

Board of Selectmen

March 12, 2020

Regular Session

Present

Selectmen: Ms. Karen Johnson, Ms. Mary Power, Mr. Joseph Fisher
Mr. Tom Mayo, Town Administrator, and Ms. Michelle Monsegur, Assistant Town Administrator.

Call to Order: 7:00pm

Ms. Johnson

Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Fisher made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 25, 2020 meeting. Ms. Power seconded. The motion passed 2-0-1. Ms. Johnson abstained.

Public Comment

Mr. Mayo read the following notice from the Department of Public Health regarding Covid-19.

“Dear Hingham residents and businesses,

As a precautionary measure to prevent and mitigate the spread of COVID-19, the Town of Hingham is suspending all non-essential services as of close of business on Friday, March 13, 2020. Town facilities will be closed on Saturday, March 14, 2020 through at least Sunday, March 22, 2020 and all public meetings have been cancelled during that time.

Essential government services, such as Police, Fire, and Public Works services will continue. Senior Center operations will be limited to the meals-on-wheels program and providing critical rides for medical appointments, medications, and groceries.

All other Town facilities, including Town Hall offices, DPW offices, Senior Center, Hingham Public Library, South Shore Country Club, Recreation programs, etc. will remain closed through Sunday, March 22, 2020. Hingham Public Schools will be closed through Friday, March 27, 2020.

Town staff will be working remotely to the extent possible and will monitor and respond to emails and voicemails on a limited basis.

We are implementing these measures as a proactive step to minimize the risk of COVID-19 to employees and residents. The Hingham Health Department remains in daily communication with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. As of today, March 13, there are no COVID-19 cases in Plymouth County, Massachusetts.

We continue to encourage residents to take everyday preventive actions, including:

- Clean your hands often by using soap and water for at least 20 seconds

- If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol
- To the extent possible, avoid touching high-touch surfaces in public places – elevator buttons, door handles, handrails, handshaking with people, etc.
- Use a tissue or your sleeve to cover your hand or finger if you must touch something
- Avoid touching your face, nose, eyes, etc.
- Practice routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces (for example: tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilets, faucets, sinks, and cell phones)

Watch for symptoms including fever, cough, and shortness of breath. If you feel like you are developing symptoms, contact your doctor.

This is rapidly changing public health situation. Please call the Hingham Health Department at (781) 741-1466 with any questions or concerns or visit the [Massachusetts Department of Public Health website](#) or [Centers for Disease Control website](#) for the latest information on COVID-19.

We appreciate everyone’s patience. The health and safety of our community is our primary concern.”

Dr. Paul Austin, Superintendent of Schools, reiterated that that there are no known cases of Covid-19 in our public schools or in the Town at this time. He said that he understands the fear and anxiety associated with this virus in this unprecedented time. He encouraged extreme social distancing in order to prevent the spread of the virus. He said that he has cancelled school for Friday, March 13 and Monday, March 16 and added that he would reassess the situation at that time to see if further cancellations are needed. He thanked the people of Hingham for their patience and support and said he looked forward to talking to the public on Monday.

Ms. Johnson reassured the public that Town administration is communicating with the State on a daily basis and are working hard on behalf of the health and safety of the community.

Re-Vote Budgets

Ms. Johnson explained that the Advisory Committee has made some additional allocations of funding for the schools, the Harbormaster and the Fire Department. She explained that the Board of Selectmen, as well as the Advisory Committee, would need to re-vote these budgets in order to bring them to Town Meeting. She added that the Advisory Committee continues to be very concerned with the frustration associated with the need to defer or turn down legitimate requests for funding by all of the Town’s departments and schools.

Mr. Mayo and Ms. Power echoed Ms. Johnson’s comments. Ms. Power added that she was very glad that the Town did not have to contract services. She also said that the School budget is often the most fluid and, as the end of the school year nears, there are often additional personnel actions that materialize. She thanked the parents in the community who wrote letters to the Selectmen and who attended meetings, adding that the budget process won’t really conclude until May/June.

Ms. Johnson went on to explain that some Capital Outlay reallocations have been made possible by FEMA funds recently received by the Town in connection with a 2015 storm. She also said that she was very impressed with the level of detail discussed during the deliberations of the Advisory Committee. She added that she wanted the public to know that the commitment of their fellow citizens on the Advisory Committee to steward the public’s tax dollars is incredible. She recognized the members of the

Advisory Committee by reading their names as follows: Tom Belyea, George Danis, Libby Claypoole, Evan Sheehan, Andy McElaney, Eric Haskell, Davalene Cooper, Ed Gaydos, Nancy MacDonald, Bob Curley, Julie Strehle, Dave Anderson, Eryn Kelly, Kathleen Almond, and Victor Baltera, Chair of the Advisory Committee.

Michelle Ayer, 41 Hemlock Road, Chair of the School Committee, thanked the Board, the Advisory Committee, Mr. Mayo and Ms. Monsegur for all the work they have put in on the budgets. She said that one of the School Committee's goals this year, as suggested by Ms. Power, is to look at its revolving funds and to see if there are any funds that can be made available to pay for some of the tier 1 initiatives that are needed by the schools. She said that the School Committee really appreciated all the community engagement this year. She added that the School Committee is dedicated to being financially responsible partners with the Board of Selectmen and that the School Committee has created an ad-hoc financial subcommittee to do this very important work. She concluded by thanking the Board of Selectmen for all its work on the budget process.

Vote: Ms. Power made a motion to recommend a FY 2021 Non-School Budget of \$66,974,521. Mr. Fisher seconded. All were in favor, 3-0.

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to recommend a FY 2021 School Budget of \$56,730,985. Ms. Power seconded. All were in favor, 3-0.

Vote: Ms. Power made a motion to recommend a FY 2021 Capital Budget of \$2,771,566. Mr. Fisher seconded. All were in favor, 3-0.

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to authorize the Chair to sign the Triad Cooperative Agreement. Ms. Power seconded. All were in favor, 3-0.

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to nominate Leslie Badger the Inspector of Animals for the Town of Hingham. Ms. Power seconded. All were in favor, 3-0.

Selectmen and Town Administrator Reports

Ms. Monsegur: Noting to report.

Mr. Mayo thanked Susan Sarni and the rest of the Health Department for their work on the Covid-19 situation. He said that they have been working seven days a week with Dr. Austin and Mr. Mayo helping them to navigate this unprecedented crisis.

Ms. Johnson thanked the public for their support and involvement in their own town government and she said she was looking forward to a successful Town Meeting.

Ms. Power: Nothing to report.

Mr. Fisher: Nothing to report.

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Power seconded. All were in favor, 3-0.

Meeting adjourned at 7:26pm

Documents: A complete meeting packet of supporting documentation is on file and available for public review in the Board of Selectmen's office.