

Town of Newington, NH
Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes
Thursday November 2nd, 2023

Present: Chair Bob Blonigen, Selectman Chris Wayss, Chris King, USAF, Sewer Commissioner Rick Stern, Sewer Commissioner Tom Hazelton, Police Commission Chair Brenda Blonigen, Police Chief Mike Bilodeau, Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) Member Mike Donahue, Planning Board Chair Denis Hebert, Board of Fire Engineer Chair John Klanchesser, Board of Fire Engineer Jim Fabrizio, Board of Fire Engineer Ann Hyland Hebert, Resident Meaghen Wayss, Town Administrator Martha Roy, Finance Director Sheryl Bagley and Eleanor Boy, Recorder.

B. Blonigen called the meeting to order at 5:30pm. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes Approval: C. Wayss moved to approve the minutes of October 16th, 2023. B. Blonigen seconded the motion. All were in favor. C. Wayss moved to table approval of the minutes of October 23rd, 2023. B. Blonigen seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Manifest Approval: C. Wayss moved to approve the manifest for \$101,632.81 dated 10/26/2023. B. Blonigen seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Facility Use Requests:

C. Wayss moved to approve the facility use request from the Recreation Committee-Old Town Hall-Exercise Dance Class-10 weeks on Tuesdays starting 1/9/24 through 3/23/24 from 4pm to 9pm. B. Blonigen seconded the motion. All were in favor.

C. Wayss moved to approve the facility use request from the Recreation Committee-Old Town Hall-Yoga Class-10 weeks on Saturdays starting 1/6/24 through 3/9/24 from 7:30am to 10:30am. B. Blonigen seconded the motion. All were in favor.

C. Wayss moved to approve the facility use request from the Recreation Committee-Old Town Hall-Holiday Party-Saturday 12/9/23 from 11am to 7pm. B. Blonigen seconded the motion. All were in favor.

C. Wayss moved to approve the facility use request from the Fire Department-Town Hall Auditorium-Training-Wednesday 11/15/23 from 9am to 4pm. B. Blonigen seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Christopher King, USAF-Newington Town Property Water Sample Wells:

B. Blonigen said that the USAF is placing wells around Newington to follow the plume of PFAS chemicals. C. King said that they are trying to expand their knowledge of the plume by placing more wells around Newington.

B. Blonigen asked if they are finding anything. C. King said unfortunately yes, that is why they are going into this next phase. B. Blonigen said that the Selectmen are

concerned because there are still 40 residents that are still on wells. C. King said that they actively monitor those wells to determine trends. B. Blonigen asked if they monitor the streams that run from the base to the Bay. C. King said those have been tested and they have PFAS in them. The levels in those streams are going down. The process that they are following is the next step is the feasibility study and then the final decision of the EPA with their record of decision and then they go into the cleanup program.

M. Roy said that residents attended the RAB meeting last night and heard that some chicken eggs in the area have high levels of PFAS in them. C. King said that they have been monitoring locations where the residents are watering their chickens with well water and have found PFAS in the eggs. The next year they tested more locations with chickens that were watered using city water and those eggs also had PFAS in them. They are unclear how these eggs are getting PFAS in them. M. Roy asked if the level of PFAS in the eggs was above the State limits. C. King said that there was no such thing. There are only levels for drinking water and they are working on levels for soil contamination. Discussion ensued about the shellfish study that was done and the levels found in them were not significant enough to limit the number of shellfish consumed. Oysters are showing little or no PFAS in them.

B. Blonigen asked about the testing of soil around the Fire Station. They did the soil testing a year ago and didn't find any PFAS. They decided to test the soil in that location because one of the wells showed high concentrations of PFAS in it. That well is drilled into shallow bedrock.

C. Wayss asked about the plume of PFAS moving to other wells or soils in the area. The plume doesn't move that fast, about a foot a year. There are quite a few monitoring wells in Newington that are above the State limits.

C. Wayss asked if they were testing for short chain contaminants and long chain contaminants. C. King said that they look for everything. C. Wayss wanted to make sure that residents understand that the short chain PFAS are emerging as the new threat to drinking water. The charts that were given to the Board include the short chain PFAS.

Discussion ensued about the history of chemicals used at the Pease Air Force base, the clean up programs, the RAB involvement, the firefighting foam used at Pease.

M. Roy asked about the charts showing the wells around Newington asked if there was a chart that shows what the chemicals levels are at each well that shows the progression of the chemicals, like a flow chart.

C. King said that don't have a time base analysis at this time. This plume moves about one foot a year. They do have a contour map that shows the direction of the flow. The maps have colored dots and the color of the dots represents the different concentrations of PFAs.

