

MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 16, 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

Mr. Houghton asked for motions on the draft minutes. Mr. Anderson motioned to approve the minutes from September 3, 2024 as amended. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton recognized Ms. McAllister who said she was working on a preliminary budget. She will send a Financial Summary to them later in the week.

CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. Moore briefly reviewed the correspondence items. Mr. Anderson motioned to accept the resignation of Jeff DiBartolomeo with regret. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Houghton turned to Mr. Moore for an update on new business. Mr. Moore reported that we received a formal notification of Exeter Hospital's intent to terminate the ALS program as of Dec. 20, 2024. The short timeframe they have given fire chiefs and municipalities to adjust to this presents a unique challenge and puts a lot of pressures on partners that we rely on for mutual aid. Mr. Moore described the challenges that lie ahead. Mr. Houghton thanked Mr. Moore for his efforts to bring definition to alternatives and for pursuing the hospital to fulfill their obligations to their contract. He wanted to have a more in-depth conversation regarding this issue but preferred to defer this conversation to the end of the meeting. Ms. Knab commented that Alexis Simpson reached out to the hospital; and discovered that they are closing several departments. Although that doesn't impact us directly, there is a lot of consternation in the community regarding the decisions the hospital is making in closing programs.

Mr. Houghton moved to the 2025 budget projections. Mr. Moore transmitted a projection for the 2025 budget as we see it now. He recognized Ms. McAllister's work on it prior to her vacation. Department Heads will be given worksheets later this week to keep to the schedule of producing a true draft budget. Informal budget discussions with them will begin soon thereafter. Ms. McAllister asked if there was any type of guidance she should include with the worksheets. In the past we've given some direction for them to use as a guideline. Mr. Houghton's advice to department heads is to hold the budget flat. If they have identified an item that they feel is necessary, they should be prepared to make their case.

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Mr. Moore stated that the Board will not see a department's budget prior to the meeting with them. Department heads will bring to the Board topics to begin a dialog then present it to the BAC. We will have draft numbers well before then.

Mr. Anderson requested a Capital discussion with Mr. Stevens and Chief Denton. Mr. Moore anticipates a discussion on Oct. 7. Mr. Anderson wanted clarification regarding the DPW salaries. Ms. McAllister described from where she was obtaining the numbers. Mr. Houghton requested draft documents before the Oct. 7th meeting.

Mr. Moore summarized, confirming that the Board wants to maintain a status quo budget with no new positions or services but if there's something a department head absolutely wants to advocate for, they should make a case for it.

Mr. Houghton moved to PFAS items. Mr. Moore recommended authorizing reimbursement for Stratham Green for the re-bedding of their PFAS filtration system. A reimbursement is requested because they moved ahead of us with their own program and fix and as a result did not use the vendor the Town is using and paying directly. They discussed a number of factors that determine replacement of the carbon noting that it was positive news that this is the first rebed since 2019. Mr. Houghton suggested putting an agreement in place for future replacements. Mr. Anderson noted DES is decreasing the minimum contaminant levels which will increase the need for replacement filters. Ms. Knab felt there were too many unknowns and wanted to observe over time. Mr. Moore thought that setting an agreement in place could help smooth out staff and leadership transition but acknowledged that he was less familiar with exposure on systems of this size as opposed to smaller residential systems. Ms. Knab suggested contacting DES for recommendation on the agreement going forward. Knab motioned to authorize the reimbursement request for Stratham Green in the amount of \$9,605 for the 2023 re-bed in accordance with our ongoing practice of managing our Groundwater Management Plan for Town Center. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Next, Mr. Houghton moved to Stratham Green solar. Mr. Moore recommended to vote to execute as a Board the instrument entitled Declaration of Obligation to Remove Solar Panels. Our Ordinance allows for this approach. Mr. Moore explained why a lien would not be appropriate. If there is non-compliance, our recourse is to bring a civil action. Mr. Houghton stated it's recorded in their deed dated August 29. Mr. Anderson motioned to execute as a Board the document entitled Declaration of Obligation to Remove Solar Panels. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Mr. Houghton amended the motion to include the release of the performance guarantee of \$4,000 for Stratham Green. Ms. Knab seconded the amendment. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton called attention to the Delegation of Deposit Authority. Ms. McAllister explained that the Treasurer is requesting the Board review and approve the revised form to allow her to meet her obligation to delegate that duty. The updated form specifies how the responsibility should be carried out. A signature line has been included for each of the positions that is having authority delegated to them. The Finance Administrator and Finance Assistant have been removed as neither should be carrying the cash to the bank. Mr. Houghton moved to approve the revised Delegation of Deposit Authority as outlined in the document by the Treasurer. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Moore reported the Field of Flags project preparations are advancing in coordination with project sponsor, the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Mr. Stevens and Ms. Bakie are involved.

