

MINUTES OF THE APRIL 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 Allison Knab, Joe Anderson

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. Anderson motioned to accept the minutes from the April 4, 2022 Select Board meeting. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. Ms. Knab was absent from that meeting and therefore abstained. Motion passed.

Mr. Houghton called attention to the Treasurer Report and related reports. Ms. McAllister explained that from today on, three financial reports will be presented monthly. One is a statement of position (balance sheet), another report will give revenues to date, and there will also be a six page report of expenditures to date.

Mr. Houghton recognized Town Planner Mark Connors to give his department report. Mr. Connors thanked Town Clerk Deborah Bakie for allowing Town Clerk Administrator Tara Madden to step in to assist while they search for a replacement for CEO/BI Coordinator Denise Lemire. He explained how they were handling the transition. Ms. Knab inquired about the other opening in the land use department. Mr. Connors said the Planning Project Assistant position would be posted tomorrow. Mr. Moore stated that interviews would be on a rolling basis and he plans to fill the Coordinator role ASAP.

Mr. Connors reported that he and Mr. Moore met with the Town of Exeter to discuss expansion of nearby water and sewer services to the property at Stoney Brook Lane. The Board discussed the potential for developing housing that is likely to be affordable to people earning moderate incomes.

Next, Mr. Connors reported on the status of the Community College property. The owner must address code enforcement issues if the building were to stay. The owners have also submitted a project to the Planning Board which is more in line with our zoning than their previous submittal. The group discussed if the existing structure would be razed. Mr. Connors explained that zoning guidelines call for a village concept. The State is providing incentives to demolish old existing structures to provide more room for housing. We feel this would be a good option for them and will assist them in applying for the grant. If they want to keep the building, it would be expensive for the owner to bring the building up to code.

Mr. Connors said that because available land is dwindling in Stratham, an increasing number of requests are coming in to purchase landlocked parcels. It is very difficult to develop on land without frontage. We are looking into grants to fund the purchase of some of these parcels, especially those in relation to Stratham Hill Park.

Conversation turned to the Rt. 33 Legacy Committee. No one has committed to being the Planning Board rep. They discussed, in general, who might be on the committee. The Heritage Commission has made Jeff Hyland their appointee on the Committee. They are working on an article for Stratham Magazine that shares the story of the new zoning and the process followed.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Houghton turned the conversation to 2022 goals. Mr. Moore has reviewed the goals with each department head. Ms. McAllister has several goals that she'd like to implement over the next few months. Mr. Houghton noted the Police Dept. goals have begun to be implemented and anticipates a new set of goals from them. Mr. Houghton would like to discuss goals more frequently, perhaps once a month. These goals become part of performance results. Mr. Moore indicated he would be happy to ensure a review of the goals and statuses once a month.

Mr. Moore reported that he has revised the Naming Policy, which was included in their packet, in accordance with previous Select Board discussions. Ms. Knab motioned to adopt the revised Naming Policy. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton turned to the agenda item Wage Adjustment at the Fire Dept. Former Fire Chief Matt Larrabee recommended increasing the pay rate of single and dual certified fire dept. members to maintain competitiveness with surrounding communities. After doing research, he found Stratham's pay rate to be below that of surrounding communities. He accounted for the increase in the budget that was voted on at Town Meeting. Mr. Moore is seeking approval from the Board to make the wage adjustments. The Board observed that, even with the increase, the dual certification rate continues to be lower than surrounding communities. Ms. McAllister said that there is room in the budget to accommodate additional increases. The Board vowed continued support and cooperation with the department. Mr. Houghton hopes to have a broader strategic discussion with the department. Mr. Anderson moved to approve the single and dual certification wage rates for 2022 as recommended by the Fire Chief effective with the first payroll in May. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

The Board signed the deed waivers as recommended by Town Clerk / Tax Collector Deborah Bakie.

Mr. Houghton called attention to the agenda item, Park Signage Discussion. Mr. Moore said that on Wednesday various representatives from three constituencies will meet for a big picture discussion at signage in the Park and the various proposals related to signage that are in the near future.

RESERVATIONS

Ms. Knab motioned to approve the road closures for the Stratham Memorial School's Wellness Walk on May 11th. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

After confirming Police Chief King's consent, Ms. Knab motioned to approve the Granite State Quest bicycle fundraiser on July 9th. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Ms. Knab motioned to approve the Port City Amateur Radio Club request to use the top of Stratham Hill Park on June 24 – 26, 2022. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Ms. Knab motioned to approve the Seacoast Parkinson Support Group's request to use the 4-H Pavilion on May 5th and to waive the fee. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Discussion ensued regarding the request of Core Physicians to use the Front Pavilion and have the fee waived. In accordance with town policy, they have requested a waiver of the fee and submitted their 501c3 letter. Ms. Knab motioned to let Core Physicians use the Front Pavilion on and waive the fee. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor. The board decided to review the policy at a future meeting.

Mr. Moore read details on two raffle permits requests which were submitted. Mr. Anderson motioned to approve the raffle permit request from Acorn School as described. Ms. Knab seconded the request. All voted in favor. Ms. Knab motioned to approve the raffle permit request from the NHSPCA, with a drawing on June 8, 2022. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Anderson motioned to reappoint Tom House to the Planning Board for a 3 year term through 2025. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Moore reported that we will be posting the Planning Project Assistant position soon. We have received two applicants for the Building Inspector/Code Enforcement Officer Coordinator position so far. We have a candidate coming in on Wednesday for an interview for the open DPW position.

Staff recognitions – DPW Foreman Al Williams will be retiring at the end of the month. He has requested no festivities. There will be a retirement luncheon for Officer Chuck Law on Friday. Mr. Moore reminded the Board of its desire to recognize Matt Larrabee for his service as fire chief for the past few years. He will discuss with Chief Denton and bring recommendations back to the board.

Mr. Moore reported that pavilion rentals at the park are increasing to pre-pandemic levels. There has been good coordination between DPW Director Nate Mears and Parks & Recreation Director Seth Hickey. With the increase in activity, there is a need to step up the maintenance of the bathrooms at the park and he, Mr. Mears and Mr. Hickey are exploring options for using existing staff resources.

Mr. Moore reported that the language for the plaque for the Smyk property has been drafted and is being reviewed. The Town staff is seeing to this deed requirement on behalf of the Smyk estate executors in California who have accepted the assistance and confirmed they will fund the costs.

Mr. Moore reported that the DPW Director has requested a “floating” cell phone be issued to the Department to facilitate rotating 24-hour response by additional staff. Mr. Moore reported Mr. Mears is developing a policy for the use and coverage for receiving direct calls from dispatch and other sources. The Board was supportive of this plan.

In response to a status update from Mr. Houghton on PFAS, Mr. Moore said that regular testing is ongoing. We have applied for grant funds. A decision must be made regarding how the town will handle those that installed their own filtration systems prior to the Town’s program. We continue to work with Underwood Engineers who are working at state level as to how to respond to contaminated water issues and to apply the new funds that are coming through.

Ms. Knab raised the issue of the mask requirement in the town offices. Discussed ensued. It was decided to take down the signs saying masks are recommended.

At 8:25 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to go into a non-public session to discuss various matters in accordance with RSA 91-A:3, II(a)(b)(c)and(d). Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. Roll call: Houghton-Yes; Knab-Yes; Anderson-Yes

At 9:59 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to come out of non-public session and seal the minutes noting that failure to do so may render a proposed action ineffective. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Additional items were signed.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard
Recording Secretary