

MINUTES OF THE MAY 15, 2023 SELECT BOARD MEETING

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

ALSO PRESENT: Town Administrator David Moore, Parks & Recreation Director Seth Hickey, Planning & Community Development Director Mark Connors

At 7:00 p.m. Mr. Houghton opened the meeting. The minutes from the 5/1/23 meeting were not in the packet so the Board deferred consideration to the next meeting.

In Ms. McAllister's absence, Mr. Houghton deferred discussion of the Finance and Budget Reports to the next meeting.

Mr. Houghton recognized Seth Hickey for his department report. He reviewed some of the programs, noting revenue is slightly down. He discussed the eco-counter at Stratham Hill Park and reviewed baseball, softball, soccer and field hockey programs. He felt the new parking ordinance that the Trail Management Advisory Committee initiated has created a dramatic and beneficial change at the park. TMAC is now focusing on redoing maps for the park and developing a volunteer structure to assess and remedy issues at park. Mr. Hickey is coordinating the Park Association's annual cookout and will invite the Select Board, Conservation Commission, and TMAC to the event.

Mr. Hickey continued his report stating that they will be pulling out the story walk at SHP. The volunteers from Serve with Liberty Day worked on two big projects at the Park. The pump track should be complete by June 1. The windscreens at Stevens Park are working well. The Food Truck Festival was successful, exceeding expected revenue. Thursday's food trucks at the park will resume this year. The Wilderness Camp was cancelled because of inadequate staffing. Attendance has been strong at the Thursday night races.

He requested a non-public session to discuss hiring. At 7:21pm Mr. Houghton motioned to go into a non-public session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3, II (b) hiring. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. Roll call: Houghton-yes; Knab-yes; Anderson-yes.

At 7:50 p.m. the public meeting resumed and Mr. Houghton voted to seal the minutes. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. Roll call: Houghton-yes; Knab-yes; Anderson-yes.

Mr. Houghton recognized Mr. Connors for a series of planning and community development related updates. By way of introduction, Mr. Moore congratulated Mr. Connors on his promotion.

Mr. Connors began his presentation by referring to Tara Madden's resignation, saying she has done a great job and has worked well in the department.

He then discussed the State's Supreme Court decision regarding short-term rentals (air BnB's) which was favorable for Stratham. Currently, our zoning doesn't allow for transient housing. He feels the zoning ordinance should be clarified even further to ensure there is no ambiguity.

For many years, both the State and the Town have had concerns regarding the Rt 111 intersection at the industrial park off of Marin Way. In an attempt to resolve these ongoing issues, the State has identified a need for an added turning lane off of Rt 111. Continued growth at the industrial park is expected and we need a permanent solution to the traffic issues. Because the traffic comes from the industrial park, we feel they should contribute to the solution. Currently, they pay for a police detail during peak traffic hours. Mr. Moore and Mr. Connors recommended the Board work with DOT by proposing some initial design work for an added turning lane that would enable DOT to release driveway permits for construction on the Town road at the intersection. DOT will need to agree to the approach to advancing the issue prior to committing to any expenditure. Later phases of the effort would include cost sharing of industrial park owners for the upgrades. The Board was supportive of learning more about the level of initial investment needed by the Town to get to a resolution.

Next, Mr. Connors discussed performance bonds that the Town is holding. Ms. McAllister brought this issue to his attention when the Town changed banks. Some of the performance bonds have been outstanding for many years. He will discuss the outstanding bonds with the Planning Board to ensure all the requirements have been met before coming back to the Board to release them. They discussed some of the more complex bonds. In most cases, it is likely the applicant simply lost track of the account. Mr. Houghton would like to see a better process and policy developed so that these will be better managed going forward.

Mr. Connors gave an update on the implementation of the planning and building software. Turnover in staffing has contributed to a delay. Initially, the software provider resisted working with our existing merchant vendor but now they are collaborating on a solution.

ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Moore presented a request from the Fire Dept. from Zoll, who provides AED devices, to do a photo shoot using a Stratham ambulance for marketing purposes at Exeter hospital. Detail rates would be paid to staff accompanying the ambulance. The Board was supportive of the request.

Mr. Moore said that preparations are underway for the Memorial Day ceremony. Chief Denton has requested that one of the Board members give a short speech at the Fire Station ceremony. The Board agreed that one of them will do it.

Mr. Moore has the text for the livestock barn plaque and will have them ready in time for the Summerfest dedication event.

Mr. Moore reported that the Historical Society was awarded the grant for which they recently applied. The grant will go towards needed maintenance for the Historical Society building.

Ms. Knab requested we address some Correspondence items. Mr. Moore contacted our ESRLAC representatives, Mr. Merrill and Mr. Behr regarding the Chair of Newfield's Select Board request for Stratham to participate in advocacy for dredging the Squamscott and Exeter Rivers. The Board indicated the need for more information and Ms. Knab will contact the Reserve for input. Further, the Board referred to correspondence to the Exeter Squamscott River Local Advisory Committee for input. ESRLAC has a meeting on May 23. Mr. Moore will follow-up with ESRLAC accordingly.

Ms. Knab motioned to accept with regret the retirement of Lt. Chris Call. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Moore highlighted the letter to residents in the Heritage District promoting that district.

Mr. Moore reported that we have received another strategic planning grant from DES to advance the work completed last year with the PFAS alternatives. This new scope would build on last year's scope, to get to a preferred alternative and do additional design work to create cost estimates and plans to eventually be ready for grant funding to implement a potential PFAS alternative to our current strategy. This would place the Select Board on a path to obtain clean water to be delivered to the Town Center from a source from a neighboring community or a new central community water system in Town Center. By accepting these monies, we would be agreeing to consider joining a larger community water system. Related conversations would have implications for the future of Stratham. Mr. Houghton motioned to accept the grant as presented. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Mr. Houghton volunteered to participate in meetings regarding the project.

Mr. Houghton moved the discussion to the meeting schedule given various upcoming schedule conflicts. The Board set new summer meeting dates for July and August (July 10 and 31; August 14). The second meeting in August will be held only if needed as per the original schedule adopted last year. Mr. Moore will spread the word. The Energy Aggregation Committee is planning to attend the July 31st meeting to discuss the possibility of holding a special Town Meeting.

Regarding the Department Linkage Report Out item on the agenda, Ms. Knab met with Library Director Kerry Cronin. Mr. Anderson reported that there are two interviews scheduled for the Fire Inspector position. The DPW still has open positions. They discussed recruitment strategies. Summerfest would be a good opportunity to advertise the employment openings. Mr. Houghton reported that he met with Chief King and met with Mr. Connors – no issues. They decided to do the Dept. Linkage Reports at the second meeting of the month.

PERMITS/RESERVATIONS

Ms. Knab motioned to approve the Fireworks Permit application for the Rollins Farm resident for his July event. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Anderson motioned to approve the Raffle Permit application for the NHSPCA for their Paws Walk event on June 4, 2023. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

APPOINTMENT

Mr. Houghton noted Chris West for consideration to the Conservation Commission.

At 9:10 pm. Mr. Houghton motioned to go into a non-public session to discuss a matter which would likely affect adversely the reputation of another in accordance with RSA 91-A:3, II(c). Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. Roll call: Houghton-Yes; Knab-Yes; Anderson-Yes.

At 10:14 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 ineffective. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

At 10:15 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to adjourn. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard
Recording Secretary