

Select Board Meeting
Monday February 3, 2025
6:30 PM
Nowak Room, Town Offices
Final Minutes

1. Call Meeting to Order

Members present: Chair Niko Papakonstantis, Clerk Julie Gilman, Dan Chartrand, and Nancy Belanger

Absent: Vice-Chair Molly Cowan

Town Manager Russ Dean was also present at this meeting.

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Papakonstantis at 6:30 PM. The Board went downstairs to the Wheelwright Room for interviews.

2. Board Interviews

- a. Dean Hubbard for the Planning Board
- b. Dawn Jelley to the Pairpoint Park Stakeholders Commission

The Board reconvened in the Nowak Room at 7 PM.

3. Public Comment

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

4. Proclamations/Recognitions

- a. There were no proclamations/recognitions

5. Approval of Minutes

- a. There were no minutes considered.

6. Appointments

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to nominate James Breeling to the Exeter Squamscott River Local Advisory Committee, with no term. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to appoint Dean Hubbard to the Planning Board alternate position, term to expire April 2026. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to appoint Dawn Jelley to the Pairpoint Park Stakeholders Commission as an alternate. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

7. Discussion/Action Items

- a. Hazard Mitigation Plan adoption

Emergency Management Director Erik Wilking said Homeland Security and FEMA have accepted the revision to the Exeter Hazard Mitigation Plan. The Rockingham Planning Commission assisted with the updates. This applies to a number of different natural hazards. There's also a possibility of funding for the Pickpocket Dam as a high hazard dam. Mr. Chartrand asked if the Town Engineer is aware of this, and Mr. Wilking said he's not sure. We held a public hearing in June 2024 and had a 30 day comment period, but received no comments, so it was a pretty seamless process. This is a 5-year process, so we'll have to do another revision in 2030. Ms. Belanger asked when the next process would begin. Mr. Wilking said about the time that it expires. We started this one in March of 2023, but there were a number of delays due to FEMA's responses to disasters and storms. Ms. Gilman asked if we have to read the plan for adoption. Mr. Wilking said if you wish to it's fine. Ms. Gilman read the certificate of adoption for the hazard mitigation plan:

WHEREAS, the Town of Exeter received funding from the NH Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management under a Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant and assistance from Rockingham Planning Commission in the preparation of the Exeter Hazard Mitigation Plan Update 2025;
and WHEREAS, several public planning meetings were held between May 2023 and December 2024 regarding the development and review of the Exeter Hazard Mitigation Plan Update 2025;
and WHEREAS, the Exeter Hazard Mitigation Plan Update 2025 contains several potential future projects to mitigate hazard damage in the Town of Exeter; and
WHEREAS, a duly noticed public meeting was held by the Exeter Select Board on February 3, 2025 to formally approve and adopt the Exeter Hazard Mitigation Plan Update 2025.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Exeter Select Board :

- The Plan is hereby adopted as the official plan of the Town of Exeter:*
- The respective individuals identified in the mitigation strategy of the Plan are hereby directed to pursue implementation of the recommended actions assigned to them;*
- Future revisions and Plan maintenance required by 44 CFR 201.6 and FEMA are hereby adopted as part of this resolution for a period of five (5) years from the date of this resolution;*
- An annual report of the progress of the implementation elements of the Plan shall be presented to the Select Board by the Town's Emergency Management Director or Town Manager.*

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Exeter Select Board adopts the Exeter Hazard Mitigation Plan Update 2025.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to adopt the Town of Exeter Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan 2025, and further authorize the Select Board to sign the certificate of adoption. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

b. TIF Advisory Board charge

Economic Development Director Darren Winham said he started up these meetings again a month or so ago, but found out that the group had to meet more legally, so he's come to the Board for approval. Mr. Dean said appointments were only for one year at a time, but there was not a charge formally adopted by the Board. This committee exists by virtue of Town Meeting. It was adopted when the TIF was established. It has three members plus Mr. Winham and a rep and alternate from the Select Board. Mr. Dean said the District Administrator described in the RSA is the Economic Development Director. Ms. Belanger asked if it should be Corey Stevens, and Mr. Dean said Mr. Stevens is already very engaged with the TIF. Mr. Winham said maybe it should be Mr. Dean.

