

# Board of Selectmen

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April 7, 2020

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**

Ms. Power made a motion to approve the minutes dated March 31, 2020. Mr. Fisher seconded.

Roll call Vote:

Mr. Fisher-yes

Ms. Power-yes

Ms. Johnson-yes

Ms. Johnson noted for the public that the agendas for the meeting are available on the Town’s website and she gave an overview the items on tonight’s agenda.

## **COVID-19 Update**

Mr. Mayo gave the following update on COVID-19:

“The Town’s Emergency Management Team, consisting of Fire Chief and Emergency Management Director Steve Murphy, myself as the Town Administrator, Assistant Town Administrator Michelle Monsegur, Police Chief Glenn Olsson, Deputy Police Chief David Jones, Deputy Fire Chief Louis LaChance, and our Executive Health Director Susan Sarni, have been meeting daily since March 20<sup>th</sup> via conference call to coordinate our COVID-19 response. On March 30<sup>th</sup> we began the transition of the Town’s COVID-19 response to a more robust Incident Command System (ICS) structure led by an Incident Management Team to enhance local efforts to minimize the spread of COVID-19 in Hingham. The Incident Command System (ICS) is used by FEMA and enables a coordinated response among various agencies by establishing common processes and common organizational structures for incident level planning and resource management. This is a robust, commonly used tool around the country that many governmental organizations are now employing. Hingham’s current Incident Management Team is led by a Unified Command consisting of myself, the Fire Chief and Emergency Management Director Steve

Murphy as well as the Police Chief, Glenn Olsson. There are some other key roles that I wanted to highlight within the Incident Management Team as follows: The Safety Officer is Dr. Elizabeth Eldridge who is also the Chair of the Board of Health. Also, our Public Information Officer role is being staffed by Michelle Monseur, our Assistant Town Administrator. The Planning Section Chief is being staffed by Fire Lieutenant Jim Sheard. The Operations Section Chief is being staffed by Deputy Fire Chief Louis LaChance, the Medical Branch Directors is being staffed by Fire Lieutenant Chris DiNapoli and Susan Sarni, Executive Health Officer. Our Logistics Section Chief is being staffed by Fire Captain Jeff Becker and our Finance and Administration Section Chief is being staffed by our Town Accountant Sue Nickerson. That team meets daily and is currently leveraging staff from ten different departments to help support and expand our COVID-19 response. Any media inquiries going forward related to Hingham's COVID-19 response should be sent directly to the PIO, Michelle Monseur. We will post this message to our website and will send it out to media contacts.

Regarding cases, the Town is following the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's recommendation that local Boards of Health report positive COVID-19 cases by county. As of this afternoon the State is reporting 15,202 cases in Massachusetts and 1,194 cases across the twenty-seven towns in Plymouth County. We believe that Hingham is experiencing cases proportionally to other communities within Plymouth County. Please keep in mind that the numbers reported by the State are, in fact, lower than the actual number of cases because they do not include clinical diagnoses of COVID-19 by medical professionals or people who self-diagnose and stay at home. The Hingham Health Department is in regular contact with residences and facilities for seniors and vulnerable populations in Town to advise on procedures to protect public health but our staff cannot publically share information about specific cases. We are doing our best to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in line with the DPH and CDC guidelines and are urging everyone in Hingham to please do your part by staying home as much as possible and practicing proper social distancing. The Hingham Health Department has restricted visitors to Thaxter Park as well as the Lincoln School Apartments. Residents can still receive deliveries outside of the buildings at those properties.

