At the Regular Meeting of the Town Council of the Town of North Kingstown, County of Washington, and State of Rhode Island, held in and for said Town, County, and State this 7th day of October, 2024 at the Town Hall Council Chambers, 80 Boston Neck Road, at 6:45 p.m.

PRESENT WERE: Gregory A. Mancini, President

Katherine K. Anderson

Lawrence C. Mandel

Matthew B. McCoy

ABSENT: Dr. Kimberly Ann Page

ALSO PRESENT: A. Ralph Mollis, Town Manager

Jeannette Alyward, Town Clerk Susan A. Murray, Deputy Town Clerk James M. Callaghan, Town Solicitor

An audio recording and video recording of this meeting was made to supplement the written record.

1. Call to Order

The Regular Meeting of the Town Council of the Town of North Kingstown held on October 7, 2024 was called to order by President Mancini.

2. Notice of Meeting being posted

Pursuant to R.I.G.L. 42-46-6(c), notice of this meeting has been posted on the Secretary of State's Website.

3. Executive Session

Motion by Councilor Mandel, seconded by Councilor Anderson and unanimously

VOTED: To adjourn into Executive Session pursuant to Rhode Island General Laws 42-46-4 and 42-46-5, Subsection (5) – Real Estate (RIDOT – Surplus Property).

The Council reconvened the meeting at 7:04 p.m.

Motion by Councilor Mandel, seconded by Councilor Anderson and unanimously

VOTED: To seal the minutes of the Executive Session.

4. Salute to Flag

President Mancini led those in attendance in a salute to the flag.

President Mancini led those in attendance in a moment of silence for those who died in the attack in Isreal on October 7, 2023 and throughout the war.

5. Public Comment

President Mancini stated that he wanted to give a shout out to the 350th Anniversary Committee.

Kathleen Guarino, 139 Summit View Lane, stated that she had a few questions on the Whistleblower Policy on tonight's agenda. She wanted to know if we were the only town that has this ordinance.

Richard Welch, 8 Arrow Lane, stated that he sent an e-mail to Town Manager Mollis regarding the School Committee meetings. You can't hear the meetings because of their microphones.

I. CONSENT AGENDA

Motion by Councilor Mandel, seconded by Councilor Anderson and unanimously

VOTED: To approve Consent Agenda Item Numbers 6 through 13 as presented with the exception of Agenda Item Numbers 8, 9, 10, and 11.

6. Approval of Change Order #3

VOTED: To approve Change Order #3 for the Planning Department for work related to the redesign of the concrete wall footing due to subsurface obstructions for the Wickford Waterfront Project to New England Building & Bridge Co., Inc., 388 Veazie Street, Providence, RI 02904, in the amount of \$21,121.91.

Funding for this Change Order is from ARPA Funds.

7. Approval of Emergency Repairs

VOTED: To approve for the Water Department the emergency repairs to Well #1, located at 500 Oak Hill Road, to include the removal and inspection of pumping equipment and chemical redevelopment, to Weston & Sampson, 55 Walkers Brook Drive, Suite 100, Reading, MA 01867, in the amount of \$30,645.00.

Funding for these repairs will be charged to FY2025 Infrastructure Replace and Repair, Well Rehabilitation #44040091-5510001.

Motion by Councilor Mandel, seconded by Councilor Anderson and unanimously voted to approve Agenda Item Numbers 8, 9, 10, and 11.

8. Class F Alcoholic Beverage License

VOTED: To approve the application for a Class F Alcoholic Beverage License by David Ainslie, dba North Kingstown VFW Post #152, PO Box 1653, to serve beer and wine in a secured approved area at Harbor Fire on the grounds of the Town Dock Parking Lot, on Friday, October 18, 2024, from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., subject to taxes and water paid to date; receipt of a Certificate of Insurance; receipt of Alcohol Server Training Certificates; and compliance with the recommendations of the Fire Department, the Police Department, the Building Official, and the Planning Department.

Councilor McCoy recused himself from this vote as he is a member of the North Kingstown VFW Post #152.