B. Blonigen asked about the flow and if they could tell us if it is flowing under the village and out to the bay. C. King said the flow is from the fire training area #2, which is the highest point on the peninsula, which means that the flow goes in every direction.

M. Wayss asked about the Pickering Brook area and the test area with high limits near her home. C. Wayss pointed out that this area has 1,000 times the RSL or AGQS limits. M. Wayss expressed her concern that with the high numbers right where she lives. M. Wayss would like to know the exact levels so she can decide if it is safe to eat what she grows in her garden. B. Blonigen asked if they had done any testing on any produce grown in Newington. C. King said that they had tested produce and didn't find anything.

The Air Force explained how different places were picked to test their items in their back yard gardens. They have done two rounds of backyard sampling in Newington. The first one targeted properties that have private drinking water wells that they were using to irrigate their gardens. Surveys were sent out to Newington residents to find the areas to test.

C. Wayss asked if the surveys were sent to all Newington residents. The Air Force said the survey was sent to residents that had a known well or had a surface water feature. M. Wayss said that her property has a lot of run off from the Pickering Brook and is concerned that her property wasn't chosen for testing. C. Wayss said that the levels near his property are 1,000 times the limits and he didn't get a survey, which is very concerning and wondered how many other properties were missed in Newington and think this issue should be revisited. The Air Force apologized that this property was missed but pointed out that they haven't found PFAS in produce. C. King said that they have ample results showing that and they are not a health organization and they are not here to test everyone's backyard. C. Wayss said that it is unfortunate to hear that they aren't going to test backyards when nearby testing shows 1,000 times higher amounts than the limits. The testing criteria should be expanded. The dots on these maps are very concerning.

A. Hyland Hebert asked if any wells came back from testing with no contaminants. C. King said plenty did. A. Hyland Hebert expressed her concern with monitoring wells and drinking water wells and if any came back without contaminants and where they are located. This is critical information for the residents. The dots on the map that are white are no detect. B. Blonigen said that the data on all the wells is important and tells

us something about the tracking of the plume. The monitoring wells are three dimensional to help the Air Force understand the distribution of the PFAS.

M. Wayss said that she did a quick count on the map with the approximately 50 dots for well locations and she only saw three wells that are non-detect and that is alarming. M. Wayss also asked that the information for testing residents for PFAS be put on the Town website. M. Wayss also asked about the options for remediation. B. Blonigen said that he thought that wasn't a question for the people gathered at this meeting. They didn't put the PFAS in the area, they are hired to track the PFAS. C. King said that there is some remediation being done. They are collecting data to see if the water treatment plant at Pease is preventing the further migration into Newington. They are starting to collect that data. M. Wayss said she appreciated them treating the immediate area where it all started, but where there are high numbers in other areas, how do we treat these areas. C. King said if there was another study on the produce, he thought that the ways property should be included in the study because it sounds like their property meant the criteria.

The next RAB meeting will be in Newington. Mike Donahue is a Newington resident and a member of RAB.

J. Fabrizio asked about people drilling wells on their property and the effect on this PFAS problem and asked if Newington should have an ordinance to prevent any new wells from being installed in town. C. King said that they would love to see an ordinance like that in place. B. Blonigen said that he would like to talk to the State about what you would recommend for an ordinance and asked if there were any other towns that had that type of ordinance. C. King said there were a few.

C. Wayss asked about the 10 new monitoring wells the Air Force would like to put in Newington. C. Wayss said that it was important for Newington residents to know that there are more monitoring wells being installed to be able to track the plume.

M. Donahue spoke about the RAB meetings and the important work that has been done by Newington residents on this subject. Good things are going to come out of this. This is an emerging contaminant. The more they do, the more they learn about it. M. Donahue urged them to continue the cooperation with the Town and the Air Force. M. Donahue suggested that the Town list the RAB members on the Town website so that residents would know who to call about any questions that they might have on this subject. C. Wayss liked that idea and asked M. Roy to put that information on the website.

Sewer Budget Review:

R. Stern said that the Sewer Commissioners would like to add a Sewer Clerk position in 2024. The position would be for six hours a month. The auditors have asked that the

