

MARCH 14, 2023 ELECTION AND TOWN MEETING MINUTES

All Ballot Clerks and Election Workers were sworn in at 6:45 am and 12:45 pm accordingly. Present were Moderator David Emanuel, Assistant Moderator Beth Dupell, Town Clerk/Tax Collector Deborah Bakie, Deputy Town Clerk/Deputy Tax Collector Jim Joseph, Assistant to the Town Clerk Lisa Dudek and Select Board Members Joe Lovejoy (Pro Tem), Allison Knab and Joe Anderson. Supervisors of the Checklist present were Connie Aubin-Adams, Cathy Warner, and Melanie McGrail. Ballot Clerks for the day were: Susan Canada, Nancy Hunter, Michael Hunter, Christina Tischler, Gale Lyon, Johanna Greenlaw, Liz Chisholm, Patricia Hughes, Karen Cushing, Joan Gough, June Sawyer, Karen Richard and Lia Joseph, Tara Madden, Susan Connors and Kendall Marks were also present assisting with voter assistance when arriving at the Polls. A winter weather warning welcomed in the Town Election which caused for a low attended election with 535 official Election Day ballots cast, with 137 of those being absentee ballots. There were 4 new voters registered on Election Day, making the total number of voters on the Checklist 6,132. This made it an 8% turnout for this election.

Exeter Region Cooperative School District Ballot results for *Stratham only* are as follows: **(*Denotes the Winner)**

Cooperative School Board, for East Kington for three years: *Melissa Lyons 299. Cooperative School Board, for Exeter for three years: *Dawn Bullens 194; Aunksika Ann Slayton 184. Cooperative School Board, for Stratham for three years: *Erin Garcia de Paredes 331. Exeter Cooperative School District Moderator for one year: *Katherine B. Miller 308. Cooperative School District Budget Committee, for Brentwood for three years: *Melissa Litchfield 201; *Erin Steckler 198. Cooperative School District Budget Committee, for Exeter for three years: *Roy ME. Morrisette 312. Cooperative School District Budget Committee, for Kensington for three years: *Sarah Fetras (write-in).

Warrant Article for Exeter Co-operative School District (Stratham Only results):

Article 1: ERCSD Operating Budget
Yes: 319 No: 127

Article 2: ERSCD Capital Reserve Fund
Yes: 352 No: 95

Article 3: CRF For Synthetic Turf Replacement
Yes: 303 No: 114

Stratham Memorial School District Ballot results as follows: **(*Denotes the Winner)**

School Board Member for three years, vote for two: *Erik Herring 331; Elizabeth Ellis Ohr 208; *Sophie Saltonstall 248. School District Clerk for one year, vote for one: Sophie Saltonstall 4; *Mikki Deschaine 3 (write-in); Saralyn Doran 2; James Scamman 2. School District Treasurer: write-in, *James Scamman 105 (write-in).

Annual Town of Stratham Ballot results as follows: **(*Denotes the Winner)**

Select Board for three years, vote for one: Denise Lemire 140; *Michael Houghton 362. Town Clerk for three year, vote for one: *Deborah Bakie 456. Cemetery Trustee for three years, vote for one: *Melanie McGrail 423. Trustee of the Trust Funds for three years: *Mikki Deschaine 399. Library Trustee for three years, vote for one: *Veronique F. Ludington 418.

Article 2: Are you in favor of the following amendment to the Town of Stratham Zoning Ordinance as proposed by the Planning Board?

To amend the Zoning Ordinance, Section 3.8.8 *Gateway Commercial Business District*, Table 2 to increase the minimum front setback for developments in the Gateway Commercial Business District and to clarify how building height is measured in the District. The purpose of this amendment is to require greater front setbacks along Portsmouth Avenue to ensure the provision of landscaping and pedestrian facilities and to clarify that building height is measured to the highest point of the roofline.

The Planning Board recommends this article by unanimous vote.

Yes: 434 No: 56

Article 3: Are you in favor of the following amendment to the Town of Stratham Zoning Ordinance as proposed by the Planning Board?

To amend the Zoning Ordinance, Section 4.2 *Table of Dimensional Requirements* to reduce the front setback for properties in the Professional/Residential District that abut residential uses from 100-feet to 20-feet. The purpose of this amendment is to make the front setback more consistent with other zones in Stratham and to allow for the redevelopment of uses on small properties where the existing setback requirement makes redevelopment unfeasible.

The Planning Board recommends this article by unanimous vote.