9. Class F Alcoholic Beverage License

VOTED: To approve the application for a Class F Alcoholic Beverage License by David Ainslie, dba North Kingstown VFW Post #152, PO Box 1653, to serve beer and wine in a secured approved area at the Fun Run/Military Appreciation Festival on the grounds of the Town Dock Parking Lot, on Saturday, October 19, 2024, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., subject to taxes and water paid to date; receipt of a Certificate of Insurance; receipt of Alcohol Server Training Certificates; and compliance with the recommendations of the Fire Department, the Police Department, the Building Official, and the Planning Department.

Councilor McCoy recused himself from this vote as he is a member of the North Kingstown VFW Post #152.

10. Entertainment License (new)

VOTED: To approve the application for an Entertainment License by David Ainslie, dba North Kingstown VFW Post 152, PO Box 1653, to have live music for the 5k Run and Fall Festival on the grounds of the North Kingstown Town Dock Parking Lot, on Saturday, October 19, 2024, from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., subject to taxes and water paid to date and compliance with the recommendations of the Fire Department, the Police Department, the Planning Department, and the Building Official.

Councilor McCoy recused himself from this vote as he is a member of the North Kingstown VFW Post #152.

11. Exhibition License (no vendors)

VOTED: To approve the application for an Exhibition License with no vendors by David Ainslie, dba North Kingstown VFW Post 152, PO Box 1653, to hold an OktoberVets 5K and Fall Festival at the North Kingstown Town Dock Parking Lot, on Saturday, October 19, 2024, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., subject to taxes and water paid to date and compliance with the recommendations of the Fire Department, the Police Department, the Building Official, and the Planning Department.

Councilor McCoy recused himself from this vote as he is a member of the North Kingstown VFW Post #152.

12. Ratification of approval of a Victualling License (new)

VOTED: To ratify the Town Clerk's approval of the application for a Victualling License by F.M.A. International LLC, dba Wickford Cheese and Sundry, 26 Brown Street, expiring December 1, 2025, subject to taxes and water paid to date; receipt of a Department of Health Certificate; receipt of a copy of their Rhode Island Retail Sales Tax Permit; and compliance with the recommendations of the Fire Marshall, the Police Department, the Planning Department, and the Building Official.

13. First Reading – Amendment to Section 11-66

VOTED: That this shall constitute the First Reading of an Ordinance in Amendment of Section 11-66 of the Code of Ordinances, Town of North Kingstown, entitled, "Stop Signs", and that this be advertised and referred to the Regular Town Council Meeting of October 28, 2024 for Second Reading and Consideration of Adoption.

II. PUBLIC HEARING

14. Second Reading – Amendment to Section 9-4

Motion by Councilor Mandel, seconded by Councilor Anderson and unanimously

VOTED: To open the Public Hearing.

There was no public comment.

Motion by Councilor Mandel, seconded by Councilor Anderson and unanimously

VOTED: To close the Public Hearing.

Motion by Councilor Anderson, seconded by Councilor Mandel and unanimously

VOTED: To adopt an Ordinance in Amendment of Section 9-4 of the Code of Ordinances, Town of North Kingstown, entitled, "Fee Schedule Enumerated – Table VI – Recreation Department Fees – Allen Harbor", and that this shall constitute the Second Reading thereof.

15. Second Reading – Amendment to Section 9-4

Motion by Councilor Mandel, seconded by Councilor Anderson and unanimously

VOTED: To open the Public Hearing.

There was no public comment.

Motion by Councilor Anderson, seconded by Councilor Mandel and unanimously

VOTED: To close the Public Hearing.

Motion by Councilor Mandel, seconded by Councilor Anderson and unanimously

VOTED: To adopt an Ordinance in Amendment of Section 9-4 of the Code of Ordinances, Town of North Kingstown, entitled, "Fee Schedule Enumerated – Table VI – Recreation Department Fees – Golf Course", and that this shall constitute the Second Reading thereof.

