

MINUTES OF THE APRIL 5, 2021 SELECT BOARD MEETING

MEMBERS PARTICIPATING: Board Members Chair Mike Houghton, Vice Chair Joe Lovejoy, Board Member Allison Knab along with Town Administrator David Moore.

The Board Chair opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Lovejoy motioned to approve the minutes from March 15, 2021 as presented. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Any comments relative to the Treasurer's Report. Mr. Moore stated the Treasurer will attend the next meeting for one of her bi-annual appearances per the Town's investment policy.

Representative Deborah Altschiller was in attendance to give a brief update on legislation she is sponsoring. Interested people can view her sponsored legislation on the Legislation General Court website, on her page. She reviewed legislation being put forth that might affect the town. Rep Altschiller explained that HB111 relates to liability for municipal officials. If it passes, municipalities could be financially liable for the innocent, good faith actions of an official or employee which might lead to increased legal and insurance expenses. It might make it more difficult for municipalities to hire employees and recruit volunteers. NHMA strongly opposes the bill. Ms. Knab asked the status of the Voucher bill which would provide funding for private schools. Ms. Altschiller stated that that bill, if passed, would come at a significant cost to municipalities. This will be coming up. Another topic that has come up lately is if a Town wanted to convert to an SB2 there is a bill would take that decision out of town meeting and instead compel towns to put it on the official ballot. The Board thanked her for coming in.

CODE ENFORCEMENT/BUILDING INSPECTION/HEALTH OFFICER

CEO/BI/HO Shanti Wolph gave his department report for last 3 months. He continues to stay updated on Covid as it pertains to the workings of building, vacations, and sick leave use. He is working with Parks & Recreation regarding Covid safety and youth sports.

Regarding code enforcement activity, Mr. Wolph gave the status of the 3 properties that had fires. All should be in compliance with the ordinance within the next two months.

Mr. Wolph reported a number of short-term rentals (Air B'Bs) have popped up recently. Air BnB's violate current zoning regulations. Mr. Wolph related how he has handled the issue thus far. Mr. Houghton recalled that the Planning Board rejected the idea of Air BnB's a few years ago but zoning ordinances can and should be periodically reviewed. Mr. Wolph will work with Town Planner Mark Connors to discuss the issue.

Next, Mr. Wolph addressed agritourism parking issues at 217 Portsmouth Ave (Legacy Farm). They will soon be filing an amendment to their business plan. Parking issues will be addressed then.

Next, Mr. Wolph said he had responded to and resolved several wetlands disturbance complaints.

Next, Mr. Wolph reported that in the last three months, requests for building permits have surpassed even last year's banner months. Currently, there are 140 new projects; 109 in 2020. He completed 277 permits so far this year; 237 last year. He did 452 inspections this year; 453 last year. His department received \$54,791 in permit fees for these past three months; last year they received \$44,632 during the same timeframe.

Mr. Wolph reported working with the Town attorney on a superior court case. Ultimately, the town was not affected by the final decision of the court.

Mr. Wolph mentioned that he has been working with the new Town Planner Mark Connors and said that he is a good addition to the team. They are preparing and reviewing zoning amendments.

Mr. Wolph has been reviewing the PFAS remediation plan to determine what is expected of the Town now and in the future. Once the mitigation filters are installed, his office is prepared to support the ongoing monitoring and maintenance work anticipated to be required in the Groundwater Management Permit.

Next, Mr. Wolph reported on a Zoning Board decision wherein the board rescinded their original decision and approved a variance for 7 Boat Club Drive.

Mr. Wolph updated the Board on ongoing commercial projects at Chipotle, UPS, the Cooperative Middle School, Lindt and the NHSPCA. He briefly touched upon his department budget, trainings he's attended and the process for adopting building code changes. He suggested creating policies regarding on-street parking for events and adopting a housing ordinance policy to protect tenants from substandard living conditions.

His department is investigating various building permit software programs. When they have narrowed down their selection, he will come back to the Board for approval.

Mr. Houghton acknowledged Mr. Wolph's efforts throughout this past year. He also suggested that Mr. Wolph, in coordination with Mr. Connors, bring regulatory issues to the Planning Board when appropriate. Ms. Knab reminded Mr. Wolph that the Conservation Commission would like to be involved with issues that arise regarding wetlands.

FIRE DEPT.