Connecting virtually with family and friends via Zoom or other video platforms is on the rise and really does make us feel connected at a time when we have to remain apart. It's what we do in the government and it's how I am meeting daily with different constituencies. It is certainly better than phone calls and I recommend using those platforms instead of face to face contact. As of Friday the CDC issued the new recommendation that people wear cloth face coverings in public settings where social distancing is difficult to maintain such as grocery stores and pharmacies. This is a voluntary public health measure that can help slow the spread of COVID-19 and can prevent asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic people from inadvertently transmitting the virus to others. The CDC is not recommending that people use surgical masks or N 95 respirators for this purpose. We need to ensure that those critical supplies are reserved for healthcare workers and other medical first responders. If you head to the CDC website, you can find information about how to make simple cloth face coverings from household items and common materials at low cost. We have also posted links to that information to our COVID-19 web page which I strongly recommend that you visit if you haven't yet and you have an interest in what is happening around the State in regard to the COVID-19 response. There are a lot of helpful links on our COVID-19 page within our web site.

We received word from the Trustees of Reservations today that World's End will not be reopening until further notice. That same message goes for Whitney and Thayer Woods. We have also closed tennis and basketball courts in line with the Governor's guidance and the South Shore Country Club remains closed to golfers. I ask that we would all try to respect those restrictions to the extent possible."

### **Update on Town Services**

Ms. Monsegur gave the following report on Town services. She said that the Swap Shop at the Transfer Station continues to be closed and the scale operations are now closed as well to protect staff and residents. This means that no commercial or residential vehicles can dispose of any construction debris or bulky waste at this time until further notice. All other Transfer Station operations remain open their regular hours Thursday through Sunday.

Staff from many different departments have been working outside of their normal duties to support food deliveries to vulnerable people in Town, outreaching to seniors to check on them and see what they need, and to support our Health Department to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. We are actively talking to Department Heads and reassigning staff to meet the needs of department programs during this time as everyone's operations keep shifting. Jennifer Young and Elder Services have organized people to make calls to 800 seniors in Town who have, in some way, accessed the Senior Center within the last year. Staff from the Senior Center, the Library, Accounting and the Clerk's Office are helping her do that. So far, she is reporting that people are fine and that they have enough groceries and essential items, but they really appreciate connecting with someone and like that someone took the time to call and have a conversation. She added that it is nice to stay connected during this time.

She went on to say that the Library is transitioning many of their services to online and remote access format. They have been increasing their purchasing of ebooks and audio sources and actively monitoring their usage and requests to meet those demands. They would like to make people aware that patrons who do not have a library card can sign up on the Library's website for a temporary ecard so that they can access these items as well as digital magazines, streaming movies and music, newspapers, and other databases online. The Library's Young Adult Librarian is working with the Middle and High Schools to find out what the students need at this time and help with titles to augment school classroom services. Other Library programs are moving to an online format. She added that they will be rolling out online story times, book clubs, craft sessions, including an open studio and an origami flower craft. They will be recommending reading and having online lectures on various topics, including Zoom tutorials because of the current popularity of the tool is increasing so much. The Library staff is also working on content for newsletters, social media posts, and emails about programs and other available services during this time.

She also mentioned that if the public had a question for the Town and didn't know what department to direct it to, they could contact Heidi Gaul in the Selectmen's Office. She added that Heidi is working remotely but can be reached at [gaulh@hingham-ma.gov](mailto:gaulh@hingham-ma.gov) or they could call the Selectmen's Office at 781-741-1451 and leave a message and Heidi would be happy to get back to them.

Mr. Fisher thanked both Mr. Mayo and Ms. Monsegur for their efforts. He emphasized that, even though it sounds like there is a lot going on at the Library, the Library remains physically closed to the public. He also asked if there was an update regarding the schools. Mr. Mayo said that the schools

began their remote learning plan on Monday, April 6 and that the school Food Services are delivering lots of meals in Town. Mr. Fisher also shared that some residents are concerned that others are not following proper social distancing guideline while outdoors, either at basketball or tennis courts, golfing or other places. He acknowledged that Town facilities are limited at this time and encouraged residents to respect the recommended distance to make sure that everyone remains safe.