III. REPORTS

16. Report by the Town Manager

Town Manager Mollis gave the following report:



October 7, 2024

Manager's Report

A. Ralph Mollis, Town Manager

Projects

Revolution Wind
Offshore Wind Farm



- Regular meetings continue.
- Their work continues on Onshore Substation, Circuit Drive Roadway Duct Bank and Interconnection Facility; community outreach also continues, including attendance and/or sponsorship at the recent events including: 350 th Anniversary Family Day, Parade, Harbor Fire, and Chamber of Commerce's Savor the Sunset.
- QDC approved the request for extended working hours; we support this approval and have been assured concerns of evening light pollution, noise, and general traffic/trucks will continue to be addressed.
- Questions/Concerns? Contact Revolution Wind at (401) 255 -2207 or info@revolution -wind.com

RI Department of Transportation Post Road Sidewalks Wickford Roundabout



- We will be meeting with Rhode Island Department of Transportation again next week to discuss the upcoming Post Road/West Main Street sidewalk project.
- The Wickford Mini-Roundabout project will also be discussed.
- An update to Council will follow, and I will be sure to bring up the Route 4 traffic signal issue along with these two projects.

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• We continue with our regular meetings with Revolution Wind regarding their Offshore Wind Farm Project. At our most recent meeting, they informed us that work continues with their Onshore Substation, Circuit Drive Roadway Duct Bank, and Interconnection Facility. They continue with community outreach having attended and sponsored 350th Anniversary events such as Family Day and the Parade, and the Chamber's Savor the Sunset event; they are also sponsoring and attending this month's Harbor Fire.

QDC recently approved Revolution Wind's request for extended hours and a 90-day extension as they have several companies within the park working 24 hours without issue. The work approved is primarily interior and the town supports QDC's approval; we have been assured that our concerns of noise, light pollution, trucks backing up and general traffic will be adhered to. We will immediately address any concerns or complaints with Revolution Wind and QDC.

As always, anyone having any questions or concerns are encouraged to contact Revolution Wind at 401-251-2207 or info@revolution-wind.com.

• We will be meeting with Rhode Island Department of Transportation next week to discuss the upcoming Post Road/West Main Street Sidewalk Project as well as the Wickford Mini-Roundabout. I will be sure to update the Council after our meeting and will bring up the Route 4 traffic signal issue at this meeting.

Projects

Wickford Elementary School
Update on Sale



- Nicole LaFontaine, Director of Planning, and I met with the owners, developer, and attorney representing the entity purchasing the former Wickford Elementary School.
 - While productive, we learned that the affordable housing component of the project along with the requirement for the reduction of the number of planned units to retain some historical components of the building (chalkboard, assembly area, etc.) have provided unique challenges.
- CRMC permitting and approval is still outstanding; their application for federal tax credits is being reviewed.
 - Regretfully, it is becoming more likely that they won't close on the sale prior to the end of Fiscal Year 2025. We are working to assist them to keep the project moving forward; I will continue to update the Council.

Allen Harbor Dredging



- The Town Council recently approved the financial component for the long -awaited Dredging at Allen
 Larbor.
 - QDC Executive Director Steven King has confirmed that an Agreement has been ratified and is being signed; all permits to complete the dredging have been completed.
- QDC is in the process of engaging a dredging contractor to complete the project this fall.

- Nicole and I met with the owners, developer, and attorney representing the entity purchasing Wickford Elementary. While it was a productive discussion and update, they did share with us that the affordable housing component of the project along with the requirement that they reduce their number of units in order to retain some of the historic components of the building such as chalkboards and assembly area have provided unique challenges. CRMC permitting and approval is still outstanding; their application for federal tax credits is being reviewed, and it is becoming more likely, and regretful, that they won't close on the sale before the end of Fiscal Year 2025. We are working with them on a variety of matters in an attempt to assist them and keep this project moving forward. I will keep the Council up to date.
- The Town Council recently approved the financial component for the long-awaited Dredging Project at Allen Harbor. I've been in contact with QDC Executive Director Steve King, an Agreement has been ratified and is being signed, all permits to complete the dredging have been completed, and QDC is in the process of engaging a dredging contractor to complete this project this Fall.

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Events

Sincere thanks and gratitude to all that were involved in an extremely successful and well-received **350**th **Anniversary Parade** on Saturday, October 5, especially:

- 350th Anniversary Steering Committee & Chairperson, Matt McCoy
- Kate Glass
- · Chief Kettelle
- · Jeannette Alyward
- DPW Staff Mike Botelho, Joe Paquette, Alex Tutsch and Kyle Wicker
- NK High School volunteers: Maili Rizzo, Siena Palermo, Addison Smith, Mia Bigelli & Aarav Puranik
- Participation in the parade from our Fire, School, Police, Public Works and Recreation Departments was great.
- Thank you to the many other community and regional groups that participated in a parade procession that was 1.5 hours long and comprised of hundreds of people representing over 100 organizations!

