

Town of Newport, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen Regular Business Meeting & Public Hearing
Minutes of December 18, 2023

Municipal Building, 15 Sunapee Street, Newport, NH 03773

Meeting ID: 845 2112 4520 **Passcode:** 661307

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84521124520?pwd=VFARQm5yUnR3dFpKR2pEejY3NVdnZz09>

+1 (253) 215 8782 US (audio only, long-distance fees apply)

SELECTMEN PRESENT: Barry Connell, Chairman; James Burroughs, Vice Chairman; Jeffrey Kessler, Jeffrey North, Keith Sayer

SELECTMAN ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Paul Brown, Interim Town Manager & Finance Director, Police Chief Alex Lee; Lee Dufort, Town Clerk

COMMUNITY MEMBERS PRESENT: Bert Spaulding, Sr., Wayne Boardman, Ed Karr, Kurt Minich, Doug Ring, Kyle Dilger, Rachel Dilger

NCTV: NCTV

CALL TO ORDER: Barry Connell called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. (Full meeting can be found on www.nctv-nh.org)

AGENDA REVIEW: Selectman Burroughs requests Action Item: **Accept Comfort Dog Program Donation of \$5,000.00 from Kyle & Rachel Dilger**, be moved to after the Public Hearing.

PUBLIC HEARING: The Board of Selectman of the Town of Newport, New Hampshire will hold a Public Hearing to present and take comments on a \$4,785,000.00 USDA Grant for Construction of the Newport Community Center: Interim Town Manager Paul Brown, starts by saying this grant has been spoken of many times prior to this meeting. He states the USDA requires a specific Public Hearing for this grant. This is a \$4,785,000.00 grant, coming through the USDA Rural Development Authority, on the construction only of this project. It was authorized to be congressionally directed spending, requested by Senator Shaheen. It went through the appropriate committees and the budget process and was approved. The Town is working on finalizing the documents for this. Interim Town Manager Brown gives an update on the construction process, and states ground has been broken, footings have been poured for the foundation, and the expected soft opening is November 2024. Ed Karr wants clarification that the grants the Town has received will fully pay for the completion of the Community Center. Brown responds by saying this grant pays for 52% of the project, and they have a little over \$2.5 million in the bank from donations and private grants. He adds a few doners have agreed to pay over a period of two or three years and have made their first payment. There are also specific donations, such as the little league field. The Town has applied for, and is confident about, a million-dollar grant from the State of New Hampshire for Community Centers. There is an additional \$156,000 from Homeland Security for a generator. Interim Town Manager Paul Brown states he is certain we will have enough funding. He adds within the contract for construction, they can stop at any time without penalty to accommodate for any mishaps during the process. Bert Spaulding Sr. asks Brown what the shortfall is at hand. He responds, since the million-dollar grant from the State of New Hampshire has not been guaranteed, and donations have not been received, we stand at \$1,040,000. There has been discussion about different avenues of

funding if the one million dollars from the State does not come through. One being utilizing the money from workforce housing. *The Public Hearing was closed at 6:47 p.m.*

MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING(S): Minutes from November 13, 2023, special meeting minutes were accepted by the Board **on motion made by Selectman Kessler, seconded by Selectman Burroughs. The Board voted 5-0-0.**

Minutes from November 17, 2023, Non-Public special meeting minutes were accepted by the Board **on motion made by Selectman Kessler, seconded by Selectman Burroughs. The Board voted 5-0-0.**

Minutes from December 4, 2023, Regular Business minutes were accepted by the Board. **On motion made by Selectman Sayer to accept minutes, seconded by Selectman North. The Board voted 5-0-0.**

Minutes from December 4, 2023, Non-Public minutes were accepted by the Board **on motion made by Selectman Kessler, seconded by Selectman North. The Board voted 5-0-0.**

ACTION ITEM: Accept Comfort Dog Program Donation of \$5,000.00 from Kyle & Rachel Dilger: Police Chief Lee informs the Board about the Comfort Dog Program. He states comfort dogs are trained to be social and comforting for children and adult victims and witnesses of crimes. Research has shown trauma makes it difficult for people to accurately account for what happened, so an emotional/comfort dog makes it easier to work with the police. The dog will be assigned to one or more officers at the police department. The dog will respond to critical incidences at various locations such as, at the station, the Children Advocacy Center, and will be utilized at the schools to build and foster relationships. Chief Lee states this will be a huge asset to the community. This is being funded entirely by private donations. Police Chief Lee adds the community has been very receptive to this. He recognized Kyle and Rachel Dilger, who are Newport residents from the greater Phoenix area. They are large supporters of law enforcement as well as animal lovers. On behalf of the Board, Chairman Connell welcomes the Dilger's to the community and thanks them for their support and donation. **On a motion made by Selectman Kessler to accept the comfort dog donation of \$5,000 from Kyle and Rachel Dilger, seconded by Selectman Burroughs, the Board voted unanimously. 5-0-0.**

