

MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 15, 2025 SELECT BOARD MEETING

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

ALSO PRESENT: Assistant Town Administrator and Parks & Recreation Director Seth Hickey, Police Chief Anthony King, Director of Public Works Tim Stevens

At 7:00 pm, Mr. Houghton opened the meeting and began with the swearing in of Police Officer Patrick Storie. Ms. Knab read the Oath. The Board welcomed and congratulated him.

Mr. Houghton asked for a motion on the minutes. Mr. Anderson motioned approval of the September 2, 2025 minutes as amended. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton recognized Mikki Deschaine, Chair of the Trustees of the Trust Funds, who said she was accompanied by the other Trustees of the Trust Funds and the Cemetery Trustees.

Ms. Deschaine reported that, following research and consultation with Terry Knowles (former head of the State Charitable Trust Unit), the Trustees of the Trust Funds and the Cemetery Trustees are requesting to pursue a Cy Pres petition for the income generated by cemetery perpetual care funds. They are seeking permission to consult with Town Counsel to proceed.

Currently, perpetual care funds are tied to individual cemetery lots and may only be used for maintenance of those specific lots, not for general cemetery upkeep. The request pertains to two of the Town's four cemeteries. Ms. Deschaine noted difficulties in allocating funds, citing that newer cemetery lots often lack sufficient accumulated income and that plots with interment rights are not included in the count covered by perpetual care provisions.

The Attorney General's Office and the Cemetery Association recommend pursuing Cy Pres when a substantial income base exists. If approved by probate court, a portion of the income could be transferred to an expendable maintenance trust fund, managed jointly by the Trustees of the Trust Funds and the Cemetery Trustees. The principal of the perpetual care funds would remain untouched. Ms. Cushman, Cemetery Trustee, confirmed that the Cemetery Perpetual Care Fund will remain in place and continue to accrue interest. While the funds may be used for gravestone maintenance, current regulations restrict spending to interest earned within the current year. She noted that \$143,783 in accumulated interest from prior years remains unused due to these limitations.

The Cemetery Trustees are requesting permission to use the accumulated interest for necessary maintenance, including tree removal recommended by certified arborists. Trees along cemetery boundaries pose safety risks to gravestones and public roadways, and the Town seeks to avoid potential liability.

The proposal includes transferring excess annual interest into an expendable trust fund for ongoing cemetery maintenance and establishing this process for future excess funds.

Additionally, Ms. Cushman requested that proceeds from cemetery lot sales be directed to the maintenance fund rather than the General Fund.

In response to Ms. Knab's inquiry about potential concerns from descendants, Ms. Cushman assured her that cemetery care will continue. She also noted that while there have been

complaints about damaged gravestones, the primary challenge has been locating qualified professionals to perform the repairs.

Mr. Houghton inquired about the approval process for use of the cemetery funds. Ms. Cushman explained that it would follow the standard procedure for trust funds: a formal request would be submitted to the Trustees of the Trust Funds, who would then review and vote on the request.

Ms. Cushman requested permission to consult with Town Counsel regarding the establishment of an expendable trust fund. If approved at Town Meeting and subsequently through a Cy Pres petition, accumulated interest could be transferred to the new fund for cemetery maintenance.

Mr. Houghton agreed to speak with Town Counsel the following morning and facilitate contact with Ms. Deschaine.

Mr. Houghton recognized Paul Deschaine, Chairman of the Lamprey Regional Cooperative, to discuss recent correspondence regarding waste management. Mr. Deschaine explained that each year, prior to the January rate setting, Waste Management provides notice of the upcoming rates under the terms of the existing contract, which are not subject to negotiation. He noted that, in addition to the contracted rate, a new surcharge of \$3.50 per ton has been introduced. Although outside the contract, this surcharge is permitted and may need to be accounted for in the upcoming budget. The Board thanked Mr. Deschaine for the information.

Mr. Houghton recognized Police Chief King for departmental updates. Chief King discussed a potential new hire, which Mr. Anderson supported. The Board agreed to continue the discussion in a non-public session later in the evening.

Chief King referenced his preliminary budget report previously submitted to the Board and Finance. He reported increased arrest activity over the summer and noted that Officer Storie has begun active duty. Staffing challenges continue, however, the proposed hire would alleviate some of the staffing challenges this as they help fill additional shifts.

The School Resource Officer has resumed full-time duties, which has been positively received. The Community Resource Officer has also been a strong and well-received presence at the park.

Chief King highlighted a growing concern with electronic bikes. He reported that Stratham Memorial School has requested officer presence. An officer has been assigned as a detail, with no administrative or cruiser fees charged.

Chief King informed the Board that the department has applied for a new grant but has not yet received a response.

