

Select Board Meeting
Monday February 18, 2025
6:30 PM
Nowak Room, Town Offices
Final Minutes

1. Call Meeting to Order

Members present: Chair Niko Papakonstantis, Clerk Julie Gilman, and Nancy Belanger. Vice-Chair Molly Cowan and Dan Chartrand were present remotely via Zoom [at 7 PM].

Town Manager Russ Dean and Assistant Town Manager Melissa Roy were also present at this meeting. The meeting was called to order by Mr. Papakonstantis at 6:30 PM.

2. Non-Public Session

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to enter into non-public session under RSA 91-A:3II(a). Ms. Gilman seconded. In a roll call vote, Ms. Gilman, Ms. Belanger, and Mr. Papakonstantis voted aye, and the motion passed 3-0. The Board emerged from non-public session.

3. Board Interviews

- a. Karen Prior for the 250th Celebration Committee

The Board reconvened in the Nowak Room at 7 PM. Vice-Chair Molly Cowan and Dan Chartrand joined remotely via Zoom at this time. They stated that they were alone in the room and it was not possible for them to be present. [They were not present for the non-public session and interview.]

4. Snow Removal Update

- a. Mr. Dean said the town has been working diligently on snow removal. Public Works crews and contractors will be conducting overnight snow removal downtown, at Lincoln Street, and on Portsmouth Avenue tomorrow night.

5. Public Comment

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

6. Proclamations/Recognitions

- a. There were no proclamations/recognitions at this time.

7. Approval of Minutes

- a. Regular Meeting: January 21, 2025
 - i. Corrections: Mr. Chartrand said on page 21, the resident's name is Patricia Yosha.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the minutes of January 21, 2025 as amended. Ms. Gilman seconded. In a roll call vote, the motion passed 5-0.

b. Regular Meeting: February 3, 2025

- i. Corrections: Ms. Belanger said on page 1, the committee member's name is James Breeling.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the minutes of February 3, 2025 as amended. Ms. Gilman seconded. Ms. Cowan abstained. In a roll call vote, the motion passed 4-0-1.

8. Appointments and Resignations

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to accept with regret the resignation of Dr. Rev. E. Heath from the Housing Advisory Committee. Ms. Gilman seconded. In a roll call vote, the motion passed 5-0.

9. Discussion/Action Items

a. Energy Committee Electric Rates Update

Cliff Sinnott of the Energy Committee gave an update on Community Power. Mr. Sinnott said every 6 months, the CPCNH provides us with updated rates, for the periods February 1 - August 1 and August 1 - January 31. In January, the rate was initially 8.9 cents, but a key power provider was not able to complete a contract representing 30% of the power for that six-month period, so they had to go back into the market and purchase the 30% replacement energy. The cost was revised to 9.7 cents. This is now higher than the utility rate, which is 8.3 cents, for the first time. After this period, it should go back down. Long-term, we expect CPCNH to deliver the lowest cost of electricity, but that won't always be true. Residents can switch back to the utility if they prefer and switch back in August on the Exeter Community Power website, but it takes 1 - 2 months to process the changeover. The community has saved \$1.3M in the 20 months since joining the coalition.

Mr. Chartrand said he doesn't think it's a coincidence that the Unitil rate has been halved since the competition from CPCNH.

Mr. Sinnott discussed HB 760, which adds to the existing RSAs about spreading the cost of utility rates among customers. CPCNH is encouraging customers to support the bill. The Energy Committee voted to have him send a letter in support of the bill, and he encourages the Select Board to do that as well. The Board was in favor of sending a letter.

b. Phillips Exeter Academy

Principal William Rawson was present to give an update about PEA. He said we built our first dorm in 50 years, which is done. The dining hall on Spring Street is up and running now. A couple summers ago, we tore up the lawn and sunk the geothermal wells, which will come into play when we renovate the Academy building, which will start this summer and take two years. The project near the library will be finished by the Spring. The building was built in 1914 following a fire and has never been renovated. It will have a new maker space and expand our assembly hall from seating 1,000 to 1,300, which could make assemblies open to the public. Now, we can't fit all faculty and students in there.