Yes: 338 No: 149

Article 4: Are you in favor of the following amendment to the Town of Stratham Zoning Ordinance as proposed by the Planning Board?

To amend the Zoning Ordinance, Section 3.8.8 *Gateway Commercial Business District*, Table 4 to establish minimum standards for sidewalks, driveways, and electric vehicle charging stations in the Gateway Commercial Business District. The purpose of this amendment is to add minimum standards for driveways and sidewalks to reduce conflict points between pedestrians and motorists and to add provisions for electric vehicle charging facilities.

The Planning Board recommends this article by unanimous vote.

Yes: 385 No: 103

Article 5: Are you in favor of the following amendment to the Town of Stratham Zoning Ordinance as proposed by the Planning Board?

To amend the Zoning Ordinance, Section 3.8.6 *Gateway Commercial Business District Conditional Use Permit* and Section 3.8.8.a *Gateway Commercial Business District Permitted Uses by Zone*. This is a housekeeping amendment to correct clerical errors and ensure consistency of terms and uses between this Section and Table 3.6, Table of Uses.

The Planning Board recommends this article by unanimous vote.

Yes: 438 No: 45

Article 6: Are you in favor of the following amendment to the Town of Stratham Zoning Ordinance as proposed by the Planning Board?

To amend the Zoning Ordinance, Section III, to establish a new zoning district, the *Route 33 Legacy Highway Heritage District*, codified as Section 3.10, for parcels with frontages along the Route 33 corridor from the Town Center District to the Greenland town line. The intent of the District is to encourage historic preservation and adaptive re-use of structures through both greater regulation of demolitions and major building alterations as well as through greater flexibility in land uses.

The Planning Board recommends this article by unanimous vote.

Yes: 380 No: 87

Article 7: Are you in favor of the following amendment to the Town of Stratham Zoning Ordinance as proposed by the Planning Board?

To amend the Zoning Ordinance, Section III, by deleting Table 3.6 *Table of Uses* and *Footnotes to Table 3.6* in its entirety and to replace with a revised Section 3.6 *Table of Uses* and *Footnotes to Table 3.6* in order to better clarify permitted and prohibited land uses by zoning district. This amendment would also permit Personal Services in the Professional/Residential District and, if passed, would account for land uses in the Route 33 Legacy Highway Heritage District.

The Planning Board recommends this article by unanimous vote.

Yes: 376 No: 92

Article 8: Are you in favor of the following amendment to the Town of Stratham Zoning Ordinance as proposed by the Planning Board?

To amend the Zoning Ordinance by deleting Section VII *Signs* in its entirety and replacing with a revised Section VII *Signs* in order to incorporate legal amendments to the Town's Sign Ordinance necessitated by decisions of the United States Supreme Court which impact how municipalities may regulate sign content.

The Planning Board recommends this article by unanimous vote.

Yes: 389 No: 74

Article 9: Are you in favor of the following amendment to the Town of Stratham Zoning Ordinance as proposed by the Planning Board?

To amend the Zoning Ordinance, Section VII *Signs* in order to both incorporate legal amendments to the Ordinance and to amend regulations on signage, limiting the size, height, and illumination of signage in order to control visual clutter along roadways, reduce distractions caused by signage to motorists, and to improve the aesthetics of commercial corridors in Stratham.

The Planning Board recommends this article by unanimous vote.

Yes: 407 No: 66

Article 10: Are you in favor of the following amendment to the Town of Stratham Building Ordinance as proposed by the Planning Board?

To amend the Zoning Ordinance, Section V, Sub-section 5.13 *Solar Energy Systems* to clarify the requirements associated with the removal of medium- and large-scale ground-mounted solar energy systems after they are de-activated. This amendment would require landowners with solar energy systems to provide a plan for restoring a site to pre-development conditions if a solar facility is abandoned and to record a declaration committing to removing the array while eliminating a requirement to provide a financial security for the life of the solar project.

The Planning Board recommends this article by unanimous vote.

Yes: 427 No: 49

The remaining Town of Stratham articles will be voted on March 18, 2023 at the Stratham Memorial School at 9:00 am.

