr. Chartrand said a lot of the other things we're considering will alleviate congestion, so they may make this seem more feasible. This would not be the thing to lead off with.

Mr. Sharples mentioned that a Park Mobile vendor emailed him and said that there are already 5,000 registered Park Mobile app users that reside in Exeter, using it somewhere else.

Mr. Sharples said Strategy 13 is multi-modal improvements. Each of the proposals would have to be analyzed on their own merits. Staff recommended

holding off on these until after other strategies are implemented, and should be put in on a trial basis. One proposal is to adjust Clifford and Franklin, adding pedestrian bump-outs. These are big changes and might be a longer-term goal. The Board agreed that this could wait.

Mr. Sharples said Strategy 14 is to reimagine Water Street's parking. Currently it's 60-degree angled parking. They recommend changing that to parallel parking. It would be a little less than half; there are 75 spaces now and there would be 46 spaces in this proposal. You could add some on the opposite side because you would have more width to the road. Staff was unsupportive of this because we were concerned about losing spaces and the safety issues and congestion caused by parallel parking. Mr. Chartrand said it's hard to imagine this working. If we vigorously push parking to permitted spots it might be possible to see how this would work, but we'd have to see improvement in the congestion along Water Street. This doesn't feel doable right now. Ms. Belanger said she would be concerned about a bike lane along the area with car doors being opened.

Mr. Sharples said we're going to hold off on Strategy 1, the shared parking supply. Strategy 2, we're going to look into it. Strategy 3, Paid parking and permit parking, we're going to look into it. We're going to start looking at wayfinding and signage. We'll defer the parking ambassadors. Improve markings and signage for bicycles is a yes, and we'll bundle that in with wayfinding. We'll further investigate but keep on hold the establishment of a truck route. Zoning will go to the Planning Board. We'll continue to explore a revised parking ban over the next year or two. The Board was supportive of the reconfiguration of the band-stand, but longer-term. We'll start looking at that from an engineering perspective. The multi-modal improvements would be a longer-term project, not an immediate project. Reimagining Water Street would be a longer-term examination. The Board agreed with this summary.

## 8. Regular Business

### a. Tax Abatements, Veterans Credits and Exemptions

- i. There were no abatements, credits, or exemptions at this time.

### b. Permits & Approvals

#### i. Rec Revolving Fund Request

Mr. Sharples presented on behalf of Mr. Bisson. Mr. Sharples said he [Mr. Sharples] has taken over as project manager for the 10 Hampton Road renovations. The Facility Advisory Committee suggested that based on his familiarity with construction and project management. We've been trying to get a contract together. The CDFA specifies that you must get at least 3 bids for any professional or trade contracts. We came to you to engage Hampton management Corp as the Design Builder, so they will get 3 quotes for everything but the design. They've done some work with their preferred firm already. This project needs to be done by August,

when the Federal Funding runs out. If we spend the design funds out of the Rec Revolving Funds, that would eliminate the need for 3 bids. We met with the CDFA and they were ok with that. We got quotes in the high \$40,000s for the design, so we're asking for a cost not to exceed \$60,000. The fund has a balance of \$126,000 and can absorb this expenditure.

Mr. Papakonstantis said he's glad Mr. Sharples is involved and he supports this funding strategy. Mr. Chartrand said he also supports Mr. Sharples being involved, because he's very good at this. Ms. Belanger said she thinks this is a great idea.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to authorize Parks and Rec to use Recreation Revolving Funds for the necessary design work for 10 Hampton Road through HDC, not to exceed a price of \$60,000. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

ii. Steven Cronin

DPW Director Steven Cronin, who was present remotely via Zoom, requested that the Board approve a contract with CMA Engineers for \$377,000 for School Street Area improvements. This would address aging and undersized sewer, water, and drainage infrastructure. CMA has been pre-qualified by the town as part of the Salem Street project. They secured us a CRF loan of \$4.8M with 35% principal forgiveness.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to award the School Street Area Improvement project contract design to CMA Engineers in the amount of \$377,000 and further authorize the Town Manager or their designee to sign all associated contract paperwork. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

iii. Flag Drop Box

Ms. Belanger said they answered her questions to her satisfaction. She'd like them to check in with the Town Manager's Office when they check the box every month. If it's not being utilized, EXTV could promote it. Mr. Papakonstantis said he'd like to see that either way.

