

Board of Selectmen

March 24, 2019

Remote meeting via telephone conference call

Present:

- Board of Selectmen: Ms. Karen Johnson, Ms. Mary Power and Mr. Joseph Fisher
- Mr. Tom Mayo, Town Administrator
- Ms. Michelle Monsegur, Assistant Town Administrator
- Town Counsel, Mr. John Coughlin

Call to order: 7pm

Ms. Johnson called the meeting to order and read the following statement:

“This meeting is being held remotely by telephone as an alternate means of access pursuant to the order issued by the Governor of Massachusetts dated March 12, 2020 suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law. You are hereby advised that this meeting and all telephone communications during this meeting may be recorded by the Town of Hingham and is being recorded by the Town of Hingham in accordance with the Open Meeting Law.”

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Fisher made a motion to approve the minutes dated March 3, March 9 and March 12, 2020. Ms. Power seconded.

Roll call Vote:

Mr. Fisher-yes

Ms. Power-yes

Ms. Johnson-yes

Ms. Johnson gave the public some direction as to the format of the meeting. She advised that the Board would discuss the business of the meeting and then discussion would be opened to the public.

Covid-19 Update

Mr. Mayo read the following public health advisory from the Hingham Board of Health:

“Hingham Health Department Health Advisory
COVID-19 update as of 3/24/20 10:47am

The Hingham Health Department has been notified by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) that we have a second laboratory confirmed case (of COVID-19). The Hingham resident has tested positive for COVID-19. All notifications have been made per DPH guidelines.

Take everyday preventive actions:

- All persons are urged to maintain social distancing (6ft away from other people)
- No gatherings of over 10 people

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- This does not apply to grocery stores, farmer’s markets, food pantries, banks and pharmacies, however they should also be maintaining social distancing.
 - Only essential services are to be open in the Commonwealth.
 - 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, sink & cell phones).

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

Ms. Monsegur then gave an update of the Town’s response to the COVID-19 outbreak. She said that Town employees have been hard at work behind the scenes. She said that Hingham has an Emergency Management Team that meets daily via conference call to stay on top of the latest COVID-19 developments, information from the State and Federal Government and how the Town is implementing the State and Federal guidance at the local level. She said that the Emergency Management Team is led by Fire Chief Steve Murphy. She added that the Emergency Management Team also consists of Police Chief Glenn Olsson, Deputy Police Chief David Jones, Deputy Fire Chief Lou LaChance, Executive Health Officer Susan Sarni, Town Administrator Tom May, and herself. She praised the work of Susan Sarni and the Health Department and said that they have been working around the clock. She said that the Health Department is in daily communication with Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the CDC. She added that they are in contact with any confirmed cases and close contacts within the Town. She said that the Health Department has been reaching out to all of the Town’s food establishments and businesses to make sure that they are complying with and understanding recent orders. She said that they are also working with municipal and school staff. She added that the Public Safety team is in contact with State and Regional authorities. She also said that Susan Sarni has been in contact with her counterpart in other communities and that Mr. Mayo has been talking with our State Representatives on a weekly basis. She said that they are doing their best to keep municipal services running while adhering to social distancing guidelines while also protecting staff and residents. She explained that Police, Fire and Public Works teams, as well as the 911 Dispatchers at the South Shore Emergency Communications Center (SSRECC) continue to provide vital services to the community. She said that Chief Olsson, Chief Murphy, and Randy Sylvester, Superintendent of Public Works, have put protocols in place for their departments to physically separate staff when possible and to clean and disinfect vehicles and equipment after each use. She added that although the Senior Center is closed, they are still coordinating “Meals on Wheels” as it is an essential service. She said that the Senior Center has also facilitated rides for a resident to get to his weekly dialysis treatments and are checking in on seniors at the Thaxter Street housing complex and the Lincoln School Apartments, making sure that they have everything that they need such as groceries, etc. She also said that, in an effort to minimize the spread of the virus, they have limited the number of staff who can access the Town Hall, explaining that a limited number of employees have access to the building twice a week on a staggered basis to process things like payroll, bills and the mail. She also said that there is information on the Town of Hingham website on how to contact the different departments. She encouraged the public to reach out if they need anything and said that employees will do their best to accommodate any requests at this time.

She thanked the Town's IT Department who has been working non-stop to get the staff up and running remotely and to get information out to the community through various channels. She said that she and Mr. Mayo are holding Department Head meeting via conference call twice a week on Mondays and Wednesdays and have also been working closely with Town Counsel.

