

MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 5, 2024 SELECT BOARD MEETING

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

ALSO PRESENT: Town Administrator David Moore, Finance Administrator Christiane McAllister, Police Chief Anthony King, Director of Planning and Community Development Mark Connors, Director of Parks & Recreation Seth Hickey, Intern Ryan Guerette.

Mr. Houghton turned the meeting over to Ms. Knab to swear in the new police officers, Kayla Reiner and Shawn Walmsley. The Board congratulated the new officers.

After the ceremony, Mr. Houghton asked for a motion on the minutes. Ms. Knab motioned to approve the Select Board minutes from July 8 and 30, 2024 as written. Mr. Anderson had previously made a small amendment. He seconded the motion as amended. All voted in favor. Mr. Anderson motioned to approve the minutes of July 22, 2024. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. Ms. Knab abstained as she was not at that meeting. Motion passed.

Mr. Houghton moved to Correspondence. Mr. Moore reported that the Town Clerk has presented a Citizen's Petition to increase veteran's tax credit from \$600 to \$750. The signatures have been verified. He will ensure the item appears on the draft warrant for the Select Board's action next year.

Mr. Houghton asked about Informational Items. He mentioned the Run for the Fallen which led to a discussion on insurance for the runners and overall procedures. Mr. Moore will follow up. Next, Mr. Moore shared photos of 240 Portsmouth Ave. as a successful redevelopment in accordance with the new zoning. The Planning and Community Development department will recommend the Heritage Commission use it as a tool for outreach to the parcel owners in the Heritage District. Mr. Moore briefly reviewed the other informational items.

RESERVATIONS

Mr. Moore described the request from the Scouts for a camp out at Stratham Hill Park from August 16 to 18. Mr. Houghton approved the request for the camp out. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Moore noted there were originally three applicants for the vacant position for the Trustees of the Trust Funds, however one has withdrawn. Ms. Knab spoke in favor of Mr. Ralabate who she had worked with previously and who was also in attendance. Mr. Anderson indicated that, at some point, the Board should review how it makes appointments for candidates that aren't known to all three members. Mr. Houghton motioned to appoint Mr. Ralabate to the Trustees of the Trust Funds based on the input from the Chair of the Trustee of the Trust Funds and Ms. Knab. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. Mr. Houghton acknowledged Mr. Anderson raised a good point and suggested that going forward there be deliberations when applicants are brought forth for consideration. An in-person meeting with the applicant may be requested. Ms. Knab noted that applications appear twice on the agendas; the applicant is welcome to come to any of the public meetings. She also reminded them that they also obtain recommendations from the

relevant Board Chair, which was done in this case and is part of the Boards and Commissions policy. All voted in favor of appointing Mr. Ralabate to the Trustee of the Trust Fund position.

Mr. Houghton recognized Mr. Hickey for his department report. Mr. Hickey introduced Ryan Guerette, a University of NH intern who has been working for Parks & Rec for the summer. Mr. Guerette has created an Excel spreadsheet categorizing revenue and expenses for the Recreation Revolving account. He demonstrated how the different categories could be broken out in order to look at specific data. Mr. Hickey said that this data will inform a complete revision of the policies and procedures for this account. It will be used to make adjustments to program fees. Mr. Guerette will step into the Treasurer position on the Recreation Commission (a role he held previously) to maintain the spreadsheet. Mr. Hickey praised Mr. Guerette's work and thanked Ms. McAllister for her assistance with the project. Ms. McAllister added that it is a direct integration of their systems; the same General Ledger numbers are used. Mr. Hickey said that the creation of this important tool would not have been possible without Mr. Guerette's help. Mr. Moore asked what it will take to make this integral to our system going forward and sustaining it so that we can have this level of quality in reporting and data presentation from this point onward. Ms. McAllister explained that because the same General Ledger account numbers are used, they will always be able to reconcile one set of data to another. She explained the process, with Mr. Guerette noting that the data is checked for accuracy.

Mr. Moore asked what the time commitment is for the Treasurer of the Rec Commission for this. Mr. Guerette responded that it varies month to month; he estimated approximately 5 hours a month. The Board thanked Mr. Guerette for his work on the project.