c. Town Manager's Report

- i. Mr. Dean said we've updated the downtown mobile food vending license application. The RFP is in place to be released tomorrow. We put into the RFP that there would be no propane or the selling or serving of alcohol. If the vendor had a Health Inspection that yielded more than 2 critical items, that could be a disqualification.
- ii. The Police Station/Fire Substation Project had a Construction Manager RFQ put out. We're doing weekly check-ins with TGAS, the Architect of the project. There's been a discussion about governmental land uses and how it affects the wetlands on the site. We can use the existing Commercial Drive as a secure means of ingress and egress.
- iii. We had an issue with the filter media at the groundwater treatment plant.

We had to purchase additional green sand from a neighboring community.

- iv. The Epping Road widening phase 1 is nearing completion. Phase 2 would be in spring and summer 2025. There will be a warrant article forthcoming.
- v. We hired a new Firefighter, Kieran McCabe. We're up to full staffing in the Fire Department, but we have one injury that leaves us short.
- vi. We hired a new Police Officer, Aaron Hurlburt of Dover.
- vii. Household Hazardous Waste day is this Saturday, October 19.
- viii. Health Insurance rates came in at an 18% increase year over year. We're hoping to have an updated budget before the budget meeting this Friday.

d. Select Board Committee Reports

- i. Ms. Belanger attended the Arts and Culture Advisory Committee meeting. The chair dollies were purchased but they're too big. We were going to ask Greg to purchase the next set. We can't return them, we've had them for too long. The project for Town Hall was discussed. They wanted the proposed plans to be made public, but they're still being vetted. We shouldn't have started the meeting because we didn't have a quorum, so all of the votes will need to be redone. The Planning Board meeting was canceled. The sculpture from Joe Grey still needs a waiver from Parks and Rec.
- ii. Mr. Chartrand attended a Conservation Commission meeting. They heard an application for a lot on Portsmouth Ave, near the McDonalds and the Volvo dealership. There's a request for a large amount of fill. They asked for more time.
- iii. Ms. Cowan had no report. She said we have an election coming up November 5th and it's your civic duty to vote.
- iv. Mr. Papakonstantis said we had a BRC kickoff October 2. There was a Pairpoint Park Committee meeting. There was a lot of discussion about multiple options and some confusion about the sequencing. We appointed 11 talented and experienced folks that have the best interest at heart in putting together a gem of a park. There are some who are anxious to get something going while others want to be more deliberate and get buy-in from the community. There was input from Mr. Sharples that wasn't well-received by some. The goal of the next meeting is to have something to come back to the Select Board with and to reset.

e. Correspondence

- i. A flier from Parks and Rec on a Senior Resource Fair
- ii. A flier from DAR for an event at Winter Street Cemetery
- iii. A memo from the Sustainability Planner Kristin Murphy on the Raynes Barn improvement project.
- iv. A letter from the Chair of the Board at RiverWoods, Susan Desjardins,



letting the Board know about how they're notifying their residents about future plans.

- v. Several emails from David Kovar, which Mr. Dean has followed up on.

9. Review Board Calendar

- a. The next meetings are October 28, Tuesday November 12, November 25, December 9, and December 23.

10. Non-Public Session

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to enter into nonpublic session under RSA 91A:3II(a). Ms. Cowan seconded. In a roll call vote, the motion passed 4-0 and the meeting entered non-public session at 8:58 PM.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to exit non-public session. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 4-0 with a roll call vote.

**MOTION:** Mr. Chartrand moved to seal the minutes until the matter is resolved. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

11. Adjournment

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to adjourn the meeting and Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 4-0 and the meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Joanna Bartell  
Recording Secretary