Ms. Power commented that every day seems to bring a new set of challenges and expressed her appreciation for Mr. Mayo and Ms. Monsegur and all the Town employees, noting that many have taken on new assignments and roles in the new ICS system. She added that remote learning for the schools began on Monday and commented that some things are taking place in a synchronous fashion and others in an asynchronous fashion. She also said that the School Committee voted unanimously on April 6 to cancel the upcoming April vacation, feeling like the instructional time would be valuable.

Ms. Johnson clarified that the scale operation at the Transfer Station has been suspended due to the due to concerns about close interaction between residents and staff members and asked if there were alternate locations available for this kind of construction waste. Ms. Monsegur commented that she would check with the DPW Superintendent.

Ms. Johnson commented that she is continually impressed by the Town employees who are taking on new job responsibilities and are using new technology to do these jobs in a spirit of cooperation and service to the Town. She asked if there were any questions or comments from the public with regard to the COVID-19 update and there were none.

#### **Discussion and vote to adopt Town of Hingham Website-Weir River Water System**

Ms. Johnson explained that the Water System is a separate enterprise fund within the Town subject to its own governing structure and its own Open Meeting Law requirements. She added that the Board of Selectmen are currently serving as the Water Commissioners and that they are required to publicly post when they have business that they are discussing, adding that they would like to adopt the Town of Hingham's web site as the official posting location.

Mr. Fisher commented that he feels that this vote would allow them to proceed more efficiently.

Ms. Johnson noted that the public could access their agenda by visiting the Town's web site and clicking on "agendas". She asked if there were any questions or comments from the public and there were none.

**Vote:** Mr. Fisher made a motion that the Board of Water Commissioners which has been designated to operate the water system under Chapter 139 of the Acts of 1879, as amended, and by vote under Article 11 of the 2019 Town of Hingham Annual Town Meeting hereby votes to establish the website [www.hingham-ma.gov](http://www.hingham-ma.gov) as an alternative method of notice for open meeting notices of its meetings pursuant to 940 CMR 29.03(3)(b)." Ms. Power seconded.

Roll call vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Ms. Johnson: yes

### **New Mooring Field Design for Inner Harbor Discussion**

Mr. Ken Corson, Harbormaster, stated that the Board has copies of the proposed plan for the new mooring field design and noted that the last time the mooring field was amended was ten years ago. He explained that they are looking to change the design of the mooring field now because all the moorings are currently out of the water due to the dredging project. He explained that, in developing this new plan, they took into account potential future plans by the State to replace the boat ramp which could have some impact on the moorings in the inner harbor. He also said that the Town plans on replacing the floats at Barnes Wharf so he felt that now was a good time for the project. He stated that the new plan will accommodate all the existing moorings in the inner harbor and also some additional boats from the waiting list. He added that the new plan looks very similar to the previous field with power boats on the North and sailboats on the Southern side with a fairway down the middle, adding that the public won't see many differences.

Mr. Fisher commented that he had reviewed the plan and had discussed it with Mr. Corson. He asked Mr. Corson to confirm the goals of this redesign and whether Mr. Corson feels that those goals will be met. Mr. Corson reviewed that the goals were to accommodate for future plans at the boat ramp and to allow for changes to the floats at Barnes Wharf and added that the Harbor Development Committee has reviewed the plans.

Ms. Power said that she feels the new plan makes sense and was happy to know that it has had some visibility with the public and the Harbor Development Committee.

Ms. Johnson asked Mr. Corson to explain how the new plan would result in a net gain in the number of moorings. He clarified that the number of moorings in the new plan is actually slightly less than the current plan because it did not take into account a number of smaller moorings that will be located around Barnes Wharf and he confirmed that the Town will not be losing any moorings. He did say that the locations of some moorings will be reassigned in the new plan but will be in the same general area as before. She also asked him to clarify how the moorings are placed back in the water. Mr. Corson explained that Bare Cove Marina is the primary mooring service provider, saying that they lease moorings to the public, service them and would be responsible for installing the majority of them in the inner harbor. He added that, according to recent communications from the Coast Guard, the port of Boston is open and being part of the port of Boston, Hingham's waterways are open. He added that the public is eager to do some boating while also social distancing. Ms. Johnson indicated that the Board would vote on the new plan at their next meeting.

