

MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 28, 2019 SELECT BOARD MEETING

MEMBER'S PRESENT: Board Members Allison Knab, Mike Houghton, Joe Lovejoy and Town Administrator David Moore

At 7:00 pm Mr. Houghton opened the general meeting of the Select Board.

MINUTES

Mr. Lovejoy made a motion to accept the minutes of 1/7/19 and 1/14/19 as amended. Ms. Knab seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

TREASURER

Town Treasurer Deb Bronson reported that the General Fund balance is \$10,518,347.23.

PARKS & RECREATION

Keri Vivathana, speaking on behalf of the Skate Park Committee, gave an update on the process thus far in determining a location for the park. She detailed the pros and cons of each possible site. They envision a beautiful park to be used by many people, not just skate boarders. After getting community input and doing much research, they are recommending Stevens Park. They made this determination in conjunction with Pillar Designs, the company they have contracted with to design and build the park. In response to Ms. Knab's question as to how much has been spent, Ms. Vivathana said \$11,000.

Resident and former Public Works Director Colin Laverty praised the Skate Park Committee's thorough efforts researching sites. However, he had a number of concerns with building at the Steven's Park location such as possible interference with Highway Dept. activities. He suggested a fence be included as part of the project. He continued, noting the area is currently used for storage and retention and could be used for the future expansion of the DPW. He spoke about the drainage issue and wanted to be sure the site would be subject to a thorough review by the Planning Board. He believes there is still a lot of research to be done and cautioned the Board against moving too quickly.

Resident Marty Wool spoke in support of the Steven's Park location. He is concerned about the safety of the children.

Resident and engineer with Waterstone Engineering, Robert Roseen spoke in support of the park in general and addressed some of the drainage issue concerns at Steven's Park. He favored the Steven's Park location.

Resident and Park Association member Dan Crow talked about locations at Stratham Hill Park and suggested they could perhaps use the stage. He believes they Skate Park Committee could do a lot more fundraising. He cautioned the Board about acting too fast.

Resident and Skate Park member Mike Tallone reminded everyone that their sole purpose coming before the Board this evening was to get their approval for their recommended location. Resident Billy Allen asked if the Board supported the Steven's Park location. Ms. Knab is in support of the location but felt strongly that Mr. Laverty's concerns be addressed before moving forward. Ms. Vivathana said that confirming a location would be a first step; once that is established, they can discuss the concerns. Mr. Houghton supports the Steven's Park location but feels they have a lot of work ahead of them, especially if they want to bring it to Town Meeting only 8 weeks away. Ms. Knab and Mr. Lovejoy agreed. Mr. Lovejoy made a motion that the Skate Park Committee confine their efforts to the Steven's Park location and plan on going through due diligence and continuing to get the necessary approvals. Ms. Knab

seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Ms. Vivathana thanked the Board and requested to withdraw \$1,000 from the \$35,000 for a site survey at the selected location. Mr. Houghton approved, saying that the request is in line with what the money was allocated for.

OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Houghton opened the Public Hearing for the Bartlett-Cushman House. This is the second of two Public Hearings related to the proposed sale of the Bartlett-Cushman house and the granting of a preservation easement to the NH Preservation Alliance consisting of land equal to 1.1 acres and the building known as Bartlett-Cushman House, 82 Portsmouth Avenue and in perpetuity placing a preservation easement on the historical elements associated with the property. The sale of the property itself is the house, 1.1 acres of land which is the westerly portion of the lot parallel to Portsmouth Avenue. Resident Greg Pruitt inquired about the details of the preservation easement and the future use of the land. Mr. Houghton answered his questions. Heritage Commission member Becky Mitchell confirmed that any changes to the land or structure would be subject to the NH Preservation Alliance and the Secretary of the Interior Standards.

Mr. Pruitt said that he was originally told the NH Preservation Alliance would hold the easement to the old Town Hall but subsequently learned that the Town holds the easement. He expressed dismay at the changes occurring in Town Center. He feels that the preservation easement on his property is being held to a different standard than the one on the old Town Hall. Mr. Houghton noted that the issues he raised are separate and distinct from the Public Hearing on the Bartlett-Cushman House. He invited Mr. Pruitt to set up a meeting with Mr. Moore to discuss his concerns regarding Town Center. Mr. Pruitt continued to express concern regarding the easement on the house. Ms. Mitchell explained the easement on the Bartlett-Cushman House used the Lane property as a model and the standards would be the same. Hearing no further questions, Mr. Houghton made a motion to close the Public Hearing regarding the preservation easement and sale of the Bartlett-Cushman House. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

