

MINUTES OF THE MAY 5, 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

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 April 21, 2025. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton recognized Chief King who gave an update on personnel. Officers Knight and Migliore graduated from the Academy and have completed their one year probationary period. Officer Robertson graduated from the Academy. Officer Storie started the Academy today. Officer Holbrook is taking steps towards becoming the next School Resource Officer. Created MOU 100% reimbursement for that position. The new Community Service Officer will start by Memorial Day. Renovation on the patrol room has begun. Working with Block 5 to replace all the internal desktop computers. He met with Mr. Anderson to discuss the fleet. He will give the Board a more detailed analysis at a later date.

The entire department will be assessed for the NH Law Enforcement accreditation process. A successful walk in has been completed; no issues are anticipated.

Mr. Houghton said they have set aside time for him at their special meeting re: personnel on Wednesday. They thanked him for his report.

Mr. Houghton recognized Mr. Wally Stevens. Mr. Moore directed attention to the correspondence regarding the sign project at Stevens Park. He expressed appreciation for the collaboration and generosity between the Stevens family and the town. Mr. Stevens thought they did a great job with the sign and expressed gratitude for the work of DPW and Mr. Moore. The Board agreed and echoed Mr. Moore's gratitude for the Stevens' family's generosity.

Mr. Houghton recognized Keith Pratt from Underwood Engineers to discuss their draft report. Mr. Pratt reported that they are wrapping up this phase of work and issuing a report to DES. The report captures the design and summary of a proposed water connection. The goal is to fix the PFAS issues in town center. Mr. Anderson asked if PFAS detections have been expanding. Mr. Moore replied affirmatively but indicated it has been nominal. He reasoned that if the government imposes more stringent PFAS regulations, this would increase the number of affected properties. The new administration has put a pause on new regulations but NHDES will continue to impose standards. Underwood has had discussions with neighboring communities regarding their water systems. Newmarket is the most cooperative. This report outlines a water line out of Newmarket to Stratham Center. He explained water metering and billing. This is a \$20 million project, a price tag that includes the cost of investments in Newmarket and Newfields, to facilitate the Stratham Connection and includes connections to PFAS impacted properties. Concurrently, Underwood is wrapping up the Seacoast Emergency Interconnect

study, which recognizes Stratham and Route 108 as a key corridor for achieving future connections from Seabrook to Rochester. In addition to the beneficial geographic location, Route 108 and Stratham as a whole has a tremendous amount of small community water systems that could benefit from future connection. He described how regional demands may impact our project.

Mr. Pratt continued, noting that yearly increases in construction costs would be an additional expense. Mr. Houghton asked about the probability of getting State assistance or grants. Mr. Pratt was hopeful and noted there was positive activity surrounding funding and legislation. Addressing water quality issues is one of the top priorities for the State. Drivers for the State are twofold: 1. Emergency interconnect 2. Community water systems, of which Stratham has a significant number. The State wants to consolidate them; therefore, it is likely to assist with that effort.

Mr. Pratt said next steps would be for Stratham to meet with Newmarket, get an arrangement and then talk to Newfields. Mr. Moore asked him to outline costs to other communities. Mr. Pratt offered some negotiation strategies. The Board gave their approval for Underwood to send their report to the State. They thanked them for coming in.

At 7:30pm Mr. Houghton motioned to go into a non-public session to discuss potential contract matters and personnel issues in accordance with RSA 91-A:3, II (d). Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. Roll call: Houghton-yes; Knab-yes; Anderson-yes.

At 8:17pm Mr. Houghton motioned to come out of the non-public session and seal the minutes noting failure to do so may render a proposed action ineffective. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton moved to the repair quote on the Fire Station roof. Mr. Moore explained that there's a leak that needs emergency repair. They discussed the work being proposed. Ms. Knab motioned to authorize the Town Administrator to use up to \$15,000 from the Building and Grounds Maintenance Trust to repair the roof and HVAC issues at the Fire Dept. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. Mr. Houghton abstained. Motion passed.

Mr. Houghton called attention to Correspondence, noting Mr. Johnson was resigning from the RPC. The DRA letter noted that we met the standards for the 2024 town-wide revaluation. No other comments.

ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Moore reminded the Board about the unknown remains and said they would be buried and a small ceremony would be performed. The Cemetery Trustees and members of the UNH team who did the study will attend. Ms. Knab noted the burial will be May 14th at 1:00pm and she would like to attend. She requested a thank you letter be sent to Exeter Monument and the Cemetery Trustees.

Mr. Moore reported that the Historical Society has done their research and is prepared to present the Boston Post Cane to its next recipient. A presentation will be scheduled for 6:30pm at an upcoming Select Board meeting.

Mr. Moore said he'll hold off on his Parks & Recreation update until a later date and moved to the strategy for cyclical inspections. Whitney Consulting has offered an approach and pricing associated with front-loading five years-worth of cyclical inspections, in order to prepare the Town for the next revaluation and to benefit from a review of data to by Whitney to ensure consistency and accuracy. The other contract includes pricing for a 2026 revaluation should the Board wish to move forward. By choosing the data catch up we are not committing to moving forward with the revaluation. Mr. Moore gave an analysis of the costs. He reviewed the money previously allocated and funds available to cover the services. We have enough this year to fund operation and 2/3 of the 18-month contract which has a non-appropriations clause. Mr. Moore continued to discuss possible future funding options. The Board discussed the frequency of doing revals, generally favoring a longer than two-year interval. They agreed it would be a good idea to have the data updated. Mr. Anderson felt that a more frequent reval was important in that it would allow the equalization ratio to stay closer to 100%, decreasing the abatement requests from commercial properties. They continued to discuss the frequency of revals and asked Mr. Moore to prepare a contract for the data catch-up work. A decision about a 2026 reval can come toward the end of 2025.

Mr. Moore called attention to the Public Hearings, which will be at their next meeting, to accept the donations from the SVFDA to the Fire Dept. and the donation from the Stevens family for the Stevens Park sign.

Mr. Moore called attention to the DPW's Standard Operating Procedures in the packet. He noted that Vanessa Price, the new Town Planner, started today and will be at the Planning Board meeting on Wednesday.

PERMIT

Ms. Knab motioned approval for Acorn School's raffle permit application for use on May 10th at Barker's Farm. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Houghton noted that Ryan Olsen is being considered for appointment to the Conservation Commission which will be voted on on May 19th.

Ms. Knab motioned to appoint Eric Bahr to the Exeter-Squamscott River Local Advisory Committee for a three year term to expire in May 2028. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton motioned to appoint Vanessa Price for a two year term as Stratham's primary representative to the Rockingham Planning Commission's Metropolitan Planning Organization's Transportation Advisory Committee to fill the remainder of the term set to expire on December 31st and to have Susan Connors remain as alternate. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

At 8:40 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to go into a non-public session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3, II (a) to discuss personnel matters. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. Roll call: Houghton-yes; Knab-yes; Anderson-yes.

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

In the non-public session the Board discussed their hiring plan for addressing replacement for an upcoming vacancy.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Richard, Recording Secretary