

MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 7, 2021 SELECT BOARD MEETING

Meeting held in the Hutton Room at the Stratham Municipal Center

MEMBERS PRESENT: Board Members Chair Mike Houghton, Vice Chair Joe Lovejoy and Allison Knab.

ALSO PRESENT: Town Administrator David Moore and Library Director Lesley Kimball, Director of Parks & Recreation Seth Hickey

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

Mr. Lovejoy motioned to approve the draft minutes of August 16 and 26, 2021. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton recognized Library Director Lesley Kimball to give her department report. Ms. Kimball was excited to report that she and her staff have applied for and received grants that would allow them to improve their facilities and offer more programs to the community. These grants have broadened their thinking of what's possible, such as going out into the community and utilizing outside areas in new ways. They are awaiting some grants and will continue to apply for others. Utilizing grant money allows them to save Town resources for other uses.

Ms. Kimball is working with Town Planner Mark Connors and Director of Parks and Recreation Seth Hickey to develop a cohesive, community-wide gathering of information about quality of life town services. Grant funds from the American Rescue Plan Act would be used for the project. What can we do to make Stratham an even better place to live? She envisions focus groups and community discussions to help us determine how needs and interests have changed over the years. This would enable them to be certain that the grant funds would go toward services and programs the townspeople want and need.

Next, Ms. Kimball talked about upcoming staff evaluations and compensation. She noted that there is a significant amount of open library positions throughout the state. They speculated on the reasons for this. Ms. Kimball said that we were fortunate to hire Scott Campbell as Assistant Library Director who has already begun forming connections in the community.

Ms. Kimball recalled that in 2020, CIP funds were allocated for a space plan to determine the best use of the library space. She requested those funds be released so that they could engage a firm to begin the process. Mr. Lovejoy motioned to authorize the Town Administrator to release from the CIP funds up to \$20,000 for the Library Space Study. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Continuing her report, Ms. Kimball reported a great response from the public. They've been delivering books to homebound residents and had good participation in the summer reading program – even among teens.

They talked about digital use. During the pandemic, digital use soared. We are one of few libraries that receive the Wall Street Journal online.

RESERVATIONS

Cornerstone School is requesting to hold a cross country meet on September 28, 2021. Parks and Recreation Director Seth Hickey noted that he has worked with Cornerstone School and Portsmouth High School on events prior to the pandemic without issue. Mr. Lovejoy motioned to authorize Cornerstone School to hold a cross country meet on September 28, 2021. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. She then asked if there was coordination with SMS and CMS and their cross country meets. Mr. Hickey assured the group that they are all working together and that, despite the different groups and age differences, they all communicate well. All voted in favor.

Ms. Knab motioned to approve the Portsmouth High School Cycling Club's use of the park for a mountain bike race on September 29, 2021. Mr. Lovejoy seconded. All voted in favor.

Mr. Hickey noted that he has met with Ms. Kimball and had a great conversation. He is excited about the project she introduced and looks forward to working with her.

Mr. Moore said that there were two other requests, from the Boy Scouts and the Cub Scouts. Mr. Lovejoy motioned to approve the use of Stratham Hill Park for a camp out for the Boy Scouts and the Cub Scouts. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. Houghton addressed the Ambit letter. Mr. Moore said that the letter was included on the agenda for informational purposes only. He reviewed the process that wetland permits go through.

Mr. Knab inquired about an item on the Treasurer's Report - funding from Verizon for the historic marker signage the Heritage Commission planned to put at the park. Mr. Houghton said that this is an active project for the Heritage Commission.

Mr. Lovejoy noted we have significantly more money than we did this time last year. Mr. Moore said it might only be because we haven't made the school district payment yet.

ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Moore discussed the American Recovery Plan Act Funds. We are on track to take advantage of the funds, half of which we have received. We are awaiting the final rules from the government. Paying for needed and identified capital improvements for our buildings is a wise use of these funds. He has included a list of potential uses for the money. If we use it for projects already identified in the CIP, at Town Meeting we could request the money for those projects lapse, thereby allowing it to go into the General Fund.

Mr. Moore reported that today was the deadline to our Building Permit Software RFP. We have received four responses.

Mr. Moore has distributed to the employees a formal policy on panic button use, dress code policy and building closing responsibilities.

Mr. Moore is drafting a communication to staff detailing a new protocol where IT consultant Lee Todis is communicating directly to staff about IT practices with a special focus on security. He will continue to supervise the IT function even after the new Finance Administrator starts.

Mr. Moore stated that he is the appointed representative on the long term Seacoast Drinking Water Commission. Each municipality must give a presentation of their water issues. Town Planner Mark Connors and he will be presenting in Oct. Their presentation will focus on water protection, water quality, PFAS and the history of the town considering water and sewer utilities. He will keep the board updated.

After doing some research, we have learned that some of our provisions in the barn easements have been changed by state laws but our easement instruments have not reflected these changes. We might need to make adjustments. Town Assessor Chris Murdough has drafted an update. Mr. Moore will review. He discussed the process of ensuring compliance with the easements. He will continue to work resolve as necessary and continue to liaise with the Heritage Commission Chair on the subject.

Mr. Moore indicated that he is conducting research into the process of accepting donations for police-related purposes that are anticipated to result from proceeds of the SVFD Association's fundraiser on October 4th.

Mr. Moore stated that Halloween falls on a Sunday this year. Ms. Knab motioned to hold trick or treat night on Saturday, October 30, 2021 from 5:00 – 7:30 pm. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

The first meeting of the Health Insurance Study Group will be this week.

A memorial service for Sept. 11 will be held Friday morning at the Police Station.

Active shooter training for staff will be next week. Officer Amanda Bibeau will be the instructor.

Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day is October 16th at the Exeter Public Works Garage. Pre-registration is required.

Mr. Moore hopes to have a staff barbeque this fall.

Mr. Moore listed a number of potential Employment Manual updates. He also plans to incorporate the appendices into the manual. They briefly talked about holidays and felt it was beneficial to keep some flexibility.

At 8:30 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to go into a non-public session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3, II(a) to discuss personnel matters. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. Houghton – Yes; Lovejoy - Yes; Knab – Yes

At 10:25 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to come out of the non-public session and seal the minutes noting that failure to do so may render a proposed action ineffective. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Ms. Knab motioned to move the Exeter Area Garden Club meetings to the Morgera Room, as approved by Fire Chief and recommended by Parks & Recreation. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Lovejoy motioned for the Select Board to enter into an extension of the cable television franchise agreement between the Town of Stratham and Comcast of Maine, New Hampshire, for a period lasting from September 8, 2021 until October 1, 2021. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

At 10:30 p.m. Mr. Lovejoy motioned to adjourn. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard
Recording Secretary