

HAMILTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN

MINUTES OF MEETING

Teleconference

April 27 2020

Selectmen Present: Chair Jeffrey Hubbard, Shawn Farrell,
William Olson, Darcy Dale, and Rosemary
Kennedy

Town Manager: Joe Domelowicz

Other Town Staff Present: Town Counsel Tom McEnaney of KP Law,
P.C.

** This meeting was conducted via Zoom teleconference with all the above participants remaining in their homes.*

Call to Order

At 6:04 p.m., Chair Jeff Hubbard called the Board of Selectmen (BOS) meeting/teleconference to order and took roll call. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment

None.

Selectmen/Town Manager Reports

William Olson expressed condolences to the family of Lee Chris Grimes, a Hamilton resident, father, and grandfather who had died due to the COVID-19 virus.

Rosemary Kennedy reported she went on a site walk with the Conservation Commission (ConCom) to Vineyard Hill across the street from the Patton Homestead. The ConCom is giving permission to take the tennis court out and have natural grass there. She discussed other efforts too, such as putting in a parking lot so people could enjoy the property. She also reported the Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust (HAHT) would be meeting tomorrow (Tuesday) to review a final letter of approval to Traggorth Companies to purchase the Mac's Shoe site on Willow Street from the Hamilton Development Corporation (HDC). The HAHT is contributing \$500K toward building 18 units, and since nine of the units (50%)

will be deemed affordable, all the units will count toward the Town's subsidized housing inventory. She said the Trust was being careful with its funds and putting some contingencies/must-dos in place before the money will be released to the developer. Lastly, she reported the HAHT had voted to award \$35K to Don Preston, executive director of the Northshore Habitat for Humanity, to secure property at 434 Asbury St. to build 10 affordable housing units there.

Mr. Hubbard said the Town Hall Building Committee would hold a virtual meeting on Friday at 10 a.m. to discuss the Town Hall project. The Zoom link will be posted online.

Town Manager Joe Domelowicz, Mr. Farrell, and Ms. Dale gave no report.

CONSENT AGENDA

- Approve minutes of March 30 BOS Meeting.
- Accept gift of 15 trees from the Institution for Savings.
- Approve change of date for half-marathon.

Decision:

Mr. Farrell made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Ms. Dale seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken with "ayes" from Ms. Dale, Mr. Olson, Mr. Farrell, Ms. Kennedy, and Mr. Hubbard, (5-0) unanimous.

Mr. Domelowicz added the trees are being stored behind the DPW [Department of Public Works] and DPW Director Tim Olson had invited the BOS to make suggestions on their placement. Mr. Farrell suggested the Town pool, to provide some shade for folks sitting on the lawn, provided the trees won't interfere with the leeching field.

AGENDA

COVID-19 (Coronavirus Discussion)

Board of Health (BOH) Chair David Smith generally leads this discussion but was not present this evening. Ms. Dale asked for the latest COVID numbers for Hamilton. Mr. Domelowicz said total cases is 20. Currently they have six active cases. The total number of deaths is four. Mr. Domelowicz said he wanted to let people know there is a COVID-19 webpage attached to the Town website, which is updated weekly by Mr. Smith and Assistant to the Town Manager Michellelee Carroll.

Ms. Dale said some towns have mandated wearing masks outside on public roadways and streets and asked if the BOH were considering that. She said research has shown the virus is like dust in the air so joggers and bikers can be affected by it. Town Counsel Tom

McEnaney said most communities have ordered the wearing of masks anytime you enter a public space, such as a restaurant for picking up take-out or a store, gas station, etc., or whenever you enter any multi-tenanted property where there are common areas. There was a question about whether the Town should have a No Visitors policy for the Hamilton Housing Authority property. Mr. McEnaney said he hadn't seen any orders in any of the other towns to do that, and it would be difficult to enforce with people needing to have grocery or Amazon deliveries. Mr. Domelowicz said he would pass the information along to the BOH.

Update on Local Government Operations

Mr. Domelowicz said the Town's response to the pandemic is well established. Town employees have been working from home and at Town Hall a couple days a week, and while on their regular shifts were practicing social distancing. As far as concerns for the economy, some decisions had been made internally to put a hold on spending and the Town is expected to get through FY'20 pretty well. For the Emergency Expenditures list (discussed and voted on at a previous meeting), the Town identified a possibility of overspending \$91K, which the DOR [Department of Revenue] authorized. But, he said, the \$360K or so the Town has put on hold should more than cover this year's budget. He does not believe they will get anywhere near the \$91K in overspend; that is a worst-case scenario. He said real estate tax receipts due May 1 but extended to June 1 (by vote taken at a previous meeting) have started to be received. Extending the deadline will result in a crunch time to balance the books at the end of the year.

Mr. Domelowicz said for FY'21, the latest projections to the economy are dire and bleak, so he and Finance Director Marisa Batista went through the budget to do some recalculations in adjusting the budgets down. They've talked with the Schools on this also, and aim to reduce overall spending by at least \$1M less than what they had been proposing. Currently they're gathering recommendations from the department heads and the Finance and Advisory Committee (FinCom), and in about a week they will have an updated FY'20 budget proposal.

Ms. Dale asked Mr. Domelowicz if he could get a memo or list from School Superintendent Dr. Julie Kukenberger of staff positions with no work currently as they may have to prepare for the worst but hope for the best. He said he would ask. He said for FY'20, the Schools hadn't been looking to make any changes because they anticipated being called back, but now the Governor has ended the school year.