The building will be geothermally heated and cooled, along with other buildings. We have a sustainability and climate action plan.

Ms. Belanger said she read he is retiring, and thanked him for his service. The PEA newspaper interviewed her and asked great questions. She's happy to hear about the expansion. She'd like to see the town and the academy to do more things together. She's hoping that the Academy put on plays that are open to the public.

Principal Rawson said next year will be his last year, so he will come back before the Board.

Ms. Gilman said she wants to plan something with the Academy for the 250th celebrations.

c. TIF Advisory Board

Town Manager Russ Dean said he wrote a memo for the packet outlining the composition of the TIF advisory Board under RSA 162-K:13. Three of the members should be property owners in Exeter, one of which should be a property owner in the TIF District. The Select Board is authorized to adopt a resolution outlining the powers, duties, and responsibilities of the TIF Advisory Board.

Mr. Papakonstantis asked who would oversee the Finances. Mr. Dean said the Town Manager is the District Administrator and is responsible for working with the Select Board and TIF Advisory Board on any issues. Ms. Belanger said initially it said the District Administrator was the Economic Development Director. Mr. Dean said he doesn't think anyone was formally appointed.

Ms. Belanger asked if, because DPW and Planning is involved, can we add two more non-voting members? Mr. Dean said we can have them attend the meetings and be resources for the Board without being members.

Ms. Belanger said there are supposed to be annual updates but the last one she saw was in 2019. She would also like quarterly updates on where the TIF is financially. Previously, the terms were for one year. Mr. Dean said we are planning to stagger the terms so Board members will rotate off at different intervals.

Mr. Chartrand asked if powers & duties #3 is unnecessary, as any proposal would be presented to the Select Board for approval anyway. Mr. Dean said that comes from the statute. There may be a conflict between the Advisory Board and the District Administrator, and it sets up the Select Board as the arbiter of that. We would have all issues come through the Select Board. Mr. Chartrand said he doesn't like the implication that if they are in agreement, they could move on without the Select Board. Mr. Dean said he could revise that.

Mr. Chartrand asked if Planning and DPW are participating as advisors rather than members, and Mr. Papakonstantis said yes. He thinks their attendance would be as needed.

The Board will discuss this again March 3.

Mr. Chartrand and Ms. Cowan left the meeting at this time, so votes were no longer taken by roll call. The remaining members were Mr. Papakonstantis, Ms. Gilman, and Ms. Belanger.

10. Regular Business

a. Tax Abatements, Veterans Credits and Exemptions

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve an Elderly Exemption for 104/79/519 in the amount of \$152,251 for tax year 2025. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to deny an Elderly Exemption for 64/105/32 for tax year 2025. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve an Elderly Exemption for 32/12/26 in the amount of \$152,251 for tax year 2025. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve a Veterans Credit for 99/34 in the amount of \$500 for tax year 2025. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve an abatement for 27/13 in the amount of \$932.20 for tax year 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve an abatement for 64/105/26 in the amount of \$307.77 for tax year 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve an abatement for 64/105/39 in the amount of \$120.97 for tax year 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve an abatement for 72/64 in the amount of \$766.75 for tax year 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve an abatement for 87/8/A-22 in the amount of \$211.70 for tax year 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve an abatement for 95/64/287 in the amount of \$782.76 for tax year 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve an abatement for 104/79/955 in the amount of \$386.04 for tax year 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to deny an abatement for 104/79/600 for tax year 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve an abatement for 63/41/2 in the amount of \$2,063.64 for tax year 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to deny an abatement for 11/18/21 for the tax year 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to approve an abatement for 71/38 in the amount of \$948.21 for tax year 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to deny an abatement for 91/31 for the tax year 2024. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

