

MINUTES OF THE MARCH 18, 2024 SELECT BOARD MEETING

MEMBERS PRESENT: Board Members Chair Mike Houghton, Vice Chair Allison Knab; Joe Anderson

ALSO PRESENT: Town Administrator David Moore, Finance Administrator Christiane McAllister, Town Clerk/Tax Collector Deborah Bakie, Public Works Director Tim Stevens

At 7:00 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to open the Select Board meeting and asked for a motion on the minutes. Mr. Anderson motioned to accept the minutes of March 4 and March 11, 2024. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton began the meeting by moving to the correspondence item from the Stratham Historical Society requesting support of capital improvements. Mr. Moore recalled the Select Board supported the Phase I preservation project for the Historical Society building; this will be Phase II at an anticipated cost of up to \$31,000. SHS has offered to manage and partially fund this phase. Phase III costs are expected to be in the area of \$5,000. Ms. Knab motioned to fund support of the work at the Historical Society building out of the Buildings, Grounds and Maintenance Trust not to exceed \$15,500 for the work delineated in the letter dated March 11, 2024. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton recognized Drew Goddard who came before the Board to request approval for two improvement projects at Stratham Hill Park. Mr. Goddard reported that Greg Blood and Dan Crow of the Stratham Hill Park Association support the projects. One is to replace the batting cage that had been on the lower field with two batting cages. Mr. Goddard described the project in detail. He stated that he is not looking for funding. The group discussed electricity at the park. Ms. Knab noted he talked to the Recreation Commission and they wholeheartedly supported the project. Ms. Knab thanked him for his generosity in taking on this project. She noted he was requesting a sign and asked that the Board approve the sign before it is installed. Mr. Houghton joined Ms. Knab in thanking him, supporting the initiative. He noted his quality work throughout town. Mr. Houghton motioned that the Select Board accept the in kind donation as proposed in the letter and supporting materials from Mr. Goddard subject to the final review of details from the Town Administration, and receipts of relevant permits and a submittal for the aforementioned signage approval. Ms. Knab seconded the motion but noted that this approval was for the batting cages; Mr. Goddard has a second project. All voted in favor.

Mr. Goddard said the second project is making improvements to the snack shack. He feels that offering a place to get food encourages people to linger, which fosters a sense of community. He described the project, which includes new windows and siding. The footprint will remain the same. Funding will come from Friends of Stratham Baseball and himself. Mr. Houghton motioned to accept the in kind donation from Friends of Stratham Baseball funding and Drew Goddard for the proposed snack shack repairs as described, subject to the review of details by Town Administration and obtaining the relevant permits. Mr. Stevens requested that there be a covering for the windows. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor. The group thanked Mr. Goddard for his generosity.

Mr. Houghton opened the public hearing to name the home dugout at Stevens Park after John Hopping. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Mr. Moore reported that all the requirements of the Naming Policy have been met. Tonight's public hearing is for public comments only. Rick Dolce, little league coach, spoke in support of the naming the dugout after John Hopping. Mr. Houghton motioned to close the public hearing. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor. They agreed to move forward with the renaming at the next meeting.

Mr. Houghton recognized Tim Stevens for his department report. Mr. Stevens talked about the positive support he's received from staff. Wednesday he is holding an outreach event with the SMS elementary school as a precursor to an open house at the garage he is planning for May during Public Works Week.

Mr. Stevens reported that both new hires, Britt Fowle and Tyler Carmody, are doing a great job.

Mr. Stevens reviewed items at Smyk Parks that he feels should be addressed, including the bridge, the fence and the culvert. He envisions a beautiful space. To achieve that vision, it's necessary to look at the bigger plan. Mr. Houghton felt that before defining the park's longer term use, engineering studies and infrastructure development would need to be done. Drainage is one concern that needs to be addressed. These studies are all part and parcel of defining the parks use.

