

## **MINUTES OF THE APRIL 21, 2025 SELECT BOARD MEETING**

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

**ALSO PRESENT:** Town Administrator David Moore, Police Chief Anthony King, Parks & Recreation Director Seth Hickey, Steve Hamilton and Ben Heller of Whitney Consulting

At 7:00 pm Mr. Houghton opened the meeting and asked for a motion on the minutes. Ms. Knab motioned approval of the Select Board minutes of April 7, 2025 as written. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton recognized Chief King who came before the Board to make a request for a new police cruiser. He outlined a plan to fund the vehicle, using a combination of budgeted CIP and detail funds. The cruiser to be replaced is beyond repair and too costly to fix. The equipment from that cruiser can be moved to the new one. Mr. Anderson questioned the need for another cruiser. Chief King explained that their goal is to keep the mileage low and the vehicles in his fleet each have defined purposes: Administrative, SRO, ACO, detail, as well as patrol. Mr. Anderson said he's heard comments from the residents about the number of cars outside the station. Chief King assured him they were all legitimate. Mr. Houghton requested more details at his next department report. Ms. Knab motioned to authorize the Town Administrator to dispose of cruiser #220 at auction. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. Mr. Anderson opposed. Motion passed.

Ms. Knab motioned support for the withdrawal of \$25,000 out of the CIP for the purchase of the police cruiser. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. Mr. Anderson opposed. Motion passed.

Ms. Knab motioned to authorize the remaining funds to come out of the Police Detail account. Mr. Houghton seconded. Mr. Anderson opposed. Motion passed.

Ms. Knab was sorry to see the correspondence from Sgt. John Emerson but reluctantly accepted his resignation. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton moved to the Community Garden proposal. Members were present to answer questions. After reviewing the proposal, Mr. Anderson suggested they add a chair, treasurer and secretary. Mr. Moore suggested making it a one year committee. He described the committee's organization and read the charge. Staff will provide the group with support. Ms. Knab motioned adoption of the charge for the Stratham Community Garden as written. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Mr. Anderson motioned to authorize the Town Administrator to work with Public Works Department and to approve the final layout in preparation for the volunteers use and in anticipation of successful resolution of these actions. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton recognized Steve Hamilton, Whitney Consulting Group, who reported on 1/3 of the abatement requests for 2024. Next grouping will be condo units. He reviewed the recommended abatements. Some had incorrect measurements or data; some had condition rating changes. Mr. Hamilton put together a proposal to review every property in town and complete an inspection on a systematic basis to ensure good consistency in descriptive factors. With this new proposal, his team will use a standard description to analyze and review records of all the properties in town. He requested the Board take time to review it. 3,200 properties will be inspected over a year and a half period. They will not re-inspect properties that were inspected this year. The gap between residential and commercial properties has closed. Mr. Hamilton has submitted two contracts for consideration. They are not mutually exclusive. Each has a different set of services. The best time to consider the proposals will be during the budget process. Mr. Hamilton discussed how the Town might fund revaluations so that big fluctuations can be avoided. They will have further details on the ratio and the performance on the existing model later in the year. More data and analysis will be needed before making a decision on a revaluation in 2026. They discussed the public's perception when their property is assessed higher, or lower. Mr. Hamilton explained that fluctuations are more consumable in smaller increments. There is a lot of economic change in the air. A 15% decrease in value is more manageable than a 30% decrease. When values go up, it is not immediately visible that taxes will go down. Similarly, when values go down, taxes go up. Mr. Hamilton said they try to go into the buildings to get the most accurate assessment. The Board will review and take action at a later meeting.

Mr. Houghton asked for comment on the correspondence. Hearing none, Mr. Houghton moved to Public Comment. Glenn Wass, Gifford Farm Rd, asked if it is possible to get a warranty on the police cars or if that is not an option because they are commercial, not residential. The Board felt that was something worth looking into.

Mr. Wass reviewed the assessing proposals and inquired as to how they would be funded, as the Town just voted on the budget. Whitney Consulting is asking for money this year. Do we have discretionary money of approximately \$110,000? Mr. Moore responded he will determine what funds remain available in previous assessing funds. We held aside a significant amount in previous years knowing that this would likely be the path forward.

Mr. Houghton recognized Mr. Hickey who called attention to the proposed policy regarding the Joan M. Sewall Room. He explained how we got to this point. UNH Intern did field rental analysis comparing other communities, included facilities. Another UNH intern brought the policy to where it is now. Based on the Board's feedback, revisions were made. He reviewed the changes to the policy and suggested increasing the fee. He recommended a checklist be completed by users of room. Commercial entities need insurance. Primex recommends we obtain certificates of insurance. Ms. Knab thought it was overkill to have a resident provide an insurance certificate. Mr. Moore offered that the use of the room (meeting versus party) might dictate that. If, alcohol is being served, then a \$25 insurance certificate is manageable. Mr. Hickey continued reviewing the policy. Renter must be held accountable for any damage to the room. He introduced a paper application which would require an actual signature. Mr. Hickey asked them to take time to review it and take it back up next month. The Board made some clarifying revisions to the form. They discussed the police detail item. Mr. Hickey will discuss

with Chief King. Mr. Hickey wanted to present a broad policy and leave it up to the Board to eliminate items as they see fit. Mr. Moore felt it is important to not discriminate; to maintain consistent requirements for each group. We do have some political events, given the current environment, we might want to retain the option to require police detail. Ms. Knab didn't think the use was significant enough to warrant charging fees to non-profits. Mr. Moore recalled the BAC raised the issue of fee waivers. We understand the need to support mission oriented activities, but we still incur clean up and administrative costs. What are the parameters for the Board approving alcohol or not? Currently, we have no guidelines. Mr. Moore suggested the Board could have a separate policy for alcohol. The Board will take it under consideration and discuss at a later meeting.

Mr. Houghton recognized Mr. Roy for highlights on his financial reports. Mr. Anderson asked for his insights although he has only been here two weeks. Mr. Roy noted the compensation leave issue is higher than budgeted, that is due to the payouts of vacation and sick leave (due to NHRS retirement) due to the previous Finance Administrator. Mr. Moore said there will be a meeting tomorrow with Mr. Roy and the Fire Dept. to discuss specific Fire Dept. items, this budget and accessing those funds for Articles 13 – 15 from Town Meeting.

Mr. Houghton moved to the health officer designation item on the agenda. Mr. Houghton motioned to designate Jason Durrance as Stratham's Health Officer. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Moore reported that the State has contacted us regarding a \$70,000 grant towards the replacement of the loader. We've put off taking advantage of this grant, but now is the time to do so. A public hearing to accept the grant was held previously. The Board agreed to move forward with the purchase.

Mr. Moore wrote a letter on behalf of the Board concerning the Town's opposition to HB 297. The letter was sent to the senator, house representatives and chair of the Commerce Committee.

Mr. Moore reported that staff is doing research on what other communities are doing to broadcast or video meetings. There is a broad array of styles and investment. He briefly reviewed the various options. He will work with the Website Steering Committee to ensure that whatever we choose, it will work with our new website product. We need time to research options.

Mr. Moore returned to funding for the police cruiser. He suggested they take the \$25,000 from the Detail account opposed to the General Fund. Ms. Knab would like this to be discussed with Chief King. They decided it could always be adjusted later.

#### RESERVATIONS

It was observed that the groups requesting fee waivers are both 501c3s. Ms. Knab motioned to approve Amare Cantare's request to use the Front Pavilion on July 9, 2025 and to waive the fee as they are a non-profit. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Ms. Knab mentioned the use of the pavilions for full day rentals only, even though some only use it for a few hours. Mr. Moore reasoned that it was to avoid conflicts. Ms. Knab motioned to approve Greengard Center for Autism's use of the Front Pavilion on June 6, 2025 and to waive the fee as they are a non-profit. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

#### APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Houghton motioned re-appointment of John Kunowski to the Planning Board for a three year term to expire at town meeting 2028. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Ms. Knab motioned to appoint Bob Keating to the Trail Management Advisory Committee as the Conservation Commission representative for a one year term. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

At 8:39 Mr. Houghton motioned to go into a non-public session in accordance with RSA RSA 91-A:3, II (a) Personnel. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

At 9:30 p.m. Mr. Houghton motioned to come out of the non-public session and adjourn the meeting. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard  
Recording Secretary