

**Kingston, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting of September 18, 2023
FINAL MINUTES**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM by the Chairman.

PRESENT: Chair Chris Bashaw; Vice Chair Charles Hart; Glenn Coppelman, Laurie Szwed, Ellie Alessio, Select Board Members

APPOINTMENTS:

Stacy Dion, Solid Waste & Recycling Committee: Recycling Flyer

The Board reviewed this flyer, which the SWRC would like to send as an insert in the Fall tax bills. Ms. Dion explained that it gives the latest information on recycling collection, including that a collection point is now open at the State shed for glass and cardboard. Asked about how the opening day of the collection point went, Ms. Dion said there were 15 cars, which wasn't bad for a "soft opening", and that they will be doing this every other Saturday on recycling collection weeks.

Ms. Dion estimated the cost to print the flyers would be around \$1200. Selectman Coppelman said that before approving the flyer for the tax bill mailing, the Board should have a definite cost and know where the money will be coming from. This matter will be revisited at the next meeting.

Historical Museum - Discussion of Maintenance Costs

Selectman Coppelman said that three groups had been invited to join this discussion, Heritage Commission, Historic District Commission, and the Historical Museum Committee. Representatives of all were present. Chairman Bashaw said that prior to budget season, the Board wants to look into what it is costing the Town to maintain the Museum (Nichols) building, and what benefit the Town is getting from the Museum. He said he had asked the Finance Director and DPW Director to prepare a spreadsheet of maintenance and other costs to the Town.

Jef Flanders-McDougall, Kathy Clark Chase and Ruth Albert of the Museum Committee came forward to respond to questions. They clarified that the museum is only open on Wednesdays from 9 am to noon, but that they also take visitors by appointment. Asked if they track attendance, they cited 100 visitors at last year's Kingston Days, and with being only open one day this year, and not being advertised, they had 35. Ms. Flanders-McDougall said that every Wednesday a team of at least 6 volunteers gather, and on average they will have 6 visitors plus answer phone calls. She said the people who come are different each time; some are former residents, and people come from far away just to see the building, which is on the National Historic Register.

Chairman Bashaw said he agrees that the building is charming and unique, but the problem is that when the total expenditures on the building are added up, they are more over the last 5 years than any other building aside from the new fire station and library. Ms. Clark-Chase said that the large expenditures, mainly for the stonework project, are not maintenance but capital expenditures that were voter approved and partially paid for with grant money.

Chairman Bashaw said that someone had felt the need to contact the Attorney General's office to lodge a complaint. Ms. Albert said that the wording in the court order when the Nichols building was changed from a library to a museum was that the Select Board will be "financially responsible for the prudent and timely care, maintenance and repair of the building and grounds, as they do for all town-owned buildings." Chairman Bashaw said that the problem is that this was not approved by the voters.

Ms. Flanders-McDougall said that the voters had no say in this because of the way the original trust was set up. She said that even in 1898 when the library was given to the Town, the Town was obligated to maintain the building and grounds.

Chairman Bashaw said that this doesn't prevent discussion, that people are interested in knowing the costs, and that other historical buildings in town, such as the Church on the Plains, are being maintained by charitable organizations. Ms. Albert said that the church was purchased by the Historical Society for \$1.00, but that is not possible for the Nichols building due to the wording in the trust.

Ernie Landry, Heritage Commission Chair, said that the reason the costs of rehabilitation were so high was that the building had not been maintained in years and years. He said that the Plains cemetery also needs a lot of work now, as it has not been maintained over the years. He said the Town was always trying to save money by deferring maintenance on buildings. He said he thinks this should not happen again with the Nichols building unless the maintenance is deferred again for 50 years. He said he felt it was important to include this cost in the 6-year report, to realize why it happened and to be clear on expectations going forward.

Chairman Bashaw said he agreed that the annual basic maintenance was not as intimidating of a number. However, he said he is concerned that if someone thinks the building is not being maintained to a standard someone agrees with, they will call the Attorney General.