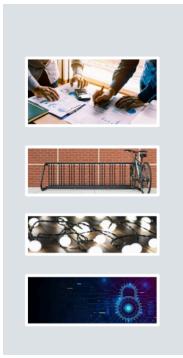
Next up for the 350th Anniversary: a small scale Founder's Day ceremony & Tree Dedication at Town Hall on Saturday, 10/26. More information will be announced by the 350th Anniversary Steering Committee soon.



• I would like to express our sincere thanks and gratitude to all that were involved in an extremely successful and well-received 350th Anniversary Parade this past Saturday, October 5th.

The event was well-executed by 350th Anniversary Steering Committee Chairperson (and Council Member) Matt McCoy, as well as Town of North Kingstown staff: Kate Glass, Chief Scott Kettelle, Jeannette Alyward, and greatly supported by DPW staff: Mike Botelho, Joe Paquette, Alex Tutsch & Kyle Wicker; and North Kingstown High School volunteers Maili Rizzo, Siena Palermo, Addison Smith, Mia Bigelli, and Aarav Puranik.

The participation, especially from our Fire, School, and Police Departments, will be remembered by many generations and community members for years to come. The parade was a 1.5-hour procession from the High School to Wilson Park featuring over 100 local and regional organizations with hundreds of participants and hundreds of additional viewers along the 1.7-mile route. Thank you all, it was a fantastic day for our town.



Initiatives

- We are starting early preparations for the FY2026 Budget and look forward to sharing the final product of our improved Community Appropriations process resulting from suggestions of Council Members Larry Mandel and Katie Anderson.
- A result of recent Town Council Office Hours with Councilor Mandel, we are in the process of designing and placing bike racks at many parks and other municipal buildings.
- The rollout of this year's Winter Wonderland Decoration Grant Program in the Planning Department will feature some new elements and awards.
- Our IT Department launched a new Cyber Security Training Platform for employees last week with support from ITAC Committee.

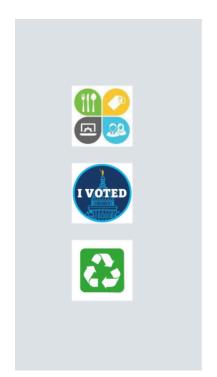
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- We are getting an early start on our preparation of the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget. With this being a state-mandated statistical revaluation year, this early start will hopefully allow us to focus on revenue after the first of the year in order to utilize the tax classification system to equalize any impact from the statistical revaluation. Also, as directed by the Council, I had the opportunity to meet with Council Person Larry Mandel and Council Person Katie Anderson to reevaluate our Community Appropriations Budget process and come up with a new format. I want to thank both Larry and Katie for their leadership and innovative suggestions to improve this process. I look forward to sharing with them the final product, as well as the new guidelines, shortly before sending out the new, revised applications for our Community Appropriations.
- As a result of a constituent request during Council Person Mandel's recent Office Hours, we are in the process of designing and placing bike racks at Wilson Park and other parks, Town Hall and, once renovated, our Municipal Office Building. My thanks to the residents who came forward during Office Hours with this suggestion and for Council Person Mandel following up with my office on this request.
- We are in the process of scheduling Public Informational Forums regarding the two Bond Questions that are on this November's Ballot. The forums are tentatively scheduled for October 21st and October 23rd. In addition, the North Kingstown Fire and Police Chiefs invite and welcome residents to the Public Safety Complex on Post Road on October 9th, October 23rd and October 26th for tours. Information can be found on our Social Media Platforms or by reaching out to my office or the Public Safety Complex.
- Based on the tremendous success of past years, we are rolling out our Winter Wonderland Decoration Grant Program with some new elements. The Planning Department will continue with the \$1,000 reimbursement and introduce new awards for Best Traditional Decorations, Best Contemporary Decorations, and Best New Participant Decorations. We are hoping to announce our Award Winners and their prizes at our Tree Lighting Ceremony. This program has been well received, has resulted in great participation and fostered a relationship between the town, the Chamber of Commerce and businesses. It has stimulated economic activity while promoting local businesses, resulting in a festive atmosphere throughout town.

