

**Kingston, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting of March 18, 2024
FINAL MINUTES**

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

PRESENT: Vice Chair Chuck Hart; Glenn Coppelman, Laurie Szwed, Ellie Alessio, Peter Bakie, Select Board Members

MOTION: by Selectman Hart, to adjourn public session and enter non-public session at 6:01 PM, per RSA 91-A:3, II, (a) to discuss personnel.

SECOND: by Selectman Coppelman

All in favor via roll call vote

The Board returned to public session at 6:30 PM.

REORGANIZATION OF THE BOARD

Selectman Hart introduced new member Peter Bakie and congratulated him and members Alessio and Szwed on their election wins.

MOTION: by Selectman Hart, to nominate Electra Alessio as Board Chair for 2024

SECOND: by Selectman Bakie

All in favor

MOTION: by Selectwoman Szwed, to nominate Glenn Coppelman as Board Vice Chair for 2024

SECOND: by Selectwoman Alessio

All in favor

Chairwoman Alessio brought forward items discussed during non-public session for vote:

MOTION: by Chair Alessio, to make Shannon Spitaleri a permanent part-time employee in the Clerk's office and change her title from "Office Clerk" to "Assistant Clerk".

SECOND: by Selectman Hart

All in favor

MOTION: by Selectman Coppelman, to delegate code enforcement authority to Building Inspector/Code Enforcement Officer Pedro Avila

SECOND: by Selectwoman Szwed

All in favor

PUBLIC COMMENT 1:

Fire Chief Graham Pellerin submitted to the Board for signatures the Deputy Forest Fire Warden forms for new hires (3). He said this is a standard form so that fire department employees have the authority to enforce state regulations and issue burn permits.

COMMITTEE LIAISON REPORTS

Chair Alessio said she had met with Phil Coombs, Adam Faulconer and Gordon Parks from the school system, to discuss the sound and broadcast issues. She said the YouTube recordings are now corrected, but there is still a problem with the broadcasts to the local cable channel. An email has been sent to the company who installed the hardware to list problems and billing discrepancies in an effort to resolve them. Selectwoman Szwed reported that the Solid Waste and Recycling committee met last week and minutes will be posted. She said the DPW is pursuing renewal of the lease on the state shed land. Other recycling-related events such as bulky goods collection and a clothing drive are being planned. L. Szwed added that the flyer the SWRC plans to send out with the tax bills is one-sided and that someone else could put information on the other side.

OLD BUSINESS

Status Update: POET Project Request For Proposals

This RFP is still being revised by the Town's consultant, Verdantas.

Status Update: Preservation easement (historic barns) checklist and flowchart

There was a brief discussion of the process that will be followed, including that the Heritage Commission will do the first review of applications and make recommendations to the Board.

Status Update: Boston Post Cane

The Museum Committee has been asked if they would like to head up the efforts to reinstate the awarding of the Boston Post Cane to the Town's oldest citizen. They plan to discuss this at their April 2 meeting.

Status Update: Audio Video Experience contracted items

The Administrative Assistant has sent a list of issues with sound equipment and billing that need resolution to the company. Chair Alessio commented that this will be an open agenda item until it is resolved.

NEW BUSINESS

Renew lease of State Land (state shed); draft request letter

The draft letter requesting a renewal of the Town's long-term lease on the Main Street property was tabled for further consideration; the Board members would like to read the old lease agreement.

Ottati & Goss Superfund site: 5-year review questionnaire

The Federal Environmental Protection Agency is conducting its 5-year review of several superfund sites, including the Ottati and Goss site in Kingston. The Board has received a questionnaire to complete, or they may request a meeting with the agency. Chair Alessio will work with the Administrative Assistant to complete the questionnaire, with input from any involved departments.

Kingston Lake Association: request for town assistance with annual beach cleanup

Muriel Ingalls was present and said she would also like to know the status of the sign permit she submitted for the boat launch site. The permit had not yet reached the Select Board office, so it will be discussed next time.

The Board agreed there is no problem having the DPW help out with the Association's annual clean-up of the Kingston State Park.

MOTION: by Selectman Bakie, to honor the request of the Lake Association to have the DPW assist with the annual clean-up of the state park beach.

SECOND: by Selectman Coppelman

All in favor

BOARD BUSINESS

Review of PO Box usage

Responses have been received from four of the Departments/Committees who had been asked to let the Board know if they have postal boxes or receptacles apart from the official Town PO box, and what is received in them. Selectman Hart said that he can see the need for separate mailboxes for certain uses but there has been concern that invoices that go elsewhere may not always find their way back to the Finance office in a timely manner.

PO boxes will be left as-is for now and the matter of invoice distribution will be addressed with the new Accounts Payable policy.

