

MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 11, 2025, SELECT BOARD MEETING

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

ALSO PRESENT: Director of Public Works Tim Stevens, President of Dragon Mosquito Sarah MacGregor

At 7:00pm Mr. Houghton opened the meeting and asked for a motion on the draft minutes. Mr. Anderson motioned to approve the minutes from July 21, 2025. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton introduced Sarah MacGregor, who was invited to address resident concerns regarding mosquito activity. He noted that the Town discontinued roadside spraying in 2021 but continues to monitor larvae for disease. Ms. MacGregor confirmed this and provided an overview of current mosquito conditions.

She explained that the recent surge in mosquitoes is primarily due to salt marsh hatches, which occur monthly or more frequently with tidal flooding. Periodic large hatches, approximately every ten years, are not uncommon. Neighboring towns do not conduct roadside spraying or larvaciding, contributing to regional mosquito influx. Although Dragon Mosquito performs larvaciding in Stratham, nearby salt marshes remain a source of migration.

Ms. MacGregor noted that mosquito eggs remain dormant during dry conditions and hatch following rainfall. No mosquito-borne diseases have been detected locally to date. She acknowledged that roadside spraying had been used in the past but was controversial. Preventative recommendations include using repellent and wearing long pants. Mosquitoes typically live for two weeks, so the current outbreak is expected to subside.

She also discussed the use of mosquito traps and confirmed that municipal properties and parks have been treated. Historically, disease-carrying mosquitoes tend to appear around Labor Day, prompting targeted spraying when necessary. Finally, she described the aggressive nature of the summer salt marsh mosquito, which bites during daylight hours.

Mr. Houghton requested an overview of the pros and cons of roadside spraying. Ms. MacGregor noted the primary drawbacks include cost, chemical use, public notification requirements, and reduced effectiveness due to wind drift.

In response to a question about disease detection protocols, Ms. MacGregor stated that public communication would be initiated, municipal properties would be treated, and roadside spraying would be considered. She explained that mosquito populations naturally decline with cooler nighttime temperatures and that roadside spraying is less effective during breezy fall conditions.

Mr. Anderson observed that roadside spray dispersal is limited to approximately 300 feet, beyond which wooded areas remain untreated. Ms. MacGregor outlined available treatment methods: larvaciding, spot spraying, roadside spraying, and aerial spraying—the latter being under State jurisdiction and not conducted in New Hampshire since the 1960s.

Ms. MacGregor confirmed that local schools have not sprayed this year but routinely treat the cedar swamp between the school and park. She noted that summer salt marsh mosquitoes are

capable of traveling up to 40 miles and that Dragon Mosquito treats catch basins to target West Nile virus carriers.

Preventative recommendations included using repellent, wearing long pants, and eliminating standing water in containers and bird baths (which should be refreshed daily). In response to a question about private property spraying, Ms. MacGregor stated that Salt River Condos are being treated, though residents continue to experience mosquito activity. She emphasized that many surrounding salt marshes are managed by Fish and Game, requiring approval though them.

The Board expressed appreciation for Ms. MacGregor's informative presentation and thanked her for attending.

Mr. Houghton recognized Town Clerk Deborah Bakie and Town Moderator Dave Emanuel for their presentation regarding voting machine options. Ms. Bakie reported that demonstrations were conducted for both Voting Works and Dominion machines. Following her research, she recommended the Town purchase the Voting Works system, citing its superior comprehensiveness, speed, and readability. Mr. Emanuel agreed with her recommendation.

Mr. Houghton made a motion to support the Town Clerk's recommendation and proceed with the purchase of the Voting Works machines. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Ms. Bakie noted that approval from Secretary of State Scanlon is required before the machine swap can proceed. She will initiate that request and hopes to have the new machines in place for the March election. Training sessions may be scheduled for the fall. The date for the state primary election remains pending, and Ms. Bakie will keep the Board informed.

Mr. Houghton recognized Tim Stevens for a presentation on proposed improvements to Stevens Park. Mr. Stevens reported that the pavilion location has been revised from the original plan to allow for increased programmable space. While he expressed initial concerns regarding the septic system's location—due to the uphill distance required for pumping—he has received confirmation that the current placement is viable. The revised pavilion location will not require relocation of existing electrical infrastructure, and the utility pole will remain in place.

