

**Kingston, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting of March 30, 2020
FINAL MINUTES**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM in the Meeting Room at the Town Hall.

PRESENT: Phillip Coombs, Chair; Donald Briggs, Vice Chair; Kevin St. James, Richard Wilson, Electra Alessio, Selectmen.

Chairman Coombs began by noting that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, meetings are being held in a new format to cut down on people present at one time in the Town Hall. He noted that Selectman Alessio is joining the meeting from home via Zoom software.

APPOINTMENTS/NEW BUSINESS:

Updates from Department Heads regarding Emergency Operations

Road Agent Rich St. Hilaire, Fire Chief Graham Pellerin and Police Chief Donald Briggs reported on activity in their departments as the Town responds to the Covid-19 virus.

Mr. St. Hilaire said that the immediate problem is public safety, and there may be unanticipated costs incurred by his department and others, for supplies and overtime pay. He said the Human Services department will also be affected as many residents, especially food service workers, will be out of work. He reported that his own budget has some unused funds, due to the mild winter, that may be available for other purposes. He suggested that all departments should consider not spending any funds that are not absolutely necessary. He said that he would like to go forward with purchasing a truck for building maintenance, as planned, and also to put this year's paving work out to bid. He said that he would not want to put off paving work, but he could halt the process at any time if emergency funds are needed.

Mr. St. Hilaire said that disaster money that will be received from the federal government will not be received until after the fact, so the town will need to spend from the budget first. He said that FEMA money will take 8 to 12 months after the fact to come in, and while in the past he has done the applications and paperwork to pursue these funds, he expects the Selectmen to handle it this time.

Fire Chief Pellerin said that to date, his department is not over budget, but his concern is what will happen in the event that some of his personnel need to be off the roster after being exposed to the virus. He said he does not know how many may have to be isolated or quarantined, so it is hard to prepare for. Chairman Coombs asked if he has the depth of personnel to cover gaps due to exposure, and Chief Pellerin answered that it will be hard to juggle the schedule if restrictions on part time employees working more than 32 hours is not eased.

Mr. St. Hilaire mentioned that if people can't pay their tax bills, revenue will be affected, in which case a Tax Anticipation loan may be necessary.

Vice Chairman Briggs, as Police Chief, reported that the Police Department is holding the line. He said he has been working to secure Personal Protective Equipment, checking with the state every day. He has received some welcome donations, including three cases of N95 masks, which he brought to Chief Pellerin. Meanwhile, he asked the Board to consider a proposal he has brought in for purchase of a new version of the N95 mask.

Chief Briggs added that the department heads and Finance Officer Cindy Kenerson have been in discussion and will be charging all invoices that may be reimbursable to the Emergency Management line for the time being, later to be designated as Covid-19 expenses where applicable.

Chief Briggs reported that his new officers in training can't act alone, but also can't ride with another officer in one cruiser due to the health precautions. He said his solution is to have the new officers in an older police vehicle, and if they are going to respond to an event, they will call in a fully trained officer to assist. He also reported that things have been quiet, and that residents of Kingston have been good about complying with the Governor's orders to stay socially distant and stay at home as much as possible. However, he said that he is concerned about conduct at grocery stores, and people being too close. Selectman St. James said he thought the stores were stepping up their game, to keep people separate. Selectman Briggs advised the public that they need to practice distancing at the stores, and that shopping early in the morning is a quieter time and also that times are set aside for older shoppers.

There was a discussion of the need to work with Ellen Faulconer to keep on top of the possible increased need for Human Services aid.

Chairman Coombs said that next steps should include examining spending in each department to reduce any non-urgent items. He said liaisons for each department should discuss this with them. Selectman Alessio suggested that each department should be asked to consider a 5% to 10% hold on non-essential expenditures.

Stone work - Nichols Museum

There was a discussion of the stone work to be done on the Nichols Museum. Mr. St. Hilaire said he would like to see it go forward so that the building does not deteriorate further. The option of doing only the stairs at this time was suggested, but Mr. St. Hilaire said that the money is already allotted in a Capital Reserve fund to do both. The consensus was to allow the work to go forward, but look at the schedule with an eye to cash flow.