PUBLIC DISCUSSION: Town Hall Stairs

DPW Director Phil Coombs came forward and revisited the topic of the repair/replacement of the front stairs of the town hall. He gave the history of the discussion, saying it had been decided that the money for Town Hall work, including the stairs, HVAC and insulation, should come from the remaining American Recovery Plan Act funds, of which about \$250,000 remains. He said he had spent multiple hours assessing the current conditions of the building and the constraints on each system. He said a common theme was numerous attempts to fix issues with Band-Aids at the lowest cost that did not meet code, and the result is that fixing it all with the allocated money would be a stretch. He said the solutions he brought to the Board on February 26 were meant to address short term needs while being part of a long-term plan for the Town Hall. He said the stairs are a part of this approach; he said the proposed replacement stairs will be held in place by two bolts, so they can be removed and replaced in the future or can be left for 30 years and be fully functional and structurally sound.

Mr. Coombs went through what he had learned about the original stairs and various repair attempts. He said this will be the seventh attempt to repair the stairs.

Mr. Coombs described what would be needed in order to replace the current layout of the stairs, and concluded the cost would be in the \$70,000 range, which would put total costs outside the window of the available ARPA funding. He said his proposed solution (prefabricated steps to be installed on a new base after removing the old steps) addresses fit, form and function required for safe and efficient operation of the building, while being of similar material to previous versions. He said that he understands people do not like change, and he wishes there was funding was such that all parties' desires could be met, but that is not the case and he asked all to keep this in mind as the discussion proceeds.

Mr. Coombs went on to project photographs of the proposed stairs along with photographs and a postcard showing the old stairs, and a rendering of the proposed smaller stairs with landscaping on either side. He said these would be \$15,000 to \$18,000 as opposed to \$70,000 to \$80,000 to replace the stairs in their current form.

Comments of the Board:

Selectwoman Szwed asked about the status of the other projects and their costs. Mr. Coombs said that there are several unknown variables, but talked briefly about what he has learned and what he has prioritized. Ms. Szwed said that her point is that there is a finite dollar amount left in the fund and a lot of work to be done, and it is most important to have functioning heat and electrical in the building, and also that it is accessible.

Selectman Hart asked if thought has been given to using some of the infrastructure fund for this purpose. He said he feels this would be a valid use of that fund.

Selectman Bakie said he appreciated all the work done by Director Coombs, but questioned some details in the numbers given by Mr. Coombs at the February 26 meeting (as recorded in the meeting minutes), saying the way he reads the numbers given, the cost of the preform steps jumps from \$6,585 to \$20,000 and where some of the added costs come from is not clear. Mr. Coombs said that in the last three weeks since his initial presentation he has conducted a lot more research. He said one big factor is the cost of the work done in 2016, which was \$48,000, and that he thinks a factor of 30% loss in the granite pieces should be figured in. He said the mass of foundation material that will need to be removed is a lot larger than previously thought. As for the \$6585 figure, he said that is the straight up cost of the prefab steps. Adding \$400-\$500 for railings and \$220 per helical pile (# depending on the size of the concrete pad), is where his total of \$15,000 - \$18,000 came from.

Comments of the Public:

Ernie Landry, Heritage Commission Chair, said he had heard a lot of new information this evening about the costs and the history of the stairs. He had brought some pictures to add to the discussion; the first he believed was from the time of the dedication of the building. He pointed out that it has 6 or 7 steps and appears to be all granite, with no brick. Mr. Landry then showed a postcard from the 1930's that had also been shown earlier, that also appears to depict the stairs as granite, not granite with brick. Mr. Landry made the point that the Town Hall is a major facility and focal point in the downtown area. From the standpoint of historic preservation, he said that major historic characters of the facility you are working on should be maintained, and the stairs are the major character of this building.

Ed McDevitt said he has worked in the concrete business for 50 years, and his opinion is that the precast concrete steps are putting a residential product on a commercial building, and that they won't hold up to ice melt and rock salt, and the railings will be rotted off in 6 or 7 years. He said the current steps hold up to that but everything that's gone wrong is due to them not having been maintained. He said all he knows is that the under structure failed. He noted that the Town already has the granite pieces. He said the current stairs should be removed, the granite saved and put back on a new structure.

Madeline Ouellette, 189 Main Street, spoke in favor of maintaining the old steps, saying that we have a beautiful historic town and have to honor that. She also suggested that by getting the community involved, she feels that volunteers can be found to do the work.

Eileen Clifford, New Boston Road, said that this is a Hall where a lot of people come, and most will use the front door. She said if a lot of people had to leave in a hurry, and someone like herself with walking difficulties was in the way, it could be a problem. She said she doesn't mind the look of the new stairs but was concerned about the size.