Plans include expanding the parking area by adding spaces on higher ground not designated for programming. Mr. Stevens also described an improved layout for the pickleball courts, which will be incorporated into the existing tennis court area. Project priorities include the pavilion, parking, and drainage, with additional work to be completed as funding allows.

Ms. Knab raised concerns about the proximity of the proposed pickleball courts to neighboring properties, which will be addressed in a later phase. Resident Beth Dupell, Doe Run Lane, a tennis and pickleball player, recommended a buffer between the courts. The group acknowledged the suggestion and agreed to revisit the layout during that phase of development.

Mr. Stevens requested approval to proceed with further engineering studies and improvements related to drainage, pavilion, and parking. In response to a question from resident Robert Law regarding abutter notification, Mr. Houghton stated that this would occur through the Planning Board process and committed to following up. The group discussed holding a public hearing prior to initiating work. Mr. Stevens indicated a goal of beginning construction in the fall.

Mr. Stevens provided an update on DPW activities. His crew has been working at Stratham Hill Park, and he, along with his Administrative Assistant, is developing a 10-year plan for

maintenance of the park. The Stevens Park sign installation has been delayed due to a contractor issue with the granite; installation is now anticipated in mid-September. Mr. Stevens (the sign donor) requested permission to hold a small family reunion at the park at that time.

Roadside mowing was completed last Friday. Mr. Stevens noted that while the equipment used is costly, purchasing a multi-use machine would allow for more efficient seasonal use. Mr. Anderson inquired about the possibility of a shared or joint purchase, which Mr. Stevens said could be considered.

Paving work is slightly behind schedule. An RFP has been issued, and crack sealing is underway. Plans to pave the Town's portion of Academic Way were contingent on the SAU's paving schedule; however, the SAU has opted not to proceed, so the Town will not move forward with its portion at this time.

Mr. Stevens requested guidance on disposing of surplus equipment currently stored at the DPW garage, including an ambulance, a police vehicle, and two lawn mowers. The ambulance has been listed for sale with no interest to date, and the police car is deemed unsalvageable. Mr. Houghton will consult with Chief Denton regarding the ambulance. The Board directed Mr. Stevens to put the police car and lawn mowers out to bid.

Mr. Stevens initiated a discussion on the Transfer Station. Mr. Houghton noted that a public hearing will be scheduled and requested input from the Board. Referring to Mr. Stevens' memo, Mr. Anderson highlighted that the Town is not recovering the full cost of operating the facility. Mr. Stevens proposed implementing a nominal fee for brush disposal, citing the high volume received and the significant staff time required to manage it.

Ms. Knab raised questions about Transfer Station stickers. Mr. Stevens will address the concerns and aims to implement a revised program by January 1.

Mr. Stevens asked what information the Board would like presented at the public hearing. Mr. Houghton emphasized the importance of showing cost drivers, such as the expense of disposing of items like mattresses compared to the fees currently charged to residents. He noted that disposal costs often exceed the revenue collected.

Mr. Houghton inquired about the Town's contract with Casella. Mr. Stevens confirmed the contract expires on December 31, 2026. Preliminary discussions have begun, though future terms remain uncertain due to market fluctuations. Mr. Stevens noted that Casella has consistently provided excellent service and that a contract extension may be possible.

Mr. Stevens reported that the recently hired employee is performing well and has made a positive start.

He also informed the Board that he has been in communication with the Summerfest Committee regarding potential plans for next year. The Committee is considering a joint event in collaboration with the USA 250 celebration. Mr. Stevens will continue to engage with the Committee and provide updates as planning progresses.

Mr. Houghton noted that resident correspondence regarding mosquito activity had been addressed by Ms. MacGregor during her earlier presentation.

Mr. Houghton recognized Ms. Dupell, who raised concerns about ongoing off-leash dog activity at Smyk Park, despite the presence of multiple posted signs requiring dogs to be leashed. She suggested increased police presence, particularly given the absence of an animal control officer, and noted that many of the off-leash dogs appear to be associated with a nearby business.

The Board acknowledged the concern and noted that the Town now has a Community Liaison who may be able to monitor the area more frequently. Ms. Knab proposed reaching out to Chief King and mentioned potential code violations related to the business in question.

Ms. Dupell also referenced a letter she submitted last year regarding an odor originating from a local car dealership, which she stated remains an issue. Mr. Houghton reported that the previous Town Planner had addressed the matter with the dealership, resulting in corrective actions. He will follow up to reassess the situation.

Ms. Dupell thanked the Board for their attention, and the Board expressed appreciation for her input.

