

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by the Chairman.

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

**ABSENT:** Vice Chair Chuck Hart

**MOTION:** by Selectwoman Alessio, to adjourn public session and enter non-public session at 6:00 PM, per RSA 91-A:3, II (I) and (a) to discuss legal advice and personnel.

**SECOND:** by Selectman Coppelman

**All in favor via roll call vote**

**The Board returned to public session at 6:35 PM and voted to seal the non-public session minutes:**

Motion made by Selectman Coppelman, seconded by Selectwoman Szwed, 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	Absent
Laureen Szwed	Y	Glenn Coppelman	Y
Electra Alessio	Y		

**Motion: PASSED**

**PUBLIC HEARING**

To consider dissolving the Solid Waste and Recycling Committee - continued from December 11, 2023:

Chairman Bashaw said that this hearing was continued in order to allow the SWRC to meet and discuss this matter. Stacy Dion, who said she is still the Chair of the committee, said that the Board had met on Thursday, and voted unanimously that they would like to continue, and not disband. She said they discussed how to go forward, that they will post the recycling collection Saturdays as meetings and notes taken there will become meeting minutes. If additional meetings are needed, Elsa Voelcker will send out an agenda, prepare minutes and act as the Chair.

Discussion then turned to the Ordinance sections that were worked on by the committee last August, to remove Articles 502, 503 and 504 as they are no longer relevant, and revise Article 501 to accurately reflect the current name and mission of the committee.

There was no further comment from the public or from the Board.

**MOTION:** by Selectwoman Alessio, to go forward with the Solid Waste and Recycling Committee under its revised scope, and to place the Ordinance revisions on the 2024 warrant.

**SECOND:** by Selectman Coppelman  
**All in favor**

## **APPOINTMENTS**

### **Police Chief Joel Johnson re: NH Highway Safety grant**

Chief Johnson brought forward a purchase order related to the purchase of in-car radar units. The vendor is Custom Signals and the total cost for two radar units for cruisers would be \$5,830. Chairman Bashaw said that as part of a NH Department of Highway Safety grant, the state would pay \$4,372.50, or 75%, and the Town would pay the balance of \$1,457.50.

Chief Johnson said that the reason for purchasing new radar units is that the old ones are falling apart, and the last time they were replaced was, he estimated, 10 years ago.

**MOTION:** by Selectwoman Alessio, to accept Department of Safety grant #24-097 in the amount of \$4,372.50 and agree to pay the Town's portion of \$1,457.50 and authorize the Chair to sign all documents associated with this agreement.

**SECOND:** by Selectwoman Szwed  
**All in favor**

## **PUBLIC COMMENT 1:**

Fire Chief Graham Pellerin came forward to inform the Board that the remaining balance of the Fire Station Building Fund is \$121,521.43. He said he would like to retain \$30,000 for items to complete his punch list and send back the balance to the infrastructure fund. He said any balance has to be used for the building or to pay down the bond.

**MOTION:** by Selectman Coppelman, to retain \$30,000 of the balance of the Fire Station building fund for planned expenses and turn back \$91,521.33 to the Infrastructure Fund.

**SECOND:** by Selectwoman Alessio  
**All in favor**

DPW Director Phil Coombs said he would like to recognize Chief Pellerin and the Fire Station Building Committee for their efforts in the middle of a massive inflation surge, a lack of construction workers, materials and everything else, to still manage to come in under budget.

## **COMMITTEE LIAISON REPORTS**

Selectwoman Alessio said she has the first item under old business, on the elderly and disabled exemptions, and explained the changes she proposed to the levels offered by Kingston. She said she had arrived at these numbers by reviewing the information the Administrative Assistant had gathered from seven local towns, taking out the highest and lowest, and taking an average of the rest. She said she had reviewed the numbers with Selectman Coppelman as well and emailed them to the board ahead of time.

Saying that Kingston was way lower than most and that it has been many years since these had been revamped, she proposed the following:

<u>Elderly Exemption</u>	Disabled Exemption	<u>Income limit</u>	Asset limit
Age: 65 – 75 – 80+		Single - Married	
\$65,000 – 85,000 – 105,000	\$110,000	\$40,000- \$50,000	\$190,000

Chairman Bashaw said that he would like to amend this to raise the income limit for married applicants to \$80,000, or twice the single rate, following the model that Sanborn uses.

**MOTION:** by Selectwoman Alessio, to place warrant articles to raise the amounts and income limits for Elderly and Disabled exemptions to the rates stated above, except to change the married income limit to \$80,000.

**SECOND:** by Selectman Coppelman

**All in favor**

Continuing her liaison report, Selectwoman Alessio said that she had met with the Library Director, and that the library holiday raffle had netted \$1500.