Dan Doyle, 156 Main Street, invited the Board to look at the poured-in-place concrete steps at the school, which are sturdier than precast, that already need replacing. He said the loading dock is 19 years old and needs to be torn out and replaced. He said concrete will not hold up like granite does.

Virginia Morse, 188 Main Street, commented that she appreciates the challenge of working within a budget to maintain all the historic structures in Town. She asked if the prior plan for a handicapped ramp in the front of the building is still to be included, and if not, if the current access to the building is legal for handicapped purposes. Mr. Coombs said that the handicapped ramp is not in the current plan, it was presented as a possibility; Chair Alessio affirmed that the access from the back door and elevator is legal.

Scott Ouellette, 189 Main Street, said he is supportive of trying to reproduce the front steps in the fashion they are today, and not going with the narrower precast stairs. He commented that anyone in the historic district that wants to change the front of their building has to go to the Historic District Commission who are oriented around preserving the old architectural features. He said the Town should follow its own rules and lead by example.

Jef Flanders-McDougall, Main Street, said she agreed with prior speakers, and commented that even if a handicapped ramp was added to the front of the building, there would still be the problem of getting up the inside steps to the meeting room.

Rick Russman, 18 Beach Drive, said it would be nice to preserve the stairs, but they have sat this way for 4 years, and would have to sit another 2 years to wait for the money to be raised. He said that this year the Fire Department and DPW capital reserve fund warrant articles both failed, which is a message. He said that unfortunately there is not enough money to go around and gave as an example that the meeting room floors are badly in need of refinishing. He said it is up to the Board to figure out the best path forward, a chore which he does not envy.

The Board continued with its own comments; Selectman Hart suggesting the option of waiting and placing a warrant article, in order to get the town residents to decide whether or not they want to do this. However, he said, if it is turned down, the work has to wait another year. He said he would want from Mr. Coombs the exact figure, including the cost of an architect, to rebuild.

Selectwoman Szwed thanked the Director for his work, saying the Board gave him a task and everyone is beating him up for it. She also thanked the public, saying public input is important, and that without it, a decision may have been made that was not ultimately popular. She said she understands the importance of heritage, but the Board is responsible for the budget, and with ARPA funding or not, they are looking at a finite amount of funds. She said the building needs to be functional, that people work here

every day and want to know the heat, air conditioning and electric work and that it is safe. She said that she feels that this is at least as important as the look of the stairs. Selectman Coppelman also said he appreciates the Director's work, and that he has been working on this for a while. He said he appreciates all who came out to be part of the discussion. He said his own preference would be similar to what many have stated, that we have the materials for the existing stairs on hand, the question is what is supporting them. He said if a more accurate number on the cost of removing the blocks, building a correct base for them and putting them back can be obtained, that would be his preference going forward.

Selectman Bakie thanked all for coming out and said he hears them. He said one comment caught his attention, and that was about having a lot of people in the building and trying to get them all out in an emergency; he said he can't imagine everyone going down an 8' wide staircase, that this is a public safety issue. He said he is in favor of doing the research and getting some professional opinions versus putting up a Band-Aid.

Selectwoman Szwed asked why the Board is not talking about the Buildings capital reserve fund. Chair Alessio said that the building has to be looked at as a whole, that there is a lot to be done, and a variety of funding sources will be included. She said there needs to be a comprehensive plan. Selectman Coppelman said that there is a capital reserve fund for building maintenance, but it is for all the buildings in town, and there are some big issues that need to be fixed.

Director Coombs said that the last three expenditures from the fund were the roof on the museum, the stonework on the museum, and the Grace Daly Barn, and all three went before the voters to authorize the withdrawal for those purposes. He said they do not have to go to the voters, but past practice is that they do.

On the topic of hiring an architect, Mr. Coombs said that before spending money on a fact-finding mission, he had presented these alternatives.

Fire Chief Graham Pellerin commented on the life safety issue of the stairs. He said technically they only need to be as wide as the doorway, which is 8 feet wide, so in that aspect they would work, although the observation that traffic would be funneled to 8 feet where now there is the option of going down to the side is valid.

Mr. Pellerin then said he hopes that the Board will consider having an architect work with them on the needs assessment for the entire building, which SMP architects quoted before as \$18,000. He said that with all the changes and growth, and including the front stairs issue, it is important to consider the entire building.

In conclusion, Chair Alessio said she agrees with Chief Pellerin, and a 5- or 10-year plan is needed.

BOARD BUSINESS, cont.

Property tax abatement applications with Assessor recommendations

The Board went through the information and recommendation provided by the town's former assessor for five abatement applications:

42 Fourth Street:

MOTION: by Selectman Coppelman, to accept the recommendation of the Assessor to deny the abatement but to reduce the assessment to \$530,100 with a land condition assessment based on negative impact from an abutting property that has no septic

system.

