

MINUTES OF THE JULY 22, 2024 SELECT BOARD MEETING

MEMBERS PRESENT: Board Members; Chair Mike Houghton, Joe Anderson. Absent Vice Chair Allison Knab

ALSO PRESENT: Town Administrator David Moore, Planning and Community Development Director Mark Connors.

Mr. Houghton noted that because he was not at the July 8th meeting and Ms. Knab was not here to approve the draft minutes, approving the minutes would need to be postponed to the August meeting.

Mr. Houghton noted that Jeff Chaisson was in attendance.

Mr. Houghton recognized Mr. Connors who began his report by stating we received the Septic Vulnerability Assessment grant. This grant focuses on older septic systems that are in danger of failing. He announced the Ross property sale has gone through. He will be submitting the paperwork for reimbursement of the closing costs. He is continuing to working on the fee structure. Permitting applications are trending comparable to our busiest year. We are taking steps to make the process easier, through electronic means. Initial data on transaction types indicate the credit card payment has been utilized extensively by the public. MS4 permit annual report is progressing due to the work of Planning Assistant Susan Connors. He reported on the status of various private development projects in town.

Mr. Connors reported that zoning amendments will be finalized by the end of September. The Planning Board will start work on it next month. The Fire Dept. requested items be incorporated into the amendments. The Planning Board is looking to explore further historic preservation protections, like we have in the Historic District, to other parts of town. Staff training and training for board members is ongoing.

The date for the hearing in Superior Court on Stoneybrook is August 27th.

Mr. Houghton moved the conversation to solar arrays. Mr. O'Keefe, Energy Commission Chair was recognized by the Chair. Mr. O'Keefe reported on a State of NH Municipal Solar Grant that is available and due on August 1st. They are proposing that as part of the DPW sander rack project, a solar array be installed that would act as the roof of that structure. In combining benefits in the federal IRA legislation in addition to the grant funds, the entire cost of the solar roof portion could be funded with non-local dollars. The solar array is expected to generate 90% of the highway garage load. They are also researching other energy efficiency upgrades, which could drive that number higher (such as lighting upgrades). Mr. Anderson asked about the competitiveness of the grant. Mr. O'Keefe explained that the criteria weighs the cost of the project and its effectiveness. Experience with solar projects, team members with knowledge and experience and letters of support are also factors. We are in a good position. Mr. Houghton motioned to authorize the Town Administrator to work with the Energy Commission to pursue the Municipal Solar Grant program through the NH Dept. of Energy. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. O’Keefe went on to discuss the Police Station solar array. We are in Year 6 of the contract with Revision Energy for the solar array at the Police Station. We now have the opportunity to purchase from them at fair market value of the remaining cost of the solar array. Mr. O’Keefe compared continuing to lease it versus buying it. The Board had questions about the capacity we use and the cost and how it would be funded. Mr. Moore suggested it be funded from the CIP funds that have been set aside for multiple years in anticipation of this purpose with the gap funding to be identified of approximately \$6,000 to be funded by the Buildings and Grounds Maintenance Trust or some other source. Mr. Anderson moved to authorize the Town Administrator to take the appropriate steps to work with the Energy Commission to take any and all steps in order to effect the acquisition of the solar array at the police station in accordance with the current purchase power agreements. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. All voted in favor. They thanked Mr. O’Keefe for his work on these projects.

Mr. Chaisson had a question on the warranty of the solar panels at the PD if we buy it out. He was advised that the Town would retain the initial 25 year warranty.

At 8:35 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to go into a non-public session in accordance with RSA 91A - litigation. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. Roll call: Houghton-yes; Anderson-yes.

In the non-public session, the Board voted to authorize the Town Administrator to make a conditional offer for employment to a candidate for the open operator/laborer position in public works. In addition, the Board discussed strategy related to the Stoneybrook litigation. No other actions were taken.

At 9:01 pm the public session resumed.

Mr. Houghton move to the next agenda item, which was related to Smyk Park. Answering Mr. Anderson’s question, Mr. Moore said that we are not introducing new drainage infrastructure, but rather improving the function of the existing. Mr. Houghton motioned to authorize the expenditure of up to \$12,000 from the Smyk Trust for the proposed driveway and drainage improvement projects described in the July 18, 2024 memo from DPW Director Tim Stevens in the packet. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Moore recalled that at the last meeting the Board authorized the expenditure of up to \$50,000 for the Gifford Barn roof project which is to be funded through a contribution from the Heritage Commission and the remainder of \$31,000 from the Building Grounds and Maintenance Trust. Pricing is based on a \$40,000 estimate with \$10,000 contingency. We don’t yet have a detailed final proposal and terms from the contractor but expect them soon. Mr. Moore requested they chose a color for the roof from a selection narrowed down by the Heritage Commission Chair along with a preservation professional familiar with the town’s holdings. Mr. Houghton felt that the “matte black” was more characteristic of period roofing.

ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Moore referred to notes on the engineering services for to the PFAS Advanced Concepts project, a project with Underwood Engineers regarding options for long-term PFAS solutions. The Regional Water Project has facilitated discussion opportunities for us to collaborate with surrounding communities for water connections.

Mr. Moore is advancing a disbursement request for this grant as well as preparing drawdown from the \$350,000 grant for PFAS installations, awarded in a previous fiscal year.

Mr. Moore referred to an invoice he received from Stratham Green requesting reimbursement for expenses related to PFAS. Stratham Green was reimbursed approximately \$30,000 for the original installation. Based on what we've been doing with other property owners, Mr. Moore recommends fulfilling this request. If this is their true annual cost to maintain their PFAS system, this is something we should plan on including in our system of reimbursements. They noted the invoice was from June 2023. Mr. Moore will investigate further.

Mr. Moore reported receiving one HVAC proposal. The due date has past. Mr. Anderson questioned if we should pursue additional proposals. Mr. Moore requested he be allowed to continue to research the proposal we received and report back.

Mr. Moore updated the Board on the Historical Society building project, noting they are on target with goals and budget.

Mr. Moore then gave an update on the website update. He plans to form a steering committee and has authored a specific charge for the group. Mr. Houghton encouraged broad-based participation. The Board felt it was important that a leader be designated.

The Library's accessible doors had a catastrophic failure last week, requiring an emergency repair. This was an unplanned expense of \$4,900 which will be funded from our maintenance budget. Mr. Moore has met with the new Library Trustees Chair and looks forward to working with her. Mr. Moore reported that they will begin the search for a new Library Director soon.

Mr. Moore noted that the DPW Director will be researching new vendors for port-a-johns and pest control in order to obtain better pricing and service.

Mr. Moore reminded them that there will be a Special Select Board meeting on July 30 at which Whitney Consulting will present an update on the revaluation.

Mr. Moore called attention to the Internal Detail procedure memo from Finance Administrator Christiane McAllister. He spoke to both chiefs who had not weighed in with any comments or objections. The Board agreed with Ms. McAllister's proposal and Mr. Moore indicated he would follow-up accordingly.

Mr. Moore reported the DPW roof project has gone well. A roof drain issue was discovered. This is approximately \$5,000 additional cost on the \$120,000 project. Further investigation will be done to learn if this is necessary and if our contractor should've discovered this prior.

Mr. Moore said that the fire tower project has been on hold because we have received two disparate cost proposals; one within budget, one not. He would like to give the project more consideration and bring in Stratham Hill Park Association and get other advice for moving forward.

Mr. Houghton addressed the compensation item on the agenda. He would like to see a compensation strategy for the town. Establishing a process of routine benchmarking is a goal. He spoke against stipends, favoring a strategy that recognizes the unique and special role of each staff member. Mr. Anderson asked for further clarification on his thoughts. In an attempt to gain understanding of the process, Mr. Houghton has talked with Ms. McAllister. Questions such as do we have access to the information we need? Do we have the ability to do it? Do we need to engage third parties? We need to bring definition to the process. Ms. Knab and Ms. McAllister must be part of the conversation. Mr. Anderson agreed that they should all be present and that the discussion should continue.

Mr. Houghton turned to the agenda item on Capital Equipment. He believes we need to recalibrate how we calculate amortizing the cost of big equipment. He recalled a discussion with the DPW Director but was unsure if he was engaged in developing another approach. Chief Denton also needs to be involved. Since we started this method six years ago the cost of trucks has increased dramatically. It is likely we are under accruing based on today's costs.

Mr. Moore recalled the Board wanted to have a conversation with the Trail Management Advisory Committee about their park and trail recommendations. Mr. Moore suggested they attend their Wednesday, August 7th meeting. It occurred to them that there was a conflict with Mr. Houghton and the Planning Board schedule. Mr. Moore will see if TMAC can move their meeting to 6 pm.

Mr. Moore noted there was paperwork to be signed.

9:22 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to adjourn. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard
Recording Secretary