

MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 18, 2021 SELECT BOARD MEETING

Meeting held in the Hutton Room at the Stratham Municipal Center

MEMBERS PRESENT: Board Members Chair Mike Houghton, Vice Chair Joe Lovejoy and Allison Knab.

ALSO PRESENT: Town Administrator David Moore, Town Planner Mark Connors and Finance Administrator Christiane McAllister

At 7:00 pm Mr. Houghton opened the regular meeting.

Mr. Lovejoy motioned to approve the draft minutes of September 20 and October 4, 2021. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton motioned to open the public hearing to accept a dedicated street; Breslin Farm Road. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Frank Catapano came before the board to request the bond for Breslin Farm Road be released. Completion of the road had been delayed because of concerns from a resident. DPW found minor issues and those were addressed. The road has been reviewed by third party engineers at the developers' expense. Mr. Connors read a memo from DPW recommending the road be accepted and the bond be released with the exception of 10% to be held for a year. Mr. Houghton called for any additional comments regarding Breslin Farm Rd. Mr. Lovejoy motioned to accept Breslin Farm Rd. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Mr. Houghton motioned to close the public hearing. Tim Mason questioned why 10% would be held. Discussion ensued regarding the road acceptance process and the amount to be withheld. They agreed to revisit the issue at the next meeting after further consult with the DPW Director.

Mr. Houghton opened the public hearing to accept a dedicated street: Barbara's Way. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Mr. Houghton asked for public comment. No public comment was made. Mr. Houghton then asked for Mr. Connor's input. Mr. Connor recalled the previous discussion regarding Breslin Farm Rd and stated that Mr. Mears had submitted approval of Barbara's Way road last year (one-year from completion). Mr. Houghton motioned to close the public hearing regarding Barbara's Way. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Ms. Knab motioned to accept Barbara's Way and release the full bond in the amount of \$18,500. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton directed attention to the agenda item – Age-Friendly communities grant. Scott Bogle senior transportation planner with the Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC) described the project. The RPC, along with Rockingham Meals on Wheels, received a grant to work with communities to understand the needs of a growing adult population. He identified several topics, such as housing and transportation, which would be examined. This initiative would be carried out by a local committee made up of staff and residents. Input would be gathered via surveys. Results would be put forth in public forums and results shared with other communities. This initiative has been undertaken in communities throughout New Hampshire with great success. The Board felt it was a worthy initiative and fully endorsed it. The project will start in January.

Meanwhile, Mr. Moore and Mr. Connors will work with the Board to identify steering committee members.

Mr. Houghton recognized and welcomed Finance Administrator Christiane McAllister.

He then recognized Mr. Connors to give his department report. Mr. Connors began by discussing the NH DOT Ten Year Plan. The Planning Board chair has agreed to go to one of the upcoming GACIT hearings to advocate for Town projects. The Transportation survey identified the Bunker Hill intersection project as a priority. A new project was recently added to the Ten Year Plan and is slated for 2023. This project involves adding a center turning lane from the technical college to the intersection in Greenland. The Board expressed concern that there wouldn't be a widening of the road and potentially impact bicycle and pedestrian facilities currently accommodated by the wide break down lane. Mr. Lovejoy observed that another priority of the Transportation survey was better access for pedestrians and cyclists on the roadways. A narrowing of the shoulder would be contrary to that goal. Mr. Houghton expressed frustration with the DOT process. Ms. Knab recalled that a corridor study was supposed to be done and would be beneficial prior to doing any work on the road. Mr. Houghton agreed, noting one was to have been done prior to the development at Pease, but the study never materialized. Mr. Moore will ensure attendance at the GACIT hearing and work with Mr. Connors to ensure a letter communication from the Board for use in defining the Select Board's position on the current draft Ten Year Plan. Mr. Connors would see to the distribution to our Executive Councilor and state legislative delegation.

Next Mr. Connors reviewed some current land use applications. A developer is considering building a large medical office building complex in the corridor. The developer of the Stoney Brook Lane townhouse development is asking for a water / sewer connection from Exeter. Mr. Connors anticipates a busy Planning Board meeting on Wednesday. A controversial issue will be regarding solar panels and conservation land. Clarity is needed to determine how open space will be treated. Definition regarding our requirements is needed. Mr. Knab noted the Conservation Commission has discussed this issue and could not come to a consensus. She reiterated some of the questions they struggled with. It's a complex issue. They continued to discuss with Mr. Connors indicating he would work further with the Planning Board on the issue following the current solar project consideration.

Mr. Connors reported that the owner of the technical college plans to meet with the Planning Board to discuss redevelopment (conceptual consultation).

Mr. Connors expects the Source Water Protection Plan draft should be adopted formally by the Planning Board next month. The RPC has funding from DES to help us with implementation, in the form of updated zoning amendments for next year.

Next, Mr. Connors is working on a report of how Stratham changed over last decade based on the census. We've grown faster than the state. However, there should be no impact to the number of representatives serving Stratham in the legislature.

Finally, Mr. Connor reported on miscellaneous items. He is working with the fire chief who has asked for help in exploring an impact fee for larger developments to help fund a ladder truck. The Conservation Commission solicited an appraisal on property that abuts conservation land. The Planning Board approved an expedited approval process for minor applications. His longer range plans involve moving forward with housing and complete streets. He brought to the Board's attention the number of projects in the wings to be advanced that are Master Plan priorities and noted he planned to explore the funding of hours for the part-time Land Use assistant for the Planning Dept. Mr. Moore spoke further to the projects the staff, Boards and Master Plan are calling for.

Correspondence

Mr. Moore reported that, once again, HealthTrust has a return of surplus. The Finance Administrator will work with them to determine distribution.

Action Items

Mr. Houghton directed attention to Health Insurance Study Groups recommendation. Mr. Connors, who was a member of the Health Insurance Study Group, reported that the committee recommends the town offer a Flexible Savings Account to employees. The FSA shouldn't have any financial impact to the Town and would benefit the employee because it is pre-tax monies that are set aside which they can use for health care expenses. They briefly discussed the health insurance plans, employee enrollment and the FSA. The group further recommended the Town consider making contributions to the employee FSAs as a way to recognize the savings to the Town associated with the deductible plans introduced last year. A Benefit Information Session will be held to ensure the employees know the insurance options and the benefits of the FSA. The Board thanked Mr. Connors, and the entire insurance study group, for the work they did.

The holiday schedule was addressed next. New Year's Day falls on a Saturday, so the Town will observe the holiday on the Friday before, Dec. 31, 2021 (as opposed to the next Monday as would ordinarily be custom). There are more Monday holidays than usual, but, for the most part, they don't impact the Select Board meeting schedule. Mr. Moore presented the Select Board schedule for 2022, explaining variances.

Mr. Houghton addressed the budget process. Mr. Moore proposed the board set aside time at another meeting to have a discussion regarding overall goals and policy regarding the 2022 budget. He doesn't anticipate any major expenditures or revenues. Initial observations revolve around staffing and succession planning. Ms. McAllister and the department heads have begun working on their budgets. Mr. Moore gave a brief overview of items that may provide some impact and others on which to focus. Mr. Houghton agreed that he didn't see major changes or impacts to the operating budget. He would like expectations made clear to staff at the onset of the budget process and an articulation of the policy issues developed by the Board for the Budget Advisory Committee process. The date and location of Town Meeting was discussed. Mr. Moore is planning on a Saturday meeting. Mr. Lovejoy commented on journal entries on the year to date statement. Ms. McAllister will look into the issue. Mr. Moore will put together some dates to begin the budget discussions.

Administration

Mr. Moore addressed the correspondence from Attorney Marshall regarding 353 Portsmouth Avenue. He has sought more information from her in order to advise the Board on moving forward. He is awaiting a response.

Mr. Moore reported attending the Energy Commission meeting last week. With Util rates on the rise, the cooperative agreement the Commission had set up has saved the town money. A NH expert on community power will attend the Energy Commission's next meeting. We look forward to continuing to work with them on ways to save the town money.

He and Mr. Lovejoy attended the Stratham Hill Park Association meeting last week. A Trustee of the Trust Funds reported about assets held by the Trustees that are related to the park.

Mr. Moore met with the Executive Director of the Richie McFarland Children's Center and a representative from Waypoint, a state-wide non-profit who serves the same clientele as the Center. They've appreciated the support the Town has given, and wanted to make the town aware that they are moving forward with a merger. There will be no visible change.

Geri Denton and Jeff Gallagher have stepped up to organize the Veterans Day event. They are looking for a speaker for the event.

Mr. Moore reported receiving two proposals for the long term approach to the PFAS issue. Mr. Moore will review them and bring a recommendation to the board. The scope of work will be 100% reimbursable by the State. He then gave them a general status update on remediation. We are finishing up installing remediation measures at the affected homes. We received a permit from the State (similar to landfill monitoring). This issue will require monitoring on an ongoing basis. He is participating in the Long Term Drinking Water Commission and will be giving a presentation later this week. We will apply for reimbursement for expenses related to PFAS.

Mr. Moore reviewed the budget process and capital planning, saying we will be revisiting our approach to the ARPA funds. Taking on infrastructure costs – roof, culvert project and others.

Ms. McAllister said they are moving closer to having the documents ready for tax rate setting. She has submitted the MS434R with revised revenues. There was a change in the SRO contract; we will see additional revenue from that. The tax collectors did great job following through on dog licenses; there are no fines regarding dogs. DRA is reviewing what she submitted for revised amounts. The 534 was completed by auditors on Monday. MS1 is the only outstanding report; we are waiting for the State to set utility values.

Ms. McAllister reported that they are still ironing out payroll issues. She explained the issues.

Mr. Houghton directed attention to the ARPA Funds. In his role as Select Board representative to the Heritage Commission, he suggested using some of the funds to install historic markers at Stratham Hill Park. This project had been talked about in the past, but never came to fruition. He felt that the use hits at the heart and intent of the master plan. They will reach out to other committees as the project takes more shape. Ms. Knab is opposed to more signage at the park.

Mr. Houghton described small, informational signs to let, especially the new residents, know the history. Ms. Knab acknowledges they could be tastefully done, but is hesitant to support the project.

Mr. Houghton raised the issue of the Smyk property. Mr. Moore reported that regulations are being worked on. The Smyk Trustees are funding a sign for the park.

Mr. Moore will soon have ARPA funds for the board to approve, including permit software, premium pay for DPW, culvert lining, and roof work. We have more years to spend the money. He is evaluating other ideas and an overall approach will be brought back to the Select Board.

Mr. Moore presented a raffle permit request from the Stratham Memorial School PTO. Ms. Knab motioned to approve the raffle permit request. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Moore noted two items are recommended by Town Assessor Chris Murdough in her memo dated 10/13/21. Mr. Houghton motioned to approve the abatement for the Czyz Revocable Trust. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Ms. Knab motioned approval of the veteran's credit for William Daigle. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

The Board signed the warranty deed for Breslin Farm Rd.

At 9:43 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to go into a non-public session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3, II (c) to discuss a matter that could affect the reputation of another. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. Houghton – Yes; Lovejoy - Yes; Knab – Yes

At 10:22 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to come out of the non-public session and seal the minutes because it is determined that divulgence of this information likely would affect adversely the reputation of a person other than a member of this board. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. Houghton – Yes; Lovejoy - Yes; Knab – Yes

At 10:23 pm Mr. Lovejoy motioned to adjourn. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard
Recording Secretary