Mr. Moore reported receiving comments on the Smyk Park signage. They discussed having a QR code.

Mr. Moore gave an update on the Bunker Hill and Portsmouth Ave intersection project. He and staff have met with the DOT project manager and are encouraged this project is moving forward. We shared our frustrations and history with this process. After collecting data from the engineering and traffic studies, they will recommend a plan to move forward. We emphasized that we want a strong system of communication and involvement. Mr. Anderson expects the data from the traffic counts will be telling. He noted the widths of the rights of way may be a constraint as to what they can do. Mr. Houghton inquired about the timeline. Mr. Moore said funding is in 2026 and 2027, but the specifics are unclear.

Conversation moved to the discussion of Heritage Commission priorities and support for the coming year. Mr. Connors, Mr. Houghton and Mr. Merrill met to discuss priorities and issues. They identified how to advance some of the bigger projects. Mr. Moore is maintaining the list. Mr. Houghton noted there are a broad range of projects that the commission is working on - Gifford property, River Road, scenic streets, etc.

Mr. Moore reported receiving one proposal for the Gifford Barn roof RFP. We have set aside \$50,000 for the project. The bid we received was for \$60,000. The discussed from where the additional \$10,000 might come. Mr. Moore said we are still vetting the proposal. He will bring it back to the Board at a later time.

Mr. Moore referred to his open projects list, assuring them that they are still on his radar. He briefly reviewed the status of the Trust for the Fire Dept.

Mr. Moore called attention to the NHDES Air Permit Application from Lindt. Mr. Anderson noted the application is regarding air pollution. Mr. Moore will request more information.

Mr. Moore continued saying that the next step in the PFAS engineering project is to follow up on meetings that Exeter and Newfields had with Underwood for the Seacoast Emergency Interconnection study. We want to learn what is possible with Stratham. Meetings with Newfields and Exeter will be scheduled. After those interactions, he will come back with a path to invest remaining funds to advance the concept.

Mr. Moore reported on the update to the website saying that at the next department head meeting, they will review applications from interested staff and appoint them to the steering committee.

Ms. Knab called attention to Scott "Kidd" Poteet's accomplishment. The group acknowledged it was a tremendous feat. Mr. Moore said that DPW and Police will put up signs on the electronic

message boards. The Board expressed support to recognize him with an event. Ms. Knab will reach out to others who can help.

Chief Denton submitted a memo regarding the Pancake Breakfast. The Board supported his request.

Mr. Moore introduced a request from resident to rent the Morgera Room and its kitchen. The purpose would be to provide a kitchen and dining space to build life skills for a dependent. He is asking for two days a week indefinitely, for an hour and a half around lunch. The Board felt this was too much usage for one individual/organization and goes against the spirit and intent of the policy and noted to significant amount of regular usage by groups and the needed balance with the primary EMS/fire function usage. The policy doesn't support approval of the request.

Reservations

Mr. Moore called attention to the request from the Seacoast Beekeepers to hold a beekeeping school in the Sewall Room in addition to their regular monthly meetings. The Select Board asked for further clarification regarding if live bees would be brought into the building and the time the school would be held. They will revisit it at the Oct. 7 meeting.

The SMS 5th Grade Committee submitted a raffle permit application to hold a raffle at their annual Halloween fundraiser for their end of year celebration. Ms. Knab motioned to authorize the raffle request for the 5th Grade Committee at the Stratham Memorial School for October 25th. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

APPOINTMENT

Mr. Houghton noted the application from Douglas Simmons for consideration. Ms. Knab said he attended the last Conservation Commission meeting and they support him joining the Commission. They will be sending a letter of support.

At 8:11 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to go into a non-public in accordance with RSA 91-A:3, II (a) Personnel. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. Roll call: Houghton-yes; Knab-yes; Anderson-yes

At 8:51 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to come out of the non-public session. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard
Recording Secretary