

TOWN OF NEWPORT, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Board of Selectmen Minutes of September 18, 2023, Regular Business Meeting

Municipal Building, 15 Sunapee Street, Newport, NH 03773

Meeting ID: 811 5586 9788

Passcode: 776367

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81155869788?pwd=SnhtUWY4K0VYUHLyQUlyMnRnbm9PUT09>

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

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

SELECTMAN ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Paul Brown, Interim Town Manager & Finance Director

COMMUNITY MEMBERS PRESENT: Bert Spaulding Sr., Virginia Irwin, Kurt Minich, Herb Tellor

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: There were no changes to the agenda.

MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS: Revised minutes from August 14, 2023 were accepted by the board on a *motion made by Selectman Kessler, seconded by Selectman Burroughs, the board voted unanimously. 5-0-0.* Minutes from August 28, 2023, were accepted by the board on a *motion made by Selectman Kessler, 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: Small Business Administration: Rick Morales, from the Small Business Association, presents to the board information about the storm damages. The Small Business Association is working with FEMA to help aid those that were hurt economically by the storm. He explains some non-profits and businesses are eligible to apply for economic damages if they were affected through the SBA. Mr. Morales explains utilizing the Small Business Association may be a good alternative to FEMA in some aspects of the repairs due to the timeliness of the SBA.

Main Street Fire Hydrant Relocation: Mr. Paul Brown addressed the fire hydrants on Main Street, located in front of the Opera House and just after Bar Harbor Bank. The water superintendent, Joe Branch, informed Mr. Brown there are two different water lines the hydrants are connected to. The proposal would include the lines being cut and a replacement to the center median. The town staff felt this project should be contracted out due to the shortage of staff. Selectman North adds he thinks it would be more beneficial to place the hydrant on the north side to not affect any parking spaces, even if that requires additional work. Selectman Burroughs asks if the Fire Chief has any preferences regarding placement; Mr. Brown will follow up with Chief Yannuzzi. Selectman Kessler adds there are two hydrants in the parking areas, and Chief Yannuzzi felt like there only needed to be one. He asks if it would be more practical to keep it on one

side of the street to avoid the cost of new water lines. Selectman North reminds the board about the snow build up around the hydrants is a main concern with the current location of being on the sidewalks.

Community Power Coalition Update: Selectman North informs the board he has been in contact with Henry Hernden, and he has presented the Interim Town Manager, Paul Brown, with necessary application links and documents. North adds once the documents are completed, Hernden will come to the board and present information about the stages, time frames, and other useful aspects on the process. Mr. Brown adds he is waiting for a firm to do a legal review on the Community Agreement.

Waste Water Treatment Plant: Selectman North raises concern about the increase in expenses raising the sewer prices will have on the citizens of Newport and small businesses. He feels the increase is unreasonable in comparison to other towns. North feels larger water usage businesses, such as Woodlawn, would have a detrimental increase to their bill. He questions if there could be a committee made where budgets be re-evaluated to potentially create an alternative to the plan in place. Interim Town Manager Brown responds to North by saying there are many grants helping aid this project but is looking for more to help reduce the cost. Additionally, Brown states there is an all-day workshop with NHSED, USDA, the town, and the engineers, on Monday, about the USDA and the states concern about the operations of the facility. Mr. Brown clarifies the state is looking out for the town's best interest and the system works. Chairman Connell states he thinks we should hold the price line. Selectman Burroughs adds there have been public hearings from the engineers that spoke in depth about the operations, materials, and the economics of the systems. He states this is a matter of the most sustainable system that is going to be practical. The town is at 60% drawings which the state and the feds have reviewed. The next phase is 90% drawings, which is due December 1, 2023, final drawings and bid packages are supposed to be out at the end of January for a spring bid. It is required that the town be in full operation by December of 2025. Selectman Kessler raises concern about the budget set aside for the drawings done for the two-bay system at the plant, he states if the USDA and the state require a three-bay system, who is going to pay for the already done drawings. Interim Town Manager Brown is hoping there can be a compromise made depending on the outcome of the workshop. Selectman Kessler states if the USDA and the state are requiring additional operations, he would like to see the infiltration/inflow (I&I) be addressed in the pipes and hopefully have some assistance from state assistance.