Mr. Farrell asked what the procedure would be for making revisions to Hamilton's budget and the Schools' budget. Could they just reopen the warrant and revote it? Mr. Domelowicz said they might want to reopen the warrant and take some articles out that aren't absolutely necessary, such as the FY'21 Capital Plan, and put them off to the Special Town

Meeting in the fall. This would shorten the meeting in light of health concerns. For example, the request for funding of the Town's Master Plan could also be removed, he suggested. Mr. Farrell noted there's talk there could be a resurgence of the virus in the fall so they will have to consider that and perhaps plan to push Town Meeting out later into the fall as well as taking all the social distancing measures.

Discussion of Annual Town Meeting

Mr. Domelowicz discussed some ideas for Town Meeting, such as holding it outdoors on a football field or another place where they can practice safe social distancing. Proposals from tent companies show basic cost for chairs, a floor, and a tent would be about \$10K-\$11K plus the cost of audio visual equipment. There might be a potential to share the cost with Wenham. Overall, they're looking for ways to make people feel comfortable if the Town makes the decision to go forward with holding Town Meeting on July 1.

Mr. Domelowicz said while some of his colleagues in other towns are worried about reaching their quorums for Town Meetings and are talking about moving to a 1/12 budget, he personally would find it hard to recommend that move. He said if people are to resume getting back to living life with precautions in place, Town Meeting is one of the most important events on the Town's calendar and it wouldn't be good to not have it. Mr. Farrell clarified a 1/12 budget meant taking the total budget of the previous year and dividing it by 12. It was discussed this poses a problem because some big payments are due all at once at certain times of the year. The Town would constantly be in a position of evaluating what it would need for a given month and asking the BOS to approve it. He said it wouldn't be good for staff morale either since they'd need to do more work. While he wasn't asking the BOS to take a vote on the Town Meeting date this evening, he said he thought they should work toward being able to give a date.

Updates on State Actions from Tom McEnaney

Attorney McEnaney said there are two schools of thought on Town Meeting. Some towns are looking at delaying and going to a 1/12 budget. Of those planning to go forward with holding Town Meeting prior to June 30, some are considering outdoor meetings or places with enough space to socially distance. He suggested if the school were used, for example, people could spread out in the larger spaces, such as the auditorium and cafeteria. There has been some discussion on legislation to reduce quorum requirements and also discussion about online town meetings, but he said the Attorney General was not in favor of that nor was the Secretary of State.

In other action, Mr. McEnaney said Chapter 65 of the Acts of 2020 puts a moratorium on evictions and foreclosures. It also extends the closure of schools and non-emergency childcare facilities through June 29, 2020. Also pending is action that allows notaries to

remotely notarize documents under certain circumstances. The courts have been closed and will not have any jury trials or other trials until July 1 with the exception of emergency business.

OTHER BUSINESS

Consideration of Topics for Discussion at Future BOS Meetings

Mr. Hubbard said he was encouraged to see boards like the Town Hall Building Committee and HAHT moving ahead and holding meetings. Ms. Kennedy said she wondered when they would start reintroducing issues other than those concerning COVID-19. Mr. Hubbard said he thought now was the time.

Ms. Kennedy brought up the issue of a lack of control of dogs and people not picking up after their dogs, which is a frequent Facebook discussion in the community. She wanted to discuss enforcement of leash laws. She proposed discussing it with the BOS among themselves and later inviting the BOH and Police Department to weigh in. Ms. Dale noted that dogs may also help spread the virus. Mr. Olson said he'd like to hear from the officers in charge of enforcement first. Ms. Kennedy said they should find out how many hours the dog officer is available and perhaps discuss increasing dog license fees.

Mr. Farrell asked for an update on the sign in front of Public Safety building. Mr. Domelowicz said they'd signed a contract with the vendor, but ran into a small snag because the size of the sign might create too much heat, and it was suggested they have two separate signs back to back with space between them. To do that, they had to run it by the Zoning Board of Appeals, which gave approval. The installation will happen in June.

Mr. Domelowicz said road striping was set to begin. They can do it without putting the crew at risk. They also received a grant for a charging station at Town Hall and will start that construction. These items are included in his Town Manager report, which he will post online tomorrow.

Mr. Domelowicz reminded the BOS a roundtable meeting/discussion with State Senator Bruce Tarr and State Representative Brad Hill was set for Tuesday, May 5, the day after the BOS regular meeting May 4. The BOS had also talked about convening another joint meeting with the Wenham BOS as they get closer to picking a date for Town Meeting. The BOS agreed it was not yet ready to pick the date.

Mr. Domleowicz said the BOS previously discussed inviting the developer for the 59/63 Willow Street project (Traggorth Companies) to speak with them. They tentatively set that for May 11. Ms. Kennedy said she had a good conversation with David Traggorth last week and he seems to want to do the right thing by the Town.

Adjournment

Ms. Dale made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:52 p.m. Ms. Kennedy seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken with "ayes" from Ms. Dale, Mr. Olson, Mr. Farrell, Ms. Kennedy, and Mr. Hubbard, (5-0) unanimous.

Prepared by:

Mary Alice Cookson / 6-8-2020
Mary Alice Cookson Date
Minutes Secretary

Attest:

Darcy Dale / 6-11-2020
Darcy Dale Date
Board of Selectmen Clerk