

Select Board Meeting
Tuesday November 12, 2024
6:30 PM
Nowak Room, Town Offices
Final Minutes

1. Call Meeting to Order

Members present: Chair Niko Papakonstantis, Vice-Chair Molly Cowan, Clerk Julie Gilman, Dan Chartrand, Nancy Belanger, and Town Manager Russ Dean were present at this meeting. The meeting was called to order by Mr. Papakonstantis at 6:30 PM.

2. Board/Committee/Commission Interviews –

- a. EC Heath for the 250th Anniversary Committee
- b. Jim Breeling for the Sustainability Advisory Committee
- c. Julie Gaunt for the Sustainability Advisory Committee

3. Public Comment

- a. The Exeter Seahawks Football Team was present. Mr. Papakonstantis said that they just completed their season at 9-0 and won the championship game against Dover. Coach Robert Garcia spoke about the team.
- b. The Webelo Scouts pack 323 were present and spoke about their ideas for the town.

4. Proclamations/Recognitions

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

5. Approval of Minutes

- a. Regular Meeting: October 15, 2024

Corrections: Ms. Belanger said on page 4, it says “Ms. Belanger said this should be coordinated with the Pleasant Street winter parking,” but it should say “Ms. Belanger asked if it would be the same permit parking process as the Pleasant Street winter parking.”

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the minutes of October 15, 2024 as amended. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

- b. Regular Meeting: October 28, 2024

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the minutes of October 28, 2024 as presented. Ms. Gilman seconded. Ms. Cowan abstained, as she had not been present at the October 28 meeting. The motion passed 4-0-1.

6. Appointments/Resignation

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to accept with thanks the resignation of Judy Rowan from the Pairpoint Park Committee. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

Mr. Dean said the Board should select a rep for the Tax Exemption & Credit Advisory Committee. The first meeting is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday December 4. Ms. Gilman asked if the Deputy Tax Assessor would be involved in these meetings, and Mr. Dean said yes. Ms. Cowan agreed to be the rep and Ms. Gilman will be the alternate.

7. Discussion/Action Items

a. General Election Report

Moderator Kate Miller, Supervisor of the Checklist Vicky Nawoichyk, and Deputy Town Clerk Jennifer Shupe were present to discuss the recent election. Attorney Miller said it was a huge turnout with over 8,000 people, or 80% of the voters. We had help from DPW, who was able to manage traffic in that area. The Clerk did a magnificent job recruiting and training the 50 volunteers. Otto had free pizza for all the workers. Some people weren't able to stand in line long enough to come in to vote, which we need to look at for future elections. We might consider splitting into two precincts or finding another location that would fit more people. We should try something different at one of the town meetings before another big election. Jennifer checked in every absentee voter, which took 11 hours. The check-in clerks were processing 600 people an hour, which kept the line moving.

Ms. Nawoichyk said it wasn't a huge turnout for new voters, there were about 750. That area was the longest wait for voters. We had 4 extra Supervisors in addition to the regular 3. Our team will be working through another weekend to process all the paperwork.

Ms. Shupe said everything seemed to go very smoothly. She thanked her team in the Town Clerk's Office, which has been handling people coming in to register for months.

Attorney Miller said because of the poll pads, the checklist process was quicker and more accurate. She's looking forward to getting new vote tabulation machines which are less prone to jamming. We could also use one additional poll pad.

Ms. Belanger thanked the team, and the voters for coming out. She said the turnout was 80% and asked what the turnout for March is. Ms. Nawoichyk said it's usually around 1,800 voters.

Ms. Cowan said there is a new law that if it had been in effect, they would have had to deny 73 people their vote, because they did not bring proof of citizenship. Ms. Nawoichyk said it's not just proof of citizenship, it's all four pieces of documentation. We as a community could do a better job of advocating at the State level to make sure we have accessible voting and ensure everyone is allowed and encouraged to access the ballot.

b. Planet Playground Sponsorship & Funding Campaign Approval

Greg Bisson, Parks & Recreation Director, was present to discuss this request. The Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant has made considerable

progress. The National Park Service has stamped it and it's now back with the State for approval. They're asking for one more approval from the Board to accept the grant for \$297,500.

In the Spring, the Rec Advisory Board and a few members of the public examined the approved design of Planet Playground. We wanted to increase accessibility throughout the playground. The design meets all State laws for accessibility with poured-in-place pathways. Full coverage with poured-in-place would cost about \$200,000 which we didn't want to put on the taxpayers. An alternative is zip-tie mats for surfacing at \$47,500. We thought it would be best to take this out of the Park Improvement Fund. There are holes in them which is better for drainage than poured-in-place. The Rec Advisory Board decided to table a proposed shade structure for a year to see if we need it.

