

MINUTES OF THE JULY 20, 2020 SELECT BOARD MEETING

MEMBERS PARTICIPATING: Board Members Chair Mike Houghton, Vice Chair Joe Lovejoy, Board Member Allison Knab along with Town Administrator David Moore, Building Inspector/Code Enforcement Officer/Health Officer Shanti Wolph, Town Planner Tavis Austin.

The Board Chair opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Ms. Knab motioned to approve the second version of the minutes from 7/6/2020. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

BUILDING INSPECTION/CODE ENFORCEMENT/HEALTH OFFICER

Mr. Wolph reported that, in his Health Officer role, he is following and implementing relevant guidance from the Governor's Office, the CDC and WHO as it applies to staff in the building. Procedures were put in place to allow for the safe return of the teleworking employees. In response to restaurants' need to allow outdoor seating, he created an outdoor seating application form. He reported on the many logistics that went into planning for Town Meeting. Mr. Lovejoy commended Mr. Wolph on the good work he did putting together a safe environment for all.

Mr. Wolph continued his report, reviewing a few minor code enforcement violations. He detailed the ways in which he is responding to the health crisis as he performs inspections. They began a new process for obtaining permits. With more people home, home projects are up. He cited commercial projects currently underway: Chipotle, CMS, Lindt renovation/expansion. Future projects include: NHSPCA major renovation/addition, Treat Farm subdivision, 90R Winnicutt, 275 Portsmouth Ave. (former Great Bay Community College). This quarter's projects, permits processed and inspections are down very slightly from last year. Although there are less projects and inspections, there has been an increase of almost \$40,000 in fees this quarter alone. This is the result of the changes in the schedule adopted last year and more commercial projects. To date, they have spent 57% of their budget, which is being spent on a 3rd party inspector because of the commercial properties. However, this money will be coming back to the Town, into the General Fund, not his department's budget.

Goals for his department include being able to accept credit card payments. With the help of Finance Administrator Dawna Duhamel, this project is almost complete. He is working on the logistics of safely holding future meetings and elections. He recommends opening the rest of the departments in the Municipal Center to the public.

Mr. Houghton echoed Mr. Lovejoy's commendation about his work in planning a safe Town Meeting. He agreed with Mr. Wolph that the 3rd party inspector fees should not be reflected in the department's budget.

A member of the public, Richard Swett, joined the meeting via conference call.

The NH SPCA is requesting a waiver of the fee for their building permit fees for their renovation/addition. He reviewed past decisions regarding non-profits and building permit fees.

All agreed that charging to cover the cost of the inspections, clerk's fees, and his time would be appropriate. Mr. Lovejoy made a motion to charge an \$11,000 fee to cover the cost of the 3rd party inspection and should anything above that be required it would be the NHSPCA's financial responsibility. A member of the public, Paul Deschaine, gave additional historic information regarding fee reductions for other non-profits. Mr. Houghton confirmed that additional third party reviews would be paid by the applicant. Mr. Wolph detailed how he arrived at the \$11,000 figure. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

PLANNING

Town Planner Tavis Austin updated the Board on projects he is working on: bonding; finalizing RPC GIS work (updating online mapping system); website for online permitting; conservation easement online data project. He, along with Nate Mears and Mr. Moore are wrapping up the MS4 year two. He will be updating the Planning Board once it is complete. He will also be discussing the 10 year plan for road projects at an upcoming Planning Board meeting. In addition, he has been working with Mr. Mears and Mr. Moore on final versions of the Right of Way permit and updated driveway regulations. When the driveway regulations are final they will be reviewed by the Planning Board.

Mr. Austin reported there is a vacancy for an alternate on the Planning Board and that the Rockingham Planning Commission needs a Planning Board representative.

Next, Mr. Austin reported on current projects, some of which Mr. Wolph described. Chipotle is moving toward construction and hopes to be finished by the start of school. The NHSPCA is pulling together state permits for their project. Stratham Green Solar resubmitted for their solar project which was originally approved, and lapsed. There will be a new two lot subdivision at 7 Boat Club Dr. The Planning Board is considering changing their meeting schedule and introducing workshop sessions. The Rt 33 Legacy Ad Hoc Committee is finalizing their project. Mr. Austin noted that the draft of natural resources inventory is nearing completion.

Ms. Knab requested to have one of the department heads take a more active role in the Conservation Commission. Mr. Moore will review the department head's roles in each of the committees.

They briefly speculated on the potential development of the Great Bay Community College.

Mr. Austin recommended acceptance of the Whittaker Drive extension to Hillcrest. Mr. Lovejoy made a motion to accept the project as complete, authorize full release of related performance surety and accept and execute the Whittaker Drive deed. Ms. Knab seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Next, Mr. Austin talked about 2 Marin Way saying this project, originally approved by the Planning Board, includes storm water and landscape improvements. Mr. Houghton made a motion to approve the performance and escrow agreement for 2 Marin Way. Ms. Knab seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Lastly, Mr. Austin directed attention to the 79E draft covenant to be signed. There was discussion about the number of years for which the tax relief should be granted, the timeline on the renovation and what assessments would be frozen and which could rise. Mr. Houghton suggested consulting with the owners to confirm understanding.

