



**Office of the Board of Selectmen
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NEWTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN

DATE: MONDAY, MARCH 16, 2020

TIME: 5:30PM

LOCATION: NEWTON TOWN HALL, 2 TOWN HALL ROAD

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

I. Call to Order

Chairman Gonyer called the meeting to order at 5:30pm. In attendance were Selectmen, Lisa L. Gonyer; Chairman, Matthew A. Burrill, and Charles R. Melvin Sr., Town Administrator Nancy J. Wrigley and Selectmen's Secretary Diane M. Morin. On the phone were Selectmen Kathryn Michaels and Lawrence Foote who stated no one else was in the room. The public meeting was audio taped. The public meeting minutes were transcribed and typed by Secretary Morin.

Present at the meeting were:

Town Clerk/Tax Collector MaryJo McCullough

Road Agent Mike Pivero

Building Department and Planning Board representative Barbara White

Welfare Agent Tina O'Rourke

EOC Trisha McCarthy

Police Chief Mike Jewett

Fire Chief John Alcaidinho

On the phone was Health Officer Robert Leverone who stated no one else was in the room.

II. Scheduled Business

A. COVID-19 Town's emergency response plan

Selectman Burrill stated that the reason for this emergency meeting was to plan how the Town should react to the COVID-19 pandemic. The plan decided at this meeting will then be presented to the public at the Board's meeting on March 17, 2020.

The Gale Library Trustees have already closed the library until April 3, 2020.

Town Clerk/Tax Collector McCullough stated that she has been in touch with the DMV to see if there is a plan to extend the March vehicle registrations. She stated that residents can renew vehicle registrations, license dogs, pay property taxes and request vital records all online. What cannot be done is a new or transferring vehicle registration. She will post a notice on the Town Clerk and Tax Collector web page instructing residents to call her office and leave a message. She will then make

arrangements to assist those residents that are not able to use the online payment system.

Mrs. McCarthy stated that Homeland Security and the Governors Office has asked that any decisions be brought to them before enacting them. She also informed the Board that holding remote meetings has been approved provide one Selectman is present in the meeting hall to allow the public to access the meeting.

Chief Alcadinho asked the Board who will make the decision to have the Town buildings remain open. The Board agreed that the decision would be theirs and that they hope to make that decision at this meeting.

Selectman Burrill moved to close all Town buildings to the public until further notice with the exception of the Transfer Station which will remain open. Seconded by Selectman Melvin with a unanimous roll call vote.

Road Agent Pivero suggested that a SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) be implemented for Transfer Station employees to keep them and the public safe. He suggested they wear protective masks and gloves.

Mrs. McCarthy suggested that the Transfer Station stop accepting cash and checks as a precaution.

Selectman Michaels suggested the Transfer Station be shutdown.

Selectman Burrill moved to close the Transfer Station to non-residents only and to stop accepting bulk items. There will be no money transactions during this time as well. Seconded by Selectman Melvin with a unanimous roll call vote.

The Board discussed the Building Department and their procedures. Anyone needing a permit can email or call the Building Inspector who will determine whether to issue the permit or perform the inspection.

Police Chief Jewett addressed the Board and informed them that he has a company that will do a deep clean of all the Town Buildings. The Board discussed the merits of cleaning the buildings now or later.

Mrs. McCarthy stated that the Town may be reimbursed by the Federal Government for expenses such as cleaning the buildings. The reimbursement would be 75% of the cost. The Town should keep all receipts and track any overtime paid to employees.

Selectman Michaels asked if the Town would be notified if a resident tested positive for COVID-19. Both Selectman Foote and Mrs. McCarthy stated that it would be a violation of HIPAA laws.

The Board asked Welfare Agent O'Rourke if there were any special issues with her office. Mrs. O'Rourke stated that clients can fill out a form and she will place the items in bag. She will then place the bag outside the door and notify the client to pick it up. Anyone wishing to donate food or non-perishable goods should make an appointment with her before dropping anything off.

The Board revisited deep cleaning the Town buildings.

Chairman Gonyer moved to authorize Police Chief Jewett to contact Aftermath Services and have the Town Hall, Gale Library, Fire and Police Stations deep cleaned. Seconded by Selectman Melvin for discussion.

Selectman Burrill stated that the Board is taking this action, deep cleaning Town buildings, as a precaution. The Board does not have any information that a resident has tested positive for COVID-19. Residents should see this action as strictly precautionary.

Chairman Gonyer stated that there will be some employees and officials in the buildings as required.

The motion passed with a unanimous roll call vote.

The Board stated that no meetings should be held with the exception of the Board of Selectmen which is needed to keep the Town functioning. Non-essential personnel should not report to work until further notice. The Planning Board Administrator Assistant will be allowed to enter the building in order to notify abutters that the upcoming Planning Board meeting has been postponed.

In order for the Board of Selectmen to hold a legal meeting, at least one Selectman will be at the Town Hall when a meeting is being held. This will allow the public access to the meeting should they need to ask the Board a question. The Board is encouraging the public to remain home and if available watch the proceedings via Comcast channel 20.

The scheduled recount vote for the Planning Board position will be held as scheduled.

Selectman Burrill will take the lead on holding meetings on a regular basis, so the Board is kept up to date.

Chief Alcadinho asked the Board about permits issued by the Fire Department. The Board discussed the possibility of having the Building and Fire Department coordinate when permits are needed in case of emergency only.

Selectman Burrill moved to suspend issuing new permits for both the Fire and Building Departments unless an emergency situation exists. Both Departments

will work together in determining if the permit needed is an emergency. Seconded by Selectman Melvin with a unanimous roll call vote.

Health Officer Leverone asked the Board if the "no permits" applied to his office as well. He explained that a resident with a failed septic system would need a permit to replace/repair the system. The Board agreed that the Health Officer could issue permits in such a case.

Mrs. McCarthy stated that she will record an "Alert Now" message that will go out to the residents informing them of the situation.

The Transfer Station Manager will direct employees to wear masks, gloves and keep their distance from the public.

Selectman Burrill will initiate a conference call every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 6:00pm. This will allow the Board members to hear the latest updates from the EOC, Fire and Police Departments as it pertains to COVID-19. Actions will be taken as needed by the Board.

III. Adjourn

Selectman Melvin moved to adjourn at 7:03pm. The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane M. Morin
Board of Selectmen Secretary