

MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 4, 2023 SELECT BOARD MEETING

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

ALSO PRESENT: Town Administrator David Moore; Parks and 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 minutes of Nov. 20 and Nov. 26 as written. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton welcomed members of the Stratham Fall Golf Classic Committee: John Cushing, Chair, Les Barker, Treasurer of SVFD, Fire Lt. Chris Heal and Police Lt. David Pierce. Mr. Cushing announced that 50% of the proceeds (\$30,586) of the golf tournament will be donated to the Police Dept. That same amount will be retained in the Fire Association.

Mr. Cushing also wanted to memorialize a check for \$50,000 given to the Fire Dept. to be used for new turnout gear that Chief Denton is seeking to purchase, these funds had been previously accepted by the Select Board following a public hearing this year. These funds are a result of donations and Auxiliary fundraisers. The Board thanked them for the presentation for coming to the meeting and for all of the hard work and dedication evident in such substantial and meaningful donations to the Town.

Mr. Houghton asked for comments on the Correspondence items. Hearing none, Mr. Houghton motioned to open the Public Hearing on the acceptance of Highway Grant Funds. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Mr. Moore explained that this is one-time additional revenue provided by the State to all NH municipalities to be used for roadway infrastructure. We will put the money towards our roadway reconstruction program. Because the amount is over \$10,000 a public hearing is required. Mr. Houghton asked for discussion from the Board and the public. Hearing none, Mr. Houghton motioned to close the public hearing. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Mr. Anderson motioned to accept the one-time highway payment of \$50,494.54. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Moore informed the board that he will post a notice for another public hearing for Dec. 18th to accept the donation from the golf tournament. He called attention to a letter of donation for forcible entry trainer. Mr. Anderson motioned to accept the donation in the amount of \$9,295 from Stratham Volunteer Fire Association for the purpose of purchasing a forcible entry door devise for the Stratham Volunteer Fire Department. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. As this donation was under \$10,000 no public hearing was required. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton recognized Parks & Recreation Director Seth Hickey who came before the Board to discuss improvements at Stevens Park and the purchase of a van. He began his report by acknowledging Diane Smith, the new Programming Assistant, who is off to a great start in her new role. He said she is doing a great job, focusing on senior activities and working well with the Program Coordinator. She's been working with other communities to learn about their senior programs and looking for ways to partner with them. He continued, informing them of upcoming programs. Ms. Knab asked to whom the programs were directed. Mr. Hickey

responded that a subset of the Parks & Rec email subscribers are, generally, adults without school age children.

Mr. Hickey continued, reporting on a successful start to Basketball. It is the longest season and most administratively intense requiring coordination at the league level (not just the town) and also with referees and the two locations of SMS and CMS.

Mr. Hickey reported that the Recreation Commission is working on their budget for the Recreation Revolving Fund. Friends of Stratham Baseball Committee are in a good position going into upcoming season. TMAC met with the Animal Control Officer. The Park Association is taking a comprehensive look at SHP. Mr. Hickey reported that it has been increasingly difficult to set up the Nice rink because of the weather and lack of DPW staff. He is suggesting taking a year off. It needs a new liner. With the water delivery, it will cost approximately \$2,000 and was only open 10 – 12 days last winter. Ms. Knab agreed with taking a year off with the Nice rink. Mr. Hickey said the trails will continue to be groomed. Sledding is also an available option.

Mr. Hickey continued, noting work on baseball fields is being done now; spring is too late. Pump track maintenance will be done in the spring.

Mr. Hickey moved the discussion to projects at Stevens Park. He reviewed past Select Board discussions about the concept for improvements that settled around addressing parking supply and circulation; meeting evolving court sport demands (basketball, tennis and pickle ball); and introducing a long envisioned pavilion to support additional and improve current programming. In an effort to learn more about project feasibility the board previously authorized test pits to be completed to introduce a bathroom facility as part of the pavilion like the front pavilion at SHP. The test pits confirmed the site would support the bathroom and pavilion facility. The Board expressed continued support for the project but noted the need for involvement in design development.

Mr. Moore suggested the Board authorize him to enter into a contract for a design for the Stevens park improvements, with a related recommendation to release CIP monies in combination with ARPA funds. The design and pricing is based on a site concept plan that includes pavilions, parking and courts. He noted that there would be public outreach with an opportunity to comment. The design process will be in phases. T

They discussed the design and parking issues. Brent Scott, resident and member of the Recreation Commission, spoke in support of the engineering study and members of the public were recognized to speak. Jay and Kathy Flagg, residents and members of the SVFDA, spoke in support of the improvements at Stevens Park, especially the addition of pickle ball courts. Mr. Flagg kept records on pickle ball attendance for a few months and attendees are exceeding the capacity on a regular basis. They supported the inclusion of a pavilion, as they feel it would encourage social interaction. Mr. Houghton reminded everyone that anything beyond the engineering study would need to be approved at a Town Meeting. When presenting this project to the community, he favored an open minded approach with no fixed end point. Ms. Knab supports moving forward with the engineering plan and feels this is a good use of the ARPA money. She observed that the engineering survey will need to be completed no matter what is done with the space. They discussed funding for the project. Mr. Anderson motioned to authorize the Town Administrator to enter into a professional services contract with Emanuel

Engineering for up to \$34,000 for Stevens Park improvement design services for a multi-functional facility using ARPA funds and \$9,000 CIP as the funding source. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Hickey continued his department report informing the Board about Parks & Rec programs including a new wilderness program and the popular ski program. Programming Coordinator Zach Cherry is at the 6 month mark and is doing a great job.

