

## SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES

December 18, 2024

Present: Noah Bond, Jeanne Gervais, Heather McElroy, Pierre Gervais, Greg Manning, Mike Testut, Maria Perry, Beth Rodondi, Ryan Perry, Annie Budrewicz, Jamie Budrewicz, Ed Barber  
John Manning

Attending Virtually: Joel Cope, Mike Strait

The chairperson, Jeanne Gervais, called the meeting to order at 5:00pm.

Pledge of Allegiance: All attendees stood for the Pledge.

Updates to the Agenda: Zoning Administrator, Cemetery Commission, Ryan and Maria Perry, and Recreation Committee. Greg Manning asked Executive Session (Personnel) be added to the agenda.

Public Comment: Zoning Administrator Beth Rodondi told the Board there are two violation issues that need to be escalated to the attorney. One is in regards to the repair business on Meadow Street, the owner of which has not complied with agreements to remove junk and unregistered vehicles from the property. This is in violation of his conditional use permit.

Board members Greg Manning, Pierre Gervais, and Mike Testut argued that the property owner should be given more time, while Jeanne Gervais and Heather McElroy said he had over 90 days to address this matter and enforcement must be consistent. Beth noted that the property owner has not communicated with her regarding any attempts to clean up. The individual has the option of going before the DRB and arguing his case at his own expense. Noah will communicate this with him. Beth will determine what a “concerted” effort is and whether the individual is meeting this standard before proceeding with legal action. No Board action taken.

Beth also spoke about another violation concerning a property with two shipping-style containers. The owner is refusing all communications (i.e. certified letters) regarding permits, which were denied because the containers did not meet setback requirements. She also said the owner threatened her, which is evidenced in letters she was sent. Greg Manning made a motion to authorize Noah Bond to coordinate with Beth Rodondi to contact the Town’s attorney in regards to this individual’s zoning violation. Pierre Gervais seconded. All in favor; motion carried.

As Town Health Officer, Beth Rodondi also spoke about the property at 145 Railroad Street. Beth has attempted to communicate with the owner multiple times regarding health code violations. She issued an emergency health order. It is unclear whether the property has changed ownership. Heather McElroy made a motion to contact the attorney regarding the health order on the property at 145 Railroad Street pending validation of sale in the last 90 days. Seconded by Greg Manning. All in favor; motion carried.

John Manning from the Cemetery Commission spoke to the Board about the Commission's trust fund. He said it renews every October, when they could draw from it without penalty. Mr. Manning said the budget for the cemetery was approximately \$5000, which does not extend far enough to cover expenses and upgrades. The Board asked if the Commission could draw on the fund or use the interest to complete work, in addition to their \$5000 Town budget. Mike Strait said the fund didn't earn significant amounts, so there was no downside to drawing from it.

Animal Control Officer Ryan Perry spoke to the Board about a habitually loose dog. He has spoken with the owner and ticketed her three times. She is not willing to surrender the dog. There have been several complaints from neighbors. Maria Perry also spoke about the need for stricter ordinances, considering the cost of impounding and boarding, as well as the possibility the animal is just returned to the owner. Heather asked Maria to present changes to the ordinance that would be helpful so the Board can review. Joel recommends speaking to the attorney about options to proceed. Mike Testut suggested sending an official letter from the Town before going to the attorney. The Board agreed.

Heather McElroy, as a member of Brighton Recreation, told the Board the Rec Committee had been contacted by a Brighton Elementary basketball coach, saying that the Committee needed to cancel the once per month open gym because that was their practice time. The Committee had scheduled the gym months in advance. The Committee is asking for Board support in keeping this once per month program. Greg Manning suggests the Board send a letter to Brighton Elementary reminding them that the Town Hall Gym is for community use and the Committee had properly scheduled it in advance. The Board unanimously indicates their support for the Rec Committee.

Jamie Budrewicz advised the Board that the recently repaired digital speed sign on Pleasant Street is not working. Noah is working on it with the appropriate parties.

