MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 9, 2026 SELECT BOARD MEETING

MEMBERS PRESENT: Board Members Chair Allison Knab, Vice Chair Joe Anderson, participating remotely Tedd Tramaloni

ALSO PRESENT: Town Administrator Tim Roache, Library Director Steve Butzel, Parks & Recreation Director Seth Hickey

At 7:02pm Ms. Knab opened the meeting and noted that Member Ted Tramiloni would be participating remotely because he is away from Stratham attending urgent family matters.

Ms. Knab held a moment of silence for Susan Canada, who passed away last week. She remarked that Ms. Canada was an integral member of the community—"one of the town matriarchs"—deeply involved in the Stratham Historical Society and in the School Board during its early years. Ms. Knab noted her passing is a significant loss for Stratham.

Ms. Knab asked for a motion on the August 17 minutes and noted she had requested a couple of adjustments be made to the draft. Mr. Anderson noted he also had a couple of changes. He then motioned to approve the minutes of August 17, as amended, to include Ms. Knab's amendments. Mr. Tramaloni second the motion. Roll call: Knab-yes; Anderson-yes; Tramaloni-yes.

Mr. Butzel presented the library report, noting that the Coral three-town consortium is now live and functioning smoothly. Stratham is the most active user on a per-capita basis, with lending and borrowing remaining well balanced among the three towns. Since launching in July, the consortium has already processed nearly 3,000 item transfers.

He provided an update on the strategic planning process: survey data has been compiled, two community forums will be held on September 12 and 15, and the steering committee will meet on September 18. A two-year strategic plan is expected to be presented for Board adoption in October.

Several new services have been implemented, including wireless and remote printing and online access to the New York Times alongside the existing Wall Street Journal subscription. Space-use improvements continue with the arrival of seven new upholstered chairs and two new bookshelves for adult fiction, large print, and "Lucky Day" titles.

He also reported on professional development, noting that he, the assistant director, and the head of youth services have begun a four-month project management certification program.

In response to a question, he explained that the online catalog clearly indicates item locations across the consortium, and patrons may place holds as usual for materials available at partner libraries.

The board noted budgets were due soon and asked him to give as much detail to the line items that he could.

Ms. Knab moved to the property tax action items. Mr. Roache explained that there are three property owners seeking relief from late fees for delinquent taxes, two of those seem to be related to real estate closing transactions. The third one seems to be an oversight. All three are looking for relief from the fees that are associated with delinquent taxes. The Tax Collector outlined her rationale for denial in a memo. Mr. Anderson motioned to reject the tax appeals for 10 Heron Way, 139 Portsmouth Avenue, and 10 Long Hill. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. Roll call: Knab-yes; Anderson-yes; Tramaloni-yes.

Ms. Knab moved to the request for proposals for IT and phone services. Mr. Roache explained that the Town's contract with Block 5 expires on November 1. While most department heads are satisfied with the vendor, he felt there was value in "testing the waters" to see whether another provider could offer improved preparedness, awareness of Town operations, and expanded cloud-based file-sharing capabilities. He noted Block 5 would likely submit a competitive bid.

Board members expressed concern about timing. Ms. Knab noted this was the first time she had heard of issues with Block 5 and questioned whether issuing an RFP now would add unnecessary workload. Mr. Anderson asked whether complaints had been raised; Mr. Roache said he was likely the only one who had expressed concerns and emphasized the RFP could simply be reviewed and declined if no better option emerged.

Mr. Tramaloni confirmed Block 5 currently provides both managed IT and phone/voice support, with separate contracts. He noted the tight timeline if proposals differ significantly in technology and require detailed vetting. He also raised the challenge of having limited staff with the expertise to evaluate complex proposals.

Ms. Knab worried that issuing an RFP might discourage Block 5, but Mr. Hickey stated Block 5 is aware of the contract expiration and has already indicated willingness to offer an extension. He suggested a six-month to one-year extension if the Board wanted more time. Board members discussed whether reviewing proposals within six weeks would be feasible. Ms. Knab felt the current system is functional and questioned the need to rush. Mr. Roache agreed an extension would be acceptable and clarified he did not intend to portray the current service as problematic. Mr. Tramaloni suggested leveraging Block 5's expertise to identify potential upgrades, which could then serve as a benchmark for future proposals. He noted Block 5 may have recommendations based on other municipal clients seeking to "step up to the next level."

