

MINUTES OF THE JUNE 2, 2025 SELECT BOARD MEETING

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

ALSO PRESENT: Town Administrator David Moore, Finance Administrator William Roy, Library Director Steve Butzel

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 May 19, 2025 as amended. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Butzel began his report by stating that the library is off to a strong start this year, with usage statistics holding steady compared to last year. They've successfully reached their goal for Zoom-based programs and are collaborating with other libraries. Currently, they are conducting an inventory of collections and running reading programs with prizes to encourage participation from both children and adults.

The library is working with Block 5 to update their computers and is in the process of developing a library app. On June 24, the trustees will hold a half-day retreat to begin a strategic planning process in the fall, focusing on their goals, community impact, and community needs.

While their services haven't been directly affected yet, they are keeping an eye on the Institute of Museum and Library Services, as government funding plays a role in supporting some of their offerings.

Senator Deb Altschiller from District 24 provided updates ahead of the state budget vote this Thursday. The finance committee is working to ease financial burdens, including a proposal to restore up to 30% more funding to cities and towns than the House initially proposed. Senate Bill 297, previously a major concern, has been amended with minimal changes. Senate Bill 246, which addresses childcare and maternal healthcare, will be fully funded but won't take effect until 2027 due to late amendments. The situation around Group 2 funding remains uncertain. Senator Altschiller emphasized that the state has enough money but is deciding how to allocate it. She noted that avoiding expenditures on universal vouchers could help meet Group 2 obligations and fully fund the Sununu Center Fund.

A wave of housing bills, primarily focused on rezoning rather than building homes, was seen as an overreach that diminished local control. A key concern was the broader push by the House and a small faction in the Senate to dismantle various local regulations.

The expansion of universal vouchers also raised issues, particularly in education, where changes could weaken teacher certification requirements. Additionally, deregulation was presented as a solution for key statewide issues, yet concerns remain about whether these issues are actually being addressed.

Mr. Houghton expressed gratitude for efforts to resist these changes, emphasizing that housing and infrastructure challenges aren't going away and require tailored approaches.

Ms. Knab inquired about restoring Housing Champions funding, and Sen. Altschiller indicated it is being considered. Ongoing bills include:

HB 342 (lot size requirements)

HB 457 (restrictions on unrelated individuals sharing a home, affecting density)

SB 163 (allowing manufactured homes on any residential lot)

ADU-related provisions (allowing two ADUs per lot and limiting bedroom sizes, which impacts affordability efforts)

SB 170 & 174 (restricting zoning applications and regulations tied to subsurface conditions, septic, and groundwater)

The overarching concern remains balancing regulation and development while ensuring local needs and environmental protections are maintained.

HB457 had a companion bill aimed at deregulating the licensing and formation of sober houses, creating a more permissive structure for their expansion in the state. However, there are concerns that eliminating zoning regulations could leave towns without decision-making power. Mr. Moore emphasized the importance of participating in discussions to support targeted improvements.

SB170 acknowledges the challenges communities are facing and aims to establish a foundation for future solutions, seeking common ground on key issues. Ms. Knab pointed out the perception that the Seacoast region has restrictive zoning, making it seem problematic. The area also lacks public water and sewer services and has environmental concerns. The discussion emphasized the need for knowledge-sharing and financial support to incentivize community-specific development.

Mr. Moore and Ms. Knab were recognized for their advocacy on zoning and housing issues. Additionally, infrastructure grants are expected to become more limited in the future.

The bill to eliminate lobbying was successfully defeated, ensuring continued collective advocacy through the NH Municipal Association. Ms. Knab highlighted that the bill also affected firefighters, police, and other associations.

Rockingham County legislators discussed the sheriff's department's entry into a 287G Agreement with ICE, initiated on April 1 with a 45–60 day training period. Unlike past mission-based collaborations, this agreement is indefinite unless terminated by federal authorities. While some towns, like Exeter, have opted out, a new state law prevents municipalities from prohibiting police departments from participating. However, towns can still craft their own policy statements. The sheriff's office clarified that under this agreement, ICE detainees from routine stops would be verified, and individuals could be held for 24 hours if necessary. The policy is still being drafted, and questions remain about public access to its details. Mr. Houghton agreed with Mr. Moore, saying further deliberation is needed before making any kind

of statement.

The delegation proposed returning in the fall instead of January to better position themselves for town advocacy.

Mr. Anderson raised concerns about future water infrastructure funding, emphasizing the need for interconnectivity among Seacoast towns. A delegate, who is part of the Seacoast Drinking Water Commission, committed to providing further information during their next visit.

The Board thanked the delegation for coming in.

Mr. Houghton quickly touched on Correspondence and referred to the Trail Management Advisory Committee, pointing out to Ms. Knab that tree cutting is planned for the top of the hill at Stratham Hill Park. Ms. Knab said many groups would be involved with this decision and a site walk would be held.

Ms. Knab motioned to accept Mr. Moore's resignation with great sorrow. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion, acknowledging it is a good move for him. He appreciated the guidance received and wished Mr. Moore continued success in his next assignment. Mr. Houghton expressed gratitude and excitement for Mr. Moore's future. Mr. Moore thanked them for their service and kindness, reflecting positively on his productive time here.