SECOND: by Selectwoman Szwed

All in favor

4 Kelley Road:

MOTION: by Selectman Coppelman, to accept the recommendation of the Assessor to deny the abatement but reduce the assessment to \$702,000 as a field review revealed that the construction quality grade was overstated and should be corrected from A3 to A2.

SECOND: by Selectman Bakie

All in favor

4 Hillside Drive:

MOTION: by Selectman Coppelman, to accept the recommendation of the Assessor to deny the abatement

SECOND: by Selectman Hart

All in favor

33 Morning Dove Road:

MOTION: by Selectman Coppelman, to accept the recommendation of the Assessor to approve the abatement and reduce the assessment to \$743,700.

SECOND: by Selectman Bakie

All in favor

66 Main Street:

MOTION: by Selectman Coppelman, to accept the recommendation of the Assessor to deny the abatement

SECOND: by Selectman Hart

All in favor

PUBLIC COMMENT #2

CORRESPONDENCE, APPLICATIONS, PURCHASE ORDERS:

- Appointment forms for Conservation Commission members were signed
- A Veterans Tax credit was approved.
- The Board requested having the Building Inspector go out to Whitney's to ensure they are still in compliance with code, before approving their junkyard renewal.
- Volunteer agreements were discussed. Some volunteers have objected to signing if it means they will not be covered by the Town's insurance. In discussion it was noted that the town insurance will cover volunteers unless the incident is due to their own carelessness. Clarification will be obtained from Primex by the Finance Director.
- An intent to excavate form for Torromeo Industries was signed pending an answer to a board member's question on whether a bond is needed from the company.
- A Yield Tax form and tax collector's authorization to collect were signed, for a cut that took place in 2022 but for which no report was received. At this time, DRA

instructed the town to make the report based on the intent estimates, and add Doorage (x2 tax).

Solar project: Option Agreement with Revision Energy

Selectman Coppelman said he would like to bring to the town's attention that the warrant article affecting the solar lease agreement at the landfill was passed, and he questioned whether the lease agreement now needs to be revised past the initial year.

MOTION: by Selectman Coppelman, to modify the Town's option agreement with Revision Energy as needed, to expand it to the full time frame of up to 5 years

SECOND: by Selectwoman Szwed.

All in favor

Building and Code Officer vehicle

Selectman Bakie said he has met with the Building and Code Officer, Pedro Avila, and found him to be pleasant and knowledgeable. However, he said that it may raise questions when he arrives at a property in his personal car, which still has no identification, and is not very professional looking. He asked permission to look into the status of the old inspector's car, which was set aside as it needed repairs. The Board agreed that Selectman Bakie may pursue information on repairs needed.

Unanticipated Revenue

MOTION: by Selectman Coppelman, to accept a donation of \$100 to the Conservation Commission given by the Hauser Family Living Trust, with thanks.

SECOND: by Selectman Hart

All in favor

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

MOTION: By Selectman Coppelman, to approve the public and non-public meeting minutes of March 4, 2024, as submitted.

SECOND: by Selectman Hart

All in favor

Motion: PASSED

Vote to seal the non-public session minutes from the beginning of the meeting:

Motion made by Selectman Coppelman, seconded by Selectman Hart, 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:

Charles Hart	Y	Glenn Coppelman	Y
Laureen Szwed	Y	Peter Bakie	Y
Electra Alessio	Y		

Motion: PASSED

Reorganization: Board and Department Liaisons

The Board made liaison appointments for 2024:

BOARD and COMMITTEE Appointments:

Planning Board/CIP: E. Alessio; Alternate: G. Coppelman

Inspectors: P. Bakie

Historic District Commission: L. Szwed; Alternate: G. Coppelman

Budget Committee: C. Hart; Alternate: P. Bakie

Heritage Commission: G. Coppelman; Alternate: L. Szwed

Conservation Commission: C. Hart

Solar Committee: G. Coppelman

Library Trustees: E. Alessio

Kingston Days: P. Bakie

Solid Waste & Recycling: L. Szwed

Cable Station Committee: E. Alessio

MS-4 Committee: G. Coppelman

Wage/Benefits Committee: E. Alessio

79-E Committee: G. Coppelman

DEPARTMENT Liaisons:

Highway: L. Szwed

Fire: C. Hart

Police: P. Bakie

Town Clerk: C. Hart

Finance: E. Alessio

Recreation: G. Coppelman

Library: E. Alessio

Museum: L. Szwed

Board Admin/Assessing/Building: G. Coppelman

Human Services: L. Szwed

Meeting Adjourned at 9:01 PM

Respectfully submitted:

Susan H. Ayer, Administrative Assistant to the Select Board