Miscellaneous Town Equipment Including Street Sweeper: Mr. Brown states the street sweeper has ongoing issues, however the town used it just before the Apple Pie Crafts Fair to clean up downtown and is able to run. The remaining sidewalks have not been swept this summer. Interim Town Manager Brown adds the new sidewalk tractor is operational and the old one is a backup and is not as effective. The town is going to start preparing sanders for winter. Selectman North suggests sweeping downtown prior to the winter months would be highly beneficial to the clean-up crews when plowing.

Combining Heritage Commission with Monuments & Memorials Committee: Selectman Burroughs speaks on how both the Heritage Commission and the Monuments & Memorials Committee share common responsibilities, coverage areas, and scopes. He states it would be more efficient in the operations for both the Heritage Commission and the Monuments & Memorials Committee. Virginia Irwin added they would engage with the Historic District as well. She feels as finding volunteers for both groups is challenging, it would be in the best interest for everyone if they were combined.

Airport Advisory Board: The board received a letter from the Airport Advisory Board with concern regarding the non-aeronautical of commercial use of the airport. A member from the advisory board states this does not work with any type of airport. Town sponsored events are able to use the space, however, if

the airport becomes federally regulated, the Airport Advisory Board says any non-related events will no longer take place.

ACTION ITEMS: Authorize Change School Street for One-Way Traffic 7:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (currently at 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.): Police Chief Lee relays to the board Richards School used to dismiss school prior to 3:00 p.m., currently they dismiss at 3:00 p.m. with new protocols in place. Chief Lee state she does not think it's very beneficial to have the one-way restriction end at the time the elementary school is being dismissed. He suggests extending the restriction until 4:00 p.m. for safety purposes. Mr. Brown adds since this is an ordinance change, there needs to be a public hearing. Selectman Burroughs suggests the residents on the road should be sent a letter about the potential changes and the public hearing information. Selectman North asks why the street is not strictly a one-way to avoid confusion all together. Chief Lee responds by saying the School Board would prefer to make it a full-time one-way street, however the town was trying to be cognizant of the residents' opinions as they, in previous years, opposed the idea. Chief Lee states the Student Resource Officer has been directed to be at Richards on the days scheduling permits.

Ambulance Purchase: Interim Town Manager Brown informs the board an ambulance purchase was approved at a town meeting for \$300,000, with \$180,000 for capital reserve withdrawal, \$60,000 in donation, and \$60,000 in current property taxes. The quote states the new ambulance will be \$344,078, which leaves the town short. There is about \$12,000 in the ambulance donations fund. The lead time on the ambulance is roughly 18 months, which will put the \$32,000 difference into the 2024-2025 budget. Mr. Brown adds the town puts roughly \$60,000 a year towards ambulances, he suggests it may need to be increased. Additionally, Mr. Brown says we will be applying for a USDA grant up to \$50,000 for the difference. The town needs to give the dealership a written commitment for the ambulance. ***On a motion made by Selectman Kessler to commit to the ambulance and make up the short fall, seconded by Selectman Burroughs. The board voted unanimously, 5-0-0.***

Appointment to Heritage Commission: Kathryn Luppold, Alternate Member, 3-Year Term Ending June 2026: Virginia Irwin informs the board this should be a full member. ***On a motion made by Selectman Burroughs to appoint Kathryn Luppold as a full member for a 3-year term ending June 2026, seconded by Selectman North. The board voted unanimously, 5-0-0.***