Sewer start using QuickBooks and this new position would accomplish that. R. Stern said that H2O Innovations runs the sewer plant, this position will work for the Sewer Commission. This new position will increase the 2024 budget by \$1,800 plus the FICA. C. Wayss asked if six hours would be enough. R. Stern said yes. B. Blonigen asked about the increase in the legal budget expense line. R. Stern said that good lawyers cost more money. C. Wayss asked about the increase in the sludge disposal budget line. R. Stern said that it is getting more expensive to dispose of the sludge. There are fewer places to bring it and they are locating further away. The testing fee expense line increased because there are always new tests for Great Bay. There is a new line in the budget called Physical Plant Maintenance. R. Stern explained that these types of repairs would have been paid out the Major Maintenance budget line and they really didn't belong there. B. Blonigen asked why the addition of this budget line didn't decrease the major maintenance budget line. R. Stern said that the major maintenance budget line amount is negotiable but they have overspent that line two years in a row. C. Wayss asked about the abatements. R. Stern said that it was a one-time occurrence. R. Stern said that the Sewer Commission would like to start a Capital Reserve Fund that would only be used for certain items and it would have no limit or cap. The Capital Reserve account would allow the Sewer Commission to bond less money the next time they have to do an upgrade. They are currently having an attorney look into this type of fund for them. B. Blonigen asked about the impact of a new development at the Fox Run Mall would have to the sewer plant. R. Stern said that they have plenty of capacity remaining. The enterprise fund is currently at \$1.3 million, they haven't added any money to it in three years.

2024 Budget Review:

M. Roy said that she had contacted the departments and let them know that the budgets they submitted to the Selectmen were \$940,000 more than the 2023 budget and asked them to look at ways to cut the budget to keep the tax rate level. This item was tabled until the 11/7/23 meeting.

COLA:

This item was tabled until the 11/7/23 meeting.

Health Insurance:

This item was tabled until the 11/7/23 meeting.

Fire Engine 5 Listing:

B. Blonigen said that he understands why Engine 5 should be listed, because it is an asset of the Town and the money it sells for will be returned to the tax payers. M. Roy has listed Engine 5 for sale with Fenton Fire. The Town will also list the engine for sale locally. **C. Wayss moved to list Engine 5 on the Town website for 10% less than listed with Fenton Fire (\$40,455).** B. Blonigen seconded the motion. All were in favor.

The new engine will be delivered by the end of the month.

Fox Point Rental Status:

B. Blonigen explained that the house at Fox Point is vacant now. The thought was to not have a renter and to winterize the house during the Portsmouth Water project at Fox Point. That project is now on hold for one year so the Town could accept bids for the rental of the house. The Town would make the renters aware that this project is coming and that they would be able to break the lease once the project starts. C. Wayss suggested that a one-year lease be offered from December 2023 to December 2024. It was suggested to move the water heater while the house is vacant. A. Hyland Hebert suggested that the town not accept bids for the rental, but instead to determine a rental amount and then accept applications and pick the best candidate. B. Blonigen agreed with this suggestion. **C. Wayss moved to table this item until the 11/7/23 meeting. B. Blonigen seconded the motion. All were in favor.**

Street Number Change-Ricci Construction River Road:

John Ricci has asked for a change in the address number for his property on River Road to #74. M. Roy said that this change doesn't affect anyone around his property. M. Bilodeau said that the Fire Chief is aware of this request and doesn't have an issue with it. **C. Wayss moved to grant the request by John Ricci to change the number on his River Road property to 74, as long as this doesn't set a precedence and each request will be handled on a case by case basis.. B. Blonigen seconded the motion. All were in favor.**

Public Comment:

J. Klanchesser said that he feels that the Air Force is not holding up their promise for testing of Newington residents. He switched to city water and deactivated his well because of water issues at his property, but the Air Force would not approve them getting tested for PFAS because of their fire service history. C. Wayss said that the State of NH is responsible for the testing and should be testing everyone that would like to be tested. B. Blonigen said that the Town should let State Representative Meuse know about this issue and ask for his help.

Several budget issues were discussed. The compactor that was listed in the Transfer Station budget should be listed in the Capital Outlay budget instead. The \$31,000 for the guardrail project should be encumbered for 2023 and removed from the 2024 budget. The EDC budget was reduced to \$6,831 and the Town Hall Cyber Security items should be moved from the Capital Outlay budget to the Executive Office budget. It was decided to table these issues until the 11/7/23 meeting.

C. Wayss moved to enter a nonpublic session at 7:17pm per RSA 91-A:3 II (e) Legal. B. Blonigen seconded the motion. B. Blonigen asked for a roll call vote: B. Blonigen-Yes, C. Wayss-Yes. All were in favor.

C. Wayss moved to return to public session at 8:54pm, seconded by B. Blonigen. B. Blonigen asked for a roll call vote: B. Blonigen-Yes, C. Wayss-Yes. All were in favor.

C. Wayss moved to seal the minutes indefinitely. B. Blonigen seconded the motion. B. Blonigen asked for a roll call vote: B. Arsenault-Yes, C. Wayss-Yes. All were in favor.

Adjournment: C. Wayss moved to adjourn at 8:55pm. B. Blonigen seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted, Eleanor Boy, Recorder