Town Moderator David Emanuel declared the meeting come to order at 9:07. Boy Scouts Pack and Troop 185 presented colors with Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Emanuel introduced the panel: Dave Emanuel; Town Moderator, David Moore; Town Administrator, Michael Houghton; Select Board Chair, Allison Knab; Select Board Vice Chair and Joe Anderson; Select Board. Mr. Emanuel also invited other officials and department heads to introduce themselves, they included Assistant Moderator, Beth Dupell; Cordell Johnston, Town Counsel; Nate Mears, Director of Public Works; Mark Connors, Town Planner; Kerry Cronin; Library Director, Christiane McAllister; Finance Administrator, Tony King; Chief of Police, Deborah Bakie; Town Clerk and Jim Joseph; Deputy Town Clerk and Supervisor of the Checklist Melanie McGrail, Connie Aubin-Adams and Cathy Warner. Mr. Emanuel asked for a moment of silence in respect for those serving in the Armed Forces, and for those lives lost in the last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Mr. Emanuel then invited Jeff Denton and Jerri Denton to read the Town Report dedication. This year the report was dedicated to June Scamman Sawyer. Bruce Kerr, President of the Stratham Historical Society then read the Memorial Page dedicated to Barbara Mann and Lucy Cushman read the Memorial Page dedicated to Kenneth Lanzillo. Mr. Emanuel read the results from the Town Election held on Tuesday, March 14, 2023 and reviewed the Rules of Procedure for Town Meeting.

ARTICLE 11: 2023 Operating Budget

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Eight million two hundred eleven thousand one hundred eighty eight dollars (\$8,211,188) for general municipal operations. This article does not include appropriations contained in special or individual articles addressed separately. Select Board Chair moved to accept the article as read, Select Board Member Knab seconded it. Select Board Chair Houghton, spoke to the Article. Seeing there were no other questions or comments from the floor, Moderator Emanuel read the Article, the vote was taken in the affirmative, and Article 11 passed.

Jeremy Riecks of 18 Doe Run motioned to restrict reconsideration of Article 11, seconded by Debra Altschiller of 15 Apple Way. Motion to restrict reconsideration voted on and passed.

ARTICLE 12: Capital Improvements Program

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Six hundred sixty three thousand dollars (\$663,000) to implement the Capital Improvements Program for 2023 as presented in the Town Report and recommended by the Planning Board. This is a special warrant article which will be non-lapsing until the specific items are completed or obtained but shall in no case be later than December 31, 2028 per NH RSA 32:7 (VI). Select Board Member moved to accept the article as read, Select Board Chair Houghton seconded it. Select Board Member Allison Knab spoke to the Article. Jane McGinn of 5 Haywick Drive asked why the voting booths were being replaced. Deb Bakie Town Clerk explained that the current election booths are no longer supporting the shelves and are no longer serviceable and are needing to be replaced prior to the (4) 2024 elections which include the Presidential Election. Seeing there were no other questions or comments from the floor, Moderator Emanuel read the Article, the vote was taken in the affirmative, and Article 12 passed. Jeremy Riecks motioned to restrict reconsideration of Article 12, seconded by Debra Altschiller. Motion to restrict reconsideration voted on and passed.

ARTICLE 13: Appropriate Funds to Capital Reserve Funds

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Two hundred and eighty five thousand dollars (\$285,000) to be added to the following capital reserve funds previously established with One hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000) to come from the unassigned fund balance and One hundred and thirty five thousand dollars (\$135,000) to be raised through general taxation. Select Board Member Allison Knab moved to accept the article as read, Select Board Member Joe Anderson seconded it. Select Board Member Allison Knab spoke to the Article.

Fire Department Capital Reserve Fund	\$110,000
Heritage Preservation Capital Reserve Fund	\$50,000
Highway Vehicle/Equipment Capital Reserve Fund	\$125,000
Total	\$285,000

Pat Abrami of 9 Tall Pines Drive asked about the unassigned fund balance. Town Administrator David Moore explained that the capital projects are for a one time capital investments. Mr. Abrami went on to ask for further explanation of the unassigned fund balance being the surplus fund from prior years which Mr. Moore confirmed. Select Board Member Knab asked for Mr. Moore to explain the acronyms used due to prior year's confusion. Mr., Moore then stated that the DRA in the Department of Revenue Administration and the GFOA is the Government Finance Officers Association. Seeing there were no other questions or comments from the floor, Moderator Emanuel read the Article, the vote was taken in the affirmative, and Article 13 passed. Jeremy Riecks motioned to restrict reconsideration of Article 13, seconded by Debra Altschiller. Motion to restrict reconsideration voted on and passed.