Community Center: Mr. Paul Brown informs the board he has confirmed the project costs at \$9,148,787. The funding stack for the project is \$1,044,037 on hand, two pledges awaiting contract signing for a total of \$1,533,333, a pledge awaiting construction of the little league field which will happen in 2024 of \$300,000, there is \$268,667 in multi-year pledges, \$61,750 in sixteen outstanding pledges. The USDA funding consists of \$4,785,000, the state grant of \$1,000,000 with the deadline to apply the end of November, and the NH Homeland Security ENPG grant for a generator at \$156,000. This balances out the total funding needed. Interim Town Manager Brown met with Breadloaf, and the projected project costs have been bid and fixed. If there is approval, they will be breaking ground November 1, 2023. ***On a motion made by Selectman Kessler to authorize interim town manager to enter a contract amendment with Breadloaf for the construction of the Community Center, seconded by Selectman Sayer. The board voted, 4-1-0, with North opposing.***

Town Manager Search Committee: Virginia Irwin asks the board to review the Town Manager profile, the ad, and the job description. Mrs. Irwin informs the board the committee has agreed on all three documents and is ready to move forward with the next step. Mr. Bown is all set to send out the advertisement to various places. Mrs. Irwin addresses the job description and why it states the manager is not required to live within the town; she says it stemmed from a court case in the State of New Hampshire

and they legally cannot require that. Virginia Irwin relays to the board, if they approve, Mr. Brown will send out advertisements and the committee will give potential candidates three and a half weeks to submit resumes. From there, they will review resumes as they come in, and present to the board who they think should be interviewed. Selectman Kessler raised concern about the population of Newport in the profile being above the census's population for the town. The committee agreed to add approximately to the profile to avoid confusion. The board thanked the people on the committee including, Christy Whipple, P.J. Lovely, Virginia Irwin, Mallory Starcher, Rob Selfridge, Herb Tellor, Selectman Burroughs, Selectman North, Selectman Sayer, and Interim Town Manager Brown. ***On a motion made by Selectman Burroughs to advertise the position of Town Manager as recommended by the Search Committee and utilizing all documents provided by the committee, seconded by Selectman Sayer. The board voted unanimously, 5-0-0. =***

OPEN FORUM: Police Chief Lee states there has been concern expressed to him by a school bus driver about residents parking on the side of Laurel Street near the Maple Street intersection. The cars are an obstruction to the school bus as they are trying to turn, which is creating traffic and safety issues. Chief Lee will be in contact with the Highway Department about putting no parking signs in place to eliminate the issue. Additionally, Chief Lee says he spoke with representatives from Millie's Place regarding rental prices. Millie's Place is a sober clubhouse currently located in the plaza with Wags & Wiggles. They host many recovery-oriented meetings throughout the day, as well as create a safe environment for people in the sober community at no cost. Chief Lee was informed by the representatives that their rent has been increasing by \$300, year after year, because of new building ownership. Millie's Place representatives said they were given decreased rent due to their charitable nature, however, can no longer afford the rental prices of their current unit. Chief Lee relays to the board he is looking for someone who owns property downtown or knows someone who owns property that would be willing to rent to Millie's Place at a level they can afford. Chief Lee comments on the great impact this organization has on this community. He adds from the Newport Police Departments perspective, this is a wonderful safe space for those recovering, and is a huge benefit to the department, the community, and the people. Virginia Irwin addresses the board about the town's website. She feels as though there is too much expectation on the town employees to upkeep the website, and that they should hire someone to maintain and revamp it. Mrs. Irwin added this was a topic of discussion at the Town Manager Search Committee meeting since that is the first-place potential candidates are going to go. Chairman Connell responds by fully agreeing with Mrs. Irwin. Selectman Burroughs adds this might be a good opportunity to partner with the school so they both the towns website and the school's website could be upgraded and regularly maintained. There will be an action regarding the website at the next meeting. Bert Spaulding addresses Chairman Connell specifically, by reading statement he wrote about Chairman Connell saying he was not being germane at the previous Board of Selectman meeting. Mr. Spaulding feels as though his speech is being regulated to fit a narrative, and that his rights are being taken from him. Chairman Connell responds by saying it is not his desire to regulate his comments and speech. He takes accountability for interrupting Mr. Spaulding as he thought Mr. Spaulding was taking the subject in a different direction. Chairman Connell says his desire is to keep things moving. Mr. Spaulding commends Chairman Connell and Mr. Brown for the way they have handled the change in town managers. Additionally, Mr. Spaulding, speaking on behalf of himself, visited the bus garage earlier today. He states he had envisioned a shed roof, but now he thinks a gable roof might be a better option.

