

MINUTES OF THE MAY 18, 2020 SELECT BOARD MEETING

MEMBERS PARTICIPATING VIA CONFERENCE CALL: Board Members Chair Mike Houghton, Vice Chair Joe Lovejoy, Board member Allison Knab along with Finance Administrator Dawna Duhamel and Parks & Recreation Director Seth Hickey. Town Administrator David Moore was on the call at the Municipal Center.

One member of the public was also on the call.

The Board Chair opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. and gave an introduction to the all remote meeting. He indicated all members of the Select Board have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through this platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if necessary, participate in this meeting through dialing the following phone # (877) 205 7349 and passcode 2254.

Via the meeting notice, we provide the information necessary for accessing the meeting, including how to access the meeting via conference call. He asked the public to contact the Town Administrator David Moore by calling 603 772-4741 ext. 187 if you have any problem with accessing this phone call during the meeting.

In the event the public is unable to access the meeting, the meeting will be adjourned and rescheduled. Please note that all votes that are taken during this meeting shall be done by roll call vote.

MINUTES

Mr. Lovejoy motioned to approve the minutes of 5/4/2020 and 5/11/2020 provided one typo be corrected. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. Via roll call vote, all voted in favor.

PARKS & RECREATION

Parks & Recreation Director Seth Hickey reviewed his department report. He has been working with Ms. Duhamel on a Rec Revolving policy. He is also working with Mr. Moore on the reservation policy. As part of the Parks & Recreation return to operations plan, Mr. Hickey outlined a tiered approach to opening the Stratham Hill Park main parking lot. He advocated a conservative plan: reopening the parking lot to Stratham residents only, alternating use of parking spaces, limiting parking to weekdays. The rationale for this last measure was to avoid the large crowds that tend to gather there on the weekends. It also offers more days for the residents to enjoy the park with less crowds. Based on guidance from the Tennis Association, he'd like to open only the tennis courts at Stevens Park for single play only. Conversation continued regarding methods to ensure compliance. Previous emergency policies, such as keeping dogs leashed and prohibiting playground use, will remain in effect. The timing was discussed.

Mr. Hickey is recommending cancelling the summer camp program this year. This decision is based on Stratham Memorial School's decision to restrict access to the building during the summer and concern over not being able to comply with the Governor's guidelines for summer camps. Next, Mr. Hickey addressed the many contracted camps that offer programs through his

department. Some of the contracted camps are considering online or virtual programs. Discussions on alternatives are ongoing and he will report back when decisions have been made. Ms. Knab wanted to ensure a coordinated approach to the camps and the Tier 2 phase of opening the parks. Mr. Houghton made a motion to authorize the Tier 1 opening of Stratham Hill Park and related recreational program offerings as discussed in the Select Board meeting of May 18, 2020. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. Via roll call vote, all voted in favor. Mr. Houghton requested the Board review the final press release before it is distributed to the public.

Lastly, Mr. Hickey directed attention to the new organizational chart that Mr. Mears has created relating to the redistribution of duties between the two departments. It outlines the responsibilities of each department.

Responding to an inquiry from Mr. Houghton regarding the implications of budget constraints, Mr. Hickey said that, given the uncertain environment, large events that typically bring in revenue will be cancelled for this year.

Correspondence

Mr. Moore stated that no action was necessary on the correspondence. It is included for information only.

Monthly Department Reports

Ms. Knab and Mr. Lovejoy voiced appreciation for the uniformity of the reports. Mr. Lovejoy noted a mathematical error on the Town Assessors report. Mr. Moore will follow up.

COVID 19 Grant Acceptance

Mr. Moore reported that the State of NH is offering first responder stipends. Ms. Duhamel and Fire Chief Matt Larrabee put together a roster to submit to the state. Mr. Lovejoy made a motion to participate in the First Responder COVID 19 Stipend Program and authorize the submittal of rosters to the New Hampshire Department of Safety, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM). Ms. Knab seconded the motion. Via roll call vote, all voted in favor.