### **National Grid: Grant of Location - Amendment of working hours**

Chairman Johnson summarized that, as part of the ongoing gas main replacement project on Route 228 (Main Street), there is an offshoot of the project of approximately 900 feet of gas main on Rockwood Road. Ms. Johnson said that they have been concerned about the level of disruption that this project would impart to the residents and explained that is why it was initially decided that the work would be done in the evening hours. It has now been suggested that the work to be done on Rockwood Road should be done during the day. Representatives from National Grid, Dennis McCaffery and Nelson Pio (Construction Supervisor) and also Mike McDunnough (Contractor) of MNX were also on the line to

explain the request. Mr. McCaffery gave an update on the project, explaining that the purpose of the project is to replace aging and leak prone pipe. He said that, to date, they have installed about 2,000 feet of pipe without incident. Due to the fact that they are very certain they will encounter ledge on Rockwood Road, they feel that it would be better to undertake this work during daytime hours for several reasons. Digging into the ledge would be very loud and digging in the daytime would be safer for the crew since it would improve visibility. He said that they have been in touch with the Chief of Police to come up with an effective traffic management plan and added that, since traffic is currently reduced due to COVID-19, he felt that they should do the work during the day. Also, there was some discussion regarding the increased availability of asphalt during the day hence improving the speed of the project.

Mr. Pio, Construction Supervisor with National Grid, commented that this project is mandatory utility work and has been deemed as essential by the Governor. He stated some COVID-19 related guidelines that they are following including:

- National Grid is not connecting service at this point and no National Grid employees will be entering any homes.
- This is mandated utility work and has been deemed by the Governor as essential work.
- National Grid has a strong commitment to maintaining a safe working environment, not only for our employees and contractors, but also for our customers and the community where we operate.
- They have reviewed the supplemental guidelines limiting exposure and worker's infection at construction sites issued by the Governor last Thursday and they are taking care to communicate with our contractors the importance of adhering to these guidelines.
- On this project, National Grid's contractor, MNX is implementing the recommended safety guidelines regarding limiting exposure as well as the worker infection protocol.
- There is zero tolerance for sick workers reporting to work.
- There is protocol for contractors to report sick workers and when workers become ill.
- There are frequent wash stations and hand sanitizer on the job site.
- Employees have been assigned equipment and have been discouraged from sharing equipment with others.
- The CDC has issued new recommendations of wearing cloth face coverings. On this job site, workers are usually able to keep 6 feet between each other but when they are not able to they have been advised to wear a face covering.
- There should not be a need for any member of the public to come within six feet of any employees onsite.

Mr. Fisher asked if the residents on Rockwood Road had been notified and, if so, have there been any questions or concerns. Mr. Mayo said that Police Chief Olsson had delivered notifications of tonight's agenda to the affected residents on Friday, April 3. Mr. McCaffery said he did receive one call from a resident at 10 Rockwood Road who had some concerns about the project regarding social distancing and he assured her that they would not hook up the new mains to the homes until the situation changes. It was decided that National Grid would update the abutters that the work will be changing from night to day work.

Ms. Johnson acknowledged that this is part of a large project and that it is difficult to live nearby but at the same time that this work has been deemed as essential. She asked for questions or comments from the public.

Craig Hutchinson, 10 Rockwood Road, expressed some concerns about the project given the current situation where children are home from school and playing in their yards and homeowners are trying to work from home and questioned whether it was possible to postpone the Rockwood Road part of the project. Mr. McCaffery explained that all the mains are “scored” by their Engineering Department as to the need of replacement. They consider this main a priority due to the age (100 years old), the amount of leak calls, and the material. He added that if they put off this part of the project it could result in setting the project as a whole back months and could even compromise completion of the project this year. Mr. Pio added that this is a critical main with active leaks that feeds into Hull as well. There was some discussion as to how long National Grid would be working in front of each home and Mr. McCaffery suggested that they could plan on as little 1-2 days but could be more due to conditions of the ledge.