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• Our IT Department launched a new Cyber Security Training Platform last week. This new platform received the support of our ITAC Committee and is a key step in enhancing our security posture and educating our employees with the knowledge to recognize and mitigate cyber threats. We will also be working in participation incentives and prizes to encourage active participation.



Initiatives

- Superintendent Duva and I attended the recent Board Meeting for the North Kingstown Chamber of Commerce and look forward to continuing to improve and foster a positive relationship between the Chamber and the Town.
- Early Voting begins Wednesday, October 16 th at our Municipal Office Building at 100 Fairway Drive.
 - That evening, there will be a School Department Building Sub -Committee meeting at the School Administration Building in Quonset Business Park.
- As confirmed in last year's budget session, we have added an "alternate" component to our Recycling Bid to include researching the cost and viability of providing trash collection for residents.
 - Our goal with this alternate component is to conduct due diligence, exploring the costs, benefits and consequences of proposed municipal trash collection.
 - Using the information received, we will present an analysis to Town Council for their final decision on the matter.

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- Superintendent Duva and I attended the most recent Board Meeting of the Local Chamber of Commerce which was well appreciated by the Board and new Director. In addition, I've attended the Chamber's past few morning and evening events, and we had one of our September Department Head Meetings in the Conference Room at the Chamber of Commerce and had the new Director speak to the Department Heads. Again, this was well received and is one of many steps we have taken to improve the relationship between the Chamber and the Town.
- Early Voting begins Wednesday October 16th at our Municipal Office Building and that same evening there will be a meeting of the School Department Building Subcommittee at the School Administration Building in Quonset Business Park.
- Finally, as we've communicated with the Town Council during last year's budget session, we have added an "alternate" component to our Recycling Bid, which is about to expire, to include researching the cost and viability of providing trash collection to our residents. This has created many questions with outreach coming from those in favor of this initiative and opposed to it. Because this is an "alternate bid", we can move forward with the Recycling Bid without awarding the Trash Pickup option.

Our goal was to conduct our due diligence, explore the cost, the benefits and the consequences of providing trash collection, present this analysis to the Town Council, and then have the Council make the final decision. As a result, no matter the course of action, we can explain in the future that this initiative was explored, and we've conducted our due diligence. As always, this discussion and decision will take place in a public meeting, open for public comment. I hope this addresses any confusion or concerns.

Thank You

A. Ralph Mollis, Town Manager

IV. OLD BUSINESS

17. Whistleblower Ordinance/Policy – Discussion/Possible Action – Next Steps

Town Manager Mollis reviewed his memo and proposal as follows:

As the Council may recall, we conducted a series of public meetings back in early 2023 regarding the ineffectiveness of our Whistleblower Ordinance.

During my almost 8 years as Town Manager, we've received a handful of complaints within this system. During our public meetings in 2023, I had reported that both the Audit Committee and I felt the "system had seen little use" since its inception and its use "involved trivial matters" and was not meeting the original intention of the Ordinance. The Audit Committee's recommendation at that time was that "the present Whistleblower Ordinance was not operating as intended....and the responsibilities of the Screening Committee within the Ordinance fell outside of the Audit Committee...and that the Town Council rescind the Whistleblower Ordinance".

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In our attempt to address this policy and rescind the Ordinance, numerous, legitimate questions and concerns were raised during the meetings which resulted in the issue traveling in numerous directions. In the end, the Town Council advised that while they agree with the fact that the Whistleblower Ordinance has not functioned effectively or as intended, the Town should have a mechanism for individuals to be guided in providing applicable information that may be valuable to the Town and/or Administration.

I evaluated our neighboring communities to see if any had similar programs which we could use as Best Practice; however, I couldn't locate any programs that may be similar to what we were attempting to enact. The matter was therefore tabled for further research.