Mr. Houghton called attention to the Sewall Room policy. Ms. Knab motioned to adopt the latest iteration of the Sewall Room Policy. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton will work with the Executive Assistant to set up the public hearing on the Transfer Station.

Mr. Anderson motioned to authorize Select Board Chair Mike Houghton to sign the Emergency Management Planning Grant. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Mr. Anderson informed the Board that the State mandates the development of an Emergency Operations Plan, which must be reviewed and updated every five years. He provided an overview of the Emergency Management team's structure and emphasized the importance of designating a public spokesperson in the event of an emergency. Mr. Anderson volunteered to serve as the Board's liaison to the Office of Emergency Management.

ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Houghton provided an update on the Stratham Volunteer Fire Charitable Trust. The management of the disposition of the remaining funds from the Stratham Fair is a process which has been underway for some time. He reported that significant progress has been made toward resolving this. Town Counsel has reviewed the matter, and the relevant documentation has been circulated to stakeholders. A meeting is scheduled for later this week to address any outstanding concerns. Following that, Town Counsel will submit the finalized materials to the State for approval. Mr. Houghton does not anticipate any issues with the process.

Mr. Houghton initiated a discussion regarding Town IT resources, specifically the allocation of desktops and laptops. Mr. Anderson was opposed to employees having both devices. He recalled previous discussions about discrepancies between the number of software licenses held and the number of employees. Mr. Houghton acknowledged the complexity of the issue. The Board discussed which roles may require laptops. Mr. Houghton will ask the Assistant Town Administrator to oversee and manage the review and implementation process.

Mr. Houghton initiated a discussion on the budget process. Chief Denton reported to him that the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) out of the Capital Reserve Funds had been fully expended, despite it being only July, and requested guidance on how to proceed. Mr. Houghton

consulted with Mr. Roy in the Finance Department, who said that Chief Denton will need to apply the expenses to his supplies line item in the Operating Budget, resulting in this line item being overspent. Ultimately, Chief Denton will need to absorb the excess within his overall departmental budget.

It was noted that Chief Denton had underspent on payroll and expressed a desire to continue hiring personnel. The paramedic program involved unexpected costs due to unanticipated equipment needs. Improved planning is expected for the next fiscal year. Chief Denton had voiced concern about offsetting the overage with payroll funds, as it may hinder staffing efforts.

Mr. Houghton said that Police Chief King had raised a separate issue regarding the need to replace siding at the Police Department. The expense is relatively minor but will need to be covered by the department's current budget or deferred to the next fiscal year. Mr. Houghton will follow up directly with Chief King.

Mr. Anderson shared that during the July Department Head meeting, he implemented a revised format. Rather than beginning with a predetermined list of discussion items, as was customary under Mr. Moore, he invited department heads to present their updates first. He noted that this approach effectively addressed nearly all of his intended topics, making it a more productive meeting.

RESERVATIONS

Ms. Knab motioned to allow the NHSPCA to use the Front Pavilion on 8/27 and to waive the fee. Mr. Anderson second the motion. All voted in favor.

Ms. Knab motioned to allow the Seacoast Detachment #394 Marine Corp League to use the Front Pavilion on 8/23 and waive the fee. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton motioned to allow the Condo Leadership Council to use the 4-H Pavilion on 9/17 and waive the fee. Mr. Anderson recused himself, as he is a member of the Council. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Ms. Knab motioned to allow Waypoint to use the Scamman Pavilion on 9/13 and to waive the fee. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Ms. Knab motioned to allow Cornerstone School to hold a cross country meet on 9/22 and waive the fee. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. Ms. Knab will confirm there will be an EMS detail at the event. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton noted that there was a celebration of life for former Police Chief Richard Gendron. In appreciation of his service to the Town of Stratham, Mr. Houghton motioned to waive the fee. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

The Board signed the barn easements.

Mr. Houghton motioned to grant a proration of taxes for a property at 8 Morning Star Drive. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

They discussed the other abatement requests.

At 8:59pm Mr. Houghton motioned to go into a non-public session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3, II (a) and (b) to discuss personnel matters. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. Roll call: Houghton-yes; Knab-yes; Anderson-yes.

At 9:39pm Mr. Houghton motioned to exit the non-public session. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton motioned to accept with regret William Roy's resignation. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

At 9:39pm Mr. Houghton motioned to adjourn. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard
Recording Secretary