Mr. Roache recommended beginning the RFP process in July 2027 to align with next year's budget cycle. Mr. Hickey added that any renegotiation should include increased phone support hours, as the Town has exceeded its current allotment and is being billed regularly. Ms. Knab agreed and asked him to bring back the extension document. The Board concurred with extending the contract and revisiting the RFP next July unless service quality changes significantly.

Ms. Knab moved to the DOT sidewalk agreement. Mr. Roache reported he is still reviewing the document and does not favor the current language. He expressed concern that the agreement reflects a downshifting of costs to municipalities and does not demonstrate DOT's vested interest in pedestrian safety. He hopes to pursue a more collaborative approach and plans to speak further with DOT contacts. Ms. Knab noted her longstanding understanding that DOT does not assume responsibility for sidewalks and that municipalities typically manage them, but encouraged Mr. Roache to see whether any changes could be negotiated. Mr. Roache recommended holding off for now, noting that a forthcoming Kia dealership project includes a sidewalk that may increase pressure on this issue. Mr. Tramaloni observed that the agreement requires towns to obtain DOT approval for changes, yet DOT does not want involvement or liability. He noted this leaves the Town responsible for any safety issues while DOT retains control without accountability. Mr. Roache acknowledged he may return in a few meetings with no progress, but asked for time to pursue further discussion. The Board agreed to hold off until he completes additional conversations with DOT.

Ms. Knab moved to the scrap loader bid opening. One bid was received in the amount of $801.13. When asked for the DPW Director's recommendation, Mr. Roache said he expected the recommendation would be not to accept. He noted that another individual expressed interest after the bid deadline, and staff did not engage with that person, wanting to wait until the Board completed this process. The Board rejected the bid. Mr. Roache advised that the Town may consider other means of sale or direct procurement for the loader and said he would follow up with the interested party after this meeting to provide direction. The Board expressed interest in pursuing the alternative offer if it exceeds $801.

Ms. Knab moved to new business, noting an email received earlier in the day regarding a proposed planting at the Stratham Historical Society in memory of Susan Canada. She shared that she had briefly spoken with members of the Exeter Area Garden Club at Ms. Canada's wake and, while unsure of the property's available footprint, could not imagine opposition to exploring the concept. Garden Club members felt the project would be a meaningful connection to Ms. Canada's work with the Historical Society. The Board was supportive of allowing the idea to move forward. Ms. Knab will reach out to Ms. Copeland to let her know she may explore the project further.

Ms. Knab moved to old business, the proposed e-bike ordinance for Stratham Hill Park and adjoining Town-owned properties. She noted that two public hearings have been held and the Board is ready to take action. Mr. Roache reported that the current recommendation is to prohibit all classes of e-bikes on Stratham Hill Park, the Noyes properties, and the Gifford Fields, consistent with the memo and prior public input. Ms. Knab reiterated that abutting properties with conservation easements do not want e-bikes on their property and that the Stratham Hill Park Association, Conservation Commission, and others have unanimously opposed allowing them. She stated that the park's narrow trails and existing user conflicts make it unsuitable for e-bikes and expressed support for the ordinance change.

Mr. Anderson also supported the change and raised questions about enforcement. Ms. Knab suggested that signage and public information would be important, along with coordination with the Police Department. Mr. Roache said enforcement would need to occur at the parking lot, with officers visually identifying e-bikes as riders enter the park; he noted the Police Chief agrees with this approach. Ms. Knab added that some users will comply voluntarily, while others may need reminders. Mr. Tramaloni agreed enforcement would be challenging and asked about penalties, noting none are specified. Mr. Roache confirmed that the existing ordinance also lacks penalties for prohibited motorized devices. Board members discussed whether general ordinance violation provisions might apply. Ms. Knab suggested beginning with education and monitoring, and revisiting enforcement measures only if issues persist.

Mr. Tramaloni motioned that the town ordinance 4-01-01 be amended to read as follows: Mini bikes, motorcycles, all classes of e-bikes, electric motorcycles, electric dirt bikes, electric motor-driven cycles, and any other gas or electrically powered motor vehicle, except as expressly authorized, are prohibited in Stratham Hill Park and adjacent town owned properties, including those lands shown and described by Town of Stratham's Tax Map 14 Lot 33, known and referred to as Stratham Hill Park and Noyes property, and Tax Map 5 Lot 19, known and referred to as the Gifford property, except for the paved driveway and parking lot effective October 1, 2026. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion.

Mr. Tramaloni suggested adding information to the Town website and having the Communications & Community Engagement Committee help begin public outreach. Mr. Anderson agreed and recommended including it on both the website and the newsletter.
Roll call: Knab-yes; Anderson-yes; Tramaloni-yes.

