



Office of the Board of Selectmen
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NEWTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN

DATE: MONDAY, MARCH 23, 2020

TIME: 6:00PM

LOCATION: NEWTON TOWN HALL, 2 TOWN HALL ROAD

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

I. Call to Order

This meeting was held to bring the Selectmen and public up to date on the COVID-19 virus. The meeting was held via conference call. In attendance at the Town Hall in the Selectmen's Office was Selectmen Lawrence Foote and Charles Melvin. On the phone was Selectmen Burrill; Chairman, Lisa L. Gonyer and Kathryn Michaels, Town Administrator Nancy Wrigley and Secretary Diane Morin. The public session was audio taped. The public meeting minutes were transcribed and typed by Secretary Morin.

Other conference call attendees were Tina O'Rourke, Shanti Wolph, Chief Alcainho, Trisha McCarthy, Terry Caswell, Pete Gagnon and Chief Jewett and members of the public.

Chairman Burrill called the meeting to order at 6:02pm.

II. Scheduled Business

A. Update – COVID-19 virus

Chairman Burrill explained the reason for the meeting was to bring the Board and public up to date on guidelines to combat the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Mrs. McCarthy briefed the Board with new updates from the State conference call held earlier today. She informed the Board that the 34 First Responders statewide have been placed in quarantine. Should any of the Town's First Responders test positive, a form from the EOC needs to be submitted to the State.

At this time no shelter in place has been ordered.

Mrs. McCarthy spoke to Health Officer Robert Leverone about employees traveling via plane, train or boat. Should they be required to self-quarantine for 14 days even if they have no symptoms. She stated that Mr. Leverone stated that he would hope employees would act responsible and stay home if symptomatic. Mrs. McCarthy suggest the Board create a policy to handle this type of situation.

A patient may sign a waiver that will allow First Responders to share their name with other First Responders but not with the public. This will help First Responders be prepared to protect themselves should they have to respond to the address again.

For those First Responders who chose to go to their own physician, a new form is available for the physician to use to send the test kit to the State lab for faster results.

Chief Alcadinho stated that there are a few local companies that have a policy in place stating that if an employee takes a domestic flight, they must self-quarantine for 14 days. He would like the Board to create a policy for this situation.

Selectman Gonyer moved to institute a policy for COVID-19 that any employee that takes a domestic flight must take a 14 day leave of absence. Seconded by Selectman Michaels for discussion.

Selectman Michaels asked if bus and train transportation should be included. Selectman Gonyer stated that the motion put forth would fall in line with what other Towns and local companies are doing. Chief Alcadinho stated that the CDC is recommending everyone avoid mass transportation.

Chairman Burrill offered a friendly amendment "to any employee who takes mass transit must notify their supervisor and be prepared to self-quarantine for 14 days". Selectman Gonyer feels the amendment is too open and vague. The Board discussed the pros and cons of both.

The motion passed with a unanimous roll call vote.

Chairman Burrill moved to institute a policy for COVID-19 that an employee who has taken mass transit must notify their supervisor as soon as possible and be prepared to quarantine for 14 days. Seconded by Selectman Michaels for discussion.

Selectman Gonyer asked who will make the determination whether to allow the employee to return to work without being quarantined for 14 days. Chairman Burrill stated that it should be a joint decision between the supervisor and Board.

Burrill – aye, Michaels – aye, Foote – aye, Melvin – aye, Gonyer – nay

Chairman Burrill received a request from Chief Alcadinho who would like to extend the working hours from 25 to 36 for key personnel in the Fire Department to be able to staff the Station on Saturday and Sundays from 7:00am to 7:00pm. Chief Alcadinho stated that currently Saturday and Sunday's are not covered and would like to set watches for those days. This will help ensure that experienced EMT's will be able to respond to any emergencies.

Selectman Gonyer moved to extend the number of maximum hours from 25-36 hours per week to Fire Department personnel during the COVID-19 pandemic. Seconded by Selectman Michaels with a unanimous roll call vote.

Transfer Station Manager Pete Gagnon joined the call at 6:30pm.

Chairman Burrill explained that the Board's motion to stop issuing permits and doing inspections was not correct. The Board needs to revisit this decision. The Town needs to provide a way for contractors and residents to obtain permits and request inspections.

Building Inspector (BI) Wolph stated that emergency order 11 was issued by the Governor that outlines the steps needed to allow construction to continue within the State. BI Wolph reviewed the new guidelines in place for contractors to use so that they can continue construction. The Town does not have online permits available on the Town's website. BI Wolph will prepare an online permit to be reviewed by the Board.

Chief Alcadinho stated that all fire department permits are available online.

Chairman Burrill asked if the Building Department web page has contact numbers. Selectman Gonyer stated that the information is there.

Chairman Burrill moved to have Secretary Morin update the Building Department website to remove information about no building permits being issued. Seconded by Selectman Gonyer with a unanimous roll call vote.

Chairman Burrill suggested that a comprehensive list be put together that includes the conference call number, purpose of the call and who is attending. This will help to disseminate information effectively.

ACTION ITEM: All employees or Board members that attend a conference call on behalf of the Town provide a list of numbers, purpose of conference call and who is representing the Town to Secretary Morin.

ACTION ITEM: A new conference phone number will be used for ongoing meetings. Secretary Morin will email the new number and update the agenda so the public may join the meeting.

Health Office Leverone addressed the Board and reiterated to continue "Social Distancing", wash your hands frequently, keep kids home and away from other kids. Health Office Leverone provide his phone number, 603-498-8028, to anyone who has questions.

Town Administrator Wrigley stated that she received an email from NHMA regarding public meetings and right to know law. She asked what the Planning Board and Board of Appeals should do regarding their scheduled meetings. Chairman Burrill stated the Boards should postpone their meetings. Should they need to meet, they should follow the guidelines NHMA has sent out.

Health Officer Leverone stated that cardboard absorbs the COVID-19 virus more than other surfaces. To prevent being infected let the box sit outside for 4 hours before touching it. Take precautions when handling mail as well.

Chairman Burrill moved to authorize Secretary Morin to sign the 1-year renewal for the Town Hall's firewall license and warranty at a cost of \$578.00. Seconded by Selectman Gonyer with a unanimous roll call vote,

III. Adjourn

Selectman Gonyer moved to adjourn at 7:03pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane M. Morin
Board of Selectmen Secretary