

**TOWN OF NEWFIELDS SELECT BOARD  
MEETING MINUTES  
TUESDAY APRIL 25, 2023**

**Select Board Present:** Chairman Michael Sununu, Hoby Harmon & Mike Kessler  
**Others Include:** Fire Chief Jeff Buxton, Jeff Couture - Conservation Commission Chair, Brian Knipstein, Lynette Batt – Trust for Public Land, Derek Rugg – Rock Crest Gardens & Police Chief Young

**Call to order at 7:00 pm.**

The Select Board reviewed and approved the following items:

School Tax Paid	04/10/23:	Accounts Payable Manifest	\$396,583.00
Checks Dated	04/14/23:	Accounts Payable Manifest	\$ 6,323.78
Checks Dated	04/14/23:	Payroll Manifest	\$ 36,070.74
Checks Dated	04/21/23:	Accounts Payable Manifest	\$ 3,836.46
Checks Dated	04/28/23:	Payroll Manifest	\$ 37,674.72
Checks Dated	04/28/23:	Accounts Payable Manifest	\$ 4,196.21

Michael addressed the public and presented the third reading of the Town Landing ordinance change, as follows:

#9 Any watercraft (kayak, canoe, dinghy, etc.) left at the landing must have the owner’s last name and phone number clearly written on it. Contact the landing overseer for more information (603-772-5070).

With no public comments, Michael closed the third public hearing and motioned, seconded by Hoby, to accept the change to the Town Landing ordinance as written. All were in favor and the motion carried.

**Rock Crest Gardens Place of Assembly Permit:**

The Board discussed Rock Crest Gardens Place of Assembly permit for their event on Saturday May 13<sup>th</sup> from 9am to 3:00 or 4:00pm. This would be an open house event offering the public an opportunity to see a variety of plants, trees, landscaping ideas and a petting zoo. This event will be catered, including alcohol, by Vernon Family Farm. The State is requiring Derek to obtain the permit in adherence to the liquor license. Derek said that he will not have a band for this event but is not ruling it out for future events.

Michael mentioned that the State law may require a kitchen when catering to the public.

Derek provided a map of his facility that the Board, Fire Chief Buxton & Police Chief Young reviewed. They discussed the parking, which according to Derek, would hold approximately 85 cars or more. Chief Buxton told Derek that the tent will need to be inspected prior to the event.

Police Chief Young advised Derek to have a police officer at the event since they will be serving alcohol. Police Chief Young was not sure if the requirement came from the Liquor Commission or town officials, but in surrounding towns, police detail is required at all public events serving alcohol. Derek asked if the officer would be able to help if the road gets congested. Chief Young responded that the officer would not be able to leave the beer tent. Derek indicated that if the detail rate is too high, he will need to upscale the event due to economics.

Michael informed Derek that it would come down to the terms and conditions of the liquor license and what it allows. The Board will need to have a conversation with the Vernon's & the liquor commission to see what is allowed under the license and to ensure that the plant sale does not turn into a one-day bar event.

Michael confirmed with Derek that this is a one-day event and not something that is going to turn into a rolling series of events. Derek responded that everything he does is an individual event. Michael emphasized the importance of going before the planning board if his plans change. The Board will review the license requirements and will get back to Derek within the next few days.

#### **Trust for Public Land/Conservation Commission:**

Lynette Batt said that Trust for Public Land (TPL) is a national non-public organization that protects land for public use. TPL was contacted last fall by SELT and Derek Rugg to look at the potential land conservation of the Rugg property through Town ownership. Her organization works with local partners to facilitate projects of interest to communities. The last work they did in Newfields was the Piscassic Greenway in 2006. She is looking at the conservation of approximately 150 acres of the Rugg property; fifty of these acres are in Exeter. This would be for public recreation. There is a network of trails on the property currently being utilized by the public through the generosity of the Ruggs. It is not public/town land, and she is here to see if the Town would be interested in purchasing the property. She specified that it would not be a conservation easement, but town owned land unencumbered by conservation easement and for the purpose of public recreation and trail use.

Lynette added that if the Town moved forward, it would be a two-year process. TPL would be managing the project & real estate part. She has identified four grant opportunities - two State, two Federal. The rest of the funding would be a Bond from the Town, similar to what was done in 2006. An appraisal for the land is expected to be completed in June-September. After such, she would have a better understanding of the budget and how much the bond would need to be.

Her organization is looking at this as a community forest or an addition to the Town forest. The community forest model has an added element which allows the community to have an input into decision making as to what type of recreation will be allowed/trail maintenance/parking access. If the Town proceeded with this, Lynette would like to have a series of public meetings – one to

access public interest in the town moving forward with the process, and if so, meetings to continue the planning process.

Shawn McGowan said that he has community forest experience and is a board member of Inland Woods and Trails and offered to help with this project. His organization is currently working with TPL in Maine.

Michael asked if it was an all of nothing project if it would complicate things if Exeter decided not to go through with it. Derek replied that there is no Exeter access to the land and that he would confirm interest with Newfields first and then approach Exeter. If both towns are interested, they would then proceed together.

Michael said Town ownership will allow more say in the property and ensuring public access to the land versus SELT conservation easement. With that will come some responsibility but the burden of the Town should be just oversight especially if working with local partners for the management.

