

## **MINUTES OF THE MARCH 19, 2018 BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING**

MEMBER'S PRESENT: Board Members Mike Houghton, Bob O'Sullivan and Town Administrator Paul Deschaine.

At 7:36 pm Mr. Houghton opened the general meeting of the Board of Selectmen.

### **TREASURER**

Town Treasurer Deb Bronson stated the general fund balance is \$7,287,355.60. Mr. Deschaine stated that Ms. Bronson has been examining the Town's bond issues. One is due for refunding. The Selectmen agreed to allow refunding of the bond at a lower rate. Mr. Deschaine said he will gather the information for the required public hearing.

### **ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

Mr. O'Sullivan made a motion to elect Mike Houghton as Chair. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Mr. Houghton made a motion to elect Joe Lovejoy as Vice Chair. Mr. O'Sullivan seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Mr. Houghton made a motion to elect Bob O'Sullivan as Secretary. Mr. O'Sullivan seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

### **MINUTES**

Mr. Houghton made a motion to approve the minutes of 3/12/18 as written as 1 for, 0 against, 1 abstained. Mr. O'Sullivan seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Mark Ralabate, 7 Evergreen Way, asked about the timing of Town Meeting. Mr. Deschaine said elections are set by Statute and the second session is an adjourned session that starts on Election Tuesday. It isn't date specific, but should be within a reasonable time because the budget is set during Town Meeting. It has always been on the Friday after Election Day. Mr. Ralabate then asked if the Election date could've been moved. Mr. Deschaine said that by State law the election date cannot be moved. If circumstances warrant it, the Moderator may change the second session, given the proper notice. Mr. Ralabate questioned the time of the Town Meeting. Mr. Deschaine explained that the time of 7:00 pm is to allow people that work and commute time to attend. Mr. Ralabate asked if there was a form to use to make a Citizens Petition. Mr. Deschaine said there is no specific form. You must state what you would like the Town to do and obtain 25 signatures. Zoning Ordinance petitions must be submitted between mid-Nov and mid-December. All other Petition Articles must be submitted up to five weeks before Town Meeting (first Tues in February). Enough time must be allowed to hold a public hearing.

### **CODE ENFORCEMENT/BUILDING INSPECTION**

Code Enforcement Officer/Building Inspector Mark Morong gave an update on permit applications, noting he was waiting for the bond for site work on Betty Lane. He reported that there were other, ongoing items in town. Verizon cell tower has been permitted but they haven't begun work.

Mr. Houghton asked about Lindt power issues. Lindt changed their metering system in order to save money. However, much of the work was done without permits. Because it is a commercial entity, the utilities are under different regulations than residential, therefore our third party reviewer has become involved. Lindt needs to bring the equipment up to the National Electric Code but they are resisting. Expensive, physical changes would need to be made. The Board wants to see the issue resolved soon. Mr. Deschaine explained that we've always had a positive relationship with Lindt and noted that it is a Switzerland owned company and many of the decisions are made there. Differences in appliances and methods make it a difficult and complex situation.

Mr. Morong said that he received a variance for a property on Squamscott Road. At Mr. O'Sullivan's request, Mr. Deschaine gave an explanation of how variances are typically handled.

Continuing his report, Mr. Morong noted that a couple of enforcement actions regarding unregistered cars have been resolved.

Mr. Houghton asked about the status of the Stratham Plaza chimneys. Mr. Morong explained the issue with the chimneys has grown to include updating the site plan documents. Town Planner Tavis Austin added that they need to go before the Planning Board. Mr. Deschaine summarized the history of the plaza. Mr. O'Sullivan inquired about imposing a fine. Mr. Houghton wanted a timeline for compliance.

Mr. Morong also informed Mr. O'Sullivan regarding his duties as Deputy Health Officer.

