

## **MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 18, 2022 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, Finance Administrator Christiane McAllister, Town Planner Mark Connors

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

Mr. Lovejoy motioned to accept the minutes from the January 3, 2022 Select Board meeting. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton recognized the legislative delegation. Representative Altschiller, Abrami, and Simpson asked the Board if they had any questions regarding any upcoming bills and voiced their willingness to advocate for any that were of particular interest. Discussion centered on items referred to in the NHMA Bulletin, firearms in schools, and election law bills. The delegation promised to flag the bills that directly affect municipalities and will notify the Board so they can each register their opposition/support for each bill. They went on to discuss a bill that proposes making virtual meetings acceptable under the Right-to-Know law. Conversation turned to Bill 1590 regarding municipalities withdrawing from the NH Retirement system. If passed, this could result in municipalities paying an increased amount for the unfunded accrued liability. Rep. Abrami gave a history of the State's contribution to NH Retirement.

Mr. Houghton called attention to Bill 1238 regarding zoning towers and workforce housing, noting it is a particularly difficult and challenging issue that needs to be addressed. The group agreed that it is primarily an economic issue with no clear solution. Mr Moore called attention to Senate Bill 249 which addresses short-term rentals. He noted this bill, if it passes, would be detrimental to Stratham because it would reduce our town's ability to enforce our zoning. The delegation thanked them for bringing this to their attention.

Mr. Lovejoy questioned Rep. Abrami on the connection of his sponsorship of Bill 1472 and how it relates Stratham. The bill is regarding the election in Merrimack County. Rep. Abrami replied that constituents in Stratham asked him to follow it. Discussion ensued regarding election procedures. .

Mr. Moore raised the benefits associated with Senate Bill 317 regarding lowering abatement interest. It would be beneficial to the Town to pay a lower interest rate on abatements

Mr. Moore introduced Town Planner Mark Connors to discuss correspondence item from NHDOT. Mr. Connors stated that the Stratham/Greenland Safety Improvements project came up in the 10 year plan quite quickly whereas the traffic light at Bunker Hill has been on the list for much longer. We contend that the traffic light should take precedence over the Rt. 33 improvements. In addition, we believe it would be beneficial to do a corridor study before making any improvements to Rt. 33. The Town has been advocating for the Bunker Hill traffic

light for many years. A transportation survey was done indicating the residents feel this is a priority. Rep. Abrami said he will discuss the issue with the Commissioner and the Chair of the Public Works Committee. They speculated on the reasoning behind the acceleration of the Rt. 33 project. Both projects have safety concerns. The State has already implemented steps to mitigate the danger on Rt. 33 but nothing has been done for the intersection at Bunker Hill.

Mr. Houghton thanked the delegation for attending and for sharing the information.

#### PLANNING

Mr. Connors presented his department report. He gave an update on the zoning amendments that the Planning Board will have a Public Hearing on tomorrow night. Some are simply housekeeping items, others increase flexibility or better define certain zoning ordinances. These amendments will go to Town Warrant.

Mr. Connors went on to describe an upcoming project at 129 Portsmouth Ave., a 10,000 sq. ft. dermatology clinic. The Planning Board has been working with them to change the architecture of the building to conform to Town standards. Convenient MD has applied for a sign to advertise a potential vaccine and booster clinic at the former Rite Aid location. Going forward, the Pedestrian and Cyclists Advocacy Committee will transition to be a subcommittee of the Planning Board making it an advisory committee as opposed to an advocacy committee. Although it is not final, he anticipates the Town will receive the grant to implement recommendations for the Source Water Protection Plan. He thanked the board for approving the funding for the relocation of his more public facing office space. He is helping the new Building Inspector get acclimated.

Mr. Connors continued his report saying he is researching regulations. He has had discussions with some gas stations regarding the installation of electric charging stations.

He then returned the conversation to legislation, noting which bills the Town should monitor closely. The bill regarding short-term rentals is of particular interest. Mr. Moore felt we should take steps to strengthen our position. He will contact town counsel to discuss. Mr. Connors called attention to some other bills regarding road closures, religious land use and elderly exemptions.