Selectman Coppelman reinforced the comments of Mr. Landry, saying that clearly a lot of money was spent, as expenditures from the capital reserve fund, and including grant money. He said these numbers should not continue going forward if the maintenance is kept up to date. He said this is clearly a valued building and a cherished resource. He said that the installation of the new heating system, backed up by electric mini-splits, can bring down the annual operating cost even more. He also said the transfer to the museum was apparently in accordance with what the state approved (Charitable Trust division). He said given the information in front of the board there is no discussion of divesting ourselves of the building, but rather how to use the building and how to maintain the heat and humidity at acceptable levels over the winter that will preserve the archives. As an example of open hours, Selectman Coppelman said that Exeter's historical museum is open for very limited set hours, and no appointments are available. Selectwoman Alessio said that the Select Board has fiduciary responsibility to the Town to review costs of maintaining the various Town buildings, and the Board does need to respond to questions from the public about expenses or comments on the hours a building is open. She said that the Board is not looking to shut down the museum, contrary to what some people were told. She said the intent is to understand the maintenance needs of this and other historic properties, and when it is a lot, to prioritize. She said that the last couple of years have been challenging, budget-wise, and costs continue to skyrocket, so every opportunity to save money needs to be considered. She said that the Board may ask that the museum be closed for 3 months of the year to save

on heat. She said this has not been decided, but options need to be considered in order to move the town forward in a financially responsible manner.

Ms. Chase-Clark said she hopes that there will be ways to conserve without closing the building.

Chairman Bashaw said that to close the building completely would present its own problems. He reiterated that people have asked questions and this is meant as a discussion.

There was a discussion of fundraising efforts and community outreach. Selectman Coppelman said that this goes back to the Envision Kingston documents, where it was apparent that historical and cultural resources are important to people.

Virginia Morse, Vice Chair of the Historic District Commission, thanked the Select Board for being stewards of the Town's tax money. She also said that she could send the Board a number of emails from all over the country regarding the value of historic preservation in maintaining a stable economic basis. She agreed with Selectman Coppelman that in Envision Kingston 1 and 2 the intrinsic value of historic places was recognized, such as maintaining the Plains, using all buildings, preserving historic buildings, and having a museum.

Selectwoman Szwed thanked Selectwoman Alessio and Ms. Morse for recognizing the role the Board has. She commented that she would like to see the roster of visitors, not only for Kingston Days but for the number of visitors in a month. She also said that times for the museum to be open, other than Wednesdays from 9-12, should be looked into.

Chairman Bashaw said that there will need to be some operational changes to streamline maintenance requests, as it has come to light that per the court order only the Heritage Commission can make requests for maintenance on the building, and a single point of contact will be helpful. Ms. Albert said they had been promised a timer for the thermostats but have not gotten it, and that a new propane furnace has not been hooked up. Selectman Coppelman said that he has been in communication with the Department of Public Works and believed this will be done this year.

PUBLIC COMMENT 1: None heard

COMMITTEE LIAISON REPORTS

Selectwoman Alessio said that the **Wage committee** and **Benefits committee** will both meet this week.

Selectman Coppelman said that the **HDC** and **Planning Board** will be holding a joint meeting in early October to discuss warrant articles for zoning amendments. He said the **Solar committee** had stopped meeting after the Town did not approve solar panels on the Fire Station, but with some recent rule changes at the State level, solar on the landfill, for example, is becoming more viable, so the committee will reconvene.

Chairman Bashaw said the **Police Department** has been busy. He also said that if people have been seeing a lot of state police cruisers, it is because the Hampstead Hospital is now the replacement for the Sununu Youth Detention Center, and it is in the state's sole jurisdiction to respond to problems there.

Selectman Hart said that the **Conservation Commission** has put together their facts and findings on the Unitil solar installation.

Selectwoman Szwed said that she met with the **Human Services** Director on the 14th. There will be a fresh food program starting with Meadows Mirth farm in Brentwood, and

people can order fresh food and meat boxes that come with recipes, that will be delivered to the **library**. The Director is preparing an order form that will be on the library's website.