Mr. Houghton introduced the agenda item on the Stratham Volunteer Fire Dept. Association Trust, a project Mr. Moore has worked on for the past year and a half. A draft statement has been prepared reflecting discussions with stakeholders, including Trustees of the Trust Fund and SVFDA. The Board must now approve the proposed changes, which will be reviewed by Town Counsel before submission to the Attorney General's Office.

The Trust holds \$140,000, with \$100,000 allocated across four sub-accounts—three supporting the Fair and one designated for the Fire Department. The funds are expected to revert to the Stratham Volunteer Fire Department Association (SVFDA), with usage guided by state laws but without specific obligations. Ms. Knab recalled discussions about park buildings and asked whether these funds would be used for these potential improvements. Mr. Moore believed they could be. The Trust will remain intact and open for future donations. Mr. Houghton motioned to proceed with the changes. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr Houghton motioned to open the public hearing to discuss the acceptance of a donation. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Mr. Moore referred to a memo from Chief King and Administrative Assistant Jenn Schaaff explaining the annual grant. Ms. Knab motioned acceptance of the terms of the State of NH Highway Safety Grant as presented in the amount of \$11,000 to the Select Board and further to authorize the Town Administrator to sign all documents related to the grant on behalf of the Select Board and following the June 6th departure of the Town Administrator, the Board Chair is authorized to sign. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Ms. Knab asked Mr. Moore to inform the Wildlife Center about the service provider process in response to their funding request, following the approach taken by other non-profits. The Board concurred.

Mr. Houghton motioned to close the public hearing. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton moved to the Whitney Consulting agenda item. Mr. Moore explained that the proposal is for an amended contract with Whitney Consulting for 18 months to perform cyclical valuations. Mr. Moore will review and write a recommendation for the June 16th meeting. The Board will also be required to act on the abatements at that meeting. Entering into this contract has no bearing on when they will do the next re-valuation. The Board agreed to move forward with the 18 month update of the data base. Mr. Moore reminded them that Mr. Hamilton, Whitney Consulting Group, will be at the June 16th meeting and will recommendations on the abatements and, possibly, propose a strategy for negotiating the current two litigated values.

ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Moore reported that the Website Committee is reviewing templates and providing feedback to Revize. Mr. Anderson asked about the project's timeline. The Board requested to be updated regularly.

Mr. Moore met with NHDOT and CHA (NHDOT's consulting engineers) to discuss safety improvements at the Bunker Hill intersection. Several engineering options have been assessed. Their project manager will contact our Town Planner to coordinate. A presentation will be given to the Select Board in the near future. Unfortunately, construction funding isn't currently available. Mr. Moore spoke about the Rockingham Planning Commission and the Executive Council as allies with the project. Traffic studies for state driveway permits at 141 Portsmouth Ave. are also in progress, with opportunities to integrate infrastructure improvements further down the corridor. Mr. Moore suggested they continue to follow developments.

The final Phase II grant report for PFAS alternative projects is nearly complete, with a final approval meeting scheduled. Reimbursement paperwork for the remaining \$50,000 is in process, though further discussions on long-term funding strategies will be needed. Mr. Moore felt that Stratham would be best served by having Underwood Engineers involved in water interconnection conversations but there is a need to discuss how they would be funded.

Executive Assistant Karen Richard requested the annual staff outing be added to the agenda. The Board will discuss further.

Mr. Moore feels confident about the transition process, will continue updating key contacts, and the Board had no concerns about the transition sheet he submitted.

Resident Mark Atlee requested that his disabled veteran's credit be retroactively applied his application for 2025. After discussion about the timing of the letter and application, Ms. Knab motioned to apply the veteran's tax credit to apply to the 2025 tax bill. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Moore reported that a Treasurer and Chair will be added to the charge for the Community Garden Committee.

The residents of 13 Rollins Farm Rd have submitted a fireworks application and the required proof of insurance for an event on July 5. Mr. Anderson approved the application as stated. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

RESERVATIONS

Ms. Knab motioned approval for the Friends in Action to use the Front Pavilion on June 27 and waiving the fee as they are a non-profit. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton motioned to approve Kathryn Nichols use of the Sewall Room on Dec. 20 and waive the alcohol prohibition with the stipulation that a certificate of insurance is provided. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Ms. Knab motioned support of Karen Richard's use of the Morgera Room on June 11 and waive the alcohol prohibition. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

APPOINTMENTS

Ms. Knab motioned to appoint Allyson Moore to the Stratham Community Garden Committee for a one year term expiring at Town Meeting in March 2026. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Anderson motioned to appoint Lisa Henry to the Wiggin Memorial Library Board of Trustees as an alternate for a one year term to expire at Town Meeting 2026. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

At 8:30 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to go into a non-public session to discuss personnel matters in accordance with RSA 91-A:3, II(a). Ms. Knab seconded the motion. Roll call: Houghton-yes; Knab-yes; Anderson-yes

At 9:38pm Mr. Houghton motioned to come out of the non-public session and adjourn. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard
Recording Secretary