Mr. Stevens continued, reporting on work scheduled at the parks and in town, including re-grading the parking lot at Jack Rabbit Lane and rectifying drainage issues at the Municipal Center and Stevens Park playgrounds. Steven's Park dugouts are in need of maintenance. He's been collaborating with the Parks & Recreation Director.

Mr. Stevens stated that he's received a number of complaints regarding Marin Way. He is meeting with the DOT district engineer and deputy to come up with a reasonable solution. Mr. Stevens thinks the culvert has broken and will need significant work. He would like to discover what the State will do before moving forward with any work.

Next, Mr. Stevens informed the group that we're behind on drainage maintenance. He's been out in the field with Planning Project Assistant Ms. Connors working on the MS4. There are a lot of issues throughout town. This work needs to be completed this year to prevent further damage.

He is catching up on the spreader hanger project and looks forward to moving this further.

Mr. Stevens stated that CMA (our contractors for our closed landfill permitting) reported on the Transfer Station mapping for storm water plan. The report was mostly positive, with only a concern with one swale. CMA will come back with a solution.

Mr. Stevens briefly talked about sweeping.

Mr. Stevens expects that work on the Fire Dept. roof will begin shortly. He reported that insulation in the DPW roof has been compromised. There are significant leaks. The roof needs to be replaced. He indicated he will obtain estimates and report back.

Mr. Stevens reported that the windows at the DPW garage were installed improperly. He called Window World and they reinstalled the several windows at no cost since they identified that their, or their contractor's work, was unsatisfactory.

Mr. Stevens is working on getting the rust off of the Historical Society building in coordination with their facilities volunteers.

Mr. Stevens moved to the Capital Improvement Plan regarding the park and DPW equipment. The original CIP didn't include much equipment and was missing planned replacement for one truck. The missing items should be included so that we have a good plan moving forward. The group discussed leasing versus purchasing equipment. Mr. Stevens wanted to clarify that this information is primarily to notify them that these expenditures will be upcoming. He recommends holding off on replacing the truck that was scheduled to be replaced. He prefers to move the excavator purchase up a year. The equipment he is proposing can have multiple uses. He talked about the equipment that needs repairs and the equipment he'd like to replace it with. He talked about how this approach was informed by taking an overall approach to the Town's operations and includes combining the equipment of the Park and DPW and ensuring multiple uses across all the Town's assets.

Another piece of equipment Mr. Stevens discussed was the Windstorm, used for blowing leaves. It would help a great deal with spring and fall clean up and sports fields and roads. It costs \$10,000. Ms. Knab asked if he'd heard about controversy regarding gas powered back-pack blowers and the rest. Mr. Stevens replied that he's heard of those issues, but the electric version is not as efficient.

Discussion returned to the CIP as the group reviewed the list. Mr. Stevens explained his updates to the CIP and advocated for the equipment he is requesting. Ms. Knab asked for a memo that summarizes his requests for this year by priority. Mr. Moore explained how leasing works from an accounting/budgeting perspective and noted it may not be an option for this year but should be for future years. He observed the connection between the many projects that are scheduled and the equipment that is needed. Mr. Stevens felt the lawnmower and the excavator were highest priorities. Mr. Moore speculated on various additional funding sources to help catch-up on unplanned replacements, especially for the smaller equipment like mowers etc. Mr. Houghton recalled setting a replacement schedule seven years ago. He stated that the previous Board had set the useful life of heavy equipment to 20 years but Mr. Stevens is using 15 years. He acknowledged that this was the most comprehensive list they'd ever seen. He wondered how the financial projection would change if the useful life is extended from 15 to 20 years. Mr. Stevens had accepted the 15 years when he inherited the spreadsheet but is willing to consider extending to 20 years. He will get them further information as soon as possible.

Mr. Stevens continued, reporting that the Fire Department parking lot paving and basketball courts are priorities. He is working with the Cemetery Trustees on the large tree issue.