Mr. Hickey emphasized the importance of consistent messaging to ensure the information is clearly received by the public. Ms. Knab will prepare a statement for distribution.

Ms. Knab moved to the proposed ordinance on animal control at Stratham Hill Park regarding commercial dog walking and walking more than two dogs. She noted the ordinance has been through two public hearings and is ready for Board action. Mr. Roache reiterated that the change does not alter existing on-leash or off-leash rules; it simply limits the number of dogs per person to two.

Mr. Tramaloni proposed an amendment to Section A ("running at large prohibited") to specify that dogs must be controlled by a leash or similar device no longer than 10 feet. He explained that standard leashes are typically six feet, long leashes are ten feet, and anything longer is generally used for training. His concern was preventing situations where a dog on a 30-foot line could still be considered "leashed." Ms. Knab clarified that he was suggesting a language change to the motion. The Board discussed the meaning of "similar device" and whether that term should remain in the ordinance.

Mr. Tramaloni motioned that Town Ordinance 1-12 Animal Control at Stratham Hill Park Section 03 be amended to read as follows: Running at large prohibited. It shall be unlawful for the owner of a dog to permit the dog to run at large without being controlled by a leash, no greater in length than 10 feet within and upon the parking lot, playing fields, or lawns of Stratham Hill Park, under no circumstances shall any person walk more than two dogs simultaneously. Mr. Tramaloni continued, motioning that Town Ordinance 1-12 Animal Control at Stratham Hill Park Section 04 be amended to read as follows: Running at large permitted, it shall not be unlawful for the owner of a dog to permit the dog to run at large within the wooded areas of the park or on the trails and trail system located within the wooded areas of the park, provided that the dog shall be accompanied by the owner and be under the command and/or control of the owner. Under no circumstances shall any person permit more than two dogs to run at large simultaneously. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. Roll call: Knab-yes; Anderson-yes; Tramaloni-yes

Ms. Knab moved to the Lane property update. Mr. Roache reported continued progress but noted that the Town has exhausted the $54,500 allocated for exterior work. Contractor Drew Bedard has completed porch removal and sill repairs and is currently at $58,900, approximately $4,500 over the approved amount. Mr. Roache has paused further exterior work until funding is discussed. He reported that interior structural work in the tannery, including attic beam repairs, is complete. As previously authorized, the contractor will now shift to exterior tannery repairs. Overall, the project remains within the broader budget and contingency, aside from the additional exterior work still needed.

The septic system is ready to move forward. A design and contract from Greg Blood were included in the packet. Work could occur within 4–6 weeks, pending state approvals. The plan has been sent to the Preservation Alliance, which holds an easement; preliminary feedback indicates they are comfortable with the design, provided it is not a mounded system.

Mr. Tramaloni asked about the status of the Heritage Commission's $50,000 offer and whether a vote is needed to accept the funds. He also asked whether certain exterior repairs, such as gutter cleaning, would be deferred; Mr. Roache said they likely would be if Heritage funds are not used, though delaying could risk ice dam damage.

Ms. Knab asked whether ledge might affect septic installation; Mr. Roache said Mr. Blood did not anticipate ledge issues. Mr. Tramaloni also raised the need for a separate electric meter for the tannery to ensure tenants pay utilities directly. Mr. Roache agreed an electrician would be needed and noted Unitil may have associated costs.

Regarding the septic installation, Mr. Roache explained the design includes a gravity-fed line from the cobble house to the tanks and leach field, requiring a driveway cut of approximately three to four feet. The Board discussed whether Mr. Blood would perform that portion of the work. Ms. Knab asked whether sufficient funds exist to proceed with the septic system. Mr. Roache confirmed that the Town can complete the septic work and previously approved items without using Heritage funds. Ms. Knab noted the Board had discussed and approved moving forward at the last meeting but suggested the Town should clarify its policy on when Select Board approval is required for contracts of this size.

Ms. Knab motioned to authorize the Town Administrator to sign the contract with KG Blood and Sons. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. Roll call: Knab-yes; Anderson-yes; Tramaloni-yes

Mr. Roache reviewed the status of the Heritage Commission funds, noting they are not a loan and cannot be repaid or mixed with taxpayer funds. If used, they must simply be applied to the project. He explained that the additional $100,000 would arrive as the second portion of the gift.

Referring to his project chart, he outlined the completed work and the remaining items. The Town has exceeded the approved $54,500 for exterior work, and all items shown in green are either underway or ready to proceed, including the septic system. Items shown in yellow—bat mitigation and cleanup, gutter repairs, and additional sill and exterior work—remain unfunded. With the $50,000 Heritage contribution, the Town could complete all listed work with approximately $2,200 remaining. Without those funds, the Town would be $47,000 short, requiring postponement of all yellow-coded work until the next $100,000 gift installment arrives. Ms. Knab shared feedback from former Heritage Commission member Mike Houghton, who felt the Lane property fits the intended purpose of Heritage funds and is a "crown jewel" of Stratham. She noted the Commission has accumulated funds that are difficult to spend on non-Town-owned properties, and she remains comfortable accepting the contribution. She also acknowledged that not all work must be completed immediately, though much has been advanced to prepare the buildings for rental.

Mr. Anderson asked about timing. Ms. Knab said she is unsure whether all remaining work is urgent or whether some items—such as bat mitigation, cleanup, and additional exterior repairs—could wait until spring. She noted the estimated cost of the remaining work is approximately $44,000. Mr. Anderson asked whether delaying certain work posed any risk. Ms. Knab referenced earlier concerns about gutters and potential ice dams, and Mr. Roache noted the gutters have been in poor condition for years; while failure is not guaranteed this winter, it is possible. Mr. Tramaloni cautioned against a "one step forward, two steps back" situation. He felt delaying some Lane house exterior repairs could lead to additional deterioration by spring, increasing future costs. He viewed bat mitigation as less urgent and suggested prioritizing exterior repairs now, using Heritage funds if needed, and postponing bat-related work until the next funding cycle.

Mr. Anderson said he was not fully supportive of proceeding with exterior repairs immediately but was not opposed. He felt the property is now stabilized and in good condition for winter, and recommended pausing after the next steps to develop a multi-year strategic plan that considers rental revenue from the Lane property, the Collector's Eye, and the tannery, and ensures the Town lives within its means. Mr. Roache agreed with finishing the exterior work and removing bat mitigation from the immediate plan. He noted that roughly $45,000 in exterior repairs remain and suggested the Board could take $35,000 of the Heritage Commission's $50,000 if they wished to minimize use of the funds. Ms. Knab felt that margin was too tight and preferred keeping bat-related items in the plan with the understanding they may be delayed.

Ms. Knab asked Mr. Anderson whether he was comfortable using Heritage funds. Mr. Anderson said he was not comfortable, but would not vote against it. Mr. Tramaloni disagreed, stating the funds exist specifically for projects like this and that using them is appropriate. He added he could support waiting if Mr. Anderson felt strongly, but Mr. Anderson reiterated he would not oppose the use. Ms. Knab noted the Heritage Commission unanimously supports using the funds and that many members are trusted long-time residents. She said she feels more comfortable using Heritage funds than relying heavily on DPW labor and believes the funds have been waiting for an appropriate project. Mr. Anderson emphasized the need for a strategic, multi-year approach. Ms. Knab agreed, noting that once the major exterior work is complete, the Town will need to carefully plan interior work over the next several years. Mr. Roache added that this is the right moment to pause after exterior completion, as interior decisions will be significant. Mr. Tramaloni stressed that long-term planning must include a clear end goal, ensuring the property becomes revenue-generating rather than stalled for years.

Ms. Knab asked whether a formal motion to accept Heritage funds was required. Mr. Roache said he would confirm whether a hearing is needed. Ms. Knab emphasized the importance of handling the acceptance correctly and transparently. Mr. Roache will report back at the September 21 meeting. Ms. Knab said Mr. Bedard could be informed that sufficient work will be available.

Mr. Roache continued the Lane property update with a discussion of rental revenue and DPW time. He noted that counsel has confirmed the Town may direct all or a portion of rent revenue into the trust, though doing so would reduce revenue shown on Ms. Ruest's spreadsheet. He added that this approach could help demonstrate long-term sustainability, especially given the significant DPW time currently spent on mowing, snow removal, and maintenance. He is preparing a strategic financial model incorporating rent estimates and DPW labor projections, with assistance from Nate Merrill, and expects it to be ready within the next few meetings.

Ms. Knab asked if there was anything further on the Lane property. Mr. Roache said Bill Lane plans to visit on Columbus Day to see the progress, and staff will prepare the site as well as possible. He suggested showing before-and-after photos to illustrate the work completed. Those planning to attend include Drew Bedard, Nate Merrill, and Tim Roache; DPW staff may join if invited, and the Board is welcome as well.

