

Town of Newington, NH
Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes
Monday July 17th, 2023

Present: Chair Bob Blonigen, Selectman Brandon Arsenault, Selectman Chris Wayss, Fire Chief E.J. Hoyt, Board of Fire Engineers Chair John Klanchesser, Board of Fire Engineer Jim Fabrizio, Board of Fire Engineer Ann Hyland Hebert, Deputy Director of the Portsmouth Public Works Brian Goetz, Portsmouth P.E. Water Resource Manager Al Pratt, Planning Board Chair Denis Hebert, Dockmaster Peter Welch, Resident Samara Pottier and Town Administrator Martha Roy and Eleanor Boy, Recorder.

B. Blonigen called the meeting to order at 6:32pm. Followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

B. Blonigen acknowledged the passing of Ted Connors and expressed that Ted would be missed.

Minutes Approval: B. Arsenault moved to approve the July 5, 2023 minutes. C. Wayss seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Manifest Approval: B. Arsenault moved to approve the manifests for \$354,943.33 dated 7/6/2023 and \$48,874.86 dated 7/13/23. C. Wayss seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Fire Chief EJ Hoyt-Fire Department Update:

The Fire Department hired a new Administrative Assistant named Crystal. She will be working Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. She reports directly to the Chief and Assistant Chief. B. Arsenault asked if she will be working more hours than the previous Administrative Assistant. E. Hoyt said that they had budgeted for 24 hours a week, but she will work a little more. E. Hoyt believes they can absorb it in their budget.

E. Hoyt said that there is still a staffing shortage for both Police and Fire across the country. However, they did finally hire someone for the part time position after a year of looking.

The Fire Department doesn't use full time firefighters to cover the fourth position on a shift, but they do use them to cover the third position on a shift.

The new engine is scheduled to be here at the end of October or early November. The delay is due to supply chain issues. If the Town was buying this same engine now instead of a couple of years ago, it would cost \$190,000 more than we paid.

B. Blonigen asked E. Hoyt to make sure to talk to the Selectmen when it is time to liquidate the old truck.

It takes three years to get an Ambulance after the order is placed. E. Hoyt recommends that the Town order a new ambulance in 2024 to be received in 2026. C. Wayss asked if there was any risk with the new ambulance being delayed. E. Hoyt said that the current ambulance has a small issue with its rear suspension and an oil leak, but feels it will be alright until the new ambulance arrives. E. Hoyt said that they have been very fortunate with this ambulance. They have been very happy with it.

E. Hoyt said that they wouldn't hear anything about the grants they applied for until 2024.

The Fire Department's revenue is \$88,000 so far in 2023, which is a little ahead of 2022.

B. Blonigen asked what the next step would be for the Fire Station improvements. E. Hoyt said that he and P. Moynihan dug some test pits and took pictures, but it has been on hold since then. B. Blonigen said that it was time to take it off hold and move forward. E. Hoyt said the next step would be to hire an engineer to get an opinion about adding a second floor to the station. If the current structure could handle it. We need to lay out the options and decide what is the most cost-effective choice. A plan that would last many years. B. Blonigen said that he believes in doing projects the right way the first time. A road map going forward needs to be done so it can go before the voters. Budget season is fast approaching and he would like to see something this year.

Al Pratt and Brian Goetz-Portsmouth Water Discussion of Haven Well:

Al Pratt gave an overview of the water system. There are two systems; the Pease water system and the Portsmouth water system. Newington gets its water from both. Portsmouth gets its water from the Madbury reservoir. This reservoir produces 65 to 70% of the water that is supplied to the Portsmouth water system. Portsmouth water also has four wells in Madbury. The water comes from Madbury, through Durham, under the Bay and then through Newington and up to the Newington booster tank where one and a half million gallons of water are stored. Additional chlorine is added at that booster tank and then it is pumped into the Portsmouth water system. The three wells in the Portsmouth water system are the Collins Well, the Portsmouth Well and the Greenland Well. These wells pump directly into the Pease water treatment facility. There are two storage tanks; the Spinney tank and the Lafayette tank. The total storage for Portsmouth water including, the new booster tanks, is 10 million gallons. The Portsmouth and the Pease water systems are connected. When the Haven Well was shut down, Portsmouth water was pumping a lot of water into the Pease system to supplement the loss of that well. The Pease system is a separate system that has three sources; the Haven Well, the Harrison Well and the Smith Well. It also has the Hobbs Hill water storage tank that was replaced around 2016. That is a 600,000-gallon tank.

The National Guard has a 400,000-gallon tank, so the Pease water system has a total of 1 million gallons of water storage.

The Newington Village was tied into the Pease system in 2014. That connection was made when the library addition was built because they couldn't get enough pressure for their fire suppression system. Historically, the Newington Village was served by the Portsmouth Water system but because Pease has a higher-pressure system than Portsmouth, it was switched because the library needed it for their fire suppression system.

The other side of the highway receives all its water from Madbury. The water is treated at the Newington booster tank. Newington customers north of the highway are all getting Madbury water. All of Little Bay Road and Nimble Hill Road, in that area, receive Pease water. There is an area along Fox Point Road where 32 homes are receiving water from Madbury.

All the wells in the Pease water system are pumped directly to the Pease water treatment facility. They have been treating water for PFA's there since 2016. There is a small part of Newington, mostly South Newington, that gets its water from the Greenland well.

B. Arsenault said that one of the reasons that the Board wanted to try to understand the water sources is to understand the risks that residents have concerning their water sources in Newington. There are some customers that are on the main transmission line from Madbury. That water is not treated at the Newington booster tank. Should those residents have any concerns over the safety of their water. A. Pratt said that the water is treated at the Madbury plant and meets all the rules and requirements.

B. Arsenault asked if well contamination is a concern because of the development at Pease. A. Pratt said he is always concerned about any contaminated water and is out at Pease all the time. They are trying to purchase land around the Madbury reservoir to protect it. The Madbury wells are protected. Around the Portsmouth wells and the Greenland wells most of the land is already developed, there is only so much they can do if they don't own the land. There is a lot of trust in the State and Federal rules around development near a water source. Portsmouth purchased an area at Pease around the Harrison well in 2006. All of these wells have a sanitary protective area around the well, a 400-foot radius in case there is a direct spill. The Haven Well is right on the runway, so there is only so much Portsmouth Water can do there. The risks for pollution around wells are cars, road salt and accidents with spills.

B. Blonigen asked if they had the capability to shut off a well if there was a spill. A. Pratt said absolutely. B. Blonigen asked how quickly it could be shut off. A. Pratt said immediately.

B. Arsenault asked if either A. Pratt or B. Goetz was on the Portsmouth TRC. A. Pratt said that he was on the TRC for the Million Air project. B. Arsenault asked what his opinion was of that project. A. Pratt said that he had reviewed all the drawings of the engineering protections associated with the facility. The riskiest part is the transfer of fuel. There are a lot of engineer controls associated with it. The risks are really with human errors made when handling the fuel. The drainage system at Pease has oil/water separators associated with them. If everything is done right and people quickly report spills then everything should be alright.

B. Arsenault pointed out that this seems to be a conflict. On one hand Portsmouth is buying land around the wells to protect them from development and pollution. A. Pratt said that if they could buy land around the Haven well they would, but they can't.

B. Arsenault said that if Portsmouth water can't buy land around the Haven well to protect it, then you certainly wouldn't think that there should be a fuel containment system very close to the well.

A. Pratt said that if the system meets the DES and EPA requirements then they can't really do anything. They can stipulate things they would like see, but since PDA is the regulatory and inspection authority there. Portsmouth Water also has some inspection oversight too. Portsmouth Water can go in there and make sure that it is operating as it was designed, that's the protection that they have.

B. Arsenault said that he is not trying to get them to change their mind about the project, he just needs to understand how they can be so careful around all the other wells, but at the Haven Well, they are going to put a fuel farm in the middle of it. B. Arsenault said he felt that Portsmouth Water felt comfortable because there are stop gaps and different regulations that made you comfortable that the Million Air project will not damage the water system. A. Pratt said yes, but there are other parts of it too. There are wetlands adjacent to it, that wetland is at the same elevation as the ground water, so if there was a spill, jet fuel floats, A. Pratt believes their recovery efforts would be able to remove it.

B. Arsenault asked if they knew that part of the plan was to dredge and fill 10,000 square feet of wetlands that are adjacent to this project. A. Pratt asked if B. Arsenault was sure and he said yes.