ARTICLE 14: First Responder Training & ALS Service Contract

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000) for the following purposes:

2023 EMS/EMT/First Responder Training	\$10,000
2023 ALS Services Contract	\$10,000

and to further authorize the withdrawal of Twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000) from the Stratham Fire Department EMS Special Revenue Fund created for these purposes during the March 17, 2000 Annual Town Meeting and as amended during the March 11, 2005 Town Meeting. No additional funds from general taxation are to be used. Select Board Member Anderson moved to accept the article as read. Select Board Chair seconded it. Select Board Member Anderson spoke to the Article. Seeing there were no other questions or comments from the floor, Moderator Emanuel read the Article, the vote was taken in the affirmative, and Article 14 passed. Jeremy Riecks motioned to restrict reconsideration of Article 14, seconded by Zoe Manos of 71 Peninsula Drive. Motion to restrict reconsideration voted on and passed.

ARTICLE 15: Fire Engine #1 Replacement

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum not to exceed Nine hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$950,000) for the replacement of Fire Engine #1 and to further authorize the withdrawal of Two hundred and fifty thousand (\$250,000) from the Stratham Fire Department EMS Special Revenue Fund, created March 17, 2000 and amended March 11, 2005 to include the purpose of purchasing Fire Department vehicles and equipment. The balance will be raised from the SVFD Fair Trust Fund (\$80,000) and the remaining balance not to exceed (\$620,000) from the Fire Department Capital Reserve Fund. This special warrant article will be non-lapsing per RSA 32:7, VI and will not lapse until the purchase has been completed, or December 31 2028, whichever is sooner. No additional funds from general taxation are to be used. Select board member moved to accept the article as read, Select Board Member Knab seconded it. Select Board Member Joe Anderson spoke to the Article. Seeing there were no other questions or comments from the floor, Moderator Emanuel read the Article, the vote was taken in the affirmative, and Article 15 passed. Jeremy Riecks motioned to restrict reconsideration of Article 15, seconded by Debra Altschiller. Motion to restrict reconsideration voted on and passed.

ARTICLE 16: Optional Veterans' Tax Credit (72:28, II)

To see if the Town will readopt the optional Veterans' Tax Credit in accordance with RSA 72:28, II for an annual tax credit on residential property of \$600. Select Board Member Knab moved to accept the article as read. Select Board Chair Houghton seconded it. Select Board Member Allison Knab spoke to the Article. Frank De Peters of 5 Haywick Drive asked why is it only \$600 for Veterans Credit and wanted to know how it is determined. Select Board Member Allison Knab stated that the State RSA allows up to \$750. Mr. De Peters asked how to go about the increase to \$750? Select Board Member Knab went on to say an increase would need to be officially requested and it's definitely an option for the next year. Seeing there were no other

questions or comments from the floor, Moderator Emanuel read the question, the vote was taken in the affirmative, and Article 12 passed. Jeremy Riecks motioned to restrict reconsideration of Article 16, seconded by Debra Altschiller. Motion to restrict reconsideration voted on and passed.

ARTICLE 17: All Veterans' Tax Credit (72:28-b)

To see if the Town will readopt the All Veterans' Tax Credit in accordance with RSA 72:28-b, for an annual tax credit on residential property which shall be equal to the same amount as the standard or optional veterans' tax credit voted by the Town under RSA 72:28. Select Board Member Knab moved to accept the article as read. Select Board Chair Houghton seconded it. Select Board Member Knab spoke to the Article. Seeing there were no other questions or comments from the floor, Moderator Emanuel read the Article, the vote was taken in the affirmative, and Article 17 passed. Jeremy Riecks motioned to restrict reconsideration of Article 17, seconded by Debra Altschiller. Motion to restrict reconsideration voted on and passed.