Chairman Bashaw said that the Planning Board will be reviewing the balance of the Zoning articles at a public hearing on January 2. He said in answer to those questioning the number of articles that it is the Planning Board's job to focus on the zoning articles that need revision.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

**Exemption guidelines:** Discussed above.

### **47 Newton Junction Road**

The Administrative Assistant said there is nothing new since the Health Officer had gone out to look at the property; he had not been able to go inside because it is very securely boarded up. She said that no one has yet gone out to help him get inside to assess the condition. She also said that if the Town wishes to go forward with a sale or demolition there, a 90-day notice to the prior owner of record is required.

The Chairman asked Chief Pellerin to schedule a time to go out with Health Officer Mike Dorman and a Select Board member to look at the property and assess options, and whether the house is worth saving or may be a candidate for a controlled burn.

### **Solar on Landfill: Option Agreement**

Selectman Coppelman gave an update on this matter, saying that the Select Board had followed the recommendation of the Solar Committee and voted to enter into an option agreement with Revision Energy. This option would give Revision exclusive rights for 4 years to do due diligence to see if the plan for a solar array can be executed. This would also give them the ability to start working with the Public Utilities Commission to get in line for interconnection. However, while the document was undergoing legal review prior to signing, the question arose about whether this constituted a multi-year contract, and as such needed to go to the voters. He said it turned out that as the Town has not yet adopted the terms RSA 41:11-a, III, authorizing the Board to rent or lease municipal property up to 5 years, it may not be able to sign on for more than 1 year at a time.

Selectman Coppelman said that the Board had reviewed advice of counsel in non-public session and discussed going forward with the agreement with the understanding that it's going to be for one year at the start and that the Board would put in a warrant article for March to request the adoption of RSA 41:11-a, III. If the article passed, then the agreement would be modified. He said if it didn't pass, then there would have to be a discussion with Revision about how to go forward, but that there is no money attached

to the warrant article, it is merely an additional amount of authority granted to this board and only applies to the leasing of municipal land or buildings.

Selectman Bashaw said that it only makes sense financially for Revision to enter into the agreement if it is for the necessary amount of time, since they have to invest hundreds of thousands of dollars to even pursue the opportunities.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Welfare Guidelines**

Selectwoman Szwed said that she had met with the Human Services Director this morning and the Board has been given a printout of the clarified language for suspension (of services) periods. She went through the revised language; as this is the last clarifying point, the guidelines are ready to be adopted. She said that the Human Services Director had done great work and reached out to other towns for guidance, that they had just been tweaking the document itself.

**MOTION:** by Selectwoman Szwed to approve the welfare guidelines as reviewed and written.

**SECOND:** by Selectwoman Alessio

**All in favor**

### **Website Policy**

Selectwoman Szwed said that the Town Clerk had come to her to request something in writing that would clarify who can task Deputy Clerk Caitlin Milhomme to add or change content on the website. She said she had met with the Clerk and Deputy Clerk along with the Board's Administrative Assistant, to go over the language and who from each department, board or committee would be able to make these decisions.

The draft policy had been sent out to all Town entities concerned, and only a couple of questions had come back. First, from the Museum Committee, asking if a board or committee chair can authorize a different board member to approve content.

Selectwoman Szwed said that this would be fine, the list of those authorized for approval was a guess, so if there is someone else that should be the contact, that person's title can be substituted. She said only titles will be written in, so that the list doesn't have to be constantly updated. For the Museum Committee it could read "Chair or Vice Chair" to cover their concern.

A second question was asked about how to handle admins who have permission to change their own content, for example, the Land Use Admin posts her own agendas and minutes. Selectwoman Szwed said that #6.1 in the policy states "in the absence of a designated POC" it would be the Deputy Clerk or Select Board Admin, so the question is answered already.

The library was removed from this policy as they have their own website and own rules.

**MOTION:** by Selectwoman Szwed, to approve the Website Content Management Policy, with the revisions discussed.

**SECOND:** by Selectman Coppelman

**All in favor**

### **Recycling Collection Permit**

DPW Director Phil Coombs came forward to discuss a notice of incomplete application the Town had received for the Recycling Collection point from the NH DES. He said that

DES had had a lengthy discussion on their end on whether the permit was even needed for two dumpsters, but had required it in the end, and he had submitted the application. He said that the items questioned were minor, such as the scale of a map submitted and also the proposed construction date, of which there is none. He said he has addressed everything and will hand deliver his revised application to Concord tomorrow. He said he had discussed with DES that the facility is just starting and has decent momentum, and it would be very disruptive to the effort if it were stopped. He said he would like to be allowed to have the collection center open for the next three Saturdays as planned, even though technically there is no permit yet. He said he was told the only corrective action is to apply for a permit, which he is doing.

Mr. Coombs said there is no fee for the permit.

**MOTION:** by Selectman Coppelman, to support the continuation of the collection point, and not require it to be halted while waiting for the permit.