Mr. Hickey went to a financial sustainability workshop for communities with recreation programming and is looking forward to incorporating some of the information from the presentation into his programming. One aspect of the workshop included the Rec Revolving fund. He's been working with Ms. McAllister on better understanding the finances regarding programming.

Finally, Mr. Hickey presented his request for the purchase of a vehicle for his department. His presentation outlined the financial picture for the Rec Dept. This vehicle would be used for small group trips, primarily for seniors and middle schoolers. Feedback from the community is to do more trips. Funding for the vehicle would be from the Municipal Transportation Improvement Fund (RSA 261) and the Great Bay Food Truck festival. Ongoing expenses would be funded through fees collected for the trip. He's discussed potential liability issues with legal counsel. In response to a question from Ms. Knab, Mr. Hickey said he budgeted for a new vehicle as opposed to a used one. They discussed the selection of the vehicle. Mr. Houghton expressed an interest in understanding related annual maintenance expenses by model. Regarding funding for the vehicle, Mr. Moore reminded the group that the Town Meeting gave the Select Board agency to expend the Municipal Transportation Improvement Funds. The Board gave their support and approved moving forward knowing that Mr. Hickey and Mr. Moore would bring back a recommendation on a specific model purchase and when the final price is known seek a formal release of the funds from the Municipal Transportation Improvement fund. Mr. Houghton recognized resident Dick Swett who spoke in support of the purchase of the van.

ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Moore said Michael Lamb, Office Coordinator, began today. The new Building Inspector starts Dec. 11th. They discussed an employee coffee event. Dept. head meeting is scheduled for tomorrow. Mr. Moore reviewed the Select Board meeting schedule for 2024.

Mr. Houghton recognized Brent Scott, resident and member of the Recreation Commission. Mr. Scott requested investigating the possibility of putting solar panels at Stevens Park. They discussed past efforts at solar panel installations at various locations. The Board was generally supportive of solar panels and suggested he work with the Energy Commission after they finish with their Community Power project.

Mr. Moore was hoping to make the Dec. 18 Select Board meeting one in which they provide final direction to staff for content going to Budget Advisory Committee. He gave an update on budget development and draft CIP materials. Mr. Houghton wanted to be more informed on the CIP before discussing the budget. Mr. Moore handed out the draft CIP. He noted there is approximately \$420,000 in ARPA funds to expend in the coming year. We can use ARPA funds to manage the CIP impact. Ms. Knab requested last year's numbers in future handouts for comparison. Mr. Moore reviewed each item in the CIP handout. Technology hardware, ballot machines, library bathroom upgrades, PFAS response and remediation, SHP plan, road

reconstruction, Fire Station parking lot reconstruction. Discussion ensued around the cost of vehicles. Mr. Houghton observed that the amount set aside for the Fire and Public Works Departments Capital Reserve will need to be adjusted up because of inflation. Mr. Moore said that ARPA funds in the amount of \$420,000 need to be committed by Dec. 2024.

They discussed the use of the ARPA funds; using it towards items already in the CIP or using it for Stevens Park. Mr. Houghton firmly believes the improvements at Stevens Park need to be a Warrant Article and is opposed to committing funds to big projects without fully understanding the impact to taxes. He referred to the attempt in years past to build a skate park. Ms. Knab felt the Stevens Park improvements would be a good use of the ARPA funds, noting the community has been wanting a pavilion there for at least 15 years. They continued to review the CIP handout. HVAC upgrades will be needed soon; Mr. Moore feels this would be a good use of ARPA funds.

Mr. Moore said if they want to go to Town Meeting with the Stevens Park project, they will need a better estimate of cost and have confidence in being able to complete the project on time using the ARPA funds. Ms. Knab and Mr. Houghton debated using ARPA Funds or CIP monies for the Stevens Park project. Mr. Houghton compared it to the Skate Park Committee's project. They cited an insufficient amount of funds and issues with the site plan as part of the failure. Mr. Houghton emphasized that we are pursuing an engineering study to further develop Stevens Park into a multi-functional recreational facility. We are pursuing the under-utilized space that the town owns and we want to put X amount of dollars in the CIP. They talked about using ARPA funds for other projects that are ready to move forward, like paving projects.

At 9:15 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to go into a non-public session to discuss personnel matters. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. Roll call: Houghton-yes; Knab-yes; Anderson-yes

At 9:55 pm 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 invalid. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton moved to the final item on the agenda, nomination of a school board member. They discussed the good work Mr. Thompson had done on the school board and Ms. Knab motioned to nominate Travis Thompson to the Cooperative School Board with a term to expire March 2024. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

At 9:57 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to adjourn. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard, Recording Secretary