Mr. Fisher asked if the work would go quicker if it was being done at night or if timing would be unaffected whether the work was being done during the day or night. Ms. Johnson commented that there would be some efficiencies if the work would proceed during the day, especially with regard to the availability of asphalt and the overall safety of the crew and the police detail. Mr. McCaffery and Mr. Pio both concurred that productivity would be much greater during the day.

**Vote:** Ms. Power made a motion to approve the request by National Grid to alter the work hours to install and maintain a gas line on Rockwood Road as contained in a prior vote of the Board of Selectmen taken on July 16, 2019 approving said installation and maintenance of said gas line to allow for work to begin at 8:00 AM and end by 5:00PM Monday through Friday. Mr. Fisher seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Ms. Johnson: yes

**Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda:** none

#### **School Building Committee letter and Initial Compliance Certification form**

Ms. Johnson explained that even during the current situation, business is continuing to go on, including the Town’s participation in the planning process for Foster School. She reminded the public that Hingham has been invited to participate in the Massachusetts School Building Authority’s (MSBA) building program for the elementary school which would include partial reimbursement of construction costs. There were no questions or comments from the public.

**Vote:** Mr. Fisher made a motion to authorize the Chair of the Board of Selectmen to sign the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) Initial Compliance Certification for the Foster Elementary School project as required by the MSBA to be eligible for an MSBA invitation into Feasibility Study. Ms. Power seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Ms. Johnson: yes

### **Selectmen/Town Administrator Reports**

Ms. Monsegur: nothing to report

Mr. Mayo reported that four new Hingham Police Officers (Jake Handrahan, Kevin Duff, Christopher Mersvey and Max Goldstein) have just graduated from the Police Academy and have been sworn in remotely via video conference with the Town Clerk and are now working as Hingham Police Officers. Mr. Mayo added that he has called each of the officers and congratulated them and welcomed them to the force. Ms. Johnson commented that they would welcome those officers more publicly when they are able to do so and added that they are very proud of them.

Deputy Police Chief David Jones commented that they are excited to have them on the force and are looking forward to working with them.

Mr. Fisher added that there will be a special Selectmen's initiation process as soon as they are able to do so. He also gave a special thanks to the Massachusetts State delegation, Joan Meschino and Patrick O'Connor, who are doing a great job keeping the Town's best interest in mind during this time. He also reminded residents to complete the U.S. Census because doing so would assure Hingham would receive the proper amount of State funds and also to make sure that Massachusetts also receive its proper amount of Federal funding. Finally, he noted that tomorrow evening is the start of Passover and that this weekend is Good Friday and Easter and that it is comforting to see that members of the community are able to continue to honor their religious beliefs and to meet virtually to celebrate.

Ms. Power commented that, as the weather is improving, it is important for everyone to adhere to the guidelines that the State health officials have put forth, adding that the more the guidelines are followed, the quicker the public will be able to resume their usual activities.

Ms. Johnson reported that she and Mr. Mayo have participated in several MSBA meetings regarding the Foster School building project and are moving forward with the planning for that project. She also met with the Library this week and was impressed with the speed at which they are moving to online activities and she appreciated the Library's participation in the team effort that is taking place and making a difference in Town. She also mentioned the generosity that has been shown to Hingham's veterans and seniors. She also added that State Representative Joan Meschino and Senator Patrick O'Connor have been conceptualizing some benefits that could be offered to small businesses pursuant to the Cares Act. The Board, as well as the Hingham Downtown Association and the Hingham Business Council have been working with them on a webinar for the merchants in an effort to educate them regarding the benefits that are available to them, particularly on a Federal Level. Finally, she added that the Battle of Grape Island recreation has been postponed until September 20<sup>th</sup>.

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

Roll call vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Ms. Johnson: yes

**Meeting adjourned at: 8:17pm**

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