

**Kingston, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting of March 25, 2024
FINAL MINUTES**

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 AM by the Chairman.

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

BOARDS AND COMMITTEES Information and Discussion

The Chair opened the floor to any board or committee members that may be present to speak.

Stacy Dion announced that the Budget Committee would hold their reorganizational meeting for 2024 on Wednesday, March 27 at 6:30; this will take place at the Town Hall meeting room and be recorded.

DEPARTMENT Information and Discussion:

Fire Department - Chief Graham Pellerin:

Chief Graham Pellerin thanked the Town Clerk, Moderator and Board for their work on a recount he requested for his Capital fund warrant article. He said it did not change the outcome, but he appreciated the effort.

He said this had been to add \$75,000 to the department's capital reserve fund. He said there is currently \$550,000 - \$600,000 left in that fund. He said he plans to go to the voters to request a new tanker next year, as the current one will be 24 years old. He said that the needed repairs are increasing and at a point it becomes counterproductive. He said that costs of trucks are increasing and gave as an example the last engine they bought cost \$450,000 in 2017, and to replace that today would cost a million dollars.

Chief Pellerin said that the Planning Board has several projects coming before them that combined will add a couple hundred new residents, so he wants the Board to be aware that that will make fire and emergency staffing an issue. He noted that one of the projects is for an age restricted development, which will be the seventh such development in Kingston, when it is already one of the highest towns for age restricted housing.

Finally, the Chief said that both ambulances have 90,000 miles on them, and the oldest is from 2012. He said once ordered, it can take 2-3 years to arrive.

Chair Alessio asked Chief Pellerin to see if he could get some numbers on calls before and after some of the existing over-55 communities were built. He said that when the assisted living facility went in, it was estimated there would be 70 extra calls per year, but in fact there have been 300.

Town Clerk/Tax Collector Tammy Bakie

Town Clerk Tammy Bakie thanked all for helping with the election, and DPW Director Coombs for building the "cattle chute". She said that she may be asking to change the election hours next year, as even with a smaller election such as this one, she did not

get home until midnight. Closing the polls at 7 pm would allow for an extra hour for counting.

Ms. Bakie said there is \$426,000 in tax bills remaining to be collected. Four properties in danger of being deeded have been sent to the title company; the deadline is May 30. There are 790 unregistered dogs left, and Ms. Bakie said that her office will be at the Fire Department's Rabies clinic on April 6.

Ms. Bakie also informed all that on April 17 her office will be closed for training.

Building Inspection and Code Enforcement: BI/CEO Pedro Avila

Mr. Avila reported that he had held an inter-departmental meeting last week, where a lot of information was shared. He said that for now the processes will remain the same, as the new permitting software will soon be installed, but he is telling everyone that the new procedures will include that all departments need to sign off prior to his finalizing the permit. He said the reason for this is that several permits have been issued that lack sign-offs and did not have the proper procedures in place.

Mr. Avila also said that business occupancies will need to be recertified every 2 years; this is because he has encountered many businesses where modifications have been made, some of which impacted life and safety components. He said one thing he takes very seriously is safety and he wants to be sure that everyone occupying or coming in contact with a business is safe.

As for permitting fees, Mr. Avila said that these have not been changed yet, but they are worth discussing due to the amount of work that goes into reviewing the applications. He said he has been seeing a lot of permit applications that are not in compliance with current code. He said that he has talked with those residents and pointed out the sections of code that they need to show compliance with, but beyond that he is careful not to give instructions as it is a thin line between that and actually designing the project for the applicant.

Mr. Avila answered some questions of the Board with regard to permit fees and the process for obtaining a permit and paying for it online.

Chief Pellerin said an ongoing issue for him and the other inspectors is that there are a lot of business condos in the town and if a unit is sold the Town has no guidance on that unless they come in to inquire. He said that whereas restaurants are inspected annually, needing a valid assembly permit in order to keep their liquor licenses, other businesses may change hands and not have to be inspected. He said they went in to one of the business condos to sign off on a building permit and there were already new walls going up in one of the units, so these things need to be caught on a regular basis. He praised Mr. Avila for taking steps to improve the process going forward.

Finance and Human Resources - Paula Mahoney, Director

Director Mahoney said she has been working on policies, which are on the agenda later in the meeting. She said she also has completed a retirement audit, which had not been done in 10 years. She said some changes may need to be made to time sheets.

Library - Director Melissa Mannon

Director Mannon reported that the library received a donation of \$1,000 from the sale of maple syrup by Alternative Sales after they tapped the maple trees on the Plains.

