

MINUTES OF THE APRIL 7, 2025 SELECT BOARD MEETING

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

ALSO PRESENT: Town Administrator David Moore, Building Inspector/Code Enforcement Officer Jason Durrance

At 7:00 pm Mr. Houghton opened the meeting and asked for a motion on the minutes. Mr. Anderson motioned approval of the Select Board minutes of 2/3, 2/18 and 3/17. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. Mr. Houghton motioned approval of the 3/3 minutes. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. Mr. Anderson abstained as he was not present at that meeting. Motion passed.

Mr. Houghton moved to the Community Garden initiative. Allyson Moore, representing the Stratham Community Garden Committee, presented their request to have a community garden. They are seeking guidance and Board approval to move forward. They're requesting direction regarding financial transactions and recordkeeping. She presented the group's mission statement. They've presented the project to town committees and done outreach to the community to gauge interest. She described their vision. Their hope is to not only provide families with a space to grow food, but to donate food to food pantries and conduct educational presentations. To have an optimally run space, they will adhere to well outlined policies/rules for members. Collaborative partnerships with groups such as the seniors and the library are part of their vision. She detailed the desired physical requirements. Smyk Park and the open space that was formally part of the Bartlett-Cushman property are potential locations. She outlined the pros and cons of each space. Ms. Knab asked about governance. Ms. Moore cited locations that have a well-run space. Other committee members, Colleen Jarvela and Mark Whiting gave input from their research. Mr. Anderson asked if it was self-funding. Ms. Moore said the fees will be put back into the garden. Mr. Houghton asked about initial funding which Ms. Moore said would be through fundraising and business sponsorship. Ms. Knab asked about drainage at the Smyk location? DPW told the group there is a potential location at Smyk which would not interfere with or worsen the drainage options. Discussion ensued about why SHP was taken off the list of potential sites. Mr. Whiting returned to costs, estimating the initial investment would be between \$6,000 – \$10,000 for fencing and beds. The group was confident local business would sponsor the project. Mr. Moore addressed the Board, saying that if there's interest in pursuing this project, he could report back on an appropriate approach from a financial / accounting perspective. The group discussed the Bartlett-Cushman property line. Conceptually, the Board was in support, provided details on governance and accountability become more defined. Mr. Moore will work with staff and come back to the board.

Mr. Houghton recognized Cole Emanuel to present his Eagle Scout Project. Mr. Emanuel's project is to reconstruct or repair the bridge at SPH that joins Tote Road to Service Road. Currently, it's too narrow, making it a challenge for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross. In addition, the decking surface is rough, and the posts are rotting. He is working with Mr. Hickey and has looked at US Forest bridge plans. He described what he hopes to build, referencing his

slide presentation. He is working with Ms. Connors on permitting requirements. Depending on the results of the permitting requirements, deck replacement might be an option. He's also working with town committees for their input and support. He will use pressure treated wood. Will ensure no conflict with events being held at the park. He reviewed his timeline, expecting to complete the project by the fall. Costs will be covered through fundraising. He is seeking Board approval to move forward and requesting Ms. Connors' continued assistance with DES permitting. Mr. Houghton and Mr. Anderson recognized this is a big project and were supportive. Given the bridge's proximity to wetlands, Ms. Knab expressed concern and asked about the impact if a full replacement wouldn't be possible because of DES restrictions. Mr. Emanuel replied that the substructure was sound, and would last for years, just not as long as a full replacement. Ms. Knab asked about a marker on the bridge. This project will have one. Mr. Moore assured the group that the applicable permitting requirements will be met. The Board was supportive of the project. Mr. Houghton motioned to accept Cole Emanuel's project as presented. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton recognized Mr. Durrance for his presentation who began by saying he has been getting acclimated to Stratham. Online inspection scheduling has begun and is working well. He hopes to move forward with updating the fee structure soon to ensure we are covering our administrative costs. Charging a non-refundable processing fee will likely be among his recommendations, as will a miscellaneous project charge not based on square footage. He is finalizing and will bring back to the board.

Next, Mr. Durrance moved to Building Ordinances noting that last year there were changes in state RSA's that concern local amendments to the building code which were aimed at increasing transparency for the public. The state amends the code for NH purposes. He reviewed the amendment process. Mr. Houghton recommended going through our code and amending them if necessary. Mr. Durrance feels that much of the amendments would simply be for housekeeping purposes.

Mr. Houghton moved to Correspondence. No comments.

Mr. Houghton then opened Public Comment. Dolores Benevento, Montrose Drive, came before the Board to request that their meetings be live broadcast. Denise Lemire, Crestview Drive, spoke in support. Kyle Hollasch submitted his feedback to the website survey indicating he was also in favor of streaming the meetings. He noted that in accordance with the RSA, minutes need to be posted within 5 days; Stratham's are not. Mr. Anderson sees the merit in the request to live stream. Lorraine Downing, Brookside Drive, agreed that there would be interest and it would be helpful. Mr. Houghton thanked them for their input. Ms. Knab noted there are more technological options available now as opposed to in the past. Ms. Lemire volunteered her assistance if needed. Mr. Hollasch asked for an update on the website update. Mr. Moore said a new vendor has been chosen; the project is moving forward but will take several months. He then asked for comment about timeliness with posting the minutes. Mr. Moore said the RSA is not that minutes be available within 5 days, only that the meeting took place, what the actions were and the general summary of topics. The Board vowed to be timelier with the postings.

Mr. Houghton moved to the road naming agenda item. Mr. Moore noted the road naming request for 89/91 Portsmouth Avenue from Copley Properties. He reviewed the various comments. After a brief discussion, the road was decided to be named Elm Lane.

Mr. Houghton moved to the Historical Society building renovation Phase III. Mr. Anderson motioned to authorize the expenditure of up to \$4,625 for the exterior capital improvements at the Stratham Historical Society building, 4 Winnicutt Rd, from the Building and Grounds Maintenance Trust. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton moved to the Board discussion of fees at Town Facilities. Mr. Moore indicated the Chair requested review of this in response to the Budget Advisory Committee's comments asking about the adequacy of the fees, and questioning waivers and discounts. This encompasses field rentals, the Sewall Room, Morgera Room (no fees), and pavilions at the park. There are building permitting fees which are separate. Mr. Houghton recognized that there's a clean-up cost for room and pavilion use and questioned why we waive the fee. When we waive it, the cost is borne by all taxpayers. Ms. Knab felt that non-profits could pay a minimal fee. Mr. Moore read from the field rental policy that P&R Director Seth Hickey submitted in preparation for this discussion. Mr. Moore offered to clarify what we're charging for each space and propose a discount fee for non-profits. The board requested to see who, including non-profits, are using the Sewall Room. Mr. Anderson reminded the group that Transfer Station fees need to be updated; we are not covering our costs. Mr. Moore will report back.

Mr. Houghton moved to the acceptance of the grant for hazard mitigation. Mr. Moore explained that Deputy Emergency Management Director Mike Lamb will find a NH based consulting firm to do the reports for the Dept. of Safety and organize our staff contributors. Mr. Anderson motioned that the Select Board, in a majority vote, accepted the terms of the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) as presented in the amount of \$9,787.50 for updating the local hazard mitigation plan. Furthermore, the Board acknowledges that the total cost of this project will be \$13,050.00, in which the Town of Stratham will be responsible for a 25% match (\$3,262.50). Further, to accept a grant and enter into an agreement with the State of NH Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management for \$9,787.50 and further hereby authorize David Moore to execute any and all contracts and agreements related to the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program Agreement. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton then asked Mr. Moore for this Administrative report. Mr. Moore called attention to the Knollwood agreement to sell renewable energy from the Police Station. The Energy Committee assessed the terms, made comparisons and recommend moving forward with Knollwood. They will be assigning our credits, sell and we will receive payment. Value is approximately \$1,500 - \$2,000 annually, but could change with the market. These funds would be classified as unanticipated revenues for the time being. Mr. Anderson added that the Energy Commission looked at 3 different options, with Knollwood being the best. Mr. Anderson motioned to authorize the Town Administrator to enter into the agreement with Knollwood Energy as presented for the sale of renewable energy credits. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Moore moved to the Radio Emergency Response Plan update from the State of NH. Radiological response plans are done based on previous plans and include updates to improve procedures. All towns in emergency planning zone are required to have these plans. The State asks the Board to formally adopt the plan. Signatures will be obtained at a later date. Ms. Knab motioned acceptance and adoption of the town's Radiological Emergency Response Plan. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Anderson commented it would be nice to recognize Chief Denton and the Fire Department on their response to Exeter Hospital's closing of the paramedic program and to getting two paramedic programs up and running. The Board agreed. More thought will be put into how to recognize his and the department's effort. Mr. Moore will come back with suggestions.

Mr. Moore said that the Boston Post Cane finalization is almost ready. There will likely be a presentation at a May Select Board meeting.

Ms. Knab wanted clarity on Arbor Day event in the packet. Arbor Day is May 25th. Mr. Moore explained that the work being done is to clear deadwood and avoid dangerous situations. The area at park being targeted is between the driveway and Jack Rabbit Lane. There will be no tree removals; just maintenance and clean up. Mr. Moore said our DPW will be accompanying Curtis Tree while the work is being done and recommended he set up a site walk for Ms. Knab and Mr. Stevens.

Mr. Moore has not focused on the Sewall Room policy. The Board felt it was overwhelming. This will be revisited on April 21. Mr. Moore called attention to the Binette Field dugouts, saying rotting is more extensive than originally thought. The recommendation is to remove the wood dugout structures, leave a cement pad and put up chain link fencing to protect the players. Ms. Knab asked that the Baseball/Softball Board be notified. Returning to the Sewall Room Policy, she asked about the certificate of insurance requirements. She questioned the need for individuals to obtain insurance coverage. According to Mr. Moore's research, there was no product Primex was willing to do for individuals. However, Mr. Hickey received a different response from Primex. Mr. Moore will investigate how difficult it is to obtain coverage for an individual.

Mr. Moore printed a color version of the Stevens Park sign. Ms. Knab is not in favor of a message board. Mr. Moore said that is the staff consensus. The Board approved the sign concept moving forward.

Mr. Moore commented that the legislative items were informational only.

RESERVATIONS

Ms. Knab motioned to allow the Ride to End Alzheimer's to use Stratham roads on June 14th as described. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Ms. Knab motioned support for the Cub Scouts to use the Front Pavilion on June 4th for their crossover event and have the fee waived. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Anderson motioned approval of the Great Bay Stewards use of the Front Pavilion for the Great Bay 5K on October 25. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. Ms. Knab abstained. Motion passed.

APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Houghton noted that Bob Keating is under consideration as the Conservation Commission Rep to the Trail Management Advisory Committee.

Ms. Knab motioned to appoint Bruce Cote to the Conservation Commission to fulfill a vacant full member position for a three year term to expire at Town Meeting 2027. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton motioned to appoint Donna Jenson to the Zoning Board of Adjustment to fulfill a full member three year term to expire at Town Meeting 2028. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Jamison Paine has decided not to seek reappointment.

At 8:52 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to go into a non-public session. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. Roll call: Houghton-yes; Knab-yes; Anderson-yes.

The Board authorized the Town Administrator to make conditional offers to two prospective employees, Director of Planning & Building and Part-time Fire Inspector, both currently open materials. The Board authorized a pay adjustment for a part-time public works employee, which was an oversight from the annual omnibus approval following Town meeting. Mr. Moore provided the Board with the Town Clerk's roster of properties behind on tax payments in accordance with state law. He advised the Board he had remaining performance reviews to complete.

At 9:15 pm Ms. Knab motioned to come out of the non-public session and adjourn the meeting. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard
Recording Secretary