Town Manager's Report: Noah updated the Board on the proposed MOU with Brighton Elementary School. He was told that they needed to wait for a School Board meeting to sign the MOU and return it. The Town cannot move forward without a document signed by either the Board Chair or Principal. He also updated the Board on the proposed placement for the NEK Broadband OLT cabinet. Due to snow, NEK Broadband is concerned this is not a good location. He will connect with NEK Broadband for work-arounds.

Noah spoke about the safety grant, saying the grant requirements didn't allow for the purchase/installation of a lighted crosswalk sign (Cross/Main St). Upon review, the monies can only be used for signage for the bridge on Head of the Pond Road. Mike Strait said that money must be expended by 12/31/2024. Additionally, the grant application specified tree removal/trimming and white line striping of Pleasant Street. The striping was not completed in time, so the town will not receive the \$11,000 for this portion of the project. The Board asked for a written document with the grants in process, key deadlines, and whether they are on-target. No action taken.

Recreation Logo Update: Mike Strait told the Board that the logo for Brighton Recreation has been redesigned to align with Town branding initiatives. Mike also notified the Board that Paul Chambers, who has organized the NEK Marathon for the past several years, is stepping back and will not do so this year. Mike asked the Board if they were willing to continue supporting the marathon. The Board will revisit.

Lakeside Park Reserve Account: Noah told the Board the Town would like to establish a reserve fund to be used for match grants (e.g. tennis court resurfacing), moving the line item for Lakeside Park to this account. Pierre Gervais made a motion to set up the Lakeside Park Reserve Account. Seconded by Heather McElroy. All in favor; motion carried.

Budget: Mike Strait presented a draft version of the 2025 to the Board. Highlighted were areas that require Board discussion as they represented significant increases. These include: Salt and chloride; sand, stone, and seed; paving; equipment purchases (including dump truck with grant offset); municipal loan fund; equipment reserve fund, building maintenance, etc.

Mike Testut inquired about staff wage increases. Proposed is a 2% increase. Social Security COLA 2025 is 2.5% and the inflation rate is 2.75%. Mike Testut said that, given the budget this year, he didn't believe a 2% increase was warranted. Heather McElroy said that, given the establishment of a union in Brighton, other employees may join and realize larger increases outside of the Town's control. Noah Bond recommended that increases not be less than COLA. Mike Strait also discussed the proposed expenditures for listing services.

\$41,501.60 was 2024's actual cost for reappraisal, with a proposed increase to 80,798.60 for 2025. The total cost of reappraisal will be approximately \$122,000, and there is approximately \$90,000 in the reserve account. The Town will also receive an additional \$10,000 from the State for this purpose. Mike Strait asked the Board whether they wanted to pay \$25,000 out of the budget and \$16,000 from the reserve fund or add the cost to the 2025 budget. 2025's reappraisal costs will be drawn solely from the reserve fund. The Board elected to pay it this year.

The Board will continue to discuss the budget in upcoming minutes.

Pay Orders: The Board reviewed and signed the pay orders for the road department expense account and the general expense accounts.

Other Business: Pierre Gervais asked for an update on the 10 Mile Square replacement/temporary bridge. Noah is working with VTRANS and FEMA on a permanent solution. The Board decided to put up signage indicating the road was closed to prevent thru traffic.

Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting: Pierre Gervais moved to approve the minutes of the previous meeting as recorded. Seconded by Mike Testut. All in favor; motion carried.

Executive Session: Greg Manning made a motion to enter Executive Session with Noah Bond in attendance at 8:23pm for personnel issues. Seconded by Pierre Gervais. All in favor; motion carried.

A motion was made by Heather to enter into executive session and Pierre seconded the motion.

The board entered into executive session to discuss personnel matter at 8:38 P.M.

The board exited executive session at 8:42 P.M.

A motion was made by Heather to adjourn the meeting seconded by Pierre. Board adjourned at 8:42 P.M.