Ms. Mannon said that the new library foundation has received charitable foundation status from the state. She said it is separate from the Friends of the Library in that it will be focused on raising and investing money to put toward large scale projects. She said the library did not get the grant they applied for but with the help of the new foundation will be continuing to explore ways to pursue outdoor space projects.

The library has joined the Exeter Chamber of Commerce and will be hosting a morning mixer at the library which will include local business owners.

No parking overnight signs are being placed in the library parking lot.

The Director said there is a fairly steep lip on the sidewalk that may constitute an ADA compliance issue, so the Trustees have asked her to do some research on that.

Finally, Ms. Mannon provided calendars for the month for both children and adults, and brought to the Board's attention, from the library perspective the ripple effects of the age-friendly communities survey, such as new programs for seniors and new partnerships. She said that traffic at the library had gone up from January to February by 400 patrons. She said they are quickly running out of space to do new programs.

Recreation - Director Paul Butler

Director Butler distributed his list of upcoming events. He said he wants to put the Trunk or Treat event on the radar, as they had over 1,000 people there last year, and clearly there needs to be something different done this year to manage traffic and safety. He said he is strongly against moving the event and suggested some ideas such as closing a portion of Main Street during the event, or running a shuttle bus from the school.

Mr. Butler said he was pleasantly surprised that the voters supported the multi-use area to be constructed at the field; he said DPW Director Coombs is quite busy so this won't happen right away.

Summer camp is full, with a large wait list.

Mr. Butler then said that there is an opportunity for a fundraiser, which is simply to host a meeting for Collette travel agency, in which they will talk about a trip to Ireland. The Rec Center would receive 10% of the cost of each trip sold during that meeting. He left information on this with the board members.

Human Services - Marissa Federico, Director

Director Federico said that her volume of clients has been steady. She said that as the Public Utility Commission does not allow electricity to be turned off until after March 31, there may be an influx at that time.

Ms. Federico then followed up on a letter she had written to the Board about initiating quarterly social service meetings, which would expand on the monthly social services coordination meetings held by her, Director Butler and Director Mannon to include social service agencies that receive taxpayer funding. The goal would be the sharing of ideas to meet challenges for residents, and to hold the agencies accountable for the funds they receive.

Selectwoman Szwed said that these meetings would be subject to the 91-A Right to Know law as they include outside agencies.

Department of Public Works, Director Phil Coombs

Director Coombs reported that he is continuing to conduct perambulations of bounds with neighboring Towns; he said that money will need to be budgeted to hire a surveyor to locate or reset missing bounds, some of which have been missing a long time.

The state is looking to expand the Green Snow Pro program, which is voluntary for contractors unless they are in an MS-4 impaired area. He said he attended a hearing with other Road Agents put on by NHDES. He said the state is exempted from this program, meaning they can use all the salt they want; he said he has already filed a complaint about this as there are three state highways going through town and pushing into the ditch. He said what will result is a chloride impairment that the town does not currently have, which will increase MS-4 reporting and in turn increase engineering costs. He said they take the training and do their best to meet the standards only to have state trucks going through and dumping salt at an insane rate. He said this raises unsustainable expectations of residents who see the state roads clear and black, because they have dumped the equivalent of the town's entire salt budget in one hour.

Mr. Coombs said there is a PO for the Board to sign for the Grace Daly barn work.

The Director reported that Eversource had completed culvert work in the Webster Natural area, meaning essentially the Town had a stream crossing put in for free. He

said this works out well for the Town as it is where the potential well water site will be. Mr. Coombs said that he talked to Eversource while out there and had a conversation about double poles, which are a longstanding problem where a new company takes over a pole, but the prior company (in these cases, Consolidated Communications) does not remove their equipment. This results in old equipment hanging there, the inability to take down an old pole, and loss of revenue due to the Town. He went over some of the history, including past consultation with an attorney, and said at this point he would like to consult with Sansoucy, the utilities assessor, to get advice on how to proceed.

Mr. Coombs said there is a match commitment letter for the Main Street Bridge grant, which he said was previously approved to be taken out of the Infrastructure Fund. He said this is a 90/10 grant. Discussion took place on what is required for the match; Mr. Coombs said that the town has already essentially spent its portion on engineering and wetlands work. In order to use the Infrastructure Fund, the Board is authorized to spend the earnings on the account only, after holding a public hearing.

Mr. Coombs then brought to the Board's attention that kitchen equipment from the Recreation Center has been put on the Municibid auction site, and that in the past it had been agreed that an employee interested in an item can offer a price that would become the reserve price. He said he is bringing it up because an employee did bid on a kitchen item which did not meet the reserve after two weeks.