Mr. Chartrand said he would be interested in being the Select Board rep. Ms. Gilman said she would serve as the alternate.

Mr. Papakonstantis said there's no other committee where a member of staff is a voting member. Should there be four members plus staff? Mr. Winham said he can recruit a fourth member. Ms. Gilman said the RSA is much more involved than just putting a name on a piece of paper for the District Administrator position. Mr. Papakonstantis asked Mr. Winham to review and revise the charge. Ms. Belanger asked him to attach a copy of the RSA.

c. Deliberative Session Recap

Mr. Papakonstantis said all the articles will go on the ballot as written, other than one of the Citizens Petition that was slightly revised by the lead petitioner. Ms. Gilman said the descriptions in the articles were well-written, so there wasn't much explaining to do. Mr. Chartrand said he was somewhat surprised there wasn't more discussion around some of the articles. The funding mechanisms became more clear over the different drafts. Mr. Dean did a good job of reinforcing that a lot of the increase was due to health insurance and employee retention. Mr. Papakonstantis said we finally have a fully staffed Police and Fire Department but we're still down 13 in Public Works. Mr. Chartrand said we felt it was important not to load up the warrant with big projects after the approval of the Public Safety Complex last year. Ms. Belanger said regarding Epping Road and bike lanes, they were looked at, but we'd have to do some land-taking to do that. We are trying to get more bike lanes and connect sidewalks. Mr. Papakonstantis said within the next couple of meetings, he'd like to get Public Works Director Cronin and Mr. Sharples on the agenda and start the discussion about Complete Streets. Mr. Chartrand said he thinks the Select Board is unanimous in wanting to pursue Complete Streets.

d. Projects/Grants/Summaries

Finance Director Corey Stevens was present to discuss recent projects and grants. Mr. Papakonstantis said this town has done an incredible job of pursuing grants.

Mr. Stevens said he's become aware of a restraining order from New York telling President Trump he can't stop grants already awarded. Any of the SRF loans will still have forgiveness according to DES. Any of the State ARPA funds, they felt fairly confident that we won't lose because the money is already in the State. Grants that could be on the chopping block is the solar array at \$1.3M, some of the Historic Preservation Grants, and the Economic Block Grant at \$200,000 which is "on pause." Items that were on the warrant on Saturday, such as the NOAA Pickpocket Dam grant at \$2.1M, may be an issue. Mr. Sharples has a recently submitted Railroad Ave improvement TAP grant; there's no reason to believe a program like that would be pulled back. Ms. Belanger asked about Planet Playground. Mr. Stevens said we've gotten correspondence that Planet Playground and 10 Hampton Road should be secure. Mr. Papakonstantis asked about the styrofoam recycling. Mr. Chartrand said that's contingent on the grant, so voters won't get stuck paying for that.

Mr. Chartrand said we've been running our local government for nearly 100 years longer than the Federal Government has been around, and we'll continue to manage our local government.

Ms. Belanger said there were a few comments from the public saying they wished the styrofoam recycling unit wasn't grant-dependent. We should apply for grants again next year if it doesn't go through. Mr. Stevens said the grant was going to come from a private source, Recyclefoam.org, so it may be ok.

Mr. Dean said the Solar Array is the biggest concern because of the program itself and the \$1.3M credit involved. We are awaiting a piece of equipment from Unitil in order to go online. Doing due diligence and keeping up with the agencies as things change is the key.

Mr. Papakonstantis said he'd like to have an update on the status of grants with the Town Manager's report at each meeting. Mr. Chartrand said we should be in touch with our representatives in Congress.

Ms. Belanger asked if we've been in this situation before. We've received confirmation of grants and now we're in a precarious situation where we may not get them. Mr. Chartrand said 2/3rds of it seems to be fairly secure.

Ms. Gilman asked about ARPA funds. Mr. Stevens said that money is almost all spent out. The biggest piece is the turnout gear for the Fire Department at \$100,000.