Another item is an Alta Glide, which is a wheelchair-accessible glider swing. This will cost \$26,950 with free installation, which we'd like to round up to \$27,000. The Victoria's Victory Foundation and Project Walk offered to sponsor this project at \$10,000. We also had another \$5,000 pledge. We propose sponsorship tiers for sponsors, including plaques at the playground.

Ms. Belanger said the motion for \$27,000 says that any additional funds to use toward the cost of the ADA mats, but isn't that covered in the other motion? Mr. Bisson said we could offset the cost instead of taking it out of the Park Improvement Fund. Ms. Belanger suggested saying playground enhancements instead of specifying mats.

Mr. Bisson said we have events planned to memorialize Planet Playground. We'll be systematically disassembling the key pieces like the posts with the names on them but then using bulldozers to demolish it. We're excited to get the new playground in place for the community.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to accept the Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant of \$297,500 and to authorize the Town Manager or their designee to sign the agreement or any subagreement to complete the Planet Playground replacement project. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to authorize the Parks and Rec Department to expend no more than \$47,500 from the Park Improvement Capital Reserve Fund for ADA Playground Mats from US Playground Surfacing to enhance Planet Playground Accessibility. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to authorize the Parks and Recreation Department to fundraise a minimum of \$27,000 to purchase the Alta Glide from Miracle for an additional ADA element enhancement to Planet Playground, and to use any additional funds to be towards the cost of any ADA playground enhancements. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

c. NH Division of Historical Resources Grant

Town Planner Dave Sharples was present to discuss this grant. The town received a grant for \$15,000 as a certified local government. The Division of

Historical Resources gets funding every year from the Federal Government and runs a competitive grant program. The grant is to do survey forms for each property in the Historic District. This will describe the details, intactness, and significance of each building, and will include photos. It also includes a public outreach element with a mailing to the property owner telling them what we're doing and inviting them to call or come meet us with any questions. We would hire a Preservation Planner from the grant to do the survey. We anticipate an April 2025 start and it must be complete by June 30, 2026.

Ms. Gilman said she recommends starting on High Street, where most of the changes that come before the HDC are.

Mr. Sharples said there are a couple hundred properties in the Historic District, so we will do this in sections with grants over several years.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked how much in total grants we've received over the years. Mr. Sharples said he thinks it's about \$1M since he's been here.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to accept \$15,000 in Certified Local Government grant funding to hire preservation professionals to complete individual survey forms for buildings located in the Exeter Historic District, and to authorize the Town Manager or their designee to execute any and all documents to complete the project. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

d. ARPA Funding Request – Raynes Barn Fire Alarm

Town Planner Dave Sharples discussed the request to install a fire alarm system for Raynes Barn from the town ARPA funds. The cost is \$12,815 for the system and \$700 for the first annual fee. After that, the Conservation Commission will have the annual fee as a line item in their budget. We talked about this being a CIP item, but it was decided that ARPA would be a better source. Mr. Papakonstantis said he met with staff last week on the CIP and agreed that it would be better to take away this warrant article and take it from ARPA funds. Mr. Deans said there is \$35,000 left in ARPA after the Complete Streets project which was approved.

Ms. Belanger said it's important to protect this structure. Ms. Gilman said we've been looking to add this to the barn for years. There are events we haven't been able to hold there because we don't have a fire suppression system.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to authorize the use of up to \$13,515 of ARPA funding to fund a fire detection system and first year of annual funding for Raynes Barn. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

e. Winter Street Stormwater BMP

Mr. Dean said this is a project to add two catch basin pre-treatment chambers and a sub-surface infiltration chamber to the Winter Street area. This will help with the non-point nutrient discharge requirements that we need to meet. We would award this to Northeast Earth Mechanics. They're currently working on the Webster Street project. They bid \$149,500 for the project. It would be a combination of grants and ARPA funds that would allow us to finish this project. The ARPA funds were committed previously.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to award the construction bid to New England Earth Mechanics in the amount of \$149,500 to facilitate installation of the Best Management Practices prior to expiration of grant and town ARPA funds; the remaining town ARPA funds from the January 3, 2022 and August 8, 2022 authorizations will be utilized; and further authorize the Town Manager or their designee to sign all associated contracts and documents. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