Municipal Relief Fund Program

Mr. Moore recommended the Board enter into the State of NH Municipal Relief Fund Program. Mr. Lovejoy made a motion to accept and enter into the grant agreement for the COVID-19 Municipal Relief Fund (MRF) in an amount up to \$176,768 and designated the Board Chair to sign. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. Via roll call vote, all voted in favor.

Memorial Day Observance

Mr. Moore outlined the procedure that Memorial Day Coordinator Jeff Gallagher, the Denton's and staff are proposing to safely observe the holiday. After a brief ceremony, taps and a wreath laying at the Veterans Garden at the park, a small, silent procession of emergency vehicles will travel through town. Logistics will be finalized Wednesday.

Outdoor Restaurants & Governor's Executive Order

Mr. Moore elaborated on a memo from Building Inspector/Code Enforcement Officer Shanti Wolph. He is recommending the Town allow outdoor restaurant seating in accordance with the Governor's order. Mr. Lovejoy motioned to adopt and utilize the temporary outdoor seating permit request form as proposed by Building Inspector/Code Enforcement Officer Shanti Wolph. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. Via roll call vote, all voted in favor.

Application for 79E Community Revitalization Tax Incentive – 82 Portsmouth Ave.

Mr. Moore reported that the Town is in receipt of a complete 79E application from the owners of 82 Portsmouth Ave. Mr. Lovejoy made a motion to accept as complete the 79E application as submitted and amended by the owners of 82 Portsmouth Ave. Mr. Lovejoy further authorized the Town Administrator to schedule a public hearing within the required 60 day timeframe. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. Via roll call vote, all voted in favor.

Town Meeting – Next Steps

Mr. Moore has not gotten feedback from the residents regarding the postponement of the meeting or the Articles to be considered. He reviewed the logistics of managing the meeting given the continued concern about large gatherings.

Due to static on the conference call, all participating hung up and re-dialed in again. The static on the line continued, so they tried another number. After asking if there were any other members of the public, Mr. Moore emailed the one member of the public with the new number.

Conversation regarding the Town Meeting venue continued. We must wait for further guidance from State.

TOWN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Moore reported that the Supervisors of the Checklist are receiving guidance from the State on voting protocols. The Supervisors will be meeting June 2. Although the building is closed to the public, they are requesting that it be open on that day from 7:00 pm to 7:30 pm to allow members from the public to come in to register to vote or change their party affiliation. They expect the turnout to be minimal and will follow safety procedures. The Board was supportive of the request.

Finance Administrator Dawna Duhamel presented the monthly financial report. She began by comparing last year's spending to this year, noting we are doing very well. The variation in the Fire Dept. compensation is due to the new stipend program that was put in place last November. Still, it remains within budget. Ms. Duhamel noted that the staff salary reductions will be reflected in next month's report. They briefly discussed how the changes in the payment of debt will leave less money at year end.

Ms. Duhamel put together a report on the Capital Projects including the project and year end balances. Mr. Lovejoy requested a list of the projects due to lapse at year end.

Next, Ms. Duhamel outlined a scenario where property tax collections are less than anticipated due to Covid 19. She wanted to be prepared and to advise the Board should the Town need short term financing in order for it to meet its obligations. Based on previous year's collections, she devised a model that would give an indication as to if and when this would be the case. Grant money cannot be used for this purpose. The Board sensed they would know by July if they would need to move forward with the financing. It was speculated that the government may make municipal lending available. They will continue to monitor the situation.

Mr. Houghton requested that Stratham's farmers be highlighted in the upcoming newsletter. He spoke about Stratham's agricultural history and the importance of the town's farms. It's been recognized that the pandemic has had a detrimental effect on farms throughout the country and he wanted to call attention to and support our local farms during this stressful time.

Mr. Moore asked about logistics of future meetings. The Board expressed a preference for meeting in person, while maintaining a safe distance. The public would be encouraged to call in to participate in the meeting.

Mr. Moore requested action on an appointment. Ms. Knab motioned to appoint Town Planner Tavis Austin to the Rockingham Planning Commission Technical Advisory Committee and Mr. Moore as an alternate. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. Via roll call vote, all voted in favor.

At 9:03pm Mr. Houghton motioned to go in to a non-public session to discuss personnel matters. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. Via roll call vote, all voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard
Recording Secretary