

Town Manager Report to the Board of Selectmen – Mon., May 4, 2020

May 18 – Governor Baker today announced that his re-opening committee would be focusing on releasing guidance to begin reopening in a phased and safe process on May 18. I have asked public works and the facilities department to begin implementing measures to ensure our employee's and the public's health when the Town Hall is again opened.

Annual Town Meeting – If the Board would still like to consider scheduling the Annual Town Meeting for Sat., June 20, 2020, then we will have to post the warrant by May 20, which makes May 18, 2020, the last scheduled Selectmen's meeting prior to May 20.

I'd like to propose that the Board schedule next week's meeting on May 11, to review a condensed Town Meeting warrant and amended FY'21 budget proposal and make the decision at that time, whether it wishes to plan for the June 20 date or not. That would give the town staff and the Finance and Advisory Committee two weeks from today to complete our work on revisions to the warrant and budget proposal, allowing the Board to vote on the final warrant and budget proposal at the May 18 meeting and have the warrant posted by May 20. That would also give us six weeks to begin planning for the "where and how" of ATM planned and get the warrant and FinCom Book of Recommendations printed and distributed to residents.

As a reminder, the June 20 ATM date would also allow the town to hold its annual Town Elections on Thursday, June 25, and provide ample time for the Town Clerk to promote early voting, absentee ballots and other measures that might help ease the burden of the town election this year.

Budget – Department heads held budget meetings with Finance and Advisory Committee liaisons, as well as Finance Director Marisa Batista and last week, as we prepare to amend the FY 2021 budget proposal. We expect to be able to provide a new budget proposal to the Board of Selectmen for inclusion in the Annual Town meeting warrant, and we will be preparing to do that over the next week or so. We are scheduled to meet virtually with the FinCom this Thursday at 6 p.m., to get feedback on the various budget savings that were discussed with department heads last week.

Schools – An important component of the FY'21 budget amendment will be the school department's recommendations for lowering its budget request as well. A reminder this Board and the Wenham Board of Selectmen have been invited to attend a roundtable discussion with the HW Regional School Committee and our state delegation – State Senator Bruce Tarr and State Representative Brad Hill – tomorrow at 4 p.m. the School Committee Capital and Finance Committee will meet after that roundtable discussion and the full School Committee will meet Wed., May 6 to discuss the FY'21 budget.

Library – Another area that we're closely looking at in this budget discussion is the Regional Public Library. The HW Regional Library Board of Trustees met this morning at 10:30 to discuss possible cost-cutting measures in both the FY'20 and FY'21 budgets, at the request of Wenham Town Administrator Anthony Ansaldi and myself. As you know, the H-W Public Library has been

closed since Governor Baker issued his stay at home advisory in mid-March. The challenge is that while we have been digging deep into town budgets to protect ourselves against revenue shortages in both FY'20 and FY'21, we haven't had the same analysis of the library budgets. Given the likelihood that even when we do re-open the library, we will not be able to provide the same level of service because of social distancing and the need for new occupancy levels, etc. for the building. So, we talked with the Library Board of Trustees and Director Kim Butler this morning about identifying a plan for how to re-open and how also to find savings for the two towns. There are challenges for the library, given the way that state library funding is determined and the way that library staff is tasked with their work, but given that we've dug deep into the budget in other departments, we are trying to have the same honest conversations with the director and Trustees there.

Reorganization – As part of our discussion with the FinCom liaisons last week, I am working with the impacted departments in Townhall to identify ways to re-structure some things so that we can deliver the same services to our residents and employees, but maybe in a different way. I also have a scheduled meeting with the union representatives to get their input on this plan and hope to be able to move forward after that meeting

Public Works – I wanted to let the Board know that projects in the DPW will be heating up starting next week, to the point where we are expecting to have most if not all DPW staff back on duty next week. As you know, our pandemic response and need to provide safety for our employees through social distancing, resulted in us choosing to split the shifts for our crews of much of the past few weeks. Work that could be done by one-person work crews and work that could not be put off has been on-going during this period, but other annual work that typically takes place at this time of year has been pushed off. However, we are at the point where we have several projects that need to begin, and so we're going to start to utilize safety precautions but return to full crews to undertake that work.

- A subset of this work includes filling potholes, cleaning and maintaining the flag poles, replacement of a valve at the School Street well, and a refocus on preparing the cemetery for the months ahead.
- On the cemetery, I would like to address some recent questions we've had about the condition of the grass at the cemetery and what the department is planning to do about it. As it has been explained to me by the Public Works Director, the town over the last few years has attempted to deal with grubs through the use of organic, natural products that are better for the environment and safer to use. However, we are aware that some of the grass at the cemetery is in particularly bad shape at this point, and the Public Works Director said today that he would be putting a plan together with the Cemetery foreman to address the condition of the grass and improve it.