

MINUTES OF THE MARCH 17, 2025 SELECT BOARD MEETING

MEMBERS PRESENT: Board Members Chair Mike Houghton, Vice Chair Allison Knab

VIA ZOOM: Joe Anderson (Mr. Anderson's attendance was not possible due to illness)

ALSO PRESENT: Town Administrator David Moore, Public Works Director Tim Stevens

At 7:00 pm Mr. Houghton opened the meeting. The minutes were still being reviewed.

Mr. Houghton called attention to Mr. Stevens who began his presentation by reviewing the road salt brine winter operations. Brine use was successful. It will save significant amounts in salt. He reviewed the three year contract.

Mr. Stevens notified the Board that there have been issues with truck 101, the 2021 Chevy.

Mr. Stevens reviewed spring clean-up work planned at Smyk Park. Aerial work on trees is planned. They will continue with plantings; add loom to protect roots of the trees and work on drainage and correct issues with the swale. He referred to his memo and the Board via consensus approved the plan.

Next, Mr. Stevens indicated he has been researching picnic tables at the park in coordination with Parks and Recreation, wanting something that is durable and heavy. Some tables would stay under the pavilions, others would be moved around with the tractor for various events. He brought in a sample and got feedback from the Board.

Mr. Stevens discussed the proposed sign for Stevens Park. Renditions are enclosed. The design is similar to the Stratham Hill Park sign. Stick figures of sports that reflect the activities at Stevens were added. Materials and location will be discussed at a later time. They talked about next steps. Ms. Knab said that there is no apostrophe in Stevens. Mr. Moore mentioned they might give thought to whether they want to include a message board or not. They do detract from aesthetics but are useful. Mr. Stevens will advance the design and continue to coordinate with staff prior to reaching back out to Mr. Stevens, whose family has offered to fund the sign.

Mr. Stevens advised the Board that he has been working to plan for the future of the Town Center flags given the deterioration of the long serving Town Center flags. In addition, he recommended revisiting the flag mounting strategy used in the past. It has been tough to keep up with the American flags with the current mounting strategy. He has found another source for flags by purchasing through State bid at a lower price.

Mr. Stevens reported that the garage lights need to be upgraded. He will be replacing lights through NH Saves at a discount. The project will cost approximately \$3,000 and will be covered under the DPW's maintenance budget.

Bids are due this week for the renovation of the Wiggin Memorial Library bathroom.

The DPW Admin Assistant has been trained on software to modernize infrastructure and road maintenance. We need to purchase a GIS user for her. This would help track storm water infrastructure, roads and condition of roads. Could also be used at the cemetery. It would help with inventory of culverts and roads. It is mandated by FEMA that if we lose a culvert, we have to prove what was there. They are working with Planning Project Assistant Susan Connors.

The Transfer Station will be open on Saturday, March 29th. He would like to modernize the payment system and move forward with the redesign of the Transfer Station. He will submit a new fee schedule before July 1st (date he would like to implement it).

Mr. Stevens reported being at 60% of his overtime budget already due to the storms this winter.

Mr. Houghton opened the meeting to public comment. Connie Aubin-Adams, Gifford Farm Rd, expressed approval of the picnic tables and asked if they were bolted down. Mr. Stevens replied that they are not because they get moved around.

Drew Goddard, Sanctuary Drive, felt Mr. Stevens was doing a great job. Mr. Stevens was reminded he wanted the Board's recommendation on the park roofs. It was determined that either the slate or charcoal colors were preferable. Mr. Stevens noted that with the soon to be imposed tariffs, the price of steel could skyrocket; therefore he'd like to move forward quickly. Mr. Goddard recommended keeping the color generic.

Mr. Houghton moved on to Correspondence. Mr. Moore called attention to the letter from the Exeter Select Board regarding Stoney Brook and the Baseball Committee recommendation about dugouts. No comments. Ms. Knab called attention to the National Estuary Program Support Letter. Mr. Moore stated that there is an effort to proactively advocate at the Federal level around programming for the Great Bay and other estuaries. Through the Conservation Commission, the Town contributes to this organization. We benefit from their work. Their research, testing, monitoring and education informs our strategy around reporting for storm water (and data for the MS4). The Board was supportive. Mr. Moore will move forward with a letter.

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Knab motioned to elect Mr. Houghton as chair. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton stated that though Chief King was here, he had to leave. He requested to release the funds from the First Responder Golf Tournament proceeds in the amount of \$4,610 which will be used to supplement the donations from the Benson Family Trust for the renovation of the Patrol Room. Mr. Houghton motioned to authorize the Police Chief to utilize \$4,610 out of the golf donation fund to use for the Patrol Room. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. Roll call: Houghton-yes; Knab-yes; Anderson-yes.