CONSENT AGENDA: *Selectman Kessler made a motion to accept the Consent Agenda, seconded by Selectman Sayer, the Board voted unanimously. 5-0-0.*

INFORMATIONAL: Dexter Firefighting Hand Pumper – Ed Karr: Ed Karr, retired member representing the Firefighter Association, gives a handout to the Board. In summary, the bank has had possession of the Dexter Firefighting Hand Pumper but it is ultimately the Town's property. The Firefighter Association has maintained the upkeep over the years. Due to the association dissolving, they recently approached the Newport Historical Society who has agreed to assume custodianship of the display in the bank. Selectman Burroughs, on behalf of the Board, thanks the Firefighter Association for what they have done and given to the community over the years. Selectman Kessler suggests an article in *The Newport Times* on the history of the association.

Update on Town Manager Position: Interim Town Manager Brown states the Board is negotiating with the finalist and is anticipating a notice in the next week. Chairman Connell adds they interviewed him during T'was the Night Before Christmas, and things went well.

North Newport Development/New Municipal Well: Selectman Burroughs relays the Conservation Commission brought the plot of land, across from the airport, which is being developed into a pit, up at the previous Planning Board meeting. The Conservation Commission looked at this matter and thought

there needed to be a discussion regarding the potential impact it may have on the water well source being developed off Corbin Road. Selectman Burroughs states there was discussion about evaluating the land to see if there is any impact. Chairman Connell adds they are worried about the runoff into the wetlands and the effect on the aquifer. This project development of the new pit has been previously approved by the Planning and Zoning Boards; however, it is going back for secondary review for several issues. Selectman Kessler adds in the spring, there will be a one-week long capacity test, four hundred gallons per minute, to see the impact within a mile radius. DES will help monitor this. Interim Town Manager Brown states he will contact the engineers and make them aware of the pit being developed and see where their concern lies.

Revisions to Planning & Zoning Ordinances: Selectman Burroughs states there were several proposed things discussed at the meeting regarding the next warrant article adjustments. One of the changes discussed would be to increase the lot size for rural residential areas. Interim Town Manager Brown states there is not much time to solidify the verbiage as there needs to be two public hearings before bringing it to the Town Clerk in March. There is ambiguity within definitions, specifically duplex and cluster housing. Ed Karr wants clear communication between the Boards and the Town if there are adjustments. Selectman Burroughs suggests people attend or watch the Planning Board meetings to become more informed.

Tax Bill Details: Interim Town Manager Brown starts by saying there are still people who have not yet received their tax bills yet, despite being mailed on the same day. The tax rate increased by \$2.68, roughly a 12.5% increase. The breakout of the increase is as follows, the Town, \$0.46; the school \$1.78; the county, \$0.05, and the state school \$0.39. Brown states most of the changes were projected last March. He addresses the complaint of people who are upset the increase all happened on the second bill. Brown adds the increases always only happen on the second bill; it is a function of state law. Chairman Connell asks what the projection looks like for next year. Brown responds by saying his goal is to reduce the town's portion by \$0.25. Selectman Burroughs asks Brown if there was a possibility for another reevaluation, and what are the costs. Brown responds, there can be a revaluation done every year. Under the state constitution, there needs to be one done every five years. The cost would vary between \$100,000 and \$250,000. Based on the housing market at the current stage, doing a revaluation would be a gamble. Selectman Sayer states the tax bills are much harder to anticipate than the water and sewer bill increases. He adds incremental increases would be much easier for a lot of families.

Workforce Housing Update: Interim Town Manager Brown relays to the Board he has met with Mr. Franks on Spring Street where they are moving along with the project. The water meter has been delivered. Mr. Franks projected finish date is middle of January. The Ruger Mill transferred two weeks ago, so they will be starting the demo and renovations soon. Selectman Sayer asks if the Spring Street property has been taxed. Brown states they were taxed on the land for this year. Bert Spaulding Sr. asks what the negotiated hook up rate in dollars is. Brown states it was just under \$30,000.00, 30% of the Town's access fees, however contingent on a grant.

ACTION ITEMS: Car Nutz Summer 2024 Car Show – Wayne Boardman: Wayne Boardman states he has been organizing car shows for roughly seventeen years. He says Pattens Auto Body hosts a Cruise Night car show with police, fire, and EMS and wants to see it be moved to the center of Town as it was a well responded to event. Boardman proposes having Main Street be blocked off on July 8, 2024, as such for the T' was the Night Before Christmas event. He adds donations that are collected would be donated to the food pantry. Boardman says he is going to be in contact with the Chamber of Commerce regarding getting businesses on Main Street involved as well. There is a question regarding the presence of police detail. Selectman Burroughs suggests this event be treated like any other Town event would be. Police Chief Lee adds there needs to be a consistent policy of rates when they are being used to detail.