Mr. Austin then moved on to following-up on the Town Meeting votes and discussion related to the Gateway. He discussed five different options for Gateway zoning. Mr. Houghton responded by saying that to give up would be irresponsible. He suggested reaching out to the people who spoke at Town Meeting – both for and against to brainstorm what is possible in hopes of discovering alternatives to creating development more in keeping with the vision. He felt that there were design standards we should retain. Ms. Knab noted that most people who spoke against Gateway development were misinformed as to what the design regulations actually are. Mr. Moore speculated on various approaches to gateway development without infrastructure. There was discussion as to what the area could look like. Mr. Lovejoy understood the sentiment at Town Meeting to be that the residents want the area unchanged from what it is. He expressed an obligation to the people who own property in that area. He emphasized the need for timely zoning changes. Mr. Houghton advocated the Town be guided by the Town's expressed desire to retain the rural New England countryside, which to him meant focusing on design standards and addressing the zoning issues.

The Chair recognized Mr. Deschaine for public comment. He commended the Town on holding a safe Town Meeting. He understands the logistics involved and thought the Town did an outstanding job. He attended tonight's meeting to learn what's to become of the Gateway. He concurred with Mr. Lovejoy that we can't fulfill our promise to businesses in the gateway, therefore we need to change the ordinances. He also agreed that zoning will need to be changed.

Mr. Deschaine continued, saying he has observed a cultural change in Stratham over the past decade. Although everyone has a different perspective on what "rural" means, most recently he's hearing that residents do not want the Gateway area to change at all. He went on to say that Town Meeting was not as it should be. He felt it was disheartening that 99% of the people arrived with their mind made up. Traditional Town Meetings are to convene legislators, listen to your neighbor, talk about what you aspire for your community then make a firm collective commitment to fund or not. It is important for people to listen but no one listened at that meeting. He talked about how social media played a role in the cultural change. He suggested it might be time to consider various other types of government. Mr. Houghton thanked him for his insight on a path forward.

Mr. Houghton directed attention to the next item: the budget schedule. Mr. Moore presented a draft budget schedule and requested guidance from the Board. Some of the budget issues have already been discussed. NH retirement system will be announcing new rates which is an unknown factor at this time. The new police officer position was touched upon. Mr. Moore will be meeting with HealthTrust on health insurance to learn about the Town's options. Mr. Lovejoy agreed to represent the Board at the meeting at Mr. Moore's invitation. Mr. Moore advocated further discussion of budget issues at the August 3rd meeting. They talked about planning for Town Meeting next year, and the possibility of holding it outside. Mr. Houghton questioned if this form of government is serving the Town's needs referring to concerns he has

heard, including during the public comments. The group concurred that this needed to be a broader, more in depth conversation. Mr. Moore offered to set up a meeting with the NHMA attorney to have a discussion to be grounded in the RSAs and options.

Mr. Lovejoy raised the topic of Community Power. He received a call from Mike Welty, Chair of the Energy Commission who explained to him that there was a push toward statewide aggregation. A group in Exeter is advancing the movement. Mr. Lovejoy agreed to receive emails from the Exeter committee to keep informed and distribute them.

Next, Mr. Moore briefly updated the Board on current projects. He will be holding a meeting on Aug. 5th with election officials to prep for the upcoming elections. He has a meeting with the DES representative and should have an update on our PFAS submission at the next meeting. He reported receiving a good response from the solid waste RFP. The PCAC has reached out to him regarding Safe Routes to School and concerns about the children returning to school. It is expected that there will be increased traffic resulting from children not taking busses. He and town staff will be meeting to address the concerns. Mr. Moore is starting CIP meetings this week.

Mr. Moore directed attention to a letter from residents regarding mosquito spraying. The budget is set for this year and we are nearing the end of mosquito spraying. Mr. Moore will speak to the group.

Mr. Houghton made a motion to open the public hearing to accept the trailer from the Ladies Auxiliary. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Mr. Moore added that the value was over \$5,000. Upon hearing no comment from the public, Mr. Houghton made a motion to close the public hearing. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. Mr. Houghton made a motion to accept the Ladies Auxiliary trailer. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mr. Moore said there was a request for Room A in October for a family event for a resident. The group agreed to approve the reservation with conditions.

Ms. Knab reminded the Board that Chief King had requested and budgeted for a part-time officer during his last department report. It was agreed that the Chief should move forward with hiring that officer. Mr. Moore indicated he would bring it back for Board action.

Ms. Knab also stated that Pat Elwell has been volunteering on various town committees for close to 30 years and she has recently decided to cut back. She felt it important that she be recognized for her many contributions to the Town. The Board agreed readily and discussed recognition.

At 9:31 pm Mr. Houghton made a motion to enter into a non-public session. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

At 10:30 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to come out of the non-public session and seal the minutes finding that failure to do so would render the proposed actions ineffective. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

At 10:32 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to adjourn. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard
Recording Secretary