Direct Deposit of Paychecks

Chairman Coombs opened a discussion of direct deposit of pay checks, which Ms. Kenerson has been promoting, in order to facilitate payroll while the Town Hall is closed down. Selectman Alessio said that she did not think this can be mandated, but employees should be asked to consider direct deposit, even if temporarily. Chairman Coombs then expressed concern that if the Finance Director should get sick there is no

one trained to take her place. Selectman Alessio said that this is a big concern and every employee should have a back-up plan.

Inspections

Chairman Coombs reported that the inspectors have cut down on non-urgent inspections, but continue to perform inspections outdoors and where distancing is possible. Chief Pellerin asked for direction on whether his department should be going in for inspections as long as a building is empty, saying that they had a call today for an occupancy permit that requires all inspectors and the fire department to sign off.

Chairman Coombs said that he has a problem with emergency personnel being diverted by non-essential tasks; Selectman St. James said that all inspectors need to be careful but at the same time, construction needs to continue. As for an occupancy permit, Selectman Briggs said that it should be done by all, or the process will stop. It was agreed that all inspections will be done on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the inspector. Selectman Coombs said that the public needs to understand and identify what is an emergency and what is not. Chief Pellerin said that, as an example, the fire department has always changed smoke alarm batteries for residents, especially elderly or disabled, as a courtesy; however, in these trying times he has to think about the possibility of his personnel being exposed to infection and having to be quarantined. He said that he would like the public to understand that for now, he is not going to send fire personnel to do this. Chairman Coombs said that it is the Chief's call, but he believes that emergency personnel need to be reserved for emergencies at this time. All were in agreement; Selectman Alessio said that a Fire Department "day of caring" might be planned for the fall during fire prevention week, to perform some of these services once we are not in a pandemic.

Oil and Propane

Selectman Briggs said he has been watching the prices of oil and propane, which are now down considerably. He asked the Board for permission for he and the Finance Director to lock in the rate when it seems the right time. There was some discussion of rate fluctuations and timing.

MOTION: by Selectman St. James, to authorize Vice Chairman Briggs and Finance Director Cindy Kenerson to lock in the rate for oil and propane for the coming year when they feel the timing is most beneficial.

SECOND: By Selectman Wilson

All were in favor via roll call vote.

Budget/Fire Station

Chairman Coombs relayed a note from the Finance Director advising that the DRA has not approved the Warrant yet, pending a decision on Articles 7, 8 and 9 (related to financing of the new fire station). That being the case, no expenditures for the Fire Station beyond what is available from the capital reserve fund and impact fees should be made until the Warrant is approved. Chairman Coombs said that the DRA and Town Counsel Sumner Kalman are working on resolving the matter. He said the DRA may disqualify Article 7, making Articles 8 and 9 moot, but they are also questioning the way the Infrastructure Fund was set up, saying it may be that the Selectmen have the authority to expend the fund at any time. Article 5, approving the full bond, can go

forward regardless. While the legal issues are sorted out, Chairman Coombs noted that in order to use the Infrastructure Fund it has to be liquidated, and this may not be the best time to do that.

In a related matter, Vice Chairman Briggs said that the first thing that needs to happen at the site of the new fire station is for the power poles to be moved. This will require a letter to Unitil and to Consolidated Communications asking them to move the poles across the street. Vice Chairman Briggs said that if any construction is planned for this season, this needs to be done soon. Selectman St. James said that the Administrative Assistant should generate the letters, either for Board signatures or just the Chairman to sign, and Vice Chair Briggs can hand deliver them.

Selectman Alessio suggested that the bond should go forward while waiting for answers on the Infrastructure Fund, as rates should be lower now than when it was discussed in March.

Tax Lien Report

This preliminary list of properties with delinquent tax payments, received from the Tax Collector for information, was acknowledged by the Selectmen.

COMMITTEE LIAISON REPORTS:

As committees have cancelled recent meetings, there was nothing new to report.

PUBLIC COMMENT I:

Glenn Coppelman, Exeter Road, submitted a suggestion via Zoom:

Mr. Coppelman wondered if the Town has considered establishing a fund for residents in need, or donations should go through Human Services. Chairman Coombs said that the Finance Officer would need to be contacted to set up a fund, but Ellen Faulconer would also need to be contacted about how to handle donations. Vice Chairman Briggs suggested that as the school is already delivering food to residents, Ms. Faulconer might contact them to see if they can combine services, to minimize contact. The Board will work with the Human Services Director on these matters.

Sanborn Head/Water testing

The \$5,000 budgeted for a contract with Sanborn Head for consulting services regarding the testing of wells for PFA/PFOA has been used up. It was established that continuation of this contract is provided for in the current budget.

MOTION: by Selectman St. James to approve \$5,000 to continue contracting with Sanborn Head for consulting services.

SECOND: by Selectman Wilson

All in favor via roll call vote.

Water delivery

The situation of Monadnock Water company being unable to deliver water, as contracted, to a resident whose well had tested above the limit for PFA compounds, was discussed. A Monadnock representative had told the resident, and the Administrative Assistant in a follow-up call, that due to extremely high demand recently they will not be

able to deliver water for about a month, so alternatives are being explored. In the meantime, this resident was given two 5-gallon jugs of water from the Police station's stock. This is not a permanent solution, so it was agreed that a back-up supplier should be sought.

PUBLIC COMMENT II: None heard.

CORRESPONDENCE, APPLICATIONS, PURCHASE ORDERS:

- The state application form for a retail dealer license for 5 Route 125 was signed by the Chairman.
- One elderly tax exemption form was rejected as income limits were not met.
- One disabled tax exemption application was approved.
- A further communication from Waste Management regarding a contract issue was acknowledged. Chairman Coombs said that Town Counsel is aware of this, and the town's position has not changed.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

MOTION: by Selectman St. James to approve the public and non-public meeting minutes of March 16 and March 19, 2020 as written.

SECOND: by Selectman Wilson.

A minor correction was made to the non-public minutes of March 16, to specify an agency's name.

In favor via roll call vote: Coombs, Briggs, Wilson, St. James, Alessio.

Town Hall Employees/Hours

The Chairman began a discussion of how the Town Hall is operating with the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 virus. He said he had been under the impression that the Town Hall would be closed to the public but that employees would still be in place to answer the phones and conduct business on an as-needed basis. He said he found that to be not the case today, when he learned that all employees except the Town Clerk were working from home.

There was a lengthy discussion that included preparations the staff had made to be able to work from home, and what can and can't be done remotely. The Board members were concerned that the phones were not being answered in real time (messages can be accessed from home) and also that the Town Clerk was left in the building alone. It was decided that the best solution would be for at least one employee at a time to be on the Selectmen's office side of the building. The Administrative Assistant pointed out that while this was meant to be discussed with the Selectmen first, the feeling of the staff had been that preparations needed to be made in case it became necessary to work from home. She also said that this was not based on health concerns alone, but on the direction of the Governor. The possibility of forwarding calls from the office to home was touched upon. The Selectmen were in agreement that the Town Clerk should not be left alone, especially if she needed to make an appointment for someone to come in.

RSA 79-E - Sanborn Academy

Noting that RSA 79-E was passed by the Town in March, Selectman St. James brought to the attention of the Board that the vacant Sanborn school will need to be reassessed before an agreement with the developer (to freeze the assessment while the building is renovated) is made. Selectman Alessio was put in charge of this as she had been involved with the School committee that worked on finding a buyer for the school. She said two appraisals had been done, and she will make electronic copies available to the Board. Hard copies are available at the Town office.

The Administrative Assistant will be in contact with KRT Assessors to find out their intentions going forward, as they had furloughed their employees until April 7.

NON-PUBLIC SESSION:

MOTION: by Selectman Briggs, to go into non-public session under RSA 91-A:3, II (b): The hiring of any person as a public employee.

SECOND: by Selectman Wilson

In favor: St. James, Coombs, Briggs, Wilson, Alessio

The Board adjourned to Non-public session at 8:51 pm

MOTION: Upon motion of Selectman Coombs, **SECOND** of Selectman Wilson, it was voted by roll call to return to public session at 9:07 PM

In Favor: St. James, Briggs, Coombs, Wilson; Motion passed.

MOTION to seal these minutes for an undetermined length of time, made by Selectman Briggs, seconded by Selectman St. James, because it is determined that divulgence of this information likely would:

xx Affect adversely the reputation of any person other than a member of this board.

Discussed in non-public:

Personnel

Adjournment:

MOTION: by Selectman Coombs to adjourn at 9:08 PM

SECOND: by Selectman Briggs

All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Ayer
Administrative Assistant