Mr. Deschaine reported that he read about a couple on Winnicut Road that were planning to hold events in their barn. He expressed concern regarding zoning ordinance violations and urged Mr. Morong to be proactive. Mr. Morong said they haven't brought forth any requests, nor has he heard anything, therefore he felt uncomfortable approaching them. He is working on a Large Gathering Ordinance with Chief Scippa. The Selectmen thought it best to be proactive.

Mr. Morong reported that the antique store that was in the old town hall would like to move to the old Italy building. However, there are life safety issues with that building that must be addressed before they can move in.

Mr. Morong's request for a Proclamation for Building Safety Month is still under review with the Board.

Mr. O'Sullivan asked for Mr. Morong's general observations regarding Stratham's residential growth. Mr. Morong believes we are growing rapidly, noting the recent increase in subdivisions.

Mr. Deschaine inquired about Home Occupancy Permits. Mr. Morong said that Land Use Assistant Denise Lemire, is working on the project, reviewing the permits and updating the files.

## PLANNING

Town Planner Tavis Austin reported on that the Planning Board meeting they reviewed the 8 Whittaker Drive subdivision (a 6 lot subdivision creating 5 new home lots) and the site plan and Conditional Use Permit for 149 -151 Portsmouth Avenue. This project, which includes adaptive reuse of the old town hall building, is moving forward. He explained the process of granting waivers. This project has 6 waiver requests to town center zoning which will most likely be granted. Over the next several months the Planning Board will focus on site plan and subdivision regulations, which is a where a lot of the waiver requests are coming from.

Mr. Austin reported that much of the Planning Board's work directly relates to the Conservation Commission. At their Feb 28<sup>th</sup> meeting, Mr. Austin updated them on the RFP responses for the Master Plan. The RPC assisted with a draft master plan chapter on climate change and coastal hazards which will be handed to the Master Plan consultant for inclusion.

Public Works Commission hasn't met recently. They are hoping to coordinate with himself, Mr. Deschaine, John Boisvert and two engineers from Tighe Bond to come up with a response to the water/sewer questions that were raised at Town Meeting. Mr. O'Sullivan asked for more background on the water/sewer project. Mr. Austin explained that a water agreement with Exeter was signed just prior to the 2016 Town Meeting. The Article was put before the voters before adequate research could be done. Since then, we've formed the Route 108 Corridor Study Committee to investigate the viability of the project. They've looked at various financing options. There will be a public meeting on April 19<sup>th</sup> to present the TIF District model. Mr. O'Sullivan inquired about installing a natural gas pipeline. Mr. Austin explained from a planning perspective why that was an impossibility. Mr. Deschaine confirmed that past discussions with the PUC have not supported that being an option. Keeping the town rural is what the residents have voted on. Mr. Houghton talked about the Master Plan and having infrastructure to support the inevitable changes in population and diversification of taxpayers. He believes they could do a better job of informing people and helping them see the benefits of some development. Discussion ensued about why the momentum on the Gateway district decreased. The cost, not the infrastructure, was seen to be the cause of the slow down. More discussions with the residents to understand their vision is needed.

Mr. Ralabate asked if they would still move forward even though there might be a paltry attendance at the town meeting when it is voted on. Mr. Houghton said the Selectmen and Boards & Committees have a responsibility for the strategic and financial planning of the Town. They then present their vision to the townspeople who vote on it. Lack of detail on how water/sewer will affect residents was missing in the past. We must find an acceptable means to adjust to inevitable changes in population. If it gets voted down, we'll make adjustments based on the feedback. We would be negligent if we weren't to plan for the future. Discussion continued about getting information on the TIF District to the residents so that they can make a knowledgeable decision at Town Meeting. Mr. Deschaine speculated on issues with the initial attempt to get water passed at Town Meeting.

Technical Review Committee has changed their regular meeting time to first Tuesday of the month with a new submission deadline of two weeks prior. Originally the TRC's main objective was to expedite Gateway matters.

The Master Plan is being reviewed by Town counsel. The Selectmen would like to form a Steering Committee. They discussed the best way to get the word out to the most people in Town for volunteers to be on the committee. They would like to see new people get involved.

