

MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 3, 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, Director of Public Works Tim Stevens, Parks & Recreation Director Seth Hickey

Mr. Houghton asked for motions on the draft minutes. Mr. Anderson motioned to approve the minutes from August 5 and August 8, 2024. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton asked Mr. Hamilton for an update on the revaluation. Mr. Hamilton reported that it was going as predicted. They are in the final phase. Approximately 5.9% of the property owners (203) came in for an informal hearing. A few of the properties will have revised valuations due to overall condition and quality of the property. Revised value notices will be sent out. Some properties will need to be inspected. They are 70% done with the review analysis. Mr. Houghton raised the issue of two commercial revals that were brought before him. Mr. Hamilton said commercial sales fall into a different category. He described various scenarios that make commercial sales more complex.

Mr. Moore reviewed the process. Whitney Consulting processes the MS-1 which the Select Board will sign. Mr. Hamilton expects it to be ready between Sept. 16 – 23. The DRA needs it by October 1.

Mr. Houghton recognized resident Alan Wapnick who said he came to hear conclusions of issues in his neighborhood but understands that that information is not available yet. Mr. George Smith, Moray Court, asked about the assessment of land associated with the condo association he is in.

Mr. Houghton opened the Public Hearing on the acceptance of a donation to the Police Department. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Mr. Moore said the Dept. of Public Works would work in coordination with the Police Dept. on the project to renovate the patrol room at the Police Station. Ms. Knab motioned to close the public hearing. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. Mr. Houghton asked for comments. None were noted. Ms. Knab motioned acceptance of the donation to the Stratham Police Department from the Benson Family Trust in the amount of \$12,000. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton called upon Tim Stevens for his department report. Mr. Stevens began by discussing a recommended revised approach to permitting for the Transfer Station that matches the color of the valid motor vehicle registrations. As a result, transfer station stickers would expire with the month of your car registration. He is proposing stickers be sold only at the Municipal Center. This change was prompted because of everyone buying their stickers at the same time in January. Mr. Stevens admitted he will have to do a lot of outreach. The goal is to get residents to get a Transfer Station sticker when they register their car. There will be a transition period. With this change, residents will have to come to the Municipal Center and prove residency. The change should reduce the long lines at the Transfer Station. He is hoping

to modernize the payment system at the Transfer Station too. Mr. Moore stated that we will need to change the Ordinance. The Board encouraged drafting the ordinance in order to prepare for a future second reading and public hearing.

Mr. Stevens met with CMA who monitors our closed landfill and keeps us in compliance. He's waiting for estimated pricing and ideas to make our Transfer Station more user friendly. Changing the flow of traffic within the site will make it more user friendly and safer. However, these improvements will take an investment.

Mr. Stevens noted that Ms. Fowle attended a class in order to train on the closed landfill reporting process.

Mr. Stevens reported on road maintenance calling attention to his paving project memo which identified certain roads that are in need of work. Mr. Moore said that the total cost would be \$545,000 which is \$23,000 more than we have available. Mr. Stevens suggested waiting on a couple of roads and noted an issue with the Fire Dept. parking lot. Currently, the cost for the full redo is higher than what we have budgeted. Mr. Moore reviewed the options given the available funds.

Mr. Stevens directed attention to Emery Lane explaining why it is expensive to repave that road. It is the old State Road and due to the components underneath, we've been adding on layers. We've added so many layers over the years, we now need to mill it down, then repave.

Mr. Anderson asked Ms. McAllister if she was comfortable with the \$545,000. Upon discussion, a discrepancy was found between Mr. Moore and Ms. McAllister's numbers. Mr. Stevens noted the Marin Way project came out of the funds that had been set aside

Mr. Anderson said crack sealing is important. Mr. Stevens explained the process. Costs for that have increased significantly.

Mr. Stevens stated the Barker Road culvert failed last spring. Repairing that is estimated at between \$14,000 - \$16,000.

Conversation returned to funding of these projects or deferring some. In general, the group briefly discussed options for a CIP strategy.

They discussed the conditions of various roads. Ms. Knab asked about the drainage issue on Depot Road. Mr. Anderson asked from where the money might come. Ms. McAllister felt she could find another \$23,000 in other DPW line items.

Mr. Moore summarized a sample motion that included scope reductions to return to in the future and Mr. Stevens reviewed the age of some of the older roads in town.

Ms. McAllister summarized and confirmed that she will be looking to cover \$17,000.

Mr. Stevens continued his report saying roadside mowing went well. He and a crew member attended a liquid deicing class. This method uses less salt and therefore will have a more positive impact on the environment than the old method.

Mr. Stevens stated that he has recommended to Mr. Moore that the Town change its pest control vendor. Ms. Knab asked about rat boxes at the park poisoning birds and other wildlife. Mr. Stevens detailed the damage being done by rodents getting into structures at the park.

Mr. Stevens said the Smyk Park project is going well. He reviewed the work they've done and have yet to do. The HVAC contract is done. Work should begin soon. Gifford Barn siding contract is signed. This project will be done this year. We are waiting for proposals for the Gifford Barn roof (we have one in so far)

Next, Mr. Stevens gave an update on the spreader hanger project. They are waiting for an estimate for a design and build which will tie into the solar project. He suspects the estimate will exceed the previous non-engineered project estimates.