MOTION: Ms. Gilman moved to accept a Timber Tax for 46/7/2 in the amount of \$1,273.03. Ms. Belanger seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

b. Permits & Approvals

Parks and Rec Director Greg Bisson was present to discuss the results of the Planet Playground fundraising. Several organizations stepped forward, exceeding our initial goal of \$21,000. We've raised \$37,000 so far. The Victoria's Victory Foundation and Project Walk donated \$5,000 each. Annie's Angels and the Amanda Ranauro fund pledged \$2,500. The Exeter Area New Car Dealers Association donated \$12,000; they also sponsor two summer camp scholarships. The Exeter Area General Federation of Women's Clubs pledged \$10,000. Mr. Papakonstantis read the list of members of the Exeter Area New Car Dealers Association: Foss Motors Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep; Holloway Automotive Group Mercedes-Benz; Seacoast Volkswagen; Exeter Subaru; BMW of Stratham; McFarland Ford; Hurlbert Toyota, Scion; Autofair Nissan; Wentworth Motors Volvo; Honda Barn; Porsche; and Audi of Stratham.

Mr. Bisson said the total donations are \$37,000.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to accept the following donations to fund the Planet Playground ADA enhancements, donations to be managed by the Finance Department: The Victoria's Victory Foundation in the amount of \$5,000; Project Walk in the amount of \$5,000; Annie's Angels in the amount of \$2,500; the Amanda Ranauro Autism Assistance Fund in the amount of \$2,500; The Exeter Area General Federation of Women's Clubs in the amount of \$10,000; and The Exeter Area New Car Dealers Association in the amount of \$12,000. Ms. Gilman seconded. Ms. Belanger thanked the Rec Advisory Board for reaching out to some of these organizations. The motion passed 3-0.

c. Town Manager's Report

- i. The retirement party for Hope Godino will be Feb 21, 2-6 at the Library.
- ii. Riverwoods Warrant and Budget night is Feb 27.
- iii. He met with representatives of the Stratham Industrial Park, who are looking to enhance their sewer capacity at the park. They have to have internal discussions on how to manage that. It's capped at 75,000 gallons per day.
- iv. The first meeting on the winter parking ban is this week.

- v. He met with CSX which represents the railroad to discuss the Park Street Bridge. The bridge is owned by the State. We had to close the bridge due to repair issues. The State inspected it today and we hope to hear from them shortly.
- vi. We wrapped up a 91A request from Brentwood.
- vii. The CDFA approved the bid package for 10 Hampton Road, so it should go out to bid this month.
- viii. He will be on vacation beginning tomorrow until Feb 25.
- ix. Mr. Papakonstantis asked about the status of grants we have not yet received. Mr. Dean said one is supposed to go before the Governor & Council March 12, but he has no other updates.

d. Select Board Committee Reports

- i. Ms. Belanger had a sitewalk on Feb 6 for Planning Board case 24-17 at 112 Front Street. It was well-attended. There is a proposed zoning amendment on the ballot for March, and that parcel would be included in that change. The developers were going to look into it. There was a Planning Board meeting Feb 13 and RiverWoods was approved, but it was going to come before the Select Board regarding limiting parking or having no parking on the side of Pickpocket Road. 112 Front Street asked to be continued until Feb 27. At the Housing Advisory meeting Feb 14, they heard a legislative update and talked about parking options. They also talked about future funding and grants and how it may affect housing programs.
- ii. Ms. Gilman had no report.
- iii. Mr. Papakonstantis had a Tree Committee meeting. They're preparing locations for the trees that are budgeted, should the budget pass. They're also working with Parks and Rec on trees for Planet Playground.

e. Correspondence

- i. A memo from DPW Director Cronin on the Park Street Bridge closing.
- ii. A letter from Unutil about a vegetation management program. Mr. Dean said they will notify people that are impacted with door hangers. They will put out herbicides but people can opt out.
- iii. A legislative bulletin from NHMA.

11. Review Board Calendar

- a. The next meetings are March 3, March 17, March 31, April 14, and April 28. March 11 is the town election.

12. Non-Public Session

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

13. Adjournment

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to adjourn. Ms. Gilman seconded. The motion passed 3-0 and the meeting adjourned at 8:28 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary