

Approved Board of Selectman minutes
Quorum of Newport School Board present
Meeting Minutes of August 15, 2022
Municipal Building
15 Sunapee Street, Newport, NH 03773

School Board Members in Attendance: Jenna Darling, Chair; Bert Spaulding, Sr. and Tim Beard

School Board Members Absent: Steve Morris, Vice Chair; Bill Wilkinson

Selectboard Members Present: Jeff Kessler, Chair; Barry Connell, Vice Chair; Herbert Tellor, Keith Sayer, *via zoom*: James Burroughs

Town Administration and Staff Present: Hunter Rieseberg, Town Manager; Heath Marsden, co-manager Parlin Field Airport; Rick Kloeppel, co-Manager Parlin Field Airport

School Administration: Donna Magoon, Interim Superintendent of Schools

Public Present: John Merriman, Sawyer Darling, Kurt Minich

Videographer: Newport Community Television (NCTV) (for full meeting go to: www.nctv-nh.org)

Chairman Kessler did not acknowledge or welcome the quorum of School Board members or Interim Superintendent Magoon. He did not add the Newport School Board SRO business to the agenda under Informational or Action Items.

Call to Order (for full joint meeting go to: www.nctv-nh.org)

Chairman Kessler called the meeting of the Board of Selectmen to order at 6:30 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Agenda Review: Rearrange the order of agenda items to: Under INFORMATIONAL: 1st Parlin Field Proposal to Join FAA NPIAS Program, 2nd September 13, 2022 Primary Election Training on August 22, 2022; 3rd Community Center Update and Direction (Kessler)

BOS Minutes of August 1, 2022

On a motion by Selectman Tellor, seconded by Selectman Connell; *the Board approved the minutes of the August 1, 2022 BOS meeting as presented. The motion passed by roll call vote 5-0-0.*

Consent Agenda:

On a motion by Selectman Connell, seconded by Selectman Tellor; *the Board voted to approve the Consent Agenda of the August 15, 2022 BOS meeting as presented. The motion passed 5-0-0.*

OPEN FORUM: *A time in the meeting when the public is able to speak on items not on the agenda.*

Chairman Kessler read aloud from a prepared statement which included information from Town Manager Rieseberg and gave a lengthy oration concerning the Town and School contractual arrangements dealing with the Newport School Resource Officer (SRO). In his prepared statement, Chairman Kessler said there had been discussions between the Town Manager and Superintendent the week prior to the Thursday, August 11, 2022 School Board meeting. The Town Manager had sent a letter to the Superintendent listing 5 points (to be included in a contract). At the August 11, 2022 School Board meeting the Superintendent discussed the 5 points with the School Board. At their Board meeting the School Board members decided as a group (quorum) to come to the BOS meeting (August 15, 2022). Although Interim Superintendent Magoon had called and the School Board had been put on the agenda he had taken them off. Chairman Kessler concluded with additional personal opinions.

Vice Chairman Connell addressed Chairman Kessler and said the oration he gave was personal and not the stance of the BOS as a whole. Chairman Kessler concurred. Vice Chairman Connell said he was dismayed that he did not have the information that Chairman Kessler was talking about. He had just received one email letter 45 minutes prior to the BOS meeting. He had not been informed about any of the exchanges. Never. Vice Chairman

Connell believed that Chairman Kessler was the only BOS member to get the information-Chairman Kessler was not speaking for him (Connell). Addressing the School Board members and Interim Superintendent, Vice Chairman Connell said he did not know if they were at the meeting to negotiate or to present their grievances. Vice Chairman Connell was concerned the BOS is having a discussion without having all the information (transparency). Vice Chairman Connell stated that he believed that they have a right as a Selectboard to have a discussion; he told Chairman Kessler not to silence them.

Selectman Burroughs arrived at the meeting via zoom at 6:45 PM.

When acknowledged, Selectman Burroughs informed the Chairman and BOS that over the last few weeks he had spoken one on one with Police Chief Wilmot and Interim Police Chief Hunter. They had discussed whether there was appropriate staffing to cover the SRO position without backfilling any position. Both Chiefs had stated they did; Selectman Burroughs therefore did not know why the BOS was discussing hiring (another police officer). He again stressed that both Chiefs had stated they had the staffing for a SRO in the School. Selectman Burroughs said under RSA 105:2-a it was the police chief's prerogative where he will use his people (officers). Neither the Board nor Town Manager can dictate that; the police chief sends his officers without the direction of the Board, Town Manager or anyone else. He informed those in attendance that there has been a long standing agreement for over 20 years that there will be a SRO in the schools (he listed the past town managers involved: O'Neil, O'Keefe, Brown and now Rieseberg). He didn't know why the Town had to change things; it has worked very successfully.

Town Manager Rieseberg addressed Selectman Burroughs with an explanation of a different agreement and not being able to review it. He stated communication with lawyers has held up the Town side.

Vice Chairman Connell asked Town Manager Rieseberg, for clarification, if the School had sent the Town a document. He was told yes. Vice Chairman Connell said it was the first he has heard of a document (contract). Town Manager Rieseberg might keep Chairman Kessler informed; Vice Chairman Connell expressed he was upset the whole BOS had not been informed (no transparency). Town Manager Rieseberg denied the lack of transparency. He then said he did not send negotiation drafts to the Board members. Vice Chairman Connell stated he did not like being caught unaware.

Town Manager Rieseberg said the Town did not receive a phone call from the School Board saying they would like to be put on the agenda. He reiterated his justification of not providing any negotiating information to the Selectboard. Town Manager Rieseberg justified his position.

Selectman Burroughs stated that Newport has had a SRO since 1999. The Town has had a very positive association with the School. A contract has been very well received by both sides. He did not know why they were trying to rewrite something that has been so successful for so long.

Interim Chief Hunter was not in attendance at the meeting. Town Manager Rieseberg said that the Chief would tell the BOS that the Town did not have adequate staffing (for a SRO). Town Manager Rieseberg gave his own opinion of the situation.

Mrs. Donna Magoon, Interim Superintendent of the Newport Schools; addressed the BOS. She thanked the Board for allowing them to speak.

Mrs. Magoon had spoken to both police chiefs. Both Chiefs told her she would have a SRO come September. Town Manager Rieseberg said that what the police chiefs said contradicts him (she has the email if they would like a copy). She was to reach out to him (Rieseberg) with anything his employees want to do. Magoon told the BOS members that the change in authority on police staffing from the police department head (Chief) to the Town Manager was perplexing. The original contract was offered by Police Chief Wilmot to the School District.

Vice Chairman Connell addressed Town Manager Rieseberg and stated for clarification that his 5 point proposal was not definite. Town Manager Rieseberg said it was a proposal. Vice Chairman Connell stated he agreed that the BOS should not be negotiating in the public meeting. The Police Chief needed to be involved in the discussion. The RSA specifically states his involvement. Town Manager Rieseberg negated the statement saying the Police Chief directs staff; he doesn't enter into negotiations.

Mr. Minich addressed the Chair. He stated the Chair had given his view on a very contentious subject that the BOS as a whole did not agree with. He reminded the Board that the School is the most populated place in Town during the day (excluding private companies who have their own security). The School system is captive to two personalities. He asked the BOS to get the SRO to the school, take care of the children and leave personalities and politics out of the decision.

Ms. Darling, School Board Chair; stated she appreciated all the work that has been done. Her concern is when the School gets to budget season (they are already strapped for cash). They are being asked to pay time and a half and 75% of the officers' benefits. She worries about what the schools will have to cut. They are trying desperately to keep teachers and paraprofessionals all the while trying to keep the students safe. The School Board has three very different personalities all in agreement on the topic. We need to negotiate the salary (time and a half) and the 75%; the school district can't afford it. Chairman Kessler told Ms. Darling that a SRO will not make a school safe; it will make it safer.

Mr. Spaulding, Sr. addressed Chairman Kessler and told him he conducted himself incorrect procedurally at the BOS meeting.

- 1) Chairman Kessler had the request for the SRO to be on the agenda, he said no to it. It is offensive that the subject of discussing a SRO between the two Boards is not on the agenda.
- 2) The discussion came to the BOS under Open Forum, which he should have procedurally respected. He did not. Therefore, the only thing needing to be discussed is having a SRO in our (Newport's) School at the beginning of the school year. The monetary compensation can be argued after; it is an obligation.
- 3) Selectman Burroughs has pointed out Newport has had one (SRO) for over 20 years. The issue is protection in the schools.
- 4) He stated Chairman Kessler was at a meeting on a Friday afternoon at which had been said there was nothing worse than potentially having a school shooting in Newport.
- 5) He asked if they agreed as a Selectboard to supply us (School) with a SRO on the first day of school. All nuances will be figured out later.

He asked, will this Board support a SRO in the Newport School District on the first day of school this year. He asked that someone make the motion.

Selectman Burroughs made the motion ***to support a SRO in the Newport School District on the first day of school this year (2022).*** It was seconded by Vice Chairman Connell. In discussion,

- ❖ Vice Chairman Connell stated he did not want to get in the way of negotiations, but he definitely wanted a SRO at the school. He didn't understand the problem.

Town Manager Rieseberg stated the statute can be read differently.

- ❖ Selectman Tellor said he had a problem telling the BOS to vote on a motion when they (Board members) do not have all the information. There is discrepancy between the chiefs' confidence in his having the staff for an SRO, now we are told (by Rieseberg) that no we don't have enough officers and the Town will have to hire someone. There is some information that the BOS members don't have and they are being asked to vote on supplying a SRO.

Town Manager Rieseberg addressed the Chair and said he did not know where Selectman Burroughs got his information (he might have spoken privately with the police chiefs). He claimed the Police Chief was in agreement that the Town was in dire straits. Interim Chief Hunter had offered to come to tonight's meeting; Town Manager Rieseberg had told him it was not necessary.

Mr. Spaulding, Sr. addressed the BOS and stated they were straying from the motion, which was: does this Board (BOS) support a SRO officer in the schools the first day of school. Get rid of all the smoke and mirrors.

Mr. Beard agreed with Mr. Spaulding, Sr. He reminded the Chair that if the School followed Town Manager Rieseberg's 5 points (150% salary and 75% benefits), there would be available staff from the police department. Looking at the BOS he said, "Town and School: it means which pocket I as a taxpayer will take the money from. The police department has been understaffed for years; it will always be understaffed because no one wants to be

a police officer any more. There are a lot of contradictions in the conversation. Is Selectman Burroughs lying? Someone is lying. As for contract negotiations we are not talking about negotiations with private companies; we are talking about entities within the same town. He said it was his and the two Boards tax money. What was the issue? The SRO is important in this day and age-there has been one there for over 20 years.”

Mrs. Magoon begged the BOS members to please protect our (Newport) students.

- ❖ Selectman Burroughs addressed the public and BOS and restated that he did have a one on one conversation with both chiefs. He stated he would be happy to go over potential scheduling with the BOS and Town Manager on what had been worked out. Even if there is no agreement with the Town, the Police Chief can detail a SRO to the school for a day or however long he feels one is required.
- ❖ Selectman Sayer asked for clarification: the Police Chief allocated his staff where he wants. What was the problem
- ❖ Selectman Tellor stated it was difficult for the Selectboard to vote on the proposal. It's stated that we have the person (SRO) and the money; there is information that the Board (as a whole) does not have.

There was an additional request for a motion to support having a SRO in the Newport School System on the first day of school. Selectman Burroughs and Vice Chairman Connell asked the BOS for a commitment. After the BOS meeting the Superintendent and Town Manager could sit down and reconcile differences.

Mr. Spaulding, Sr. addressed the Board of Selectmen and asked if they supported a SRO in school. Ms. Magoon said her goal was the safety of the kids. She wants a SRO in the school. Ms. Magoon asked the BOS to please protect our (Newport) children. Allow the school to pay straight time.

Selectman Burroughs made a motion ***to vote to support a SRO in the Newport School System on the first day of school.*** It was seconded by Vice Chairman Connell. ***The motion failed by roll call vote 2-2-1 (Burroughs and Connell yes; Tellor and Sayer no; Kessler abstained).***

There was further discussion by both Boards including the content of the motion. The recording secretary was asked to read back the motion. She concurred, conferring with Selectman Burroughs that she had his motion down correctly.

Vice Chairman Connell made a motion ***to support having a SRO in the Newport School System on the first day of school.*** It was seconded by Selectman Tellor. ***The motion passed by roll call vote 5-0-0.***

The School Board members and Mrs. Magoon thanked the Selectmen for their support.

Ms. Jenna Darling and Master Sawyer Darling left the meeting at 7:36 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Maura Stetson, Recording Secretary

Approved on: September 22, 2022

The next meeting of the Newport School Board is scheduled for September 8, 2022.