

## **MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 15, 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 (via phone), Finance Administrator Christiane McAllister, Parks and Recreation Director Seth Hickey, Town Clerk/Tax Collector Deborah Bakie

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

Mr. Lovejoy moved to approve the draft minutes of November 1, 2021. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton recognized Parks & Recreation Director Seth Hickey. Mr. Hickey reported working on regulations for Smyk Park. He's solicited feedback from other departments and is trying to keep regulations consistent with the other parks while being mindful of the Smyk's intentions. After hearing the Board's feedback he intends to send the draft to the committees for input. They discussed possible parking for users of that space.

Next, Mr. Hickey gave an update on youth sports. Soccer had a successful season with 250 participants. Basketball is off to a positive start. He talked about our involvement in the Seacoast Basketball League and the need to examine cost-sharing to ensure expenses are evenly distributed.

The department has met with the Exeter Area Chamber of Commerce and have decided to hold the Great Bay Food Festival on Saturday, May 7<sup>th</sup>. Based on what they learned from the first festival, they will be making some changes with this one.

Mr. Hickey reported the Trail Management Advisory Committee (TMAC), in conjunction with the Conservation Commission held two successful Trail Days. Approximately 30 people volunteered their time each day and Lowes donated lumber. Tote Road from Jack Rabbit to the school was renovated as was the lower half of Kitty Rock Trail. They also preserved a historic portion of a trail. Money generated from spring and summer races were also used for the project.

TMAC is looking for a CIP budget beginning in 2022 to be used for infrastructure items, such as signage, additional trail days, etc. They hope to install an ecocounter at the park (memo in the packet) which will be useful in providing concrete data of park users which could then be used to apply for state funding. They discussed cost and funding for the counter. The counter will give us quantitative data about park utilization; enabling us to validate how it's changed over time. The information will help with future decision making. Mr. Lovejoy motioned to move forward with the ecocounter install pending confirmation of funding sources. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Hickey stated that the next Trail Management Committee Public Forum will be on December 1<sup>st</sup> at 6:00 pm. [SINCE RESCHEDULED TO DECEMBER 15<sup>TH</sup> AT 6:00 P.M. AND THE MC] It will be an information sharing session. He referred to the policy concerning having dogs on / off leash at the park. They've learned that many people are unaware of the regulations; this meeting will be used to inform the public about current rules in place.

Mr. Hickey reported that the Recreation Commission approved the Rec Revolving fund transfer, which is an annual occurrence.

Next Mr. Hickey said that many years ago, the Soccer Board raised funds to construct a pavilion at Steven's Park. Many recreation camps and activities are held there and a pavilion would provide much needed shade and shelter. They would also like to install bathroom facilities. He also noted the need for more courts. Conversations with various committees have led to the conclusion that an overall plan that addresses all the issues is needed for the park. He plans to work with Mr. Moore to create a CIP element sheet for a future year to bring this project into further focus.

Regarding the 2022 budget, the Parks & Recreation Department is not requesting any increases. He felt they got a lot accomplished in 2021 and are looking forward to do the same next year with the current resources.

Mr. Hickey reported that Eagle Scout Evan Driscoll's basketball project has been well received by the community. Mr. Hickey would like a consistent way to recognize Eagle Scout projects. Mr. Driscoll is requesting to install a plaque as a part of his project. Given the magnitude of money he raised for the project and the way it was executed, Mr. Lovejoy motioned to authorize the installation of the plaque as described by Mr. Driscoll. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Mr. Hickey is putting together a list of upcoming Eagle Scout projects in order to make the process more efficient.

Mr. Hickey noted a request from a Master's student to obtain boulder samples at SHP; the Board agreed to the request and expressed interest in learning the results of her work.

Mr. Hickey raised the topic of the future direction of the Pedestrian & Cyclists Advocacy Committee and how their work coordinates with the Planning Dept. and Planning Board. The Board was supportive of perhaps realigning the group as a sub-committee to the Planning Board, which could result in having defined tasks directly related to implementation of related projects identified in the Master Plan formed by the Planning Board. Mr. Moore will contact Town Planner Mark Connors to coordinate with the Planning Board in order to rejuvenate the PCAC.

