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NEWTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN

**DATE: FRIDAY, MARCH 20, 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 Chairman Burrill. On the phone was Selectmen Gonyer, Foote and Michael, Town Administrator Wrigley and Secretary Morin. Selectman Charles R. Melvin Sr. was excused this evening. 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 Alcaidinho, Trisha McCarthy, Terry Caswell, Pete Gagnon. No members of the public were on the call.

Chairman Burrill called the meeting to order at 6:01pm.

**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 State has a separate facility for First Responders should the Town want them to go there for testing. They do not have to use this facility and may go to their own doctor instead, but tests should be sent to the State lab for quicker results. The Anchorage Motel in Portsmouth, NH has been opened for First Responders who have been infected and need to self-quarantine.

Mrs. McCarthy has sent an updated EMS protocol to Chief Jewett and Chief Alcaidinho.

The State is working on getting more PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) for First Responders through the FEMA acquisition process. They have set aside testing kits for First Responders.

The limitation on the number of hours a retired employee in the NH Retirement System can work has not changed.

Noontime calls with the State may change due to costs.

A representative from Primex Insurance was on the noontime call with the State and informed them that if a First Responder is infected it will be dealt with on a case by case basis. The representative also asked that Towns take into consideration the liability if they send employees home to work or not work depending on what you ask the employee to do. Any questions, the Town can reach out to them.

At this time, shelter in place has not been implemented and that people need to remain flexible should the order need to be issued in the future.

The State asks that all Town's keep track of any invoices and time sheets associated with COVID-19.

The State will look at breaking down the number of COVID-19 cases by communities.

The State is looking into compensation for dispatchers should they need to remain at the dispatch center passed their shift.

Mrs. McCarthy asked that if there are any updates that they be sent to her. She will post them on the Emergency Management (EM) Town's web page.

**ACTION ITEM FROM MARCH 18:** Chairman Burrill will speak with Town Administrator on how to compensate.

Chairman Burrill addressed how First Responders would be compensated should they be infected. He stated that Primex has forms for Worker's Compensation that the Town will need to fill out. Chief Alcaidinho reviewed what other area Towns are doing. Some Towns are switching to 24 hour shifts and only allowing those First Responders to answer emergency calls. Should the emergency need more responders, then they would be called in to assist. Chief Alcaidinho went on to state that other Towns are going to fully compensate First Responders through Primex should they need to be self-quarantined. Chief Alcaidinho stated that he has not seen anything in writing about this. Chairman Burrill stated that this a good start and will continue to collect information on how to handle compensation for First Responders that need to be self-quarantined.

Transfer Station Manager (TSM) Pete Gagnon informed the Board that he has reduced the number of employees per shift because the Transfer Station is no longer accepting cardboard. Selectman Gonyer stated that this would fall under the decision the Board made to pay employees affected by the loss of hours due to COVID-19. The Board instructed TSM Gagnon to have employees affected by loss of hours to fill out time sheets and to note in the comment field "COVID-19".

**ACTION ITEM FROM MARCH 18:** If the public are allowed in the building, the Board will need to determine if the building needs to be cleaned.

Chairman Burrill stated that if only a small group has used the building in a specific location it does not warrant cleaning the building. Selectman Gonyer stated that the surfaces were cleaned prior to and after the recount vote was done. Selectman Michaels stated that the virus has been known to live on surfaces up to 3 days. She stated that this may change as we learn more about the virus. Selectman Gonyer

stated that only a few employees would be going into the Town Hall and that would be to pick up mail or other needed work.

**ACTION ITEM FROM MARCH 18:** Board of Selectmen to consider long term response to situation.

Mrs. McCarthy stated that Emergency Management has plans in place for such emergencies. Changes can be made to the plans if needed.

Chief Alcaidinho informed the Board that the Fire Department beginning Monday, March 23, 2020, will be implementing an Administrator Order to limit the number of First Responders on daily details and to essential personnel only. Only those scheduled will be allowed in the Station and will respond to emergencies. Should an emergency occur, and more members are needed, only then will the call go out for more responders. The Board agreed to the Administrator Order proposed by Chief Alcaidinho.

Building Inspector (BI) Shanti Wolph addressed the Board. He is looking for directions on how to handle requests for building permits and inspections. He does not believe the Town can stop issuing permits or provide inspections as this would basically shutdown construction in the Town. Who will enforce the stop constructions order? He stated that the State has not issued any order to stop construction. Other Towns are leaving it up to the Building Departments to make the decision on whether to issue permits and inspections.

Chief Alcaidinho stated that he received a call from a contractor stating that the Town does not have the authority to shutdown construction.

Chairman Burrill stated that he has reached out to legal counsel about this matter and hopes to have a definitive answer on Monday.

Chief Alcaidinho stated that the Fire Department has no issue doing inspections for propane installations, smoke or visual inspections.

**ACTION ITEM FROM MARCH 18:** The Board will revisit allowing the Building and Fire Department to issue permits and perform inspections.

Selectman Foote stated that supplies should be delivered on Monday from the State.

III. Adjourn

**Chairman Burrill adjourned the meeting at 6:33pm.**

Respectfully submitted,

Diane M. Morin  
Board of Selectmen Secretary