Selectman Burroughs states there needs to be a police detail there for safety purposes with the amount of people projected to attend the event as well. He adds he is encouraging of this event and hopes to see it move forward but wants to see it done right to add to the success of Car Nutz. Selectman Kessler points out the Board needs to be strategic about allowing parades to avoid many other groups in the future saying they want a parade without a set-in stone procedure. Selectman North asks Police Chief Lee what the rates are for a detail. Chief Lee said he normally would bill a company \$85.00 per hour for a private detail. There is a Town agreement which allows there to be a reduced rate of \$35.00 per hour. However, the agreement was made years ago and has not taken the increase in pay into account. Chief Lee adds there is limited personnel, so usually it is the salaried employees that cover these duties. ***On a motion made by Selectman Burroughs to allow Wayne Boardman to continue the planning of the Car Nutz Summer Car Show, but to ensure the safety of it through Police Chief Lee's standards, seconded by Selectman Kessler. The Board voted unanimously, 5-0-0.***

Accept and Expend NH State Library Moose Plate Grant for Records Restoration in the amount of \$8,997.00 and authorize the Current and Active Town Manager to Sign All Related Documents: Town Clerk, Lee Dufort, mentions this is roughly the ninth grant the Town has received from them. The Town is working on an invoice records book with dates ranging from 1867 to 1879. There is a Town fireman record book dating from 1832 to 1884, a collection of fire department records that date from 1875 to 1884. The money is used to preserve and scan records. All the records done to date are in digital format, however, the Town's website does not allow them to be uploaded. Lee Dufort adds if anyone is interested, there is a thumb drive available. ***On a motion made by Selectman Burroughs to Accept and Expend NH State Library Moose Plate Grant for Records Restoration in the amount of \$8,997.00 and authorize the Current and Active Town Manager to Sign All Related Documents, seconded by Selectman Kessler. The Board voted unanimously, 5-0-0.***

Review and Approve CDBG Grant Performance Lien for the Opera House Improvements and Authorize the Current and Active Town Manager to Sign All Related Documents: ***On a motion made by Selectman Kessler to Review and Approve CDBG Grant Performance Lien for the Opera House Improvements and Authorize the Current and Active Town Manager to Sign All Related Documents, seconded by Selectman Sayer. The Board voted unanimously, 5-0-0.***

Election Coverage: Interim Town Manager Brown states the primary is a week after the next Board of Selectman Meeting. Brown wanted to remind the Board there needs to be some presence. This is held, Tuesday, January 23, 2024. Lee Dufort, Town Clerk, adds this is going to be a large election as it is the presidential primary, with a big turnout.

OPEN FORUM: Wayne Boardman asks if there is any new information on the Belknap drains. Brown responds, there is nothing new he has heard from the state. He adds he knows the state scoped it and jettied it.

COMMUNICATIONS: Selectman Kessler states T'was the Night Before Christmas was a great event with a good turnout. He adds it was truly like a Hallmark movie. **Selectman Burroughs** agrees T'was was a phenomenal event and the addition of the DHART Helicopter dropping Santa off was great.

NCTV Recording Ended

NON-PUBLIC SESSION: RSA 91-A:3, II (b) Hiring of Town Employees, RSA 91-A:3, II (d) Real Estate, (added to Non-Public Session) RSA 91-A:3, II (i) Matters Related to Emergency Functions, and RSA 91-A:3, II (c) Reputation of Another: ***On a motion made by Selectman Burroughs, seconded by Selectman Kessler, the Board voted unanimously to go into Non-Public Session at 8:58 p.m., with***

Town Manager Brown in attendance, and Police Chief Alex Lee in attendance for Matters Related to Emergency Functions.

No action was taken during Non-Public Session RSA 91-A:3, II (i) Matters Related to Emergency Functions.

Police Chief Lee left the meeting at 9:09 p.m. and the remainder of Non-Public Sessions took place.

No action was taken during the remainder Non-Public Session topics.

On a motion by Chairman Connell, seconded by Selectman Kessler, ***the Board voted unanimously to come out of Non-Public Session at 10:30 p.m.***

ADJOURNMENT: On a motion made by Selectman Burroughs, seconded by Selectman Kessler, ***the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 10:31 p.m.***

Respectfully submitted,



Riely Skarin
Recording Secretary

The Board of Selectman meeting scheduled for January 1, 2024, has been canceled.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Selectman is scheduled for **January 15, 2024, at 6:30 p.m.**

Approved: January 15, 2024