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**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
REGULAR MEETING
January 4, 2023**

Present: Norman M. Needleman, First Selectman
Stacia R. Libby, Selectman
Bruce M. Glowac, Selectman

Norman Needleman called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

First Selectman Needleman welcomed everyone to the Board of Selectmen in person and remote public access meeting via Zoom.

In attendance: First Selectman Norman M. Needleman, Selectman Stacia R. Libby, and Selectman Bruce M. Glowac.

Others in attendance: John Guskowski, Carey Duques, Andrew Kressley, Chris Going, Peter Decker, Tracey Celentano, and Kelly Sterner.

Approval of Agenda:

Motion was made by Stacia Libby to approve the agenda. Bruce Glowac seconded the motion. All in favor.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion was made by Stacia Libby to approve the December 7, 2022 Meeting Minutes. Bruce Glowac seconded the motion. All in favor.

Informational Items, Communications and Correspondence

The Selectmen expressed their condolences and sympathy to the friends and family of Eric Peter Bierrie, Gary J. Weymer, and Clifford G. Ward, three long time volunteers in the Town of Essex who died this past week.

Public Announcements / Comment: None

OLD BUSINESS:

Capital Committee:

Selectman Bruce Glowac reported that the River Road Bridge Project was not awarded the State and Local Bridge grant. Mr. Glowac stated that Town will resubmit an application for the next round.

NEW BUSINESS:

Appointments and Resignations Board and Commissions

Norman Needleman reported the following Board of Selectmen appointments:

Tree Committee

Robbie Marshal
Matthew Winkler

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Open Town Board and Commission positions can be found at https://www.essexct.gov/sites/g/files/vyhliif3116/f/uploads/boards_and_commissions_website_30.pdf

The application to join a Board or Commission can be found at: https://www.essexct.gov/sites/g/files/vyhliif3116/f/file/file/application_to_volunteer_for_board_or_commission_fillable_4_13_18.pdf

American Rescue Plan Funds: None

Sinking Fund Request – Essex Fire Engine Company #1

Essex Fire Engine Company #1 presented to the Board of Selectmen a request for \$437,464.00 from the Fire Department Sinking Fund. Said funds will be used for the purchase of self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) which is a device worn by firefighters to provide breathable air in an atmosphere that is immediately dangerous to life or health for the Essex Fire Engine Company #1.

Motion was made by Norman Needleman to approve and recommend to the Board of Finance the appropriation of a sum not to exceed \$440,000.00 for the purchase of the self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) equipment. Said sum to be taken from the Fire Department Sinking Fund. Bruce Glowac seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

River Road Sidewalk / Bridge Project

There was general discussion about the bridge and the replacement options, and whether to build a pedestrian bridge parallel to the bridge or to build a bridge which includes the sidewalk. There was discussion that the sidewalk could be started in the spring of 2023. The Town was not awarded the State and Local Bridge grant. It was determined that there is no urgency in replacing the bridge so we can move forward with a pedestrian bridge and the sidewalk.

There was general discussion regarding the width of the new sidewalk, and the material that would be used as well as the possibility of keeping the sidewalk width at 5 feet.

Bruce Glowac stated that the sidewalk should look more like a walking path. Mr. Glowac suggested that once the plans are finalized, the Town go out to bid asap. The Town received a Community Connectivity Grant totaling \$595,611 for the sidewalks. The deadline to complete the sidewalks and utilize these funds is Feb 3, 2025.

There was discussion about what permits would be needed for this project. The pedestrian bridge is expected to be made of steel and wood that would be installed on the east side of the bridge on the downstream side.

Public informational hearings meetings on this project will be set very soon.

Short Term Rental Ordinance

The Town has created a draft short-term rental ordinance which would outline a set of recommendations and rules. The current zoning regulations state that short-term rentals are not allowed. The Selectmen requested the Town Planner John Guskowski and Carey Duques the Enforcement Officer attend the first Selectmen meeting in January. Mr. Glowac suggested the ordinance be done in coordination with Planning and Zoning. The ordinance would function as a set of guidelines and guardrails the Town could follow. The Selectmen are interested in what Planning and Zoning would recommend and what licensing is required to operate a short-term rental.

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Land Use Official Carey Duques mentioned some of the goals are to limit short-term rentals to twenty-eight consecutive days. The properties would either be owner occupied like a bed and breakfast or the owner must live adjacent to the short-term rental property. The premises must meet building and fire code regulations as much as possible, and if the applicant cannot meet those regulations, they may not get approved. If approved and signed off by health, zoning, building, and fire, then a license would be issued through the Town, which can be revocable.

There are approximately nineteen short-term rentals that can be found through VRBO. There are other short-term rental sites, so there could be more rentals that we are unaware of.

Peter Decker had concerns and would like to make sure the ordinance has a limitation of the number of people who can be on the site at a given time and to include information on the requirements pertaining to trash removal. There are also concerns about public safety and he suggested the rentals contain a tent card with all important phone numbers. It is especially important to preserve the character of the neighborhood.

John Guskowski commented that it does state in the ordinance that the rental must also be owner occupied or has owner proximity. There is a maximum or a not to exceed clause in the ordinance which states only two people in a bedroom, or not to exceed fifteen in a home, whichever is less.

Selectman Needleman reported there are serious septic constraints, especially in the villages. If a home has several people and the use of water increases, it could potentially blow up the septic. The Town does not want to eliminate short-term rentals but does need a set of guidelines to follow.

Ms. Duques reported that Planning and Zoning has not been given a draft of this proposed ordinance. Mr. Guskowski stated that he would update this current draft version once again and he will send to the Planning and Zoning Commission for their input.

Permit Fees

Motion was made by Stacia Libby to waive all Town of Essex Permit Application Fees for Essex Court CDBG grant project. Bruce Glowac seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Motion was made by Stacia Libby to waive all Town of Essex Permit Application Fees for the Connecticut River Museum roofing project. Bruce Glowac seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Public Hearing None

Set Town Meeting

Motion was made by Bruce Glowac to set a Special Town Meeting on Monday, January 23 at 5:00 pm in Conference Room A for the Fire Department Sinking Fund Request. Stacia Libby seconded the motion. All in favor.

Public Comment / Announcements: None

SELECTMEN GENERAL DISCUSSION:

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Motion was made by Norman Needleman to adjourn the meeting at 6:06 p.m. Stacia Libby seconded the motion. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Maria P. Lucarelli