8. Regular Business

a. Tax Abatements, Veterans Credits and Exemptions

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve a Disabled Exemption for 99/16 in the amount of \$125,000 for tax year 2025. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve a Solar Exemption for 104/18 in the amount of \$6,500 for tax year 2025. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to deny a Veterans Credit for 96/2/7 for tax year 2025. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve a Veterans Credit for 80/6/4 in the amount of \$500 for tax year 2025. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve a tax abatement for 55/61/1 in the amount of \$622.26 for tax year 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve a tax abatement for 55/61/2 in the amount of \$611.98 for tax year 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve a tax abatement for 55/61/3 in the amount of \$560.39 for tax year 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve a tax abatement for 55/61/6 in the amount of \$343.35 for tax year 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve a tax abatement for 55/61/7 in the amount of \$451.87 for tax year 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve a tax abatement for 55/61/8 in the amount of \$1,867.95 for tax year 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve a tax abatement for 55/61/9 in the amount of \$1,414.31 for tax year 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve a tax abatement for 55/61/10 in the amount of \$1,855.50 for tax year 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve a tax abatement for 55/61/13 in the amount of \$1,903.53 for tax year 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve a tax abatement for 55/61/11 in the amount of \$816.56 for tax year 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve a tax abatement for 55/61/12 in the amount of \$1,985.36 for tax year 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

b. Permits & Approvals

i. NOAA Grant

Mr. Dean said this is a letter of support for the NOAA grant for barrier removal at the Pickpocket Dam. This is a request from the Public Works Director.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to submit a letter of support for the NOAA Restoring Fish Passage through Barrier Removal Grant Application for Pickpocket Dam Removal Project, and authorize the Select Board Chair to sign the letter. Mr. Chartrand seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

c. Town Manager's Report

- i. He spent a lot of the past week preparing for Deliberative Session.
- ii. He attended the retirement party for DPW employees last week.
- iii. Principal Rawson from PEA will be here on February 18 to give an update.
- iv. We've been working with Unitil on "double pole" issues in town. They will be clearing them throughout the spring and summer.
- v. CPCNH has updated rates which will be in the next packet.
- vi. He met with Devon Skerit and Bill Campbell to talk about Pairpoint Park. They needed to be brought up to speed on the town's CIP process.
- vii. He will be in Concord on Thursday the 6th for a Health Trust meeting
- viii. The Chamber Economic forecast is on the same day.
- ix. Meeting with the owners of 19 Continental Drive regarding a water flow issue on Thursday.

d. Select Board Committee Reports

- i. Ms. Belanger had a Recreation Advisory meeting which she did not attend, where they heard a 10 Hampton Road update. There is a projected move-in date of mid to late September. They're still waiting on some approvals from the State before putting bids out. They're looking to expand the COAST bus service out to 10 Hampton Road and possibly Sterling Hill. There's an ARPA community challenge grant open that they are going to look into. It could be used on a pathway from 10 Hampton Road to 4 Hampton Road. Regarding Planet Playground, they've raised \$37,000 but are looking for more. At the previous meeting, one of the members brought up concerns about allergy liability at Senior Luncheons, but Primex said we were fine. She attended a Planning Board meeting with a public hearing on RiverWoods extension. We tabled it to the next meeting on February 13. Green and Company at 76 Portsmouth Ave asked to continue until February 27. 112 Front Street has a sitewalk this Thursday. She did not attend the Arts & Culture Commission meeting but watched it on TV. They talked about Town Hall and Townhouse Common.
- ii. Ms. Gilman had no report. She discussed issues on the State level.
- iii. Mr. Chartrand attended a Facilities Advisory Committee meeting, where there was an update from Dave Sharples on the 10 Hampton Road

project and Public Safety project. The committee also made a workplan for the first half of the year.

- iv. Mr. Papakonstantis had no report. He attended the Public Works Department retirement party and it was well-attended and quite a few retirees came back.

9. Correspondence

- a. A list of meetings that Selectwoman Gilman will have tomorrow.
- b. The NHMA Legislative Bulletin
- c. A letter from Robert Prior which he read at the Planning Board meeting and copied the Select Board on.

10. Review Board Calendar

- a. The next meetings are Tuesday Feb 18, March 3, and March 17. Town voting is March 11 7 AM - 8 PM.

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 4-0 and the meeting was adjourned at 8:14 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary