

MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 20, 2022 SELECT BOARD MEETING

Meeting held in the Hutton Room at the Stratham Municipal Center

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

ALSO PRESENT: Town Administrator David Moore, Finance Administrator Christiane McAllister, Town Treasurer Tracy Abbott, Director of Public Works Nate Mears, Town Planner Mark Connors

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

Ms. Knab motioned to approve the minutes of October 3, 2022 minutes as written. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton recognized Town Treasurer Tracy Abbott who reported on the bank transition. She and Finance Administrator Christiane McAllister have condensed the number of bank accounts in accordance with previous consultations with the Select Board.

Ms. Abbott will be conducting her annual review of the Investment Policy. She will suggest changes and bring it back to the Board for comments and approval.

Ms. Abbott explained that, currently, only three investment accounts are separate. She and Ms. McAllister are very happy with the reduced number of accounts. Ms. McAllister and Ms. Abbott are working on reconciling the accounts.

Mr. Houghton recognized Nate Mears for his DPW report. Mr. Mears indicated that the solid waste market is beginning to show a return for commodities. Transfer Station revenues are equaling nearly 50% with the line item. He recommends removing the fee schedule from the Solid Waste Ordinance to allow for more flexibility in meeting market expenses. Mr. Mears reviewed the benefits of the automated curbside collection implementation. Casella has been working with their staff to reduce issues and the improvement is apparent and he noted we get swift attention to issues that we bring forward.

Mr. Mears continued his report noting that, overall, costs are trending down, which is largely tonnage related. Mr. Houghton requested a report on trending tonnage and costs for the past three years. Mr. Mears detailed impending costs.

Next, Mr. Mears referred to his draft of the revised solid waste ordinance. Mr. Moore reviewed the process for changing an ordinance. This is the first reading of a revision to the Solid Waste Ordinance. A Public Hearing will be held November 1. Mr. Moore explained the advantages of the revision. The Board indicated they wanted to hear feedback from the residents. He will put it in the Select Board Newsletter.

Mr. Mears reported that he was pleased with the turf grass on the playing fields at the park. In November, he will move forward with winterizing.

Mr. Mears felt that the approach to mosquito control this year was successful and advocates continuing that plan with Dragon Mosquito next year. Few cases of mosquito-borne illness were reported.

Mr. Mears reported that line painting on the roads, bike lines and parking lots has all been completed. He went on to describe the management and maintenance of the 80+ catch basins. They are tracked through MS4 reporting. The data must be recorded and sent to the EPA.

Mr. Houghton returned to the discussion on mosquitoes. Given the weather conditions this year, he was curious if reduced spraying had any meaningful impact. Data would be resident complaints. Mr. Mears feels larvaciding is the best tool to remove the mosquito population. He believes continuing with the current program is the best path.

Mr. Mears reported on the paving program, citing the roads that were repaved this year.

Mr. Mears explained that there's been a delay in the replacement of Truck 10 due to supply chain issues and production. It will not be able to be produced this year, but we are looking to lock in for the first quarter 2023 production. The cabin chassis should be received next year. We did receive an inspection sticker for Truck 10, so it is still operational.

Cemetery improvements regarding drainage issues and landscaping is complete. Drainage issues have been resolved. Regarding facilities, the salt shed roof has been replaced. The work was done quickly and done well, this project was funded with the Town's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds.

Mr. Mears noted that a light pole located in the middle of the Fire Dept. rear parking lot has been a long-standing problem as it was struck repeatedly over the course of snow removal and other parking lots movements. His crew remedied the situation by relocated the pole across the parking lot. We will be receiving additional poles to provide sufficient lighting to the lot.

Mr. Mears reported on improvements made to the Gifford Farm rental property.

Mr. Mears' crew has stabilized 50% of the wall at the Smyk property. He will contract with a masonry firm to complete the project.

Mr. Mears informed the Board that he has been diligently working with two of his crew members to get them licensed with a commercial driver license. He described the lengthy and difficult training. He was proud to report that the two new staffers completed the required portions of the program and received their 90 day permit.

Mr. Mears and Mr. Moore have been having discussion regarding acquiring an administrative assistance for the DPW function. Duties would include assisting with payroll, accounts payable, responding to resident questions regarding the cemetery, waste collection, etc. Mr. Mears said funding for the position is likely to be able to be covered in the existing payroll allocations for

the department, in that we replaced a senior staff person with an early career hire and that our intended restructure to include a grounds crew lead did not materialize due to recruitment issues.

Mr. Houghton recognized Mark Connors who began his department report by noting proposed changes to the Zoning Ordinance. The first is regarding minimum setbacks in the Gateway District. Currently there is no minimum setback; implementing one would make the gateway more visually appealing. The next is a minor housekeeping amendment to clarify previous amendments. The third amendment was raised following an inquiry into redevelopment on the 108 corridor and addresses loosening setback restrictions that are potentially unintended limitations. The fourth amendment is to implement a common standard in the Gateway for pedestrian/bike improvements. This would require coordination with DOT. The next amendment is regarding Gateway uses that aren't permitted; the Planning Board wants to keep the process. Other housekeeping items include keeping uses listed in the Gateway consistent with other parts of the ordinance. The sixth amendment is a result of a new state law limiting the ability of towns to regulate site development for churches. This amendment would allow the town to have some input even if it is non-binding. The seventh is regarding density standards in a mixed use zone. The next two amendments are related to signage.

Mr. Connors reported on the Town's ability to adopt impact fees. Stratham hasn't adopted this, but most of our surrounding towns have. He explained that the fees generated (which could range from \$3,500 per unit to \$15,000) would go to capital improvements for school districts, DPW, library, roads, public safety, etc. If Stratham decides to adopt the impact fee, it may decide not to implement it. This is an enabling ordinance and would be included in site plan regulations. There would be specific accounting regulations that must be adhered to so he advised hiring a consultant to ensure compliance.

Next Mr. Connors discussed a potential Article for Town Meeting: RSA 79E Housing Opportunity Zone. To encourage affordable housing, the Town could designate part of town (such as the technical college site or the far southern site off of Rt. 101) where we would reduce the property taxes collected for between 5-9 years and step up each year until it reaches the full value. A developer would need to commit to doing one third of the units as affordable units.

Mr. Connors reported that the Rt. 33 Heritage Committee has received some applications and are meeting more often. After a thorough review, the Planning Board approved the 297R Portsmouth Ave. demolition. The barn at 249 Portsmouth Ave. has been reviewed and all involved agree it is beyond repair and needs to come down. The Planning Board will have the Rt. 33 Heritage Committee recommendation in time for their next meeting.

Mr. Connors said the MS4 permit has been submitted to the EPA. He relayed stories about towns that did not submit reports/submitted inaccurate reports. We are considering three planning projects. We just filed year 4; these projects are required for year 6. We have to create an inventory of town owned property, then look at opportunities to incorporate best practices for capturing storm water management. The second project is looking at parking lot and street signs for storm water treatment. The third examines ways to encourage green infrastructure. Of the three, the first is the bigger effort. He is considering bringing in a consultant to assist with that. Mr. Moore said we have money in CIP for storm water planning.

Mr. Connors said that he and Parks & Recreation Director Seth Hickey are creating a short video to showcase the trail near the Memorial School. Mr. Moore observed that it is a 12 minute walk from Jack Rabbit Lane parking lot to the Tote Road trail to the Memorial School. He thinks it would be appropriate to highlight this option as a great alternative to the idling during the drop off/pick up times at the school and that these types of connections are the sort of progress that is envisioned in other locations to be explored through the Open Space Plan.

The Pedestrian /Bicyclist Committee, a subcommittee of the Planning Board, will be meeting next week.

Mr. Connors is happy Code Enforcement Officer/Building Inspector Jim Marchese is back and commended his replacement Peter Rowell on his knowledge and patience. Mr. Connors expressed gratitude for Planning Assistant Susan Connors and her expertise. He is working to streamline the process for Fire and Police Department inspections and make sure our fees are competitive with surrounding communities.

Mr. Connors referred to the Age Friendly report, noting transportation and communication came out as Stratham's top concerns. Rockingham Planning Commission offers a technical assistance grant for which we will apply. The Board discussed who has responsibility for communication and acknowledged challenges in that area. Ms. Knab motioned endorsement of the Town moving forward with the application to the Age Friendly Communities support for year two. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Mr. Anderson suggested senior programming information be more prominently located on the website.

Next, Mr. Connors addressed the Congestion Mitigation Air Quality plan (CMAQ). This is for high budget projects; the cap is \$3 million and the Town must commit to a 20% (\$600,000) match. He listed potential options in his memo. The Planning Board has identified their priority to be the synchronization of traffic signals along Portsmouth Ave. Their second choice is Portsmouth Ave. sidewalks, followed by Marin Way improvements. They did not feel electronic fueling stations is something the Town should pursue at this time. They discussed the various projects. Mr. Moore suggested the Energy Commission be given an opportunity to provide input. Mr. Houghton noted that we are not constrained in the number of projects we can submit provided they don't exceed \$3 million. The group expressed disappointment in the lack of support for the electronic fueling stations. Mr. Moore will submit letters indicating two projects. We are not obligated to follow through with projects we put in the letters.

Mr. Connors discussed the culverts on Squamscott Road. NHDOT held a public meeting last week. This is an environmental project which will upsize the two culverts on Squamscott Road enabling wildlife to get through easily. The project will begin next summer. Mr. Connors described the options for road closure while the work is being done. Mr. Moore requested DOT use a decorative railing as opposed to the corrugated steel that is typical. DOT noted they must comply with certain requirements. Mr. Houghton motioned to provide a letter of support for the project. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Ms. Knab motioned to authorize the Town Planner to move forward with the two comments discussed, roadway

shoulder widening and installing the nicest railings possible for the Squamscott Road project. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton inquired about the Rt. 33 crossing at Sandy Point Rd, which was included as an informational item. We received correspondence saying it was a much bigger project than originally anticipated and, as such, it will not be able to be included in the Rt. 33 project. This was disappointing news, but somewhat expected. There has also been a change in project managers at DOT for this project.

Mr. Anderson asked Mr. Connors if any further discussion had been had regarding having an engineer funded by developers to oversee Planning Board decisions on issues as storm water, draining, etc. Mr. Connors is considering an attorney to help navigate those issues. Mr. Anderson asked for an update on Source Water Protection. Mr. Connors met with the RPC regarding strategies to upgrade regulations. The Planning Board will address some of these issues.

The Board thanked Mr. Connors for all his work on these important issues.

At 8:44 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to go into a non-public session to discuss matters that may affect adversely the reputation of another in accordance with RSA 91-A:3, II (a)(c) and (e). Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. Roll call: Houghton-Yes; Knab-Yes; Anderson-Yes.

At 10:00 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to come out of the non-public session and seal the minutes noting that failure to do so would render a proposed actin ineffective. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Moore presented a preliminary budget with a 2.2% increase; \$180,000 over last year. This includes everything except additional part-time hours for administrative assistance at DPW and the animal control services raised by the Police Chief. He has worked with our IT consultant, Lee Todis to bring greater detail to our IT supply, subscriptions, and line items. Having a better understanding enables us to better manage and control that budget. As an example of tighter budgeting, Mr. Moore explained that because shifts in the Fire Dept. haven't been filled 100%, we are budgeting to 85%. Adjustments are included in this preliminary budget. He reminded the Select Board its goal is to finalize a draft budget on December 19th for the purposes of distributing to the Budget Advisory Committee.

Ms. Knab motioned to authorize the Board Chair to execute all related documentation associated with closing the real estate transaction that is the land donation of 18 Jana Lane. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

ADMINISTRATION

Veteran's Day volunteers are busy working on this year's ceremony. The Board discussed their attendance.

Mr. Moore informed the Board that we have received the two Purple Heart signs and asked them to give some thought as to where they should be installed.

Mr. Moore directed attention to the election preparations and bake sales. Town Clerk/Tax Collector Deborah Bakie recently attended a training with Secretary of State who clarified his interpretation of the role of the Select Board members which is to be at the polling location from open to close. Mr. Moore advised that the guidance also says the Select Board can appoint pro tem Select Board members to do their duties. Mr. Moore recommended all three Select Board members to appoint two people as pro tems. They will ask former select board member Joe Lovejoy. Mr. Moore will raise the issue again as we get closer to the election.

Mr. Moore said that Ms. Bakie had recommendations on how best to accommodate the bake sales and it was determined the two requestors would be invited to utilize a portion of the cafeteria on that day.

Mr. Moore reported that interim Library Director Steve Butzel is working with Mr. Mears on an internal renovation project that will accommodate two drop boxes for library books and audio materials. This project will cost approximately \$10,000. There are funding sources for this project in the CIP.

The IT group will meet next Friday to review proposals and discuss a path forward. Mr. Moore will share his ideas about additional process steps with the group.

Mr. Anderson has been monitoring the drought and informed the Board that our status has improved. Ms. Knab moved to authorize the Town Administrator to take all steps to loosen the water restriction in accordance with new information pertaining to our status. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Moore informed the Board that self-appraisals have been initiated. Wellness Coordinator Tara Madden is doing a fantastic job.

RESERVATIONS

Mr. Houghton motioned to approve Diversity Outreach Services use of the Morgera Room at the Fire Station as requested by Lt. Call. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Ms. Knab motioned to approve the raffle permit request for Parks and Recreation. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Moore referred to the communication from Fire Chief Jeff Denton regarding Scouts' campfires at SHP. Chief Denton is requesting that the Town, as land owner, delegate permission to the Fire Dept. to issue a burn permit Scout-sponsored events. The Board wanted to retain control over activities at the park and sought more information from the Chief.

Mr. Houghton recognized Brent Scott's application for consideration to the Recreation Commission. Ms. Knab motioned to move Brent Scott's application for the Recreation Commission to the next meeting for nomination. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Anderson inquired about the Active Shooter Training Event at Stratham Hill Park on October 27th. Mr. Moore will clarify the time and exact location for meeting.

The Board signed the warrant for the date and time of the General Election.

At 10:30 p.m. Mr. Anderson motioned to adjourn. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard
Recording Secretary