8. Regular Business

a. Tax Abatements, Veterans Credits and Exemptions

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the Tax Collector's warrant for the second half of the year, in the amount of \$33,161,092. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

b. Permits & Approvals

Mr. Papakonstantis said we received one bid for the 2025 Downtown Exeter Mobile Food Vending bid proposal, from Clyde's Cupcakes. The bid is \$5,000.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to forward the application to the various departments that need to approve it for review and to come back with their recommendations. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

Mr. Papakonstantis said he received correspondence from downtown businesses regarding parking issues around the loka. He asked Mr. Dean to remind the Board what they did about this last year. Mr. Dean said the permit went month-to-month last year, which gave us the ability to monitor what was happening. A dumpster took up the no-parking spot and 5 parking spots in front of the building from 7:30 AM to 10:30 AM. We talked about bumping the time back this year. We also talked about having the proprietors of the project park in the municipal lot. Ms. Gilman asked if the time frame was adhered to. Mr. Dean said we haven't been actively monitoring, but he believes so. Ms. Belanger suggested making the time 10 AM because that's when businesses start to open. Mr. Papakonstantis suggested 9:30 AM. Mr. Chartrand asked how much longer that project is slated to go. Mr. Dean said they said spring of 2025. Ms. Belanger said she doesn't want the dumpster there during the holiday parade. Mr. Papakonstantis asked Mr. Dean to tell Jay Caswell that there should be no parking spaces taken from 9:30 on from Thanksgiving to Christmas, and communicate to the businesses that this is the action that we're taking.

c. Town Manager's Report

- i. Last week he met with James Haney and his father to work on the flag retirement box.
- ii. The Swasey Parkway gates should be installed very soon. Bell & Flynn began their work on November 6 and should be paving shortly.
- iii. The Pairpoint Park fence was installed November 7.

- iv. The DRA set the town's tax rate at \$17.79 per thousand, a decrease of \$8.99 per thousand. The tax bills are at the printer's and should go out in the next 7 days or so. This will have the effects of the revaluation in it. If you received an exemption or credit on your bill, you may see a significant increase.
- v. The groundwater testing is on-schedule for November 13 on Drinkwater Road.
- vi. Today we interviewed Construction Managers for the Police Station/Fire Substation. We had 5 bidders.
- vii. Regarding speed limits, we received information from Town Counsel, and will implement a speed study with our Police Department.
- viii. We're working on the 27 pay period issue. We will discuss it further at the next meeting.

Ms. Gilman said regarding the grant for the Gateway, have you verified that the town can spend that in any manner? Mr. Dean said we're still looking into it.

Mr. Papakonstantis said as we've done for the last few years, we give employees additional time off during the holidays. We're proposing a half day on Wednesday, November 27; closing the Town Office on December 24; and giving folks a half day on December 31.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to authorize the Town Manager to close the Town Offices at noon on Wednesday, November 27; to close the Town Offices completely on December 24; and to close the Town Offices at noon on December 31. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

- d. Select Board Committee Reports
 - i. Ms. Belanger had no report.
 - ii. Ms. Gilman attended the Local Energy Solutions Conference. We've been discussing whether the electric vehicle day is maintaining its interest from the public and dealers. We came across several different programs we could look at. We also saw some energy grant opportunities for homeowners.
 - iii. Ms. Cowan had no report. She asked that the Board look carefully at what tax bills are going to look like for the next few years.
 - iv. Mr. Chartrand attended two Budget Recommendation Committee meetings.
 - v. Mr. Papakonstantis attended the BRC Police and Fire meeting. There was a Tree Committee meeting this morning with a representative from Unitil. There was a misunderstanding between Unitil and a resident over a tree that they trimmed. Unitil is willing to donate trees to offset the issue. Mr. Chartrand said sometimes Unitil goes beyond their charge and maims these trees. He's delighted to hear that they are being held accountable.
- e. Correspondence

- i. Mr. Dean said Womenade is now going to be called Exeter Area Womenade.

9. Review Board Calendar

Mr. Papakonstantis said the next meetings are November 25, December 9, and December 23.

10. Non-Public Session

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to enter into non-public session under RSA 91-A3II(a). Ms. Gilman seconded. In a roll-call vote, the motion passed 5-0. The Board emerged from non public session. Mr. Chartrand moved to seal the minutes indefinitely. Ms. Belanger seconded the motion. The motion carried all in favor.

11. Adjournment. Ms. Belanger motioned to adjourn. Ms. Cowan seconded. The motion carried and the Board stood adjourned at 8:54 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary