MINUTES OF THE JUNE 16, 2025 SELECT BOARD MEETING

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

ALSO PRESENT: Finance Administrator William Roy, Police Chief Anthony King, Sergeant Mike Doucette, Director of Public Works Tim Stevens, Whitney Consulting Group Steve Hamilton and Ben Heller.

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 June 2, 2025 as written. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton recognized DPW Director Stevens. Mr. Stevens stated that Highway overtime is at 72% year to date and is looking for guidance. Mr. Anderson stated that regular highway payroll through May is 37% and when combined with overtime is 40%, which is on par. Mr. Roy stated he will look at how DPW payroll is tracked and will report back to the board at a future meeting.

Mr. Stevens is requesting to accept credit cards at the transfer station. He’s also looking to align transfer station stickers with motor vehicle registration renewals. The board was receptive to both concepts.

The board was also receptive to Mr. Stevens ordering the previously approved new loader.

Mr. Stevens provided estimated cost information on MC bathrooms and for SHP 4H bathrooms. The costs are substantial and would potentially be 2026 projects.

Mr. Stevens is looking for direction on the SHP fire tower. The cost to have it painted exceeds what’s budgeted. Mr. Houghton stated it is viewed with high historical significance, which suggests we need to take action on it.

Mr. Stevens stated that the Stevens Park entrance sign will be completed by August 1st. The sign vendor has given Mr. Stevens a recommendation about where to place the sign. Mr. Hickey stated he’s in agreement with the sign vendor. Mr. Stevens stated that we have to stay off of the state right of way, which is 13 feet from the edge of the pavement. There’s an additional 13-15 foot setback and the sign goes back 10 feet. Mr. Stevens is looking for guidance from the board on tree removal. Mr. Houghton indicated that it should be discussed when all 3 board members are present.

Mr. Stevens is still waiting for an engineering sketch of the proposed Stevens Park pavilion. He’s hoping to have that soon, so all of the stakeholders can review it and the project can begin to move forward. Mr. Houghton said he will call Mr. Scamman tomorrow.

Mr. Stevens is working with the Stratham Community Garden to dig the perimeter for the fence.

Mr. Stevens is requesting the board's guidance about the Emery Lane project. Mr. Anderson said he will meet with Mr. Stevens onsite to look at the project. Mr. Stevens stated there is some funding left over from last year. Mr. Houghton ask Mr. Roy to confirm the funding available.

Mr. Stevens discussed GIS mapping, for inventorying streets, culverts and storm water. Mr. Houghton asked if this is different GIS mapping than planning. Mr. Stevens stated there are different levels of mapping. Mr. Anderson asked Mr. Stevens to touch base with Planning.

The board asked Mr. Stevens to move forward with capping the live 240-volt line, which is at the top of a pole.

Mr. Houghton invited Steve Hamilton and Ben Heller, from Whitney Consulting Group to discuss abatements, to both deny and approve. Mr. Anderson asked how much valuations have changed since the last revaluation. Mr. Hamilton stated there was approximately a 5-10% increase in the past one year. The board agreed to move forward with an amended inspection timing.

Mr. Houghton invited Police Chief King and Sergeant Doucette to discuss the COPS hiring grant. It will pay for a 25% match, which will pay part of the salary and benefits for a three-year period. This grant needs to be submitted by July 1st. Mr. Anderson motioned to accept the terms of the 2025 COPS Hiring Program grant as presented in the amount of $117,600 annually and the match of 25% at $29,000.00 annually. To further authorize the Select Board Chair to sign all documents on behalf of the board related to the grant. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Todd Harrington, representing Careno Construction, submitted a request for a waiver of Stratham Memorial School planning permit and building permit fees. Mr. Houghton asked if these fees were included in the bond approved by taxpayers. Mr. Harrington said yes. Mr. Anderson indicated there are real planning and inspection costs that the town would be asked to absorb. Mr. Houghton asked what this money would be used for and stated at a minimum the town's costs would have to be covered. Mr. Houghton said he will talk with the planning and building departments to better understand the town's cost.

At 8:00pm Mr. Houghton motioned to go into a non-public session in accordance with RSA RSA 91-A:3, II (a) Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

At 8:33pm Mr. Houghton motioned to seal the minutes noting failure to do so may render a proposed action ineffective and return to public session. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

CORRESPONDENCE
Mr. Houghton referenced a Community Power article he submitted and suggested input from the Energy Commission would be valuable. Mr. Anderson noted the Commission had previously shared an update in the Select Board newsletter but should issue another. He highlighted recent developments: a vendor defaulted on a contract last winter, leading to the company president's dismissal; and there's an ongoing dispute with the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) over whether utilities or third-party suppliers should bear stranded electricity costs—a decision that could impact future rates. The Energy Commission is monitoring this closely. Community Power will be announcing their rate on July 1st. Directly following that announcement, the Energy Commission should put an update in the newsletter.

Mr. Houghton continued, noting the Planning Board Notice was included to keep the Board aware of that issue. Other items were FYI.

Mr. Houghton referenced a memo summarizing ongoing discussions about the Stratham Fair Charitable Trust. Multiple stakeholders have been meeting to chart a path forward, and the matter is now with Town Counsel, who is coordinating with the NH Attorney General's Trust Division to explore appropriate modifications. Progress is underway, though a response from the state may not arrive before Town Counsel returns. For now, the process rests in legal hands.

Mr. Anderson motioned to authorize the expenditure of $5,000 to Underwood Engineers for the purpose of PFAS contamination technical assistance and for the Select Board Chair to sign the agreement dated June 4, 2025 on behalf of the Select Board. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

INFORMATIONAL
Mr. Houghton noted the Key Dates chart was important to keep them on track.

RESERVATIONS
Mr. Houghton introduced a reservation request involving a fee waiver. Mr. Anderson recalled that, in a prior meeting, Mr. Stevens had mentioned a similar waiver granted to another non-profit, which ultimately cost the town the equivalent of 20 hours in DPW labor. Mr. Houghton remembered that conversation as well. Mr. Anderson emphasized the need to be more cognizant of the financial impact of granting fee waivers in the future.

Mr. Anderson moved to approve the UNH Cooperative Extension 4-H teen community project request to use the 4-H pavilion and waive the fee. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

APPOINTMENTS
Mr. Houghton motioned to re-appoint Jeff Hyland as a full member to the Heritage Commission for a three year term to expire at Town Meeting 2028. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton motioned to re-appoint Jeff Hyland to the Route 33 Heritage District Advisory Committee to a three year term to expire at Town Meeting 2027. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton placed the Open Space Plan on the agenda as an informational item. The project had not concluded as expected, but the vendor has agreed to return and collaborate with the town to bring the project in line with original expectations. While Mr. Houghton didn't have full details, he noted that Mr. Hickey is more familiar with the issue and should take the lead. The vendor is open to addressing outstanding matters. This item was included simply to keep the Board informed.

Mr. Houghton asked Mr. Roy for an update on the MS-232. Mr. Roy explained that the DRA is verifying the submitted budget matches the one approved by voters at Town Meeting, noting a $14,000 amendment. He reported that everything appears on track, though he's double-checking, having discovered items left unresolved from last year—such as accrued labor from FY24 paid out in FY25, which may affect labor costs.

Mr. Anderson inquired about an overage in Recreation payroll. Mr. Roy said it might be a misallocation and will investigate, possibly involving charges that should have gone to the Recreation Revolving Fund instead of the General Fund. Mr. Anderson pointed out that overall expenditures are slightly under budget.

A discussion followed about DPW overtime. Mr. Houghton questioned why more isn't categorized as regular wages. Mr. Roy explained overtime is more costly and should be included as part of the budget. Mr. Anderson clarified that when combining regular and overtime wages, the weighting matters. Mr. Houghton acknowledged the budget is currently covered due to being understaffed, but recognized that full staffing could strain the budget—a concern since no current mechanism accounts for that.

Mr. Anderson added that, per Mr. Stevens, expected overtime drivers included seasonal events and snow plowing. However, new demands like Transfer Station staffing, are contributing more overtime than anticipated. Mr. Roy confirmed all involved are hourly employees, and overtime is triggered after 40 hours.

Mr. Anderson noted, as an aside, that he's ready to revisit the employee handbook whenever the group is. He's spent significant time reviewing it over the past two weeks and has no major issues to raise. Mr. Houghton responded that the two items he had been updating have been signed off on, so the handbook will likely appear on the agenda for the next meeting. Mr. Anderson mentioned he does have a few questions.

Mr. Roy brought up a separate point regarding job postings. He believes that any paid position should be publicly posted for at least 10 days, though he acknowledged this is not currently required by policy. Since taxpayer funds are involved, he feels transparency through posting is appropriate. He also noted that while the handbook addresses internal candidates, it does not currently speak to external postings.

Mr. Anderson returned to the topic of monthly reports, asking whether the reconciliations are aligning with the bank statements. Mr. Roy acknowledged there are some discrepancies, but they are known and primarily due to timing issues. He confirmed that electronic fund records are up to date. The Treasurer is currently reviewing the reports and ensuring her records reconcile accordingly. The auditors are scheduled to arrive beginning June 30. They utilize SharePoint software and will request that we scan and upload documents, enabling them to continue working remotely.

Mr. Anderson also reminded the group that the School Board has inquired if any of the Select Board members wished to assist in selecting a School Board Clerk. They are seeking a volunteer to help interview candidates at one of the September meetings, which will take place on a Wednesday—exact date to be determined. In addition, they hope to initiate the FAC process earlier this year, potentially starting in October. Mr. Houghton recalled that Ms. Knab was planning to reach out to the SAU, and Mr. Anderson believes she did so, with these developments taking place following that discussion. They will ensure she is brought up to speed.

At 8:52pm Mr. Houghton motioned to adjourn. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard
Recording Secretary