ARTICLE 18: Motor Vehicle Registration Fee and Capital Reserve

To see if the Town will vote to collect an additional motor vehicle registration fee of \$5.00 per vehicle for the purpose of supporting a Municipal Transportation Improvement Fund as set forth in RSA 261:153 VI, and further, to vote to establish said fund as a capital reserve fund governed by RSA 35 and to appoint the Select Board as agents to expend from this capital reserve fund for the purposes for which it was established. Proceeds from the Municipal Transportation Improvement Fund are to be used to support eligible local transportation projects as permitted under RSA 261:153 such as public transportation, roadway improvements, signal upgrades, and development of new bicycle and pedestrian paths. The additional fee shall be collected from all vehicles, both passenger and commercial, with the exception of all-terrain vehicles as defined in RSA 215-A:1, I-b and antique motor vehicles or motorcycles as defined in RSA 259:4. Select Board Chair Houghton moved to accept the article as read, Select Board Member Knab seconded it. Select Board Chair Mr. Houghton spoke to the Article. Nancy Hunter of 2 Brown Ave asked why this isn't going through the DPW's budget and increasing their budget. The Town Administrator Mr. Moore replied with the state law it requires this mode of adoption. Mr. Moore went on to further explain that the funds are held in a capital reserve fund which saves and accumulates year after year. Pat Abrami of 9 Tall Pines drive asked for confirmation of 10,000 registered vehicle in the town which Mr. Moore confirmed. Mr. Abrami went on to say that this was an aggressive tax, stating that there are several different means already for improvement. Mr. Abrami further asked if Stratham allocates funds to COAST transportation which Mr. Moore stated Stratham does not. Mr. Abrami further asked if it has to go back to vote for expending. Mr. Moore stated that the funds are an asset to the town and are a capital reserve fund not a special revenue fund. Mr. Abrami went on to state that he would rather see it come out of general fund money or CIP rather than additional fees on Motor Vehicle registrations. Lucy Cushman of 159 Winnicutt Road sees it as a user fee for vehicle use and that she rather see it here than an increase on property taxes. She further went on to say that any way we can support roadway infrastructure is an asset. Nancy Hunter asked if the residents had a say for the use of the money. The Town moderator explained that this is the way the Town has decided to use the money. Select Board Member Knab explained that these fees would also be used for senior transportation which is highly supported by the local seniors. Philip Caparso of 40 River Road stated that he was concerned about local control over spending. Jane McGinn asked if the money was being planned to use this year for something specific. Select Board Chair Houghton stated nothing was planned as of yet. She further went on to state if it was voted down would it have an adverse effect. Deborah Bakie 28 Pheasant Run stated concerns about pedestrian traffic on Portsmouth Ave and was hopeful that these fees would be used for crosswalks and other means of pedestrian safety. James Cushman asked if trailers would be exempt from the \$5.00 fee, Mr. Moore stated that trailers are exempt. Philip Carparso asked what the process is to amend a Town Warrant Article. The moderator stated that he would be consulting with the Towns attorney. Lester Cuff stated that he supports the \$5.00 fee. Debra Altschiller spoke with regards to State grants requiring towns to "pony up" funds, and further went on to explain the verbiage of the Article and the many ways the funds could be used for. Maria Emanuel of 18R Scamman Rd stated her support and that bringing it back to town meeting would restrict the availability. Lucy Cushman asked if there would be a public meeting when deciding the expenditures of the collected fees. Mr. Moore stated that the meetings would be open to the public and posted per usual. Seeing there were no other questions or comments from the floor,

Moderator Emanuel moved Article 18 to a required paper vote.

YES- 67 NO- 23

Moderator Emanuel read the results of the paper vote count, and Article 18 passed. Jeremy Riecks motioned to restrict reconsideration of Article 18, seconded by Debra Altschiller. Motion to restrict reconsideration voted on and passed.

ARTICLE 19: Establishment of Fees

To see if the Town will vote to adopt RSA 41:9-a, to allow the Select Board to establish or amend fees following a public hearing process. Fees authorized under the section include fees related to regulatory programs adopted by the Town and fees for the use of revenue producing facilities. Select Board Member Joe Anderson moved to accept the article as read, Select Board Member Knab seconded it. Select Board Member Joe Anderson spoke to the Article.

Seeing there were no other questions or comments from the floor, Moderator Emanuel read the Article, the vote was taken in the affirmative, and Article 19 passed. Jeremy Riecks motioned to restrict reconsideration of Article 19, seconded by Debra Altschiller. Motion to restrict reconsideration voted on and passed.

ARTICLE 20: Other Business

Select Chair Houghton thanked all whom were in attendance and the importance at Town Meeting. Mr. Houghton further went on to thank Karen Richards, the Select Board's administrative assistant for all that she continues to do on a daily basis. Mr. Houghton also thanked Deb Bakie, the Town Clerk and her staff for the guidance in the election process, he also thanked the many election workers for their hard work and dedication. Select Chair Houghton also asked that those newly elected officials remain behind for oath administration.

Moderator Emanuel asked if there was any further business to discuss. Moderator Emanuel reminded everyone of the pancake breakfast being held the next morning to support the 9/11 Eagle Scout project. Seeing no other business before the floor, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting. Moderator Emanuel adjourned the meeting at 10:42 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Deborah L. Bakie
Stratham Town Clerk