As a result, I am recommending the following which I hope will address many of the concerns that developed during our review while at the same time rescind an Ordinance and program that is not functioning as intended:

- Rescind the current Whistleblower Ordinance. This will require a First Read and a Second Read.
- Once rescinded, cancel our current contract with Navex Global, resulting in an annual savings of \$5,314.
- Enact the following Whistleblower Policy to be placed on our website under the "residents" icon:

Whistleblower Policy – The Town of North Kingstown requires its employees to observe high standards of business and personal ethics in the conduct of their duties and responsibilities, practicing honesty, integrity and obeyance of laws & regulations when fulfilling their responsibilities.

Reporting – This Whistleblower Policy is intended to enable employees and others to raise concerns they may have internally so that the Town can address and correct inappropriate actions and conduct. It is expected that employees (and volunteers) would report concerns they have about suspected violations of law or regulations to the appropriate representative, as described below.

Protection from Retaliation – It is illegal, and contrary to the values of the Town of North Kingstown, for anyone to retaliate against someone who in good faith reports a suspected violation of the law, fraud, suspected violation of any regulation governing the operations of the Town, or an ethics violation. Anyone who retaliates against someone who has reported a violation in good faith would be subject to discipline up to and including termination of employment, as well as subject to any laws broken as a result of retaliation against a "whistleblower".

Reporting – The Town of North Kingstown has an open-door policy and suggests that employees (or any applicable party) share their questions, concerns, or complaints with the appropriate supervisor. If you are not comfortable sharing your concerns with the appropriate supervisor, you are encouraged to reach out directly to the Town Manager (in the case of Town of North Kingstown operations) or the Superintendent (in the case of School Department operations). If you are not comfortable sharing your concerns with the above-mentioned individuals, you should reach out directly to the Town's Legal Counsel (Town Solicitor).

If your concern involves an alleged Ethics Complaint, you should also reach out to and potentially file a complaint with the Rhode Island Ethics Commission.

If your concern involves an alleged financial crime, or any action that rises to the level of potential criminal actions, you should also reach out to the North Kingstown Police Department and/or the R.I. State Police.

If your concern alleges misconduct within or by a member(s) of the North Kingstown Police Department while on duty, you should file a civilian complaint/police report with the North Kingstown Police Department.

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It should be further noted under this section that the "Whistleblower Protection Act" protects those who work for the government and report the possible existence of violations.

Acting in Good Faith – Anyone filing a complaint concerning a violation or suspected violation must be acting in good faith and have reasonable grounds for believing the information reported indicates a violation. Any allegations that prove not to be substantiated and which prove to have been made maliciously or knowingly to be false will be viewed as a serious disciplinary offense.

Handling of Reports – All reports will be promptly investigated and appropriate corrective action will be taken if warranted. Reports of violations or suspected violations will be kept confidential to the extent possible, consistent with the need to conduct an adequate investigation.

The Council thanked Mr. Mollis for his presentation.

Mr. Mollis stated that if the Council wishes to go forward with rescinding the Ordinance, the First Reading would be October 28th, with the Public Hearing for the Second Reading on November 18th. The Council would then adopt the "policy" also at the November 18th meeting.

After a brief discussion, it was the consensus of the Council to move forward with Mr. Mollis's recommendation as stated above.

V. NEW BUSINESS

18. Correspondence

The following is a summary of the e-mail correspondence received from constituents since the last regular NKTC meeting on 09/23/2024.

09/24/2024 - TANK Organization - Indigenous Peoples Day

09/18/2024 & 09/24/2024 - Raymond Birch - North Kingstown Planning Commission Meeting of 09/17/2024

09/24/2024 - Jennifer Lima - NKTC Meeting Agenda Item #19 for 09/23/2024 Regular Meeting

09/25/2024 & 10/07/2024 - Megan Reilly - School Bond

09/25/2024 - Richard Pastore - Quidnessett Country Club Seawall

09/30/2024 & 10/01/2024 - Sarilee Norton - School Bond

10/02/2024 & 10/04/2024 - David Perrotti - Waste and Recycling Bid - North Kingstown

10/04/2024 - Matt Gendron - NKTC Meeting

10/04/2024 (2x) – Karen Anne Kolling – Rubbish Pickup

Note: Information cutoff time & Date: 3:00 PM, Monday, October 7, 2024.

Councilor Mandel stated that he held office hours on Tuesday, September 24, 2024; however, he did not have his notes so he will report at the next meeting.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Jeannette Alyward Town Clerk