Mr. Houghton read the Public Hearing Notice to accept the dedicated street known as Taylor Court. Mr. Houghton then motioned to open the Public Hearing. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Mr. Houghton then asked for comments. Upon hearing no comments, Mr. Houghton closed the Public Hearing. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Mr. Lovejoy motioned to accept the street known as Taylor Court as a Town Road. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Mr. Lovejoy motioned to return in

full the bond associated with Taylor Court in the amount of \$254,000. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton recognized Town Clerk / Tax Collector Deborah Bakie to discuss polling locations. After soliciting feedback from the Supervisors of the Checklist and Town Moderator and Deputy Moderator, Mr. Moore and Ms. Bakie drafted the joint memo to the Board for recommendations for polling locations. Ms. Bakie is concerned that, with the Town growing, there will not be enough space to hold some of the bigger elections at the Municipal Center. Ms. Knab noted that the Supervisors were against moving the polling location. Ms. Bakie said that the last election we had at the Memorial School went very smooth, parking was safer. The Board discussed. Mr. Houghton felt that the issue warrants further consideration and engagement with the community and directly with the Supervisors to hear out concerns. Mr. Moore suggested making the public aware via the newsletter, invite comments and revisit the issue at a future Select Board meeting. The memo recommended all State elections (General, State Primary and Presidential Primaries to be held at SMS; with the Town Election to be held at the Municipal Center). Mr. Houghton discussed how he feels there should be strong consideration to having one-location for all elections and noted the value in consistency and predictability for the public. Ms. Bakie agreed with inviting more feedback and continuing the conversation. Ms. Knab felt it was important to give the Supervisors comfort surrounding the integrity of the election. Mr. Moore will put out a call for comments in the Select Board newsletter.

#### ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Moore referred to the handout in the packet regarding ARPA funds summary. The funds are proposed to be used for up to five projects at this time: pandemic-related premium pay for DPW workers, Union Road culvert replacement, Municipal Center roof replacement, Municipal Center office reconfiguration, online permitting. These projects needed to be done. If not for the ARPA funds, they would've been funded through the CIP or the Reserve Fund. There will be ARPA funds remaining (\$580,000). Other projects on the horizon include the Salt Shed roof (approximately \$140,000) and roadway capital investments that we use every year. We want to keep the number of projects down and use the money for larger projects for ease in satisfying reporting requirements.

The Board continued to discuss using the ARPA funds to reduce the amount needed for gross appropriations from the town. Ms. McAllister reassured the Board that the use of the funds outlined by Mr. Moore are in alignment with guidelines set forth by the government. Mr. Moore listed the reasons for using the funds now as opposed to waiting to use them in the future. They discussed other potential uses of the funds. Ideally, they are hoping to use the funds to provide some financial relief to the taxpayers. Mr. Moore mentioned upcoming projects.

Mr. Moore made some observations about various other funds held by the Town and distributed a chart of these funds and their eligible uses, authority for creation, and related information. Mr. Houghton added that along with Mr. Moore's observations, unassigned fund balances might be leveraged in this budget cycle. It might be possible to use some of those funds to offset tax increases. Mr. Houghton commented that, economically, are going into a precarious place with inflation and gas prices going up. This is hitting residents in a major way. Ms. McAllister will

start compiling the funds in a format from least restrictive funds to most restrictive so she can identify funds that can be used immediately. She will ensure that her recommendations are based on the Statute and what the Town of Stratham Warrant Articles say about the use of the funds to make sure the guidance she gives follows those.

#### INFORMATIONAL ITEM

Mr. Lovejoy and Mr. Moore attended a meeting with the Energy Commission regarding Community Power. Mr. Lovejoy volunteered to become the Select Board representative to the Energy Commission.

#### BOARDS AND COMMISSION

Ms. Knab motioned to appoint Michele McCann-Corti to the alternate Library Trustee position. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

#### ADMINISTRATION

With the end of the year approaching, Mr. Moore has been focusing on capital appropriations that will lapse.

Next, Mr. Moore reported that open enrollment is going well.

At 8:36 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to go into a non-public session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3, II(c) on a matter which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of a person, other than a member of this board. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. Roll Call: Houghton – yes, Lovejoy – yes, Knab - yes.

At 9:40 pm Mr. Houghton moved to come out of the non-public session and seal the minutes noting that failure to do so may render a proposed action invalid. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Ms. Knab motioned to accept the Veteran's credits as recommended by the Town Assessor. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Ms. Knab motioned to allow Ms. Anderson to use Room A and waive the alcohol prohibition for her event in February 2022. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Lovejoy motioned to allow Joyce Rowe to use the Morgera Room on December 18, 2021. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

At 9:48 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to adjourn. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard, Recording Secretary