

MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 6, 2025 SELECT BOARD MEETING

MEMBERS PRESENT: Board Members Chair Mike Houghton, Joe Anderson

ABSENT: Vice Chair Allison Knab

ALSO PRESENT: Assistant Town Administrator and Parks & Recreation Director Seth Hickey,

At 7:00 pm, Mr. Houghton opened the meeting and asked for a motion on the minutes. Mr. Anderson motioned to approve the minutes from September 15, 23 and 29, 2025. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Mr. Houghton stated there are no department reports this evening. Mr. Houghton referred to the Education Tax Warrant for 2026.

Mr. Houghton recognized Mr. Hickey regarding his memo regarding computer assessment. They briefly discussed which computers were being upgraded to Windows 11 and which were being decommissioned. Mr. Houghton approved the expenditure of \$6,184.19 for IT equipment as outlined in Seth Hickey's memo dated September 25, 2025. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. Motion passed. Mr. Anderson reported that Emergency Management Deputy Mike Lamb has requested the purchase of additional laptops to support emergency operations. The Office of Emergency Management (OEM) receives an annual contribution of \$8,600 from the Town of Seabrook, which could be used to fund the purchase—meaning no impact to the Town's general budget.

Mr. Lamb has organized the Emergency Management team into five functional areas; each assigned a dedicated laptop. Two of the existing laptops have already been upgraded or rebuilt. The request is specifically for two new laptops to be funded through OEM resources, not taxpayer dollars.

Mr. Hickey noted that he had not been made aware of this request. The group noted that the Emergency Management laptop should remain in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and be used exclusively for emergency management purposes.

Mr. Houghton asked Mr. Hickey to provide an update on the website redesign. Mr. Hickey referenced Ms. Schaaff's recent memo to the Board, noting she gave a good summary. The project is currently in the site mapping phase. No functional or clickable version has been presented yet, as much of the work remains behind the scenes.

Mr. Anderson inquired about a timeline. Mr. Hickey explained that the team is focused on ensuring content accuracy before moving forward with each phase. Existing website content is being reviewed to determine what will be migrated, with consideration given to improved functionality and platform updates. As we go through each department and committee, oftentimes we accept the recommendations from Revize, but it is a slow process.

Mr. Anderson noted that most of the contract has been paid. The group agreed that no further payments will be made until the training phase begins. Mr. Hickey acknowledged that while

progress may not yet be visible, foundational work is underway. The Board thanked Mr. Hickey for the update.

Mr. Houghton noted there is a dues request from Rockingham Planning Commission. Mr. Anderson motioned to approve the 2026 dues request in the amount of \$8,608 as outlined in the September 16 correspondence from the RPC. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Mr. Houghton deferred the discussion on the proposed road name for the Winnicutt subdivision to a future meeting to allow Ms. Knab to participate. Mr. Anderson noted that the suggested name, "Gallant," does not align with the Town's Road Naming Policy. Mr. Houghton added that the road is not a circle, which may further impact naming considerations. The Board agreed to postpone feedback until Ms. Knab is present.

Mr. Houghton reported that he met with Planning and Building Director Ms. Price and Mr. Mark Stevens, a long-time resident and developer, to discuss a proposed infrastructure project within the Industrial Park. Mr. Stevens is seeking approval to install an additional water line from Exeter, running under the highway and across Town-owned land situated between the Lindt and Timberland facilities, extending across Marin Way to a pump house located on his property.

The purpose of the project is to create a continuous loop for water flow throughout the Industrial Park, enhancing reliability and emergency response capabilities. The plan includes the installation of water shut-off valves to allow for isolation in the event of a break. Mr. Houghton noted that the impetus for the project stems from a water line break last summer on Marin Way, which resulted in the loss of approximately 200,000 gallons of water. At the time, the inability to shut down the system without disrupting operations led to an emergency repair. The proposed loop would serve as a contingency to prevent similar disruptions in the future.

The Town-owned parcel in question is landlocked and already contains a utility easement. Mr. Houghton stated that there is no anticipated exposure or liability to the Town but intends to consult with Town Counsel to confirm. At a conceptual level, he expressed support for working with the developer to advance the project.

Mr. Anderson inquired about the project timeline. Mr. Houghton indicated that significant steps remain, including engineering, plan development, and Planning Board approval. Mr. Anderson also raised concerns about the portion of the water line that would cross a public way, noting that the road predates the Lindt facility, is heavily used, and currently in poor condition. He emphasized that any easement to cross a public way should include a provision for maintenance responsibility and recommended requiring a bond if road work is planned. Mr. Anderson agreed with Mr. Houghton's plan to consult Town Counsel to proceed to the next step.

Mr. Houghton stated that the MS-535 was in the folder for signature. He will reach out to Ms. Knab to also sign.

Mr. Houghton reported that Fire Chief Denton has requested authorization to offer stipends to day shift volunteers in an effort to increase participation, particularly during weekends when

engagement has been low. The proposal includes a stipend of \$85 for a 10-hour shift as an incentive for volunteers.

Mr. Houghton expressed support for implementing the plan through the end of November, with a request that Chief Denton provide an update to the Board at the end of October should he wish to continue the program.

Mr. Houghton made a motion to approve the stipend as proposed. Mr. Anderson confirmed that it would be \$85 for a 10-hour shift and seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Mr. Houghton announced that the second of two required public hearings regarding the Lane property will take place on Tuesday, October 14. The Board is scheduled to formally accept the gift on October 21. He confirmed that Town Counsel is aligned with the process. The first public hearing was well received, with two Town commissions expressing their support. Mr. Houghton anticipates a similarly positive outcome for the next hearing.

Mr. Houghton reported that, as part of the closeout process following the departure of the DPW Director, there remains an outstanding payment for plowing duties performed by Tim Stevens. Mr. Anderson clarified that these hours were worked outside of Mr. Stevens' salaried responsibilities, including nights and weekends between January 1 and early March 2025.

Typically, such compensation would be issued as a bonus in the following fiscal year; however, due to Mr. Stevens' departure, the payment will be processed now. A total of 168 hours at a rate of \$43.40/hour for a total of \$7,290.36.

Mr. Anderson motioned to approve a bonus payment of \$7291.20 to Tim Stevens in remuneration for the plowing hours worked in 2025, thereby closing out any remaining compensation owed. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. Motion passed

Mr. Houghton initiated a discussion on Town budget planning in preparation for Town Meeting. Updated budget documents were distributed by Finance Administrator Lori Ruest, with department submissions due by October 21. The Board noted that the overall budget timeline requires revision.

The Board discussed obtaining a preliminary draft budget from Ms. Ruest. Mr. Houghton indicated he would follow up with her the next day and also reach out to Mr. Emanuel regarding appointments to the Budget Advisory Committee.

Mr. Houghton requested an update on Department of Public Works (DPW) projects. Mr. Anderson reported that while the paving budget has not yet been fully utilized, the remaining funds will be expended before year-end. Roads have been assessed and rated on a scale of 1 to 5, with the worst-rated roads—along with the Municipal Center and DPW parking lots—scheduled for crack sealing during the weeks of October 20–31. A contract for this work is available for Board approval.

Following crack sealing, five roads are slated for paving, which is expected to take approximately four days. The total cost for paving is \$425,000, within the allocated budget of \$475,000. Once paving is complete, long line striping will be conducted under a separate budget.

Administrative Coordinator Britt Fowle is currently working on the DPW budget and Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Mr. Anderson noted that he has met with former DPW Director Tim Stevens and Ms. Fowle several times over the summer to support this effort. A final review will be conducted with Crew Lead Trevor Batchelder and Ms. Fowle prior to submission.

Additionally, Ms. Fowle is collaborating with Town Clerk/Tax Collector Deborah Bakie to evaluate Transfer Station fees and the implementation of credit card payment options, including how best to communicate these changes to residents.

Ms. Fowle will have the ambulance cruiser and mower posted to the municipal auction site tomorrow.

Mr. Anderson noted that, in conjunction with the recently approved Transfer Station fee increase, there was a separate item from Mr. Stevens regarding a proposed ordinance amendment related to Transfer Station operations. He recommended that the Board give consideration to the amendment.

Mr. Houghton stated that the Town is not yet prepared to implement credit card payments at the Transfer Station. He emphasized the need for further discussion with Finance Administrator Lori Ruest to ensure her understanding and support of the process before moving forward.

Going back to the crack sealing discussion, Mr. Anderson motioned to approve the contract for services between the Town of Stratham and Seal Coating Inc. in the amount of \$145,000 and authorize the Select Board Chair to sign. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. Motion passed.

The Board also referenced a potential warrant article related to Transfer Station operations, which will require timely discussion with Town Clerk/Tax Collector Deborah Bakie.

At 7:36pm Mr. Houghton motioned to adjourn. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard
Recording Secretary