

MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 6, 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, Finance Administrator Christiane McAllister, Director of Public Works Nate Mears

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

Mr. Lovejoy moved to approve the draft minutes of November 15, 2021 and December 2, 2021 provided the times of entering/exiting the non-public session be inserted. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

Mr. Moore stated that the annual Seabrook emergency drill is coming up on Dec. 8th. We have openings for some Emergency Management roles (communications, radiological and deputy directors) and that the newsletter recently invited volunteers to express interest.

Mr. Moore noted the Police Dept. received the CALEA award. He is working with the Chair and Chief King to organize a public event in January to recognize this tremendous accomplishment and to swear in the new officers.

Mr. Moore pointed out that the Equalization Ratio Assessment needs signatures from the Board; from here DRA will determine the Equalized Value Ratio for 2021.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Mr. Houghton motioned to open the Public Hearing. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton noted there will be three Public Hearings this evening. The first will be regarding the Fire Dept. Association's donation to the Stratham Police Dept. Mr. Houghton recognized Dan Crow of the Stratham Volunteer Fire Association. Mr. Crow recalled that they decided to hold a golf tournament fundraiser and to partner with the Stratham Police Dept. as they have the same goals of serving the community. They are donating \$29,217 with the understanding that upon Select Board acceptance of the funds, the funds be used by the Stratham Police Dept. for community initiatives and programs, officer wellness and peer support, law enforcement equipment and training, emergency preparedness and public safety tools. The Fire Dept. received the same amount. Mr. Crow directed attention to Deputy Fire Chief Josh Crow, Committee Chairman and noted Lt. Pierce was the Police Dept. Chairman. Mr. Crow recognized the hard work of the committee. There was tremendous support from the community and local businesses. People have expressed anticipation for next year's tournament. Feedback has been that people appreciate that the proceeds stay within the town. Lt. David Pierce thanked the committee for the donation and everyone who made it possible. Mr. Houghton said that this was a tremendous accomplishment and thanked everyone whose initiative made it successful. Mr.

Houghton then motioned to accept the funds from the Stratham Volunteer Fire Dept. Association that is being transferred to the Police Dept. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton moved on to the second Public Hearing: A donation of \$783,916 from the US Dept. of Treasury in American Rescue Plan Act Funds to be used in recovery from the impacts of Covid 19. Mr. Moore noted the many discussions of eligible uses of the ARPA Funds in past meetings. This Public Hearing is a formal act to accept the funds. Mr. Lovejoy motioned to accept the ARPA funds with the intent of expending them in accordance with the regulations thereto. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton moved to the third Public Hearing. This is to accept the donation of up to \$40,000 in DES design service reimbursement funds for the purpose of planning for long-term solutions to PFAS in town center. This is a DES reimbursement grant for design services. Mr. Moore noted that this had also been discussed in previous Select Board meetings. Mr. Moore said that we have identified a scope of work for \$32,500 that is eligible for reimbursement under this program. Mr. Houghton called for any comments or questions from the public on any of these public hearings. Mr. Houghton motioned to accept the grant funds. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton motioned to close the Public Hearings. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton directed attention to the discussion regarding polling locations. Mr. Moore summarized that this topic was discussed at the Nov. 15th Select Board meeting that included a joint recommendations for future polling locations from the Town Administrator and Town Clerk/Tax Collector. A call for public comments was made. There was one comment. Connie Aubin-Adams, a Supervisor of the Checklist, advocated for consistency in polling locations and clear communications to the public about where to vote. Speaking on behalf of the Supervisors of the Checklist, she indicated the Supervisors prefer the polling location remain at the Municipal Center but are willing to make any location work for the good of orderly elections. They have been striving to ensure the checklist is up to date. Ms. Bakie, noted that the Clerks' office will need to close if we move the polling location for local elections, something they have been able to keep open during the local elections in March. She observed this fact, coupled with the difficulty of moving the location, and questions if it would be worth moving it for the smaller, lower turnout elections. Ms. Knab and Mr. Houghton expressed a desire to maintain consistency and noted the value of a consistent predictable polling place outweighed the benefits of keeping the local election at the Municipal Center. Ms. Bakie agreed that the community is growing and SMS can accommodate a larger crowd. Ms. Bakie noted that, with the pandemic, people might feel more comfortable at SMS where there's more room for social distancing. The Select Board consensus was to be consistent and hold all elections at Stratham Memorial School pending approval of the request by the local School District. Mr. Moore said he would make that request for the March 8, 2022 election and the two State elections in 2022 (September and November).

Mr. Houghton directed attention to Public Works Director Nate Mears to give his department report. Mr. Mears reported that he reduced operational costs in certain divisions for FY 22. The solid waste market is changing and the value of commodities is going down. He will work with Casella on how we can do better as a community. His goals for 2022 would be to reconfigure the operations at Transfer Station to better manage the increase in construction debris from the residents. We have seen reduction in household trash. He continued to discuss improvements he hopes to implement in 2022. Mr. Mears discussed removing the fees from the ordinance in order to allow for more regular review of fees in the future. He noted that from his perspective, it appears residents are concerned about disposing of items properly. Mr. Moore outlined the steps to change the ordinance. Discussion ensued. It cost the Town \$35 to dispose of a mattress. Finance Administrator Christiane McAllister noted that NHMA allows charging a fee to reflect actual costs and urged studying figures for surrounding communities.