ASSESSING

Town Assessor Andrea Lewy announced a settlement agreement with the Board of Tax and Land Appeals. She explained how the final number was reached and asked the Board to approve the settlement agreement. Ms. Knab made a motion to approve the settlement agreement to refund the \$2,401.49. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Next Ms. Lewy recommended two veterans be approved to receive the veteran's credit. Mr. Houghton made a motion to approve the Veteran's Tax Credit for Louis Albert and Ana Alenjandro. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Ms. Lewy presented two Land Use Change Tax bills for Breslin Farm and gave a brief explanation. Ms. Knab made a motion to approve the Land Use Change Tax bill for the two Breslin Farm properties. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Ms. Lewy presented for the Board's consideration a Warrant article for modifying the Elderly Exemption limits. She explained the re-valuation is this year which will cause assessments and therefore taxes to increase. She presented a report from DRA which showed all the Towns in Rockingham County and explained where Stratham is for each age group and income level compared to other towns. She proposes increasing the level off their assessment and increasing the asset levels to allow for the elderly to save money. As it is currently, they can only save up to a certain amount or they will lose their exemption status. Ms. Lewy described the monetary impact to the Town. She reviewed Stratham's levels compared to surrounding towns. They discussed percentages. Mr. Houghton said he supports modifying the Elderly Exemption. Mr. Moore detailed the steps that would be necessary to make this a Warrant Article.

Although Ms. Knab would like to see more detailed numbers, she and Mr. Lovejoy also both support the modification.

Lastly, Ms. Lewy announced that she will be holding an information night for the public regarding the 2019 Statistical Update. It will be held Tuesday, February 19th at 6:00 pm in Room A at the Municipal Center. She described how they gather the data. Ultimately, they will come up with one square foot cost for all residential properties. She continued to describe the steps they will take during the revaluation process. *Preliminary* notices will be sent so that residents will have a chance to ask questions. Ms. Lewy talked about the issue of needing to have the MS1 done by Sept. 1 but never receiving the necessary Dept. of Revenue's utility values by that date. She continued to outline the steps necessary to complete the process. They will do abatements until March 1st. Ms. Lewy described what methods she will use to inform the public. She went on to explain that all towns' re-vals and assessment review times are staggered. By doing the reval in-house, she is saving the town a great deal of money.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Moore presented an early draft of the Warrant Public Notice saying he would distribute it by Friday. He reviewed # 4, enabling the Trustees of the Trust Funds to use professional financial services, #5 recycling and curbside collection program, #7 Elderly Exemption. In addition to the usual items, there is the request to change the polling hours and the Fire Dept. is making a funding request. The Skate Park Committee is moving forward with their own petition. February 11th is the Public Hearing with a backup date of February 18th. The reason for the dates are outlined by state law. The Library will host Voter Information Night on Tuesday, March 5th.

In other business, Mr. Moore requested authority be granted to him to enter into a MOA for the shared drive off of Bunker Hill Ave. Mr. Houghton made a motion to give the Town Administrator authority to execute an MOA for the shared drive off Bunker Hill Ave and incorporate all of the appropriate tracking and recording mechanisms to ensure shared expense. Ms. Knab seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mr. Moore presented said the REDC is requesting to move forward with the CDBG Grant. We are assisting the REDC to bring funds to this region to create jobs. We, along with a contract grant administrator trained in CDBG will be responsible for the majority of the grant making tasks. We will be drawing funds from the state CDFA and making payment at the REDC's direction to the recipients. He anticipates approximately ten \$50,000 loans over the next two years. There will be no expense to the town.

Next, Mr. Moore updated the Select Board on the budget process. He suggested going into a non-public to discuss the wage and salary issues.

Mr. Moore brought up another major warrant article that he has been working on - the recycling curbside automation program. He's discussed with Mr. Wool the concerns the condos have and believes they have come to a resolution. He's working on the details of the program and will be able to address questions by Town Meeting. Mr. Wool said that he is on the Board of Directors at Glen Garry Condos. Their concerns are where to store the bins and how snow removal/bin pick up will be handled. He voiced support for demolition of the Smyk house asked what plans were for use of the property. Mr. Houghton said a committee will be formed after Town Meeting to study the property and make a recommendation for its best use. Mr. Wool said the Friends of Stratham Hill Park are discussing donating a flag in honor of Terry Barnes to the Smyk Property. The Board agreed that that would be a good way to honor him.

RESERVATIONS

Mr. Moore said that he approved all the reservation requests that met our policy. The following are making reservation requests and asking that the fee be waived because they are non-profits: Friends of the Library for their book sale, the Acorn School for an Earth Day event and One Sky for a picnic. Mr. Lovejoy made a motion to approve the requests and waive the fee. Ms. Knab seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Next, Mr. Moore said that June Sawyer was requesting use of the Morgera Room for a bridal shower and asking that alcohol be allowed. Mr. Lovejoy made a motion to grant permission for alcohol to be served at the bridal shower. Mr. Lovejoy made another motion to allow alcohol to be served at Mr. Deschaine's party on January 31st. Ms. Knab seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Mr. Moore noted it will be a licensed caterer at that event.

At 9:04 pm Ms. Knab made a motion to go into a non-public to discuss employee wages. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion which passed unanimously. At 9:26 pm Ms. Knab made a motion to come out of the nonpublic session and seal the minutes. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

At 9:30 pm Mr. Lovejoy made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Knab seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard,
Recording Secretary