Hoby asked Lynette what percentage of purchase price grants usually cover. Lynette said that they have four grants that if they got full funding would total \$2.1 million. She cannot estimate the percentage until the appraisal is completed. There are various grants available with some being better fits for certain projects. Sometimes they get 75% of the purchase price and other times only 35%. The grant sources they have identified support the actual purchase of the land by the Town as opposed to conservation easement. Two of them would not support a conservation easement.

The Board will reach out to John Hayden, Derek, Conservation Commission and Lynette to have a series of meetings including residents to see if the Town is interested in purchasing the land.

Lynette told the Board that the first grant application will be due in June. It will be a two-part project since some of the property is in the Town of Exeter.

**Paving:**

Brian Knipstein, the road agent, discussed the paving status with the Board. Bald Hill Rd should be completed by the end of the week. The remainder of Old Lee Road – from Meadow Road to the end of Old Lee, towards Newmarket, will be paved next year after the new development has been completed. Pleasant Street, Finn, Bassett & Partridge Hill Roads also require repaving. Brian explained that he will only have approximately \$7k remaining in his budget after Bald Hill Road and it will not be enough for Old Lee Road. The paving schedule continues to fall further behind. A mile of road was to be repaved every 15-17yrs. When the schedule was made, paving was \$32 a ton, it is now \$85. He asked if the \$20k-\$30k unused portion of a previous budget for Garvey/Winkler Way could be put towards this year.

Michael replied that the funds were placed in an unreserved fund account and that it may be one option. Another option would be possibly utilizing \$20k from the road maintenance trust fund that remains unexpended. The Board, as agents, can release the funds to offset road maintenance costs. The critical issue is to comply with the State Budget rules, the Board must adhere to the budget.

They may have to hold a special town meeting and allocate another \$30k-\$40k for road maintenance.

Hoby suggested having a proactive plan to catch up the paving when they discuss the budget in the Fall.

### **Girards/SELT:**

The Girards own property that has an access road to various Piscassic Greenway trails. In a prior meeting they asked the Board to give SELT permission to access the trails via the trail on Bald Hill Rd. This would give SELT better access for large timber trucks as they feel it is dangerous to have these types of vehicles entering/exiting their driveway that is situated between their house and their garage. Michael feels the Bald Hill access road would be a safer option. The Girards would like the Town's support for moving the access road. There would be no financial obligation of the Town.

Michael motioned, seconded by Mike, to draft a letter in support of moving Piscassic Greenway access from the Girards to the access road on Bald Hill Rd. All were in favor and the motion carried.

### **Crosswalks:**

The Board continued a conversation from a previous meeting regarding the crosswalks on Main Street and at the school. Police Chief Young informed the Board that if the beacon signs have a data mechanism to them, State Highway & Safety will pick up 75% of the cost and any of the data collected from the signs. There is a grant that they could apply for in the summer/fall. The Town would be required to provide maintenance of the signs. Chief Young suggested receiving input from the residents to ensure they want them prior to having the State come to present their data on the effectiveness of signs.

Michael agreed that a meeting would be necessary as not everyone may want this in front of their house. The Board will determine a time to place this subject on the agenda.

### **Rain Gardens:**

The Board discussed the future rain gardens and working with the Garden Club to repair the fence.

### **Old Utility Poles:**

The Board discussed how to get the old telephone poles removed by the utility company. Many towns are having issues getting them removed with some taking legal action. Michael will reach out to Public Utilities Commission and the State Department of Energy on the matter and Hoboy will reach out to the Town of Exeter.

## **Fireworks:**

Fire Chief Buxton informed the Board that the Fire Marshall would like towns to make a policy either for or against residents having fireworks.

## **Other issues:**

The Board discussed two solar exemptions. Michael explained that years ago, the Town recognized that solar power recipients receive full retail rates for the energy they sell back to the utility company. This offsets the utility company's transmission and distribution charges which in essence causes the rest of customers to pay higher utility rates. Michael realizes that exemptions have been issued in the past by other Board members, but he has been consistently opposed. When the warrant article was passed, it was written that if the resident is receiving this subsidy, they would not be eligible for the exemption. No motion was made to approve the exemptions.

Michael motioned, seconded by Hoby, to approve the rental of the Town Hall on May 5/12 & 5/19 for a musical presentation hosted by Billie Bell. All were in favor and the motion carried.

The Board updated the Citizens Bank signature card for the town accounts.

The Board reviewed the permit application from Dragon Mosquito.

Michael mentioned that the Sheriff has posted the Hazell property for auction on June 7<sup>th</sup>, at 10:00am.

Michael will reach out to John Hayden to set up a meeting prior to the end of school to discuss the Rugg property.

Mike K. asked Michael S. how information from Town Boards is disseminated across the other Boards. Michael replied that in respect to the Vernons, to alleviate those concerns, everything has gone through Attorney Durbin who then coordinates with Town personnel/Boards. He advised Mike to reach out to Attorney Durbin, as needed. Regarding the Rugg property, it should be more straightforward as there will be a series of Board and public meetings. At the end, it will come down to a warrant article.

Michael motioned, seconded by Hoby, to approve the 4/11/23 Select Board Meeting Minutes as drafted. All were in favor and the motion carried.

The Select Board decided on the following dates for upcoming meetings:

May 16<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup>

At 8:37pm, Michael motioned, seconded by Hoby, to adjourn the meeting. All were in favor and the motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Kisha Therrien

DRAFT