B. Blonigen asked if the water from the Haven Well will be treated for PFAs when they disturb these soils to do the construction. B. Blonigen asked if they are worried about the disturbed soil releasing more PFAs. A. Pratt thought that the disturbed soil would be maintained on sight and he hasn't seen any data about PFAs in the soil in that area. B. Arsenault said that they have been told that the soil is 10 times higher than the EPAs

standards. A. Pratt questioned what method they would have used to test the soil because there is no approved method for testing soils for PFAs.

Chris Wayss expressed his concern that this project is going to be 1,800 feet from the Haven Well. They can build all the containment they want, but when you start digging you are going to hit water at a certain point and it seems clear that PFAs would leak into the aquifer.

B. Goetz thought that the Air Force could answer some of these questions. Portsmouth Water has the treatment system for the drinking water. The Air Force has another system which pumps water out of the aquifer, it gets treated and they put it back. That system is treating the PFAs in the aquifer. They have nine years of data on all the monitoring. The Haven Well has much less PFAs coming into it then when it was first shut down.

C. Wayss asked if there have been any disturbed soils within 1,800 feet of the Haven Well in the last nine years. This is a very big concern for Newington. C. Wayss understands that you can detect it and shut it off, but how much has gotten in there before you shut it off and what risks are there. B. Goetz said that they monitor everything monthly, they change the filters and they have the trending and tracking operation. The filters have done a very good job. NH regulates the PFAs containments now. The Air Force is paying for all of this.

B. Blonigen asked if they think they would see the Haven Well shut down and another well dug by the golf course. A. Pratt said that the Haven Well is in the best place for it, because it's where the spring was in the past.

B. Arsenault said that he thought the Haven Well was not a big contributor to the system and that not everybody in Town was getting their drinking water from the Haven Well, but after reviewing the map, it is worse than he thought.

B. Arsenault asked what the position of the Portsmouth Water District on placing a fuel farm over a well. A. Pratt said that they can't take a position because they are public servants and they are doing what we need to do to meet the rules and they respect the rules of the State and the Federal Government. If the airport wasn't there, it would be great, it would be better for the water supply. B. Goetz pointed out that there is already fuel out there for Port City Air and the National Guard. B. Arsenault said that he would bet that nobody had PFAs on their minds when Port City Air or the National Guard came to Pease. It's fair to say that we don't know what causes the pediatric cancer clusters in the seacoast. Should the PDA make it worse.

B. Arsenault said that it doesn't make sense that Portsmouth Water is concerned about road salt getting into a well, but you are willing to put aircraft deicing and jet fuel containers on top of a well.

B. Goetz said that they are not supportive of this project. Just because they are not opposing it, doesn't mean that they are supporting the project. They have measures they have to follow, through the PDA, through the whole permitting process, through the type of facility they would have to construct, that would follow all the guidance of the best management practices of a fuel station of today.

Al Pratt said that jet fuel is the biggest concern for him because they already have a system in place for the PFAs. There have been issues at the current FBO, as far as fuel containment, this will hopefully correct that.

B. Arsenault thinks that is a poor argument, to not handle the current problem, but to pass this project through in order to create competition.

Brian Goetz thinks these questions would be best answered by the PDA. The PDA owns the wells, Portsmouth Water operates the wells. Control and approval of projects go through the PDA.

B. Arsenault said that there are 30 customers on the transmission line, that would be unaffected by the Haven Well, residents and businesses on Shattuck Way, plus the residents that get their water from the Greenland well. These residents live from the Greenland line to approximately Fabian Point. Every other resident is affected by the Haven Well.

Chris Wayss read the list of streets with residents that are affected by the Haven Well:

- Gate at Short Street along Nimble Hill Road to Coleman Drive and just past Coleman Drive to Shattuck Way
- Little Bay Road off Nimble Hill Road
- Little Bay Extension
- Dumpling Cove
- Gundalow Landing
- Captains Landing
- Little Bay Road to Fox Point Road
- Fox Point Road up to Beane Lane
- Beane Lane
- Carters Lane
- Old Post Road
- Lydia Lane
- Hannah Lane

That is a significant number of residents that are impacted by the Haven Well.

B. Goetz said that he had sent the new agreement to M. Roy today for the Little Bay project. The bids for the Little Bay project will be going out on Wednesday and they are getting all the required permits. In the bid specs that are putting in \$50,000 for roadway repair.

Discussion ensued about the Little Bay Project and the restoration of the area after the project is completed and the protection of the pipe from continued erosion.

Release of Eversource Bond:

M. Roy said that Town Attorney John Ratigan said that the deed has been recorded, but the plan has not been recorded yet. J. Ratigan feels it is ok to release the bond at this time. B. Blonigen asked how much the bond is. M. Roy said \$200,000. B. Blonigen said that he doesn't feel comfortable releasing the bond until the plan is recorded. C. Wayss agreed that both the deed and plans should be recorded before the bond is released. **B. Arsenault moved to release the Eversource bond once the recording of the deed and plans have been confirmed by the Town's attorney. C. Wayss seconded the motion. All were in favor.**

Town Forest Work-Signs-Recreation & Conservation Recommendations:

M. Roy said that she has not heard from the Recreation Committee or the Conservation Commission about their recommendations. B. Arsenault said that he has been thinking about the proposal from the NEMBA and doesn't think there is any benefit to the Town of Newington. C. Wayss agreed that there was no upside for Newington. **B. Arsenault moved to decline the NEMBA proposal because there isn't a benefit for Newington. C. Wayss seconded the motion. All were in favor.** B. Blonigen asked M. Roy to contact the NEMBA and thank them for their interest in Newington, but let them know that the Board declined their offer.

C. Wayss updated the Board on the Stone School Committee. The committee has a meeting scheduled in September when they are going to work on their recommendation to the Board of Selectmen.

Oyster Farmers:

Dockmaster P. Welch has spoken to several oyster farmers along with Chip Taccetta about the problem that the oyster farmers are having accessing the bay. Samara Pottier stated that they would like the Town of Newington to partner with the oyster farmers and to consider putting a pier off the granite bridge abutment at Fox Point so they could have access to the bay.

Discussion ensued about the benefit of having oysters in the bay, the hours that the farmers would be working and using the pier, how many farmers there were, how many cars would be down there, what kind of boats they would be using, permits the farmers have already received through the State, when the last time the pier was used.

B. Blonigen said that he thought the project had a lot of merit and encouraged the group to come back to the Selectmen with a written project that can be reviewed.

B. Arsenault said that he thought it was an interesting project, but reminded the group that Fox Point is a very sensitive area for the Town residents.

P. Welch gave the Board an update on the dock. The dock was at 75% capacity in June and thought that looking at getting an additional dock would be a good idea. P. Welch said that some people may be using the Newington dock because Great Bay Marine now charges \$400 for a skiff. B. Arsenault encouraged P. Welch to ask the Police for help determining if all these skiffs belong to Newington residents. Discussion ensued about the idea of Newington charging for skiffs or stickers. P. Welch said that Chip Taccetta has volunteered his garage to build new dock sections and he has six volunteers that would be willing to help build them.

P. Welch asked M. Roy to talk to Len Thomas about painting the gangway with nonslip paint.

P. Welch also said that the underside of the docks needs to be cleaned every couple of years and it is due now.

C. Wayss said that he is unable to attend the Emergency Management meetings because they are during the day. B. Blonigen said that he would take over attending these meetings.

A representative from Million Air will be attending the August 7th Board of Selectmen's meeting. The Library Trustees will be at the July 31st meeting.

M. Roy is working on getting a representative from Torrington to come to a meeting.

B. Blonigen said that the Planning Board approved the hotel on Woodbury.

C. Wayss updated the Board on the Stone School Committee. The committee has a meeting scheduled in September when they are going to work on their recommendation to the Board of Selectmen.

Public Comment:

Ann Hyland Hebert spoke about the presentation by Portsmouth Water tonight. By their own admission they stated they do not support The Million Air fuel farm project over a well. A. Hyland Hebert said that she feels that the Town is finally getting answers to the questions because of persistence by the Selectmen, continued meetings, public hearings and the answers are coming. It's critical information. A. Hyland Hebert encouraged the Board to continue to pursue people involved to get the information that's needed.

Adjournment: B. Arsenault moved to adjourn at 8:32pm. C. Wayss seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted, Eleanor Boy, Recorder