Mr. Fisher thanked Ms. Monsegur and Mr. Mayo for all their work during this time and said that the Selectmen have been involved, getting updates from Ms. Monsegur, Mr. Mayo, Chief Olsson and Chief Murphy. He added that he has participated in updates from the Massachusetts Lieutenant Governor and that the Massachusetts Municipal Association has been very active as well. He said that they are making sure that Boards that need to be functioning can be and that the Board of Selectmen are doing their best to stay on top of the situation.

Ms. Power and Ms. Johnson both agreed that Mr. Fisher's comments were very well said. Ms. Power added that she was very grateful for the Town's dedicated and hardworking employees who are pulling together to provide services and are making sure that our critical resources are working in a safe environment. She also asked Ms. Monsegur to explain where the public could find information about COVID-19 on the Town's website.

Ms. Monsegur explained that residents can visit the Town of Hingham's website homepage where they will see a bar across the middle of the page that reads "COVID-19 Update Center for the Town of Hingham" as well as a button that reads "COVID-19 Updates and Alerts." She added that there is another link that reads "COVID-19 Contact Information" that provides email addresses and phone numbers for the Town's departments and staff and what services are available right now and said that the staff is checking emails and voicemails daily. She added that also on the website is a section called "COVID-19" Community Notices" where the Town is posting information from different businesses and organizations in the community about services that are running and which restaurants are available for take-out. She explained that the Town is not endorsing any specific business, but rather just providing information.

Ms. Johnson said that she concurred with Ms. Power and added that, under the leadership of Mr. Mayo and Ms. Monsegur, Steve Becker and Kate Richardson of the IT Department have worked tirelessly to get Hingham to a place where the Town could conduct business virtually. She also praised the discipline and patience of Hingham's residents in dealing with this crisis. She thanked the Town's employees, some of whom have been working many more hours than normally, for delivering the kind of services that the residents rely on. She praised the team at the Town Hall and the extraordinary leadership of Mr. Mayo and Ms. Monsegur. She also said that they are worried about the local businesses and that the Board of Selectmen has been in touch with Lynn Barclay, Director of the Hingham Downtown Association, and is mindful of how upsetting the current situation is to everyone. She also said that residents and employees of the Town have access to a Social Worker whose contact information could be found on the Town's website. Ms. Johnson asked if there were any public questions or comments regarding the COVID-19 update. There were none.

Declaration of State of Emergency

Ms. Johnson said that the Governor of Massachusetts and the President have both declared a State of Emergency. She added that this declaration is an important statement that recognizes the seriousness

March 24, 2020

of the issue before them and that the Town is pledging to abide by the rules, proclamations and orders handed down by the State and Federal Government.

Mr. Fisher said that there have been many towns across the state that have issued their own State of Emergency. He felt that it was the right thing to do to make sure that Hingham is in the right position to coordinate and possibly obtain any available assistance or resources from the State or Federal Government.

Ms. Johnson read the following proclamation:

TOWN OF HINGHAM, MASSACHUSETTS
DECLARATION OF STATE OF EMERGENCY
EFFECTIVE MARCH 13, 2020

Whereas, the 2019 novel Coronavirus (“COVID-19”) has been declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern by the World Health Organization; and

Whereas, COVID-19 is a highly contagious, and in some cases, fatal respiratory disease; and

Whereas, on March 10, 2020, the Governor of Massachusetts declared a State of Emergency as a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency; and

Whereas, on March 13, 2020, the President of the United States declared a National Emergency Concerning the COVID-19 public health emergency; and

Whereas, the COVID-19 public health emergency poses a present, real and imminent danger to the public health, safety, or general welfare of the residents, businesses and employees of the Town of Hingham; and

Whereas, it is necessary for the Town Administrator and his designees to utilize and coordinate the services, supplies, equipment, and facilities of the departments, offices, and agencies of the Town of Hingham and the community, both locally, regionally, statewide and nationally, if necessary, including the taking of ordinary and extraordinary actions for the purposes of emergency management to protect the residents, businesses and employees of the Town of Hingham;

Now, therefore, the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Hingham hereby declares a state of emergency in the Town of Hingham effective as of March 13, 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency in order to allow the Town Administrator and his designees to take all necessary actions to prevent, minimize, or mitigate damage to the public health, safety, or general welfare of the residents, businesses and employees of the Town of Hingham and do hereby appoint the Town Administrator to act as the director of the local organization of civil defense under Section 13 of Chapter 639 of the Acts of 1950 (Civil Defense Act) and do hereby authorize the Town Administrator and his designees to exercise all emergency powers on behalf of the Town of Hingham.

March 24, 2020

This declaration shall remain in effect for the duration of the State of Emergency as declared by the Governor of Massachusetts or as otherwise sooner rescinded.

Town of Hingham
Board of Selectmen

Ms. Johnson asked if there were any questions from the public. There were none.