Senior lunches may be starting with a pot luck at the library; there is also the possibility that they may be held at the Town Hall. **The Kingston Days Committee** will be meeting on Thursday and may discuss possible dates for next year.

OLD BUSINESS

Architectural Cost estimates, Town Hall renovations

Chairman Bashaw said that the estimates are from 2022. Selectman Coppelman asked for clarification as the Board had narrowed down work to be done to the front steps and HVAC, possibly insulation on the back wall, and these estimates are not for those things. DPW Director Phil said that these were requested and sent in just for reference. He said the second bid was from a mechanical engineer who is also an architect, and the reconfiguration of the Town Hall office space included HVAC. He said he has not engaged with a contractor, that he needs to measure the stairs, which they will be bidding on. He said that these estimates are a year old and have a different focus. Chairman Bashaw said that the town wanted not only a mechanical engineer but someone with an architectural background to make sure the integrity of the building is preserved with any changes that happen.

Mr. Coombs said the numbers are just estimates for budgetary purposes.

Mr. Coombs also said that if the focus is to be the stairs and HVAC, the engineering needs to be secured, as that is the one part of the work that is not in his budget. He said that the reserve fund is really meant to take care of these buildings, for such things as the furnace in the Town Hall that is in bad shape, or the waste oil burner at the DPW which is no longer functioning. He said that if the plans are drawn up under ARPA funds, and one of the two is done, then at least the other things can be put on the CIP and be done eventually. For that reason, he strongly advocated for having the engineering work done under ARPA.

Selectman Coppelman asked Chairman Bashaw to follow up with the Town Planner about CIP request letters to be sent to the Departments.

Memorial Tree

Selectwoman Alessio said that she doesn't have any answers on this yet that she can share.

NEW BUSINESS - None

BOARD BUSINESS

Well sampling results letter

Sanborn Head has prepared the results letter to submit to NH DES for the latest round of PFAS testing.

MOTION: by Selectman Coppelman, to authorize submittal of the sampling results letter to NH DES.

SECOND: Selectwoman Alessio

All in favor

PUBLIC COMMENT 2: None

CORRESPONDENCE, APPLICATIONS, PURCHASE ORDERS:

- Land Use Change Tax: Map R8 Lot 42: On a motion by Selectwoman Alessio, seconded by Selectwoman Szwed, the Chairman was authorized to sign this Change Tax (removing a parcel from Current Use).
- July-August Human Services report was reviewed briefly.
- Paperwork to accept adding additional coverage in the health plan for domestic partners (voted on previously) was signed.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

MOTION: By Selectwoman Alessio, to approve the public and non-public meeting minutes of September 11, 2023 as written

SECOND: by Selectman Hart

In favor: All

Chairman Bashaw suggested that a consent agenda could be added in future meetings, for routine items that do not require discussion. These items would be listed in the consent agenda for blanket approval.

NON-PUBLIC SESSION:

MOTION: by Selectman Hart, to adjourn public session and enter non-public session at 7:39 PM, under RSA 91-A:3, II (a), Personnel

SECOND: by Selectwoman Alessio

All in favor via roll call vote

MOTION: by Selectwoman Szwed, to adjourn non-public session and return to public session at 7:59 PM

SECOND: by Selectwoman Alessio

All in favor

Motion made to seal minutes of non-public sessions.

Motion made by Selectwoman Szwed, seconded by Selectwoman Alessio, because it is determined that divulgence of this information likely would...

X Affect adversely the reputation of any person other than a member of this board.

__ Render a proposed action ineffective

___ Pertains to preparation or carrying out of actions regarding terrorism

Roll Call Vote to Seal Minutes:

Chris Bashaw	Y	Charles Hart	Y
Laurie Szwed	Y	Glenn Coppelman	Y
Electra Alessio	Y		

Motion: PASSED

Meeting Adjourned at 8:02 PM

Respectfully submitted:

Susan H. Ayer, Administrative Assistant to the Select Board