He presented two equipment requests for consideration:

1. **Taser Purchase:** Chief King proposed purchasing eight tasers for full-time road officers using funds from the golf donation line. The total cost is \$39,000. Ms. Knab motioned support for the Police Chief moving ahead with the purchase of eight tasers using funds from the golf donation line in the amount of \$37,213.05. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.
2. **Dash Camera for Cruiser:** Chief King requested funding to equip the new cruiser with a dash camera and associated hardware, noting that equipment was transferred from the previous vehicle, but it lacked this component. Ms. Knab motioned support for the

Police Chief to move forward with purchasing the dash camera and associated hardware in the amount of \$12,300 out of the Police Detail Fund. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton motioned to open the Public Hearing to discuss the modification of the Transfer Station fees and noted that this is the second public hearing on the matter. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Mr. Houghton addressed the public and asked if anyone would like to speak to the modification of the Transfer Station fees. Hearing no response, Ms. Knab motioned to close the public hearing. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Mr. Anderson motioned to approve the Transfer Station Fee Schedule and Stratham resident sticker program as outlined in the letter of June 18, 2025 from the Director of Public Works. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Mr. Stevens referred to the amendment to the bylaws of the ordinance. Mr. Houghton said he would look into the matter and follow up.

Mr. Houghton recognized Greg Blood of the Stratham Hill Park Association (SHPA) to present the proposed 10-year plan for the park. Mr. Blood explained that SHPA, along with Mr. Stevens and Mr. Hickey, developed the plan through a series of meetings. He noted that historically, no dedicated funding has been set aside for park maintenance, infrastructure, or activities, and requested that such funding be included in future budgets.

Key goals outlined in the plan include:

- Infrastructure support for Summerfest and the natural skating rink
- Trail grooming and signage updates
- Expansion of the indoor rink
- Pavilion bathroom improvements
- Field of Flags installation
- Tree maintenance
- Picnic table replacement
- Roof repairs to the 4H barn, which Parks & Recreation hopes to use for summer camp programming
- Pursuit of historical landmark designation for the fire tower
- Implementation of a revised pavilion fee structure

Mr. Anderson emphasized the need to outline specific projects and associated costs. Mr. Houghton noted that some items may fall under the DPW budget. SHPA is seeking guidance on how to proceed, recognizing that the funding needs exceed current maintenance allocations.

Ms. McGrail added that the Town Planner recommended developing a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to support larger park projects. She also raised concerns about pavilion rentals, which often receive fee waivers despite incurring cleanup costs for DPW. Mr. Anderson agreed that rentals should be cost-neutral.

Ms. Knab stressed the importance of involving other committees in future planning and noted conflicting information regarding Recreation's use of the 4H building. Ms. McGrail clarified that this presentation was an introduction to the park's long-term vision. Mr. Blood reiterated SHPA's desire to move forward and emphasized the amount of work ahead.

Mr. Houghton confirmed that Mr. Hickey will assist with planning and budgeting efforts. The Board agreed that a formal plan is needed and commended SHPA's efforts. The group also discussed the stage area. Ms. McGrail asked them to review the document outlining priorities for the next three years and let them know if it aligns with their vision. Mr. Houghton asked who initiated the planning request, and Mr. Blood and Ms. McGrail confirmed it was made by the previous Town Administrator. The Board thanked them for their presentation.

Mr. Houghton called attention to Seacoast Shipyard Association and noted the tremendous economic impact that place has on the surrounding area.

Mr. Houghton motioned to accept the reimbursement of \$7,500 Local Source Water Protection grant from the Department of Environmental Services. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton deferred the building fees discussion to the next meeting, when the Director of Planning & Building would be present. Ms. Knab recalled that the previous Town Planner raised this issue, but it was never acted on.

Ms. Knab raised her concern with third party reviews.

Mr. Anderson motioned to approve the request from the Stratham Volunteer Fire Department Association for a raffle to take place at the First Responder Golf Tournament on October 6, 2025. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton reviewed some for information only items.

Mr. Anderson referred to a request from a resident for a special exception to the watering restriction. They discussed the restrictions and what might qualify for an exception. They agreed to grant the resident's request.

At 8:05pm Mr. Houghton motioned to go into a non-public session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3, II (a) personnel. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. Roll call: Houghton-yes; Knab-yes; Anderson-yes.

At 8:50pm Mr. Houghton motioned to come out of the non-public session and seal the minutes. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Anderson motioned to accept the resignation of Tim Stevens with regret effective Friday, September 19. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton motioned to approve the hiring recommendation from the Fire Chief to hire Jonathan Markey and Michael Langille for the positions of weekend paramedic at the Stratham Fire Department and permit the Select Board Chair to sign the conditional offer letters. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Mr. Anderson suggested they send the Finance office a copy of the offer letters.

Ms. Knab motioned support for Chief King moving forward with a conditional offer to Jonathan Ballard for the patrol officer position with a starting rate of \$28.79. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

At 8:55pm Mr. Houghton motioned to adjourn. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard
Recording Secretary