

Board of Selectmen

May 12, 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
- Mr. J.R. Frey, Town Engineer

Call to order: 7pm

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

“This meeting is being held remotely as an alternate means of public access pursuant to an 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 communications during this meeting may be recorded by the Town of Hingham in accordance with the Open Meeting Law. If any participant wishes to record this meeting, please notify the chair at the start of the meeting in accordance with M.G.L. c. 30A, § 20(f) so that the chair may inform all other participants of said recording.”

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Fisher made a motion to approve the minutes dated May 5, 2020. Ms. Power seconded.

Roll call vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Ms. Johnson: yes

COVID-19 Update

Mr. Mayo gave the following update regarding the COVID-19 crisis:

“COVID-19 Cases

As of last Wednesday, DPH was reporting 186 laboratory-confirmed cases in Hingham. As of today, DPH is reporting 79,332 cases in Massachusetts, of which 6,507 are in Plymouth County. Please keep in mind that the numbers reported by the state are lower than the actual number of cases, because they only include those who have tested positive. They do not include clinical diagnoses of COVID-19 by medical professionals, people who self-diagnose and stay at home, or asymptomatic people who don't realize they have the virus. A total of 401,496 people in Massachusetts have been tested to date. About 4% of Massachusetts cases as reported by DPH are currently hospitalized. The number of hospitalized COVID-19 patients has been slowly decreasing since April 21, according to DPH data.

Non-COVID-19 Care

At the same time, hospitals have been reporting a decrease in the number of people seeking medical attention for urgent, non-COVID-related issues like heart attacks, strokes, appendicitis, etc. Medical professionals are concerned that this may mean that people are delaying or avoiding seeking care for

serious medical issues out of fear of contracting COVID-19. Many serious conditions like strokes can be successfully treated if care is received quickly — **but can be fatal if treatment is delayed**. Please **do not hesitate** to call 911 if you need immediate medical attention.

Governor's Four-Phase Reopening Approach

The Baker-Polito Administration has announced a four-phase reopening approach for transitioning out of our current “stay at home” status. **Businesses and activities that provide COVID-19 Essential Services per Governor Baker's March 23rd order will continue to operate.** Certain businesses and activities with a lower risk of COVID-19 transmission will open in earlier phases.

The four phases are generally described as follows:

- Phase 1: Start - Limited industries resume operations with severe restrictions
- Phase 2: Cautious - Additional industries resume operations with restrictions and capacity limits
- Phase 3: Vigilant - Additional industries resume operations with guidance.
- Phase 4: New Normal - Development of vaccine and/or therapy enables resumption of “new normal”

This approach comes with the caveat that we may move back to a prior phase if public health metrics fall below thresholds. The state has developed Mandatory Workplace Safety Standards to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission as employees and customers begin to return to workplaces during Phase 1. **These Mandatory Workplace Safety Standards are applicable to all sectors and industries that will be open in Phase 1. They create new workplace requirements for social distancing, hygiene, staffing and operations, and cleaning.** We continue to work on reopening plans for Town facilities and our Health Department is working with local businesses and organizations to ensure compliance with the reopening guidance from the state. “

Town Services Update

Ms. Monsegur gave the following update on Town Services:

“Elder Services

Elder Services staff are in the process of developing additional remote program opportunities, including an open social coffee hour. **The Memoir Writing Group began to meet through Zoom this week.** Staff are conducting surveys for programming offered at other senior centers to ensure that the programs we are offering remotely in Hingham are helpful and relevant. **The Senior Center upgraded its Voice Connect system, so now all pre-recorded messages generated by the Senior Center will appear in your Caller ID as “Town of Hingham, MA (781) 741- 1458.”**

South Shore Country Club

The SSCC opened this past Saturday to permit holders only for the time being. The Club is following the new guidelines established by the Governor to allow golf to safely resume in Massachusetts. These guidelines include the following:

- Course facilities including but not limited to the clubhouse, golf shop, restaurant, bag room and locker room must remain closed.
- Practice putting green, driving range, and chipping areas must