Mr. Hickey gave an update on the Stevens Park improvements. There will be an on-site meeting tomorrow with DPW and Emanuel Engineering to review logistical aspects. He will do another public outreach event in September. He went on to report that Summerfest was successful and acknowledged DPW's work to get ready for it. Some enhancements and changes to next year's summer program were discussed at a debrief that took place immediately following this year's event. There is much interest in the Counselor-in-Training (CIT) program, which is a key offering for Stratham young adults that the department has been working to bring more focus in serving. They will be offering more teen based programming to meet the needs of middle to early high schoolers. Thursday nights at the park have been successful. Bike races have brought in \$2,000 after expenses. This money will be reinvested into the trail system. Mr. Hickey showed them a sample of a senior programming postcard (direct mailing) that will be going out. Mr. Guerette is also helping with this project. The effort of ensuring a direct mailing is in response to feedback about communicating with seniors as well as the loss of the privately operated monthly glossy that went to Stratham residents.

Mr. Hickey reported that the eco-counters were deployed at the park a year ago. Interestingly, on Sunday, July 28, 499 people entered from the Jack Rabbit entrance. There were no special events that day. The average is approximately 200.

The Rec Commission is working on separating their by-laws. Some are governed by state statutes; we are separating those from the governance that we as a town have put in with our youth sports committees. They will operate as two separate documents. Doing this enables us to be more flexible and dynamic with youth sports. As things change, we can edit that document, whereas the other one is dictated by RSAs or town regulations. Mr. Guerette is assisting with

this project too. We are looking to use it as a tool to have our sports committees' set budgets in advance, even before fees get set and registrations begin. This will increase accountability from our sports boards. The Recreation Committee anticipates finalizing this by the end of the month. Ms. Knab recalled that one of the issues that had come up was how the boosters fundraising works with the budget. The Committee is working with these fundraising committees to ensure a collaborative approach and achieve a level of accountability for all parties involved.

Mr. Hickey reminded the Board of the meeting with Trail Management Advisory Committee on Wednesday to review existing ordinances related to leash regulations at Stratham Hill Park. Both interns along with TMAC chair Kate Dardinski have worked on cataloging intersections and inputting signage and trail markers into GIS. He hopes to hold two trail work days with TMAC this fall.

Mr. Hickey thanked Mr. Guerette and Graham LaNigra for their work in his department this summer. He hopes to recruit another intern in January. Having the interns was a great experience; worth the investment of the time required to make it meaningful for the interns and the Town.

Mr. Anderson asked how we could improve Summerfest. Mr. Hickey reported a robust follow-up meeting was held. Mr. Cushing will be summarizing the feedback, putting forth suggestions. It was a great community event.

Mr. Houghton recognized Police Chief King who began his department report by thanking the Board for the swearing-in ceremony. He reported the two other officers are doing well at the Police Academy and are due to graduate in October. As the Board previously approved, conditional offers were given to two other candidates. One is starting Monday, the other starting later in the month. They will be fully trained before going to the Police Academy in January.

Chief King has been working with Ms. McAllister and Mr. Moore on approximately \$100,000 in grant funding. Approximately \$43,000 previously approved for dashboard cameras and \$53,000 for active threat equipment as well as trainings and simulations. A few officers are working a lot of hours but they remain within budget. The Chief reports that morale is high. Chief King would like to post the Animal Control Officer position.

Mr. Houghton proposed maintaining an active posting for an experienced officer. He is aware there are currently no open positions, but feels that with the difficulty in hiring it might be wise to leave up in the event a good candidate wants to apply. The remaining board members were agreeable. Mr. Moore will discuss further with Chief King.

Mr. Houghton moved to the noise ordinance item on the agenda. Mr. Moore reminded them that this remains unresolved since 2022 when Mr. and Mrs. Cooper submitted a noise complaint and the Board agreed to look into it. A formal report containing comparative information on noise ordinances in a variety of communities and how they are handled is included in the packet. Mr. Houghton recognized Mr. and Mrs. Joshua Cooper, 9 Orchard Hill Rd, Stratham, who were in attendance. Mr. Cooper spoke first saying our current noise ordinance was outdated and didn't address current issues. Mrs. Cooper spoke, advocating for a commonsense, enforceable ordinance. Both Bailey and Hazel Cooper spoke about the sound of the neighbor's events being so loud they couldn't enjoy being outdoors. Hemalatha Kaliappan, 92 High St., Stratham, said