PCAC has a grant that is in process of being authorized at state level. The 3 responses to the RFQ will be reviewed next week.

Mr. Austin reviewed the criteria for the bond on Betty Lane. The Selectmen accepted the bond for Betty Lane as presented and signed the performance agreement as indicated. The agreement will be held until we have an active copy of the letter of credit.

Mr. Houghton asked about Mr. Austin's involvement in the site plan for the skate park and the need to bring in a third party engineer. He said he would work with Parks & Recreation Director Seth Hickey to put together an RFQ. It will be built on town own land; a site plan is not necessary for building on your own land. Mr. Deschaine said site plan elements need to be addressed (drainage, parking, etc.).

## HIGHWAY

Public Works Director Colin Lavery presented the top two financing options for the single axel truck that was planned for in the Operating Budget lease to purchase and reviewed the details. Mr. O'Sullivan made a motion to proceed with the \$200,000 seven year lease purchase at approximately 3.99%. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Mr. Lavery promised to review the truck specifications along with the snow and ice proposal again. He will confer with other towns regarding their opinion of their trucks and two way radio proposals. The Board said that if his findings validate what he had already researched, he should just move forward with the purchase. If not, bring his findings back to them. Mr. Houghton asked about the purchase. He plans to review the details over the next two weeks. The timeline was discussed.

Mr. Lavery reported the Highway crews have been handling the recent Nor'easters. They will clean up the tree and other debris as soon as they can. Truck 7 failed during the last storm. He detailed a couple of minor problems with two of the other trucks. Emergency Management Director David Barr contacted him regarding total costs associated with the March 13<sup>th</sup> storm. The State of NH is looking to quantify March 13<sup>th</sup> as a state of emergency for FEMA reimbursement. Total expenditures throughout the state might constitute that as federal reimbursement. The Town's costs were minimal.

Municipal restroom renovations should be done by next Wednesday. They are finishing up the details.

The Highway Department is hosting UNH at the Municipal Center for a public works safety training course. We get three free slots for hosting. We are also hosting a course in June at the park and one in the fall.

## MEETINGS

Mr. Houghton reviewed the meetings for the coming week. Notably, the Smyk Committee will be meeting with the Attorney General's office on Thursday. PCAC put out a survey and is working on the grant.

## RESERVATIONS

Mr. Houghton made a motion to approve the request by the Boy Scouts Pack 185 for an overnight at Stratham Hill Park on May 11<sup>th</sup> and waive the fee. Mr. O'Sullivan seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

## ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Deschaine gave a brief summary of the history of the tax deeded property on Doe Run Lane.

Moody's Investors draft report on our financial position which affirms our bond rating. Town Treasurer Deb Bronson pointed out that the debt to revenue ratios over 4-5 years were correct the first two years then dropped. She questioned why. Mr. Deschaine contacted Moody's who will investigate.

Mr. Deschaine said he will be taking vacation the first week in April. The Selectmen decided not to meet on Monday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Committee assignments: Mr. O'Sullivan is to replace Mr. Lovejoy on the Conservation Commission.

Regarding capital planning, Mr. O'Sullivan said he would like to bring together the planned spending of the Cooperative and Stratham Boards on big items added to our CIP to be able to collectively see what our planned spending is. He feels there's been a disconnect and where he is on the school board, he can bring it together.

The Selectmen signed the EMS 232 which is a document that states items appropriated and approved at Town Meeting.

Mr. Houghton raised the issue of hiring someone for a newly created HR position. Mr. Deschaine responded that he was focusing on hiring an IT person first. Mr. Houghton urged him to move forward quickly. Staffing those two positions should address many of the concerns of the employees. He would like to empower the Department Heads and have the Selectmen focus more on strategic planning. Mr. Houghton sees the Route 108 Committee as key to issues that should be focused on. Mr. O'Sullivan suggested talking to individual residents, listening to what their opinion is. They talked about various funding structures and legal limitations.

At 10:06 pm Mr. O'Sullivan made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard  
Recording Secretary