They briefly discussed the dry weather conditions, mosquito spraying and election preparations.

7:40 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to go into a non-public session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3 II(b) and (d) hiring and sale of property. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. Roll call: Houghton-yes; Knab-yes; Anderson-yes

At 8:01 p.m. Mr. Houghton motioned to seal the minutes noting failure to do so may render a proposed action invalid. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Houghton moved to the Correspondence from Stratham Green regarding solar panels. Mr. Moore explained that Mr. Connors met with Town Counsel regarding the subject which resulted in an ordinance change. They discussed the ramifications of non-compliance, wanting to be sure that it does not become a Town obligation, but rather remains Stratham Green's obligation. Mr. Moore will look further into the issue and bring it back to them.

Mr. Anderson motioned to accept the 2025 Highway Traffic Safety Grant and designate the Town Administrator as the authorized sub-recipient signer on behalf of the Town of Stratham. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Ms. Knab motioned to set Trick or Treat Night for Oct 31. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. All voted in favor. It will be held 5:00 – 7:00 pm. **[via consensus of the Board this was adjusted later to 7:30 p.m. to reflect consistency with the past several years, information not available at the time]**

Mr. Houghton directed attention to the TMAC agenda item. Mr. Moore included information on dogs and the Conservation Commission in the packet to aid in the discussion and noted this discussion is a follow-up to the TMAC joint meeting with the Select Board, where the TMAC

recommendation, previously transmitted to the Board, was discussed. That policy included designating the two open fields off of the Jack Rabbit parking lot as “off leash areas” and requiring dogs to be on leash on the trails and parking lots. Ms. Knab said the topic didn’t come up at the last Conservation Commission meeting though they are aware of the issue. She believes the previous Animal Control Officer was beneficial and regrets we do not have one in place currently. Mr. Houghton had nothing to add to his previous comments. He supports TMAC’s objective. Community outreach and engagement have been good. He emphasized Stratham Hill Park is not a dog park. Bringing your dog there is a privilege. Ms. Knab didn’t feel that what TMAC is proposing was a complete solution, but did not know what the solution would be. Mr. Moore raised the concept of a test pilot of the policy. They were opposed to the concept. The Select Board felt that the best way to support TMAC’s recommendations, is to move it forward to the Town Warrant. Mr. Moore will let TMAC know that the Board appreciates the work they put into this and support them pursuing the issue through the Town Meeting.

ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Moore said the buyout for the solar station at the Police Station is underway. There is a pricing gap of \$6,264. He suggested the Board authorize him to expend from the Building Grounds Maintenance Trust but if the Police Dept. Operating budget can cover it, he will pursue that option. Mr. Houghton motioned to move forward with the solar station buyout at the Police Station and authorize the Town Administrator to expend up to \$6,264 from the Building Grounds Maintenance Trust to succeed in that effort. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Moore reported that Police Chief King and Town Planner Mark Connors met to follow up on a noise ordinance request. They feel more work is warranted and would like to involve town counsel. When it is fully developed, they will present it to the Board for the ordinance process. The Board encouraged the additional work.

Ms. McAllister gave an update on revised revenues. Not including Rooms & Meals, she will be adding another \$55,000 to what we will submit to DRA for our revenues. This is coming from additional interest.

Mr. Moore and Ms. McAllister have begun budget preparations, including CIP and operating budget. He believes all significant items have been identified. Mr. Moore is hoping they will have a projection of the budget for 2025 for the Board’s initial review for its next meeting. Ms. Knab suggested beginning to form the Budget Advisory Committee soon.

Mr. Moore reminded the Board that the owner of Gifford Pond Fire Pond has expressed frustration with users of the pond and closed it to that use but is supportive of the SVFD use. While investigating, we discovered we don’t have a formal agreement for the Fire Dept.’s use of the pond. We have engaged town counsel to develop a formal agreement.

Mr. Moore reported that the Department head meeting was Aug 27. He reviewed some of the items such as regular finance topics boot camp and introduced the charge for the website steering committee.

Our Police Department recommends we place park rules signage at Smyk Park so that they have enforceable regulations, such as no overnight parking. We are working on signage which will be low cost and have a light footprint. He will share the draft signage with the Board.

Mr. Moore noted that Primary election preparations are going well. The Select Board discussed their availability.

Mr. Moore and Ms. McAllister briefly discussed the Detail Fund and payment of NHRS costs for the remaining eligible employees. No action was taken.

Mosquito spraying has been done on town properties.

Mr. Moore will be voted on to serve as a member of the NHMA Board of Directors at the annual meeting of the NHMA in October. The regular meetings are one Friday a month for 11 months.

Mr. Houghton motioned to all the 76ers to hold a bake sale at the election. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

At 9:35 pm at the request of Mr. Moore, Mr. Houghton motioned to go into a non-public session in accordance with RSA91-A:3 (a), (c), (e). Ms. Knab seconded the motion. Roll call: Houghton-yes; Knab-yes; Anderson-yes.

At 10:01 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to seal the minutes noting failure to do so may render a proposed action invalid. Ms. Knab seconded.

Ms. Knab motioned to adjourn. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard
Recording Secretary