In discussion, it was decided that the Board and other departments should be notified on these offerings and a policy should be in place, but in this case the employee may purchase the item(s). There was also a question about where the money is to be deposited; Mr. Coombs said that in the past most of the equipment was highway surplus and the proceeds would come back to the Highway reserve fund.

Mr. Coombs said that he needs direction on how to proceed with the front stairs of the Town Hall, and also wants to know if the Board would like him to do a roads presentation as he did last year. He said the alternative is to have an engineering firm assess the roads, which would cost \$35,000.

Chair Alessio said she was invited to go down Jericho Drive to see how the chip seal on that road is aging. She said a resident took pictures, which are in the Board packets and

depict gravel debris on the side of the road and into the grass, and also large cracks. She said she didn't think the road looked bad, but the residents are still not happy. It was decided that a presentation should be given and all options discussed so that the Board can give Mr. Coombs a decision one way or another on how to proceed.

Police Department: Chief Joel Johnson

Chief Johnson reported that his department is busy but that all is going well.

BOARD AND DEPARTMENTS DISCUSSION TOPICS:

Policies review and input:

Director Mahoney presented a new policy for Accounts Payable, and revisions to the Purchasing Policy and Purchase Order template. There was discussion on the details and some minor amendments made:

MOTION: by Selectwoman Szwed, to approve the Purchase Order form as revised.

SECOND: by Selectman Hart

All in favor

Departments were instructed to use the form with the revision date on it.

MOTION: by Selectman Hart, to approve the revised Purchasing Policy with additional wording added to Section 11 regarding Land Use professional services.

SECOND: by Selectwoman Szwed.

All in favor

MOTION: by Selectman Coppelman, to approve the Invoice (Accounts Payable) Policy with amendments discussed.

SECOND: by Selectman Hart

All in favor

Change time of Department Head monthly meetings?

It had been suggested to change the timing of the monthly Department Head meetings to Monday afternoons. After some discussion, it was decided to leave them as they are, on the last Monday of each month at 9:00 am.

Stacy Dion commented that many committee and board chairs have jobs and can't attend these morning meetings. An opportunity will be added to an evening meeting for them to attend and report on their committee.

(The Board called for a 5 minute break at this time.)

Public Comment 1: None

OLD BUSINESS:

Preservation Easement flow chart and checklist

The checklist as prepared by Ernie Landry and Bob Bean was reviewed. This will be used to assist the Board in making an informed and objective decision on historic barn easements, starting with a public hearing on April 1.

MOTION: by Selectman Coppelman to adopt the checklist as presented.

SECOND: by Selectman Bakie

There was a brief discussion with Ernie Landry about the contents of the checklist and guidance offered by the Department of Historical Resources advisory committee on what factors to look at.

All in favor

Follow up: Town Hall renovations discussion

Selectman Hart began the discussion by commenting that after the opinions aired at the last meeting, he is inclined to figure out exactly what it costs to get the full steps repaired as they are. He said the town has procrastinated on a lot of projects, and it seems that the stairs are a priority, so whether the project needs to be engineered or not, it should be done as soon as possible.

Chair Alessio said she would personally prefer having an architect look at the Town Hall as a whole, and that maybe a 5- or 10-year plan is needed. She said she did not mind the look of the prefab steps because when all is said and done, people won't notice the difference. She said as a similar example, there is aluminum siding in the historic district. She said her real concern is that it is not just the front steps, it's the HVAC system and expanding office space. She said that to half-heartedly make improvements without a master plan could run into problems.

Selectwoman Szwed agreed that there should be a holistic look at the building, with the understanding that there are some immediate needs. She said that she also thinks there should be a 5-year plan because if repairs keep happening piece-meal this will be coming up again in 10 years.

Selectman Coppelman also agreed that an overall plan is the best option at the moment, but wondered if there is a way to address the front steps as a separate project and get them done sooner. He said if they need to stay as they are until the overall plan is known, he is fine with that too. He said there are possible funding sources to look into. Selectwoman Szwed said one immediate factor to consider is the ARPA funding; if a plan is gotten in place then anything to be paid through those funds needs to be obligated by the end of the year.

Director Coombs said he hopes whatever the Board decides, they will stand by it along with him.

Selectman Hart said that he does feel the front steps are separate from a plan for the entire building, and asked Director Coombs how he would want to proceed. The Director said that it is probably easiest to have one person plan the entire building; he said the proposal he laid out previously did consider future expansion but at this point it may be best to have one person draw everything up.

There was a lengthy discussion on all aspects of the Town Hall renovations and planning. A motion was made and rescinded.

There was wide agreement that an architect should be hired to plan the entire project and all its components.

Selectman Bakie said that he felt the front stairs is a separate issue, and proposed the plan should be to go ahead and get pricing and fix them as planned, and then get an architect to come in and address the rest of the building. He said otherwise the front stairs are going to stay broken for a couple more years.