Ms. Knab reminded the Board that the Plaistow meeting on the ALS intercept program will be held the following evening. She noted she is unable to attend but emphasized the value of having supportive towns present, as some communities on default budgets are uncertain about continued participation. Chief Denton has encouraged strong representation from towns committed to the program. Mr. Roache confirmed he plans to attend.

Mr. Roache reported that the Office Coordinator and Building Inspector both started on Tuesday. Each expressed confidence they will work well together, and the Building Inspector has already begun inspections around town. The Coordinator faces a steep learning curve with zoning, but Ms. Connors and Ms. Price are actively training her. Mr. Anderson noted both new staff will have a learning curve, particularly as the Building Inspector transitions from Massachusetts to New Hampshire codes. He suggested ensuring their time is used effectively once they settle in; Mr. Roache will discuss ideas with him later.

Mr. Roache reported new Zoning and Planning Board members have joined. The Kia dealership will be the next major development review. Preparations for the Seabrook graded drill are underway. Mr. Hickey successfully restored the copper phone lines, and Mr. Roache and Mr. Anderson will meet with potential Emergency Management Director candidates the next morning.

Chief Denton reported Engine One is out of service due to a failed brake line and rear axle leak; both issues are covered under warranty, with return expected late September. Engine Three passed inspection but needs new tires, estimated at $5,000, which will exceed the remaining $600 in the vehicle maintenance budget.

Mr. Roache said the keyless access project continues to face delays. The vendor has committed to completing the Town Office the week of September 21, with full functionality by week's end. Work at the Fire Department will extend into October due to wiring conflicts with the existing burglar alarm system. Fobs have been secured instead of cards, and the Town Clerk's entry doors will be rekeyed to eliminate old key access.

Mr. Roache received the RPC Stratham Hill Park plan results and will schedule a presentation for October, followed by discussion of incremental next steps.

Turning to the CIP, Mr. Roache praised Ms. Fowle's work. They now have a framework for CIP and capital reserves and will refine project appropriations for the 2027 warrant article. A full CIP summary document is expected in time for budget season.

Mr. Roache continues work on policies and procedures, prioritizing purchasing/procurement, fund balance, and credit card policies.

Regarding the Employee Manual, Mr. Anderson said he and Mr. Hickey will meet Monday and expects to have a clear sense of remaining work. Both believe the manual is close to completion.

Mr. Roache reported that all departments have been asked to include detailed notes in their budget drafts so the Budget Committee can better understand line items that may otherwise appear unclear. Departments have received their draft worksheets and will return them in October.

Ms. Knab recommended contacting David Emanuel early to ensure the Budget Committee is fully staffed and prepared for the season, noting that delays sometimes occur in getting members on board. Mr. Roache agreed to reach out to him.

RESERVATIONS

Ms. Knab motioned to allow the Stratham Republicans to use the Sewall Room on October 22 and have the fee waived as we traditionally do with our political parties. Mr. Tramaloni seconded the motion. Roll call: Knab-yes; Anderson-yes; Tramaloni-yes

APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Anderson motioned to appoint Mel McGrail and Dan Crow to the Stratham Hill Park Association Committee for a three year term ending March 2029. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. Roll call: Knab-yes; Anderson-yes; Tramaloni-yes.

Ms. Knab motioned to appoint Matthew Malone to the Zoning Board of Adjustment as a full regular member for a three year term ending March 2028. Mr. Tramaloni seconded the motion. Roll call: Knab-yes; Anderson-yes; Tramaloni-yes.

Mr. Anderson detailed why he believes the term for Jameson Paine should expire in 2027. The motion from the last meeting was determined to be correct.

Mr. Tramaloni expressed gratitude to Ms. Knab and Mr. Anderson for their support.

At 8:41pm Ms. Knab motioned to go into a non-public session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3, II(b), II(d) and II(e). Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. Roll call: Knab-yes; Anderson-yes; Tramaloni-yes.

At 9:02pm Ms. Knab motioned to come out of the non-public session and seal the minutes render action ineffective. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. Roll call: Knab-yes; Anderson-yes; Tramaloni-yes.

Mr. Roache reported that a Vietnam veteran approached him requesting that a flag be placed on the empty flagpole at the Lane property. He noted that a light would be required for proper display and that DPW would need to raise and lower the flag.

He also reported that Mt. Washington will project lights into the sky for the 9/11 memorial, which may draw additional visitors to the top of Stratham Hill Park. He will notify the Police Department so they may allow the activity for this occasion.

Seeing no further business, at 9:05pm Ms. Knab motioned to adjourn. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. Roll call: Knab-yes; Anderson-yes; Tramaloni-yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard
Recording Secretary