that the noise is so loud you can hear it in the Cooper's house. It makes it difficult to get their children to bed and it disturbs the pets. Ann Sapcoe, 15 Christie Lane, Stratham, explained that she moved to town for the peace and quiet. She observed that if there is nothing to measure the noise against, it becomes subjective. An ordinance would set what is "reasonable". Mark Sapcoe, also of 15 Christie Lane, agreed with the previous speakers. He noted that other towns have ordinances addressing the issue; we should too. Mr. Cooper said that more people were coming to the meeting but couldn't make it in time. Ms. Knab replied that they could email the Board. Mr. Houghton said we will pursue and work with those engaged in it and bring clarity to the process going forward. Ms. Knab asked Chief King for his input. Chief King asked about the type of noise and urged them to call the police with complaints so they may track it. Some residents said that they had called, but because the ordinance that we have is unenforceable, they were told there is nothing the police could do. Mr. Cooper said that the existing ordinance is antiquated and doesn't reflect the modern use of high output music systems that are used today. There are no barriers from the noise to their home 400 feet away. Chief King said we need a paper trail as this progresses and still encouraged them to report. He added that it is possible to check decibel levels. Most towns will try to stay with a state standard, but individualize their plan. He offered assistance to move toward that. Martha Franceschi, 36 Haven Lane, Exeter, said she visits Stratham residents and confirmed that the noise affects gatherings at the Cooper House. She advocated for an ordinance that defines time and decibel level. Mr. Houghton thanked everyone for coming in and giving them their input.

Mr. Houghton returned to new business, 189 Bunker Hill subdivision. Mr. Moore had no additional comments to the memo from Mark Connors in the packet. Mr. Anderson inquired who authored the Stormwater Maintenance Agreement. Mr. Moore thought it originated as a template and has been reviewed by a third party and town counsel. Mr. Houghton as Planning Board Representative said Chinburg has been straightforward and responsible in dealing with storm water. There are a couple of retention ponds and the HOA will take over when the development is done. Ms. Knab motioned approval of the Stormwater Maintenance Agreement for subdivision 189 Bunker Hill Avenue as drafted and executed by the developer included in the August 5th memo from Mark Connors. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton moved to the declaration from UNH Monitoring about the moderate drought in our region. Mr. Moore reviewed past Select Board actions during drought conditions. He noted there are weekly updates from the state. The Board discussed the rain in the forecast and debated the merits of implementing restrictions. It was decided that between now and August 26th, if we move to a critical loss of groundwater then the TA could be authorized to put in water mitigation efforts consistent with our policy. They also decided to put an informational item in the newsletter advising the residents of the moderate drought conditions.

Mr. Moore gave a brief update on the revaluation. Reval letters will be mailed to the residents next week. Referring to Whitney Consulting Group's presentation by Mr. Hamilton, Mr. Anderson observed commercial properties were up 26% and industrial up 34%. These are our larger taxpayers. Mr. Moore compared 2023 values saying residential was 84.77% vs 15.23% commercial and industrial. After the reval it is 88.59% residential vs 11.4% commercial/industrial.

ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Moore had no recommendation on the HVAC project. A grant for the solar panel over the sander rack hanger has been submitted. A State of NH grant for the diesel replacement has been submitted.

Mr. Moore recalled that at a previous meeting the Board approved the DPW roof replacement. They had authorized 50% of the cost to come from ARPA funds and 50% from the Building Grounds Trust for a total of \$60,000 from each. Recently, we have incurred unanticipated roof drain costs of \$5,000 which Mr. Moore feels should come from the Building Grounds Trust. Mr. Houghton asked if all the ARPA funds were earmarked. Mr. Moore replied that they were but changes can still be made. Possible projects that may warrant reconsideration of ARPA funding are as follows:

- Fire Station parking lot paving \$75,000
- Fire Tower painting project \$10,000
- PFAS remediation response – will need some, but perhaps not all.

Ms. Knab motioned to expend up to \$66,000 from the Building Grounds Maintenance Trust toward the DPW roof replacement. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton returned to the noise ordinance discussion. He would like an organized effort towards addressing the input we received. He said the issue comes up on the Planning Board occasionally. Though there are limits to number of events, the guidelines only apply over a certain number of people. The residents assert that smaller events are also impactful. Mr. Moore indicated his next step would be meet with Mr. Connors and Chief King to see what we could improve upon with our noise ordinance.

At 8:10 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to go into a non-public session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3 II(a) dismissal and compensation of a public employee, II(c) matters which may affect adversely the reputation of another, II(e) litigation. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. Roll call: Houghton-yes; Knab-yes; Anderson-yes.

During the non-public session the Board discussed the upcoming discussion with Chief Denton regarding Fire personnel. Mr. Moore updated the Board on an offer for the Town to buy land adjacent to the Ross property within Stratham Hill Park, this parcel was previously identified as a lower priority acquisition behind the Ross acquisition. The discussed an update on the Stoneybrook litigation and that the judge had granted a continuance of the hearing. Review a draft communication to acquire an interest in land to facilitate safety improvements at Bunker Hill Avenue and Portsmouth Avenue.

At 9:29 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to come out of the non-public session and adjourn. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard
Recording Secretary