All members agreed this is a good approach.

Selectman Hart asked about several other issues that had been part of the overall plan, such as the added window in the Town Clerk's office and the door into the server room.

Mr. Coombs said that those are not priorities but were brought up as doable while the electrical and HVAC work was being done. As for the exterior fascia work, he said he has a contractor coming in for the Grace Daly barn work, and will have him look at the Town Hall fascia and get some ideas from him. Selectwoman Szwed said that the fascia could also be a separate project from the overall interior renovation.

Assessing and Permitting office window hours

Chair Alessio said that the Assessing and Permitting window will be opening at 8:00 AM each day beginning on April 1. Going forward, the hours will remain the same year-round rather than changing to a 9:00 am opening in winter.

NEW BUSINESS

Option Agreement with Revision Energy - amendment to lease

Selectman Coppelmann explained that the Town had an arrangement with Revision Energy to have an option on the old landfill to start assessing its potential for holding a solar farm. He said the Board only had the authority to offer a one-year option, so a Warrant Article was placed to allow for up to 5 more years to complete the assessment. That article passed, so the Board now has an amendment to the original agreement to sign.

MOTION: by Selectman Coppelmann to approve, and authorize the Chair to sign the amendment extending the option agreement with Revision Energy

SECOND: by Selectman Hart

All in favor

Local Match Commitment Letter (Main St. Bridge project)

There was a discussion of this letter, which asks for a source for the matching funds for the grant for the Main Street bridge project. Noticing that the agreed upon source is the Infrastructure Fund, Selectman Coppelmann said that a public hearing will be necessary, and this will be set for April 8.

Sale of Town Property 2024

The Administrative Assistant informed the Board that there had been an inquiry into 47 Newton Junction Road, which was deeded to the Town for back taxes in May of 2022. It was decided that individual Board members would take a look at the property and discuss it at the next meeting.

Fairgrounds Committee

Selectwoman Szwed said that the Fairground Study Group has completed their study of possible uses of the Fairgrounds land, and the next step is to hold a public hearing with the Board. This will be set for May 6.

Inspectors Vehicle

Selectman Bakie said he had looked at the 2012 Ford Explorer that had last been used by the former Building Inspector. He said a list was forwarded to him of what it needs to make it roadworthy, and he inquired whether the DPW mechanic could complete a few of the tasks, but he is too busy right now. He said the vehicle has 76,000 miles on it. He said he did have a battery put into it, and dropped it off at AJ Auto, where they will

provide a detailed list of exactly what it needs. Meanwhile, he had found that in January and February of this year, Pedro Avila had been paid \$238 for mileage (356 miles at 67 cents per mile). He said the Town has never had an inspector vehicle maintenance fee; in November of 2022 this vehicle needed \$322 worth of work that was taken out of the Town Inspector's supply budget.

Joe Thompson Memorial

Selectman Coppelman said the previous board had purchased and planted a tree as a memorial for Joe Thompson. He said they had talked about adding a granite marker; this will cost \$300 including shipping, and he wanted to be sure this board is okay with that. All were in agreement to purchase the marker.

Public Comment 2: None heard

BOARD BUSINESS:

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

MOTION: By Selectman Hart, to approve the meeting minutes of March 18, 2024, as written.

SECOND: by Selectwoman Szwed

In favor: All

Special Events request: acoustic music at Draft House: Saturdays 5/27 - 9/28

MOTION: by Selectman Hart, to allow acoustic outdoor music at the Draft House Restaurant on Saturdays from May 27 - September 28, 2024

SECOND: Selectwoman Szwed

There was a discussion in which all agreed this is not eligible as a "Special Event" when the plan is for music every week, that this will require an amended site plan to allow outdoor music.

In favor: None; **Against:** Alessio, Bakie, Coppelman, Hart, Szwed; **Motion fails.**

Facilities Use Request: Nat'l Day of Prayer use of Plains and bandstand

MOTION: by Selectman Coppelman, to approve use of the Plains and bandstand for this purpose contingent upon Fire Department approval.

SECOND: Selectman Hart

All in favor

Elderly Exemption applications were approved (5)

Veterans Credit application approved (1)

Abatement form for Tax Collector signed (abatement previously approved).

Facebook questions

Adam Faulconer said he had gotten a question through the Facebook page, and wanted to know if he should just answer questions on his own or forward it to someone else. It was agreed that depending on the question, he can just reply, or direct it to the appropriate department.

Meeting Adjourned at 12:30 PM

Respectfully submitted:

Susan H. Ayer, Administrative Assistant to the Select Board