COMMUNICATIONS: Selectman Kessler speaks about the ground break that happened today for the new natural science building for the Career Technical Center. He gathered they hope to have it closed in by winter to then do finish work during the colder months. He thought it was a nice ceremony. Selectman Burrough spoke with a resident on Unity Road who has seen many cars passing other cars at a high rate of speed in the 35-mph zone. He wanted to know what has been done in the past and what can be done in the

future to ensure the mph regulation is being followed. The resident of Unity Road had already been to the police station, where they told him it was a state patrolled road. Selectman Burroughs, asking on behalf of the resident, is wondering if car accidents were up or down other the past couple of years. Additionally, he was wondering if the flashing speed signs can be placed on Unity Road for a period of time. This resident is also offering up his driveway as a place officers can park to enforce the speed limit. Chief Lee responds by saying proactive enforcement vanished after covid and has not fully recovered. This is largely to do with staffing in the patrol division. Chief Lee is happy to report there were two conditional offers signed today for two recruits to put in the next academy, and a third in the background investigation process, who they are hoping to send to the January academy. Long-term, this will put two additional patrol officers on duty. As for Unity Road, Police Chief Lee states that is one of the four top enforced roads in town, and the patrol officers are trying their best to enforce speed limits. Chief Lee says he will get back to Selectman Burroughs about the accident data. The flashing speed signs are movable. Chief Lees plan was to set up bases throughout town to make them more portable, but the turnover in employees have halted this plan.

Selectman North gives recognition to Dan Huot and his wife who came to the Historical Committee Meeting last week and now have slate replica roof going up on 31 Main Street. He commends them for taking on the financial burden and the effort to do something historically correct. Selectman North clarifies a comment in a previous meeting where he said LaValley's did the Main Street striping draw up, Dan Huot put in his personal time to get the drawings done. He also commends the Superintendent for the Newport School Letters. **Chairman Connell** states up until this past year we have always had a Budget Advisory Committee. Herb Tellor has stepped forward to encourage people to become involved with the BAC. Chairman Connell says there were no recommendations last year and stresses the importance of having a Budget Advisory Committee for the town. In the past the board has had about seven members. Chairman Connell encourages people if they are interested to contact the town. **Town Manager** addressed the flood repairs. Whitcher Road is now open, but not fully completed. Camel Hump Road and Flether Road are being worked on next week. The town just received a permit to repair a section of Old Goshen Road. The Governor has requested the federal disaster declaration, the President has not yet.

On a motion made by Selectman Kessler to enter a non-public session under RSA 91-A:3, II (e) Litigation; RSA 91-A:3, II (d) Real Estate, seconded by Selectman North, the board voted unanimously via roll call vote, 5-0-0.

NON-PUBLIC SESSION: RSA 91-A:3, II (e) Litigation: RSA 91-A:3, II (d) Real Estate. ***On a motion made by Selectman Kessler, seconded by Selectman Burroughs to exit the non-public session at 9:46 p.m., 5-0-0. On a motion made by Selectman Kessler, seconded by Selectman Burroughs, the board voted unanimously to seal the NPS minutes until December 4, 2023, 5-0-0.***

ADJOURNMENT: ***On a motion made by Selectman Kessler, seconded by Selectman Burroughs the board voted unanimously to adjourn at 9:50 p.m., 5-0-0.***

Respectfully submitted,



Riely Skarin, Recording Secretary

The next regular meeting of the Board of Selectman is scheduled for **October 2, 2023, at 6:30 p.m.**

Approved: October 2, 2023