Fire Chief Matt Larrabee reported that call volume is up, inspections are ongoing. Some members of the department are participating in vaccination administration. Because the Fair is cancelled this year, they are looking for fundraising opportunities. He and EMS Captain Peggy Crosby are working with Finance Administrator Dawna Duhamel on moving to digital timesheets. Chief Larrabee noted that burn permits are on hold due to the dry conditions.

Chief Larrabee continued saying that with the recently approved Operating Budget he will post the new schedule including weekend coverage and three people on a shift at night. Chief Larrabee stated he would like to purchase the portable radios out of the Ambulance Account and the existing Capital Reserve Fund. Mr. Lovejoy moved to approve purchase of the radios from

the Capital Reserve Fund (\$80,000) as proposed during the budget process. The Board agreed unanimously.

Chief Larrabee is working with Town Planner Mark Connors on the availability of funds previously set aside to do maintenance on the fire ponds.

Fire Lieutenant Josh Crow reported that the Fire Association is going back to in person meetings – third Tuesday of the month; other Tuesdays are for trainings. He reported the past year has been active with fires, not just in Stratham but with surrounding communities too. He noted there were 5 fatalities this year in NH, all without working fire detectors. They discussed the fire at Burger King, saying it was likely due to grease buildup in the ductwork. Discussion turned to the policies and procedures in place for expanded coverage. Mr. Houghton requested Chief Larrabee closely track coverage and report back on achievements gained.

At 8:15 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to go into a non-public session to discuss personnel matters in accordance with RSA 91-A:3, II (a). Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

At 8:58 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to come out of the non-public session and seal minutes finding that failure to do so might render an action invalid. Mr Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Moore stated that the attorney who was to come in to discuss the cable franchise agreement was unavailable. This discussion will be postponed.

Ms. Knab motioned to nominate Mike Houghton as Select Board Chair. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Ms. Knab motioned to nominate Joe Lovejoy as Select Board Vice Chair. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Mr. Houghton motioned to re-adopt the Select Board Manual. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Mr. Houghton motioned to re-adopt the Administrative Orders and Procedures Manual dated April 5th. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Mr. Houghton motioned to adopt the Investment Policy. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Mr. Moore proposed reviewing the Select Board linkages to departments and committees. It was decided to defer this discussion pending research from Mr. Moore to determine Select Board member status within committees. Mr. Houghton motioned to adopt the select board meeting schedule as proposed. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Moore had previously submitted to the Board his thoughts on the 2021 Town Meeting and preparing for next year's Town Meeting. Ms. Knab commented on Mr. Moore's reflections saying she would prefer to hold next year's meeting in Stratham. Mr. Moore believes the Cooperative Middle School will be available next year. They discussed the possible causes of the low resident turnout at the meeting.

Next, Mr. Moore reminded the Board that a survey was sent to employees regarding the open enrollment. Feedback was positive. They discussed the commitment to cost sharing while not

still not knowing the implications of HealthTrust's rates or options for the coming year. They would like to have a committee formed to review health insurance options.

TOWN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Moore reported that the Assessing RFP has been posted. Proposals are due April 30th.

Parks & Recreation Director Seth Hickey is working with the Chair of the Trail Management Advisory Committee to set up a first meeting.

Mr. Moore reported that Police Chief King is following developments associated with camera funding from the State. State funding looks promising.

Mr. Moore noted that drought conditions persist. The Water Restriction was adopted last year. Staff is working with the Rockingham Planning Commission on a Source Water Protection Plan the draft of which has content about how to manage and communicate about drought situations. Mr. Moore outlined a plan to address various levels of drought. The Board is concerned, as water levels are at a deficit. They suggested putting it in a newsletter encouraging people to conserve water and project a conservative approach to managing the current "pre-drought" conditions in 2021.

Mr. Moore stated that he has completed the final draft of the PFAS letter which is to be sent to affected residents. The letter briefly describes next steps regarding the Remedial Action Plan.

Mr. Moore reported that the Transfer Station has received a revised permit. Mr. Lovejoy motioned to adopt the Facilities Operation Plan part of the permitting process. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Lastly, Mr. Moore discussed preparations for a Memorial Day celebration. Jeff Gallagher and Geri Denton are coordinating the event. There has been no guidance from the State regarding parades. The Board wants to recognize the importance of the day through the ceremony, but suggested the parade not take place as traditionally set. Mr. Moore will continue to work with Mr. Gallagher and Ms. Denton.

At 10:02 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to go into a non-public session to discuss a personnel issue in accordance with RSA 91-A:3, II(a). Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor. At 10:43 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 ineffective. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:44 pm.

Respectfully submitted

Karen Richard
Recording Secretary