There was a brief discussion amongst the Board members concerning specific wording and dates in the declaration. Town Counsel John Coughlin offered some advice and the Selectmen were in agreement with regard to the above declaration.

Vote: Mr. Fisher moved to adopt and sign the Declaration of Emergency in the form as amended by Town Counsel. Roll call vote:

Ms. Power: yes
Mr. Fisher: yes
Ms. Johnson: yes

Chairman Johnson read the following statement regarding the Declaration of a State of Emergency:

COVID-19 Update and Local Declaration of State of Emergency

The Town of Hingham Board of Selectmen has voted to declare a local State of Emergency for the Town of Hingham effective March 13, 2020. This declaration was made as a practical measure to make sure that the Town of Hingham is in the best position to take all actions necessary to protect the public health, safety or general welfare of its residents, businesses and employees and to ensure that the Town of Hingham may fully coordinate with and obtain any available assistance and resources from the State and Federal Government.

During Hingham's nearly 400 years of existence, this Town has always cared for our neighbors and friends. We look out for each other. Our social bonds and cultural awareness set us apart. It is in that vein that we are asking you to please take seriously the State and Federal guidelines surrounding social distancing. Congregating, even in small groups, can result in the inadvertent spread of COVID-19. We have closed or altered our delivery of many local government functions in an effort to help slow this pandemic and thereby keep our residents and employees safe. For information relating to Town of Hingham services, please visit our website at www.hingham-ma.gov.

As with all things in life, a calm, measured response to even the worst situations will most often result in the best possible outcomes. We ask that you follow government guidelines, including social distancing, with typical Hingham poise. Let's continue to be civil, look out for our neighbors (especially the elderly), and we will get through this crisis together.

Thank you.

Board of Selectmen

Discussion and vote to adopt the municipal website as the official method of posting Open Meeting Law notices under 940 CMR 29.30

Ms. Johnson said that, under the Open Meeting Law, public entities have to post an agenda for meetings at least 48 hours prior to the time of a meeting. She said that their official posting location is currently Town Hall, which is now closed. She added that they are allowed, under the regulations of the Open Meeting Law, to select an alternate posting location which could include the Town of Hingham's website. She added that if they do this, there are certain notifications that need to be made to alert the Attorney General's Office and a notification for the public will be required to be posted at Town Hall so that the public will know that the website will be the official posting location. She also felt like most people already look to the website for information on meetings in Town.

John Coughlin added that while the regulations allow Hingham to adopt the Town website as the official posting location, it does not preclude them from continuing to post in other locations. He also said that this decision could always be amended and brought back to the old method of posing in the future. He felt that this would make sense during this crisis.

Ms. Johnson asked if the public had any questions or comments.

Kirk Shilts, 65 Prospect Street, said that he liked the website for posting because changes could be updated very quickly.

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion that the Board recognize that the website, www.hingham-ma.gov, is the Town's municipal website to adopt the municipal website as the official method for posting notices pursuant to the Open Meeting Law in accordance with 940 CMR section 29.03. Ms. Power seconded.

Roll call vote:

Ms. Power: yes

Mr. Fisher: yes

Ms. Johnson: yes

Taste of Hingham

Vote: Ms. Power made a motion to approve the request of the Hingham Congregational Church, Men's Group for the annual Taste of Hingham event to be held on Saturday, August 29, 2020 from 12:00 to 3:00 PM with a rain date of Sunday, August 30, 2020 from 12:00 to 3:00 PM. Mr. Fisher seconded.

Roll call vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Ms. Johnson: yes

Selectmen and Town Administrator Reports

Ms. Monsegur: Nothing to report

Mr. Mayo praised the Board of Health, led by Susan Sarni, who has been working around the clock. He said that he couldn't be happier with their efforts and that other towns have been looking to Hingham as a good example of how to perform during this crisis. He also reported that the Town of Hingham has received a little over \$9,000 in a grant from the State and will receive another \$9,000 very soon.

Mr. Fisher said that the Hingham Historical Society has been doing an amazing job reaching out to the community through emails highlighting various moments in Hingham's history and he thanked Executive Director Diedre Anderson for engaging the community in this way.

Ms. Power reminded people that the Greenside Grill at South Shore Country Club is open for take-out. She also thanked Sharon Perfetti and Heidi Gaul of the Selectmen's Office for their help during this crisis. She also said that the group Hingham Link is an endeavor to help people in the community who might need help, whether just a phone call or something more.

Ms. Johnson said she appreciated the public that has taken the time to call into the meeting.

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Power seconded.

Roll call vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Ms. Johnson: yes

Meeting adjourned at: 7:50pm

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