At 8:40 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to go into a non-public session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3, II(a) Personnel. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. Roll call: Houghton-yes; Knab-yes; Anderson-yes

At 9:15 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to come out of the non-public session and seal the minutes noting failure to do so may render a proposed action invalid. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Stevens asked to advertise for summer help. Ms. Knab agreed to help choose the winning names for the trucks.

Mr. Houghton recognized Ms. McAllister for her department report. She presented the completed summary for 2023 which contains the final balances including all the trusts. She talked about challenges, there is a timing issue, not a discrepancy issue, with reconciling with the Treasurer. Some transactions come in outside of the period they are reconciling, especially electronic ones.

Ms. McAllister explained that in the second summary enables them to compare year over year balances. If we look at the end of last year, the net of revenue and expenditures is a little more than \$800,000. We've gained fund balance. A healthy fund balance provides excellent cash flow. She pointed out that Stratham Hill Park and Smyk is more than anticipated. Mr. Moore speculated that we might potentially obtain revenue from Smyk Park next year. Ms. McAllister said she has additional recommendations. Mr. Houghton indicated a need to develop a policy for expending the income from interest earned on the Smyk Trust currently valued at about \$50,000.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Moore gave a recap of Town meeting. He reviewed what happened procedurally. He wrote a letter to the School Board following up for the Board to use in following-up. 426 people attended. Overflow space worked well. They all agreed the meeting went smoothly and supported the motion to not hold town events at conflicting times.

Ms. Knab noted she contributed the correspondence item regarding local control and asked Mr. Houghton to obtain the Planning Board's input on upcoming bills. He will give her their opinion after the meeting on Wednesday.

ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Moore stated that April 16th will be the kick off meeting for the long term PFAS study that Underwood is doing for us. He invited the Board to attend.

The assessing appeals for the 2023 tax year deadline has passed. He will forward a summary. Whitney Consulting is handling them and they will report back to the Board.

Mr. Moore reported that we only received a portion of the grant for the funding for Stuart Farm. SELT is seeking alternate funding sources to make up the gap. Mr. Moore drafted a letter to assist in that effort as requested by SELT and presented it. Ms. Knab motioned to authorize the

Select Board chair to sign the letter of support for the federal funding request for Stuart Farm. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Moore reported that the Emergency Planning Seabrook drill be taking place April 3rd. We are ready.

Mr. Moore announced that he has been appointed to the NHMA Finance and Revenue Legislative Policy Committee.

Mr. Moore called attention to the Lamprey Cooperative materials. He recently sent a thank you to Mr. Deschaine for his work on this committee. Mr. Deschaine had previously offered to come before the board to give a report on the committee. The Board agreed to take Mr. Deschaine up on that offer for an upcoming meeting.

Block 5 will be updating the phone systems this week.

RESERVATIONS

Ms. Knab motioned support for Port City Amateur Radio to use the top the hill at Stratham Hill Park from June 21 – 23, 2024. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Anderson requested that at the next Select Board meeting, he hopes to delve into a discussion with Chief Denton about coverage and response times in the Fire Dept. Mr. Moore said that Chief Denton is expecting that.

Mr. Houghton reported that the Heritage Commission has been working on a program for house plaques to be used for Stratham homes that have historical status. The cedar plaques are \$210 per sign. One third of the cost will be subsidized by the Historical Society, one third by the Heritage Commission (Heritage Preservation Trust Fund) and one third by the homeowner. 135 structures are eligible. The Heritage Commission will to do outreach. After discussion, they agreed to have the Board approve the invoices as they come in. Ms. McAllister will pay the invoices as they come in, but will accumulate them until she has a significant amount. She will then make a request from the Trustees based on the invoiced amount. Mr. Houghton motioned to support the rollout of house placards for historically significant homes. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton reminded them that it was time for the election of officers. Ms. Knab motioned to nominate Mr. Houghton as Chair. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Mr. Anderson motioned to nominate Ms. Knab as Vice Chair. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

At 10:20 pm Ms. Knab motioned to adjourn. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Richard
Recording Secretary