

## **MINUTES OF THE JULY 6, 2021 SELECT BOARD MEETING**

**MEMBERS PARTICIPATING:** Board Members Chair Mike Houghton, and Vice Chair Joe Lovejoy, along with Town Administrator David Moore.

At 7:00 pm Mr. Houghton opened the regular meeting.

Mr. Houghton asked if there were any comments on the draft minutes. Mr. Lovejoy motioned to approve the June 21, 2021 minutes as presented. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Next, Mr. Houghton called attention to the Treasurer's Report. Mr. Lovejoy commented that we are in a better place than we were at this time last year. They noted the State is also surpassing its revenue expectations.

### **INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

Mr. Moore reported that we are working with County Sheriff's Office and State Department of Safety on their initiative that involves the installation of a generator and fuel source on the top of the hill at Stratham Hill Park. This cooperation is included in memorandums of agreement between the Town and the two agencies from the year 2012. Mr. Moore reminded the Board that in accordance with previous explanations by the County and State the Generator power is necessary to make it an effective communication facility during power outages. The Tower provides a critical communications link to regional emergency responders and Stratham responders directly. Mr. Moore and Director of Public Works Nate Mears have reviewed the proposal and have found it to be in keeping with the parameters of the agreement and responds well to safety and aesthetic concerns previously worked through with the partners during a site visit and conversations. Consistent with direction from the Board previously, he will advise the partners for the Town's support for moving forward as proposed in the most recent submitted materials.

Mr. Moore gave details on the final MOA with Seacoast Velo Kids. Although the concept and process have been approved by the Select Board at their May 17, 2021 meeting, there must be a public hearing to accept the donation formally. It is scheduled for July 19<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Houghton then addressed the letters that were sent from students at Stratham Memorial School to the Board concerning accessibility at Stratham Hill Park. The group agreed to respond to each letter. Mr. Moore will also forward the letters to appropriate Town committees. In addition, he will work with staff to get input on instances of inaccessible facilities at the park and gather other suggestions. Mr. Houghton voiced support, noting it is a timely request with the TMAC currently examining park usage. It was agreed that any current inaccessible facilities should be addressed. Mr. Moore will follow-up and report back.

### **FIRE DEPARTMENT**

Fire Chief Matt Larrabee presented his department report. Call volume is up over last year, as expected. The volume is up over previous years as well, with an even mixture of EMS and Fire calls. They are collaborating with the Police Dept. Association and Fire Association on a golf

tournament which is scheduled for Oct. 4<sup>th</sup>. They are also working with the Police Department to support National Night Out for Aug. 3<sup>rd</sup>. A Stratham resident who started a company called Birdies, is assisting them with the Golf Tournament. Chief Larrabee reported that Leah Richard and Dusty Almon have completed and passed the very challenging Firefighters Exam. Two of the out of service hydrants have been repaired. The third one is still out of service and a resolution is being sought. Once it is scoped, we will know our repair options. At the July 20<sup>th</sup> Fire Association meeting, Chief Larrabee said he will address the issue of planning for the future of the department. Lt. Jeff Denton is working on the new radios which will be rolled out soon. There are four potential candidates for Advanced EMT class in the fall which will allow us to be a host site for the training. Mr. Houghton returned the conversation to the future of the Fire Department, asking if he has had discussions regarding a strategic longer term plan. Chief Larrabee said that there's a lot to consider - different ideas, approaches, understanding all the aspects, the responsibilities, the many facets of the job – many people aren't aware of all that's involved. Chief Larrabee wants everyone in the department to have a clear understanding of all that's involved.

He went on to report that shift coverage is going well. Some people opt to be available from home, but at a lower pay rate. Younger people who have this as their only job tend to go in and take the shift. Older people who do this as a second job tend to want to be on call from home.

Mr. Lovejoy asked if vaccination clinics were still being held. Chief Larrabee said they are wrapping up. Soon, the value of the work provided will be known and reimbursement through the State program will be closed out. Mr. Moore stated that a public hearing would need to be held to accept the funds. Once we know the total amount, we will have the hearing.

The ice machine at the station has broken and is irreparable. It is over 20 years old. They'll be ordering a new one.

#### ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Moore referred to his memo on the American Rescue Plan (ARP) where he outlined potential approaches to expend the funds for the intended purposes through the deadlines 2024 and 2026. He will keep a thorough written record of the current situation, reasoning for the decisions, and key dates. He has applied for the funds as authorized by the Board at its June 21<sup>st</sup> meeting. Half of the funds will be received first and are able to be held in an interest bearing account. The funds come with restrictions on use which Mr. Moore outlined. Mr. Moore identified projects that would be eligible. The rest of the funds could be used at a later date for projects we've previously identified to take the pressure off of our Capital Improvement Plan by funding them and directly avoiding costs that we would otherwise incur. Lastly, we should reserve these funds for projects that can't be funded from other sources. For example, PFAS remediation costs seem to be eligible, but which we think we may be able to funded through the State's revised PFAS remediation fund.

Mr. Moore reported that Building Inspector Shanti Wolph will be at the next meeting to discuss the permit software issue. One of the categories of uses for the ARP funds is revenue loss. We are in the complicated process of applying the definition and formula looks back to 2014. Eligible uses for those funds are more flexible than the other categories. One eligible use is to

make improvements to IT that allows us to have greater online capability. They are hoping the permit software will increase remote connections allowing us to communicate seamlessly between departments and provide better online payment methods for residents.

Mr. Moore identified projects totaling \$250,000 (all projects where eligibility will need to be confirmed with further guidance), leaving an unallocated number of \$533,000 which would need to be committed by 2024 and fully expended by 2026.

Mr. Lovejoy asked about premium pay and ventilation at town buildings. Mr. Moore replied that premium pay would be for those that haven't already received it and that the ventilation at the Police Department is on their radar.

They speculated on future needs of the community and if some of the funds could be spent on needs that are yet unidentified. Mr. Moore will keep an ear to the ground to come up with suggestions. He then confirmed that he will move forward with initially-identified projects after confirming eligibility, keep an ear to ground and bring back to the Board on other ways the funds may be able to assist the community.

#### RESERVATIONS

Run for the Fallen has requested a parade permit request which Police Chief Anthony King recommends approving. Mr. Houghton motioned to approve the Run for the Fallen parade permit request. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

There was a brief discussion on the need for a volunteer for Exeter River Local Advisory Committee. The current representative, Nate Merrill, recommends someone from the Conservation Commission be appointed. Mr. Moore noted that he will revisit this recommendation with Town Planner Mark Connors who is currently assigned to assist the Conservation Commission.

#### ADMINISTRATION

A retired employee reached out to Mr. Lovejoy about the Health Insurance Group that is being formed. This person felt that the retirees should be represented on the committee. Although the group was open to having retirees on the committee, the focus for changes to the health insurance benefit should be on retention and of current employees. He noted that no changes are planned for the 2022 plan year. Mr. Moore recommended the Study Group design an outreach effort to the retirees such as a listening session. The Board agreed with the approach and Mr. Moore indicated he would follow-up with Finance Administrator Dawna Duhamel who is coordinating the group.

Mr. Moore reported that the Energy Commission has started meeting again. At their next meeting on July 13 Public Works Director Nate Mears will join the group to talk about energy concepts. Staff is also working on a report regarding town energy usage for them.

Mr. Lovejoy asked about the regional buying cooperative group. Mr. Moore noted that he believes we are in the second year of the aggregation agreement sponsored by the Rockingham Regional Planning Commission. Mr. Lovejoy inquired about the solar panels at the Police

Station and the buyback. Mr. Moore responded that it was on the Committee's radar and he is sure it will come at this meeting.

Mr. Moore reported that there will be a required sexual harassment training in mid-August for all employees. He has made arrangements with Primex to have an on-demand training available for those who cannot attend the two scheduled sessions. However, he noted he is emphasizing attendance at the group training. Department heads are aware a fall back option is available.

For the Select Board's next meeting, Mr. Moore has arranged for Paul Deschaine will come in to report on the Lamprey Cooperative.

#### MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

Mr. Moore reported steady progress with the PFAS remediation projects. He will provide an update at the next Select Board meeting at which Building Inspector Shanti Wolph will attend who is working directly with the vendor preparing installations of point of entry systems.

Mr. Moore restated that the culverts are in need of attention and are a good opportunity to use the ARPA funds. Mr. Mears has already gotten estimates and is prepared to move forward after pricing comes through. The Board agreed it was appropriate to move forward, including with the ARPA funds if eligibility is confirmed.

At 8:03 pm Mr. Houghton made a motion to enter into a non-public in accordance with RSA 91-A:3, II (c) to discuss matters that may affect the reputation of another.

At 9:10pm Mr. Houghton motioned to seal the minutes noting that failure to do so may render a proposed action ineffective.

At 9:11pm Mr. Houghton motioned to adjourn. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard  
Recording Secretary