They discussed the requirements needed to get a Transfer Station sticker. The ordinance states that the vehicle must be registered in Stratham. Occasionally, issues arise when residents register their vehicle in another town because of business reasons. The fix is to issue a temporary permit. The staff has been there a long time, they know the residents. They do inspect the items to be disposed of. No commercial debris is accepted. Mr. Mears will come back to the board with a new draft ordinance on January 18.

Mr. Mears gave an update on the highway portion of his report. They are near the end of paving, drainage repairs at 34 Stratham Heights Rd will be completed this week, a portion of Union Rd has been overlaid.

Mr. Mears reported that they are ready for winter operations.

Next, Mr. Mears requested several encumbrances, the first one being for 2017 paving for Maple Lane Cemetery. He was unable to get work completed this year but is working with vendors and it should be done in early spring 2022. Ms. Knab motioned to approve the encumbrance of funds for the paving of Maple Lane Cemetery in the amount of \$7,000 from the CIP. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Next Mr. Mears said that in order to comply with NH DES regulations, improvements must be made to the municipal fuel pumps at the DPW garage. \$8,600 has been held aside in Building Maintenance funds, as Mr. Mears knew this change was coming. Gaftek didn't get the equipment in time to complete the work in 2021 as a result of supply chain issues. Work should be completed in January 2022. Mr. Houghton motioned to encumber \$8,314 held in account 100 4312 01 375 Building Maintenance to support the work outlined in Gaftek's quote # 21-2138 dated September 3, 2021 to upgrade the tanks at the DPW facility. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Finally, Mr. Mears presented RFPs to solicit proposals for certain functions in our cemeteries and parks, namely soil testing and weed control and fertilization as specialized field maintenance such as shatter tining and other regular services to maintain playability of the field surfaces. He then explained how these areas are now serviced and how the exercise of drafting the scopes of work in the instruments have helped define the service levels expected by the cemetery trustees.

and the field user groups. Designating contractors for these specific areas, will better ensure they can be performed on a schedules preferred by the user groups, which can sometimes conflict with availability for DPW due to other responsibilities or competing responsibilities that may conflict at times. Mr. Moore indicated that having these defines scopes of work will allow us to ensure accountability for the service and allow us to more easily make adjustments in line with service-level expectations of the user groups. Mr. Lovejoy motioned to move forward with the RFPs for the parks and the cemeteries. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

There's been an increase in revenue relative to the cemeteries. More lots have been sold and burials are being done. Mr. Mears had a very productive meeting with the Cemetery Trustees and has their support for the RFPs.

Mr. Mears continued his department report regarding the facilities. The Municipal Center roof project has been done without issue.

Next, Mr. Mears said he will reduce the mosquito control budget in 2022. He noted we did not receive many complaints about not spraying for mosquitoes this year. He is proposing the Town continue that practice, only treating on an as needed basis.

Mr. Mears believes fuel prices will come down in 2022. Mr. Lovejoy is concerned about allocating cost of fuel to different cost centers, something that is being done with the replacement of the software managing the keys that work with the fuel pump system. Mr. Mears reviewed at his data over past two years and increased his original proposal by 21%, up to \$47,432. In addition, is was able to uncover a bid extension for fixed pricing that the State of NH established with Dennis Burke, our vendor. Mr. Mears said he is working closely with both parties to lock in those numbers. This will be a substantial reduction in our costs.

Lastly, Mr. Mears requested the board allow him to purchase from the CIP a tool using Maple Lane Cemetery Landscaping funds in the CIP, which will allow his crew to perform fall clean up at the cemeteries more efficiently. The Cemetery Trustees are supportive of expending these CIP funds this tool. The Board unanimously approved support for the purchase from the CIP.

NEW BUSINESS / ACTION ITEMS

Mr. Moore briefly discussed the budget schedule and next steps. He has designated dates for the Budget Advisory Committee meetings. The Moderator is making appointments. Ms. McAllister and he are making refinements to the preliminary budget. He hopes to give draft budget, including line items, narrative and CIP with backup, to the Moderator by the 17th to give to the BAC.

Mr. Moore requested confirmation for the Town Meeting date. He noted the CMS auditorium has been reserved for Saturday, March 12th. The Select Board set the Town Meeting date of Saturday, March 12, 2022 as the Town Meeting (in person session following the March 8, 2022 Town Election).

Mr. Moore reported that Town Assessor Chris Murdough has recommended a veteran's credit for Map 24, Lot 22. Mr. Lovejoy motioned to approve the veteran's credit as recommended. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

RESERVATIONS

Mr. Moore read a request from Kathy Flagg to use the Morgera Room on Dec. 16 and waive the alcohol prohibition as requested. Mr. Lovejoy motioned to approve the use and waive the prohibition. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Next, Mr. Moore read the request from Pastor Oliver of New Life Baptist Church to continue to use Room A on Sunday mornings and requested a reduced fee in exchange for mopping and shoveling snow. Ms. Knab motioned to approve the request. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

ACTION ITEM (continued)

Mr. Moore reminded that Shanti Wolph who has left the Town's employ was the designated Health Officer for Stratham and recommended Mr. Jim Marchese be so designated. Mr. Marchese is the new Code Enforcement Officer/Building Inspector and the role of health officer was included in his job description. Ms. Knab motioned to appoint Jim Marchese as Health Officer. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton read the Purple Heart proclamation.

At 8:54 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to go into a non-public session per RSA 91-A:3, II(c) on a matter which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of another. Seconded by Mr. Lovejoy. Roll call: Houghton – Yes; Lovejoy – Yes; Knab – Yes

At 10:09 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to come out of the non-public session and seal the minutes noting that failure to do so may render the proposed action of the board ineffective. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard
Recording Secretary