Mr. Houghton moved to the Planning Board request regarding proposed legislative bills. Senator Altschiller was in attendance seeking input from the Board on the bills. Mr. Moore cited deep concerns in municipal circles throughout New Hampshire concerning many of these proposed zoning bills. Planning Project Assistant Susan Connors and Carol Ogilvie, interim town planner,

had previously reviewed 23 proposed bills and the Planning Board further narrowed it down to the most concerning bills. The Planning Board, Ms. Connors and Ms. Ogilvie are all in opposition to the bills and recommend the Select Board, if they agree, voice their opposition. Ms. Connors spoke about the bills that might have the greatest impact to Stratham. Two are regarding parking, two concern maximum lot sizes. These bills diminish local control. Ms. Knab noted that she typically supports local control. Comments to her, Ms. Manos or Ms. Altschiller are always welcome, though they are most helpful when the bills are still in Committee. Sen. Altschiller commented that SB84 in particular takes away local control. She has spoken against it. Stratham is unique in that it has a lot of wetlands, no municipal water/sewer and is rural. There is a new push this year to restrict towns that don't have municipal services as to what they can and can't do. Stratham's voicing their opinion is helpful. Mr. Moore and staff will draft a letter reflecting the Select Board's position.

Mr. Houghton moved to the agenda item of reconsideration of a private road name. Mr. Moore reminded the Board that Mr. Goddard spoke to this during Public Comment at a previous meeting. The Planning Board made a condition for the Select Board to approve the naming of an access road. Mr. Goddard said he worked with the Heritage Commission extensively and cares very much about doing what is right for the town. He talked about the projects he's done and what he did to not only comply, but go above and beyond. He has given the town two right of ways on the property. He feels that because he has given the town so much, the name he has put forth deserves to be chosen. He said it is not a road; it is a driveway with a parking lot. It's a condition of his approval. He expressed disappointment in the Select Board's reluctance to give the driveway the name he chose. He'll return to the Planning Board to have the condition removed. He will contact 911 to determine if it needs a road name. Because he made the request before the Board approved the Road Naming Policy, he feels his submission should be grandfathered in. In addition, Mr. Goddard noted the Heritage Commission chair supports the name he is suggesting. Policy implemented after the beginning of the project. Should be grandfathered in. He emphasized it is not a road, it's a driveway. Ms. Knab said that the Planning Board decides if it's a road or not. There is potential that right of ways will become roads. Ms. Knab acknowledged that he is a good steward and has done good things for the town however, the Select Board policy is to not name roads after living people. He is requesting they go against their policy. She is not compelled to override the policy at this time. Mr. Anderson agreed with Ms. Knab, noting it is a Planning Board issue and they can remove the condition if they choose. Mr. Houghton also acknowledged his good work. A lot of work was put into the policy. The policy stands. Mr. Goddard wants the name he suggested or no name. He reiterated that his good will should be reciprocated. This project should not be held to the policy because the policy was put in place after he requested the name. He recommended the Board talk to the Heritage Commission chair. The Board told him that they are not inclined to change their decision based on what was presented tonight.

RESERVATIONS

Ms. Knab motioned to allow the Collie Rescue League of New England to use the Front Pavilion on Sept. 16 and waive the fee provided they are a 501c3. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. Roll call: Houghton-yes; Knab-yes; Anderson-yes

Mr. Anderson motioned to allow SMS year end field day to use the Front and Scamman for the published dates and waive the fee. Knab seconded. Roll call: Houghton-yes; Knab-yes; Anderson-yes

Mr. Anderson approved Jim Joseph's request for use of the Sewall Room on Sept. 27 and waive the fee. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. Roll call: Houghton-yes; Knab-yes; Anderson-yes

Mr. Houghton recognized Victoria Duffy who thanked the Board for increasing the exemption amounts. She spoke in favor of giving additional financial advantages to seniors and lower income residents. Ms. Knab explained that NH is not a "home ruled state", meaning the town is not allowed to do anything that is not enabled in State law. She directed her to work with her senators and representatives. She noted that NH is a no income tax state and no sales tax so everything is done through property taxes. However, she encouraged her to pursue this. Mr. Houghton suggested she put together a presentation and return to the board.

APPOINTMENT

Ms. Knab motioned Bruce Cote be appointed to the Conservation Commission for a three year term set to expire in 2027 to fill the vacant position of a regular member. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. Roll call: Houghton-yes; Knab-yes; Anderson-yes

Mr. Houghton motioned to appoint Allison Knab as Vice Chair of the Select Board. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. Roll call: Houghton-yes; Knab-yes; Anderson-yes

Mr. Moore addressed the Board's request to make residents aware of the new exemption levels and application deadline. The Board discussed ways in which to notify the residents and recognized that it is always possible to improve on communication.

Mr. Anderson asked for a status update regarding the website. Mr. Moore said he has a meeting tomorrow with the Revize representative and Library Director Steve Butzel to discuss the contract. The project is moving forward.

Mr. Moore will follow up with Fire Chief Denton to see what, if any, recommendations he has regarding the amendment that was proposed and passed at Town Meeting.

At 8:54 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to go into a non-public session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3, II(a) to discuss compensation and personnel matters. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. Roll call: Houghton-yes; Knab-yes; Anderson-yes

At 10:42 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to come out of the non-public session and adjourn. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. Roll call: Houghton-yes; Knab-yes; Anderson-yes

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard
Recording Secretary