**SECOND:** by Selectman Bashaw

**All in favor**

## **BOARD BUSINESS**

### **Review proposed Warrant Articles**

The Board reviewed the draft warrant, to which have been added the article asking to adopt RSA 41:11-a, III, and an article changing the terms of Solar property tax exemptions. The Administrative Assistant explained that solar systems installed on residences were assessed at \$5,000, and the exemption available was worth \$5,000, so that it abated the entire tax for the feature. However, starting in 2023 the solar systems are assessed at \$500 per panel, meaning that a roof top system may be worth quite a lot more than \$5,000. She said that other towns generally offer an exemption of 100% of the value rather than a flat rate, and the Board has the option to set the percentage. Selectman Coppelman said that the reason for the \$5,000 exemption in the first place was to offset the value 1-1, so going forward to stay with 100% would cover the increase in assessment in the same way.

Selectwoman Alessio expressed concern that if 100% of a solar feature is exempted, other residents would be paying the cost. Chairman Bashaw said this is not so, because the extra value only exists because of the solar panels. It was decided to put 100% in the warrant article.

### **NH DRA Municipal Assessment Data Certificate**

The Administrative Assistant explained that this is an annual document that has to be signed by the Board; it is verifying that they have reviewed the data used to set the equalization rate. It was agreed to sign.

### **Select Board Initiatives 2024**

As suggested at the last meeting, a list has been started of things the Board should have on the radar for the coming year. The Chair went through the items submitted thus far. These included:

1. Put in place the structure for a Town Administrator.
2. Create a Building Department to include a Department Head.
3. Create and publish organizational charts for the town.

4. **Revamp the website to include investigating other platforms.** Discussion included information gained from other towns on cost, and the suggestion that the initial upgrade might come from ARPA funds, specifically funds left over from the records scanning project.
5. **Continue with creating/updating policies for the town.**
6. **Increase community engagement and involvement.** The need for more volunteer involvement was discussed.
7. **Explore the possibility of implementing a “Community Power” program for Kingston Residents as a way of potentially lowering individual residents’ electrical utility bills.** Chairman Bashaw said he had sat in on a county meeting on this; he said if the County takes the “opt in” option, every household in the county would automatically be eligible to participate. Selectman Coppelman said a lot of communities are looking into this, and that it is similar in concept to the electrical aggregate program that the town participates in through the Rockingham Planning Commission.
8. **Complete the ground marker and dedication for the Joe Thompson memorial tree at the KFD.**
9. **Get started on concept(s), guidelines and timeline for establishing the “Kingston Volunteers Memorial”.**
10. **Complete the process that was started several years ago to establish a Municipal Water Utility in Kingston.** Selectman Coppelman said that the first step, where the voters approved the concept of a water utility, is already done. He said there is at least one more big step that has to go to the voters, to set up the parameters for the structure, to get the town into a position where it would be ready to supply municipal water. He said it also is important in that it would give the town control over the extraction of water in the community, citing the example of a water company tapping the aquifer and piping water out of town. He said this is talking about water as a Town asset, and wanting to manage it, not necessarily providing Town water.
11. **Add a backup generator at Town Hall to our list of projects.** The need for this was discussed, and the potential for it also to come from ARPA funding, depending on the total spent on other Town Hall upgrades.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT 2:**

Rick Russman, Chair of the Solar Committee, asked for confirmation that assuming the warrant article (asking for board authority to rent or lease Town property) passes, the intention will be to shortly after that extend the option for the full period of time.

Chairman Bashaw said that this would be the action taken. Mr. Russman also said that the community power plan is a no-brainer, he said that it would eliminate the rate of return on investment for shareholders, so that millions of dollars would then become available for rate payers to save money. He said Exeter has it and it's been great. Chair Bashaw agreed, saying they did estimations of rates in all the towns and the potential cost savings are a lot.

Director Coombs gave an update on the heating system. He said he has not gone out for quotes yet because the HVAC system is a tangled rats nest, and that installing the LED lights also shone a spotlight on problems in the electrical system. He said that he would like to get at least a preliminary plan of what is needed so that everyone will be bidding on the same thing. He said before a generator is looked at, the HVAC and electrical have to be dealt with. Chairman Bashaw said he thought the appropriate thing is to have contractors look at it as a whole and not just individual pieces, and if electric is going to be upgraded it would make a lot of sense to at least make sure the wiring is in place for a generator. Mr. Coombs added that rooftop solar capability is another item to consider.

**APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:**

**MOTION:** By Selectwoman Alessio, to approve the public and non-public meeting minutes of December 11, 2023, as submitted.

**SECOND:** by Selectwoman Szwed

All in favor

**CORRESPONDENCE, APPLICATIONS, PURCHASE ORDERS:**

- Payroll, accounts payable and two General Assistance requests were reviewed and approved.
- One abatement was approved.
- One Veterans Credit application was approved.
- On Solar exemption was approved.
- One request to carry over vacation time to 2024 was granted.

**Meeting Adjourned at 7:50 PM**

Respectfully submitted:

Susan H. Ayer, Administrative Assistant to the Select Board