#### APPOINTMENTS/NOMINATIONS

Mr. Houghton noted there are nominations for consideration to the Age Friendly Committee. As part of its duties, the committee will hold a public forum. The main goal of the committee is to work with the Rockingham Planning Commission to adopt a report for the Select Board and Town on recommendations to improve services for senior citizens. Mr. Houghton motioned to formally appoint Ms. Knab to the Regional Age-Friendly Planning Group. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

#### ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Moore reported that Town Meeting preparations are underway. The Budget Advisory Committee meetings are done. The legal notice for the public hearing on Thursday, February 3 will be released tomorrow. Mr. Moore is finalizing the budget and asked for any questions or

comments from the Board. Ms. Knab requested a “big picture” clarification on the CIP funds going into Stratham Hill Park, the open space plan and Stevens Park. Mr. Moore said Steven’s park identifies most funding in an out year. After talking to Mr. Connors, they agreed that Stratham Hill Park will fit into the open space plan. Mr. Moore noted that we will need to set aside funds to follow up on the Trail Management Advisory Committee’s recommendations – focusing first on short term projects, then long term. Mr. Moore discussed reallocating the funds. After talking with department heads, they decided against purchasing another vehicle; opting instead to keep the one we have and cycle through Police vehicles. Ms. Knab suggested we start thinking about funding for building a pavilion or structure at Smyk.

Mr. Moore talked about other movements in the budget. Assessing Assistant Jim Joseph identified a \$5,000 reduction in the Assessing budget. Compensation adjustments will be based on a 3% merit based COLA adjustment. They raised the issue of to whom the town report should be dedicated. This will be discussed later in a non-public session. Mr. Moore and Ms. Bakie plan to attend the School Board meeting to request the elections be held at Stratham Memorial School as voted by the Board in a December meeting.

Mr. Moore suggests reappointing the Public Works Committee. The Board agreed this was a good idea, but will continue the conversation at another time. The PWC’s duties would include monitoring PFAS status and reporting on other water quality issues.

Mr. Moore recognized Ms. McAllister to explain the Town’s short and long term disability insurance. After obtaining a quote from HealthTrust, it was determined that it would be in the best interest of the Town and employees to change providers. They looked at timing issues and found there would be no penalty and no loss of coverage. Ms. McAllister went in depth comparing the options of the two companies. She researched the plans employees are currently subscribing to and wanted to ensure there would be a comparable or better plan being offered if we were to change companies. Mr. Houghton favored option 2 and moving forward with offering it to the employees. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Continuing his Administration report, Mr. Moore informed the board that a petition was submitted by a non-resident via the website. It lacked sufficient signatures. Because all Town Clerks received the same petition, the Secretary of State addressed it.

Lastly, Mr. Moore called attention to the Recreation Commission meeting. As a result of a decline in volunteerism for their programs, the Commission proposes adding a stipend position funded with Recreation proceeds to provide support and alleviate ancillary pressures on the volunteer coaches. The position will be funded through the recreation programs. Mr. Lovejoy described the reasoning behind the position. Ms. McAllister had questions regarding payroll for the position. Ms. Knab requested more information on what the specific duties would be. Mr. Moore noted Mr. Hickey’s Departmental report is scheduled for February and he will ask him to review the issue then.

Ms. Knab inquired if it might be possible to request use of ARM Funds for the project on Route 33. In their letter to us, DOT mentions impact to the wetlands. The group questioned if there

would be a wetland impact as there is no plan to widen the road. Mr. Moore will ensure a response to the letter with our guidance.

Mr. Moore stated the meeting with the new emergency response volunteers went very well. He was happy to report that we had many qualified people volunteer for the open positions.

Mr. Moore said DES will be doing outreach on water quality and volunteer testing, helping residents understand results and provide resources. It is a great public education opportunity about water standards for arsenic and other contaminants outside of PFAS. Mr. Moore said we continue to meet weekly with Underwood Engineers to check in on progress for our long-term engagement for PFAS. The State plans to coordinate a larger scale meeting of regional water operators who may have interest in bigger picture seacoast water sustainability project. They will facilitate. We were able to get full funding for additional testing that Underwood recommends on water quality in our effected areas to determine if there are other issues in the corridor.

#### RESERVATIONS

Guy Hadley, US Military Vets, requests use of the Front Pavilion on July 9, 2022 and to have the fee waived. Stuart Hemming, Collie Rescue League, requests use of the Front Pavilion on September 24, 2022 and to have the fee waived. Lisa Rohr requests use of Room A and to waive the alcohol prohibition. Mr. Houghton motioned to approve the two requests for the non-profits to waive the fees and the third request to waive the alcohol prohibition in Room A. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Moore said the Association will be meeting soon to evaluate the future of the Fair. The Association has considered moving the dates of the fair and are coordinating with the Parks & Recreation Department. .

At 9:36 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 may affect the reputation of another. Seconded by Mr. Lovejoy. Roll Call: Houghton – Yes; Lovejoy – Yes; Knab – Yes

At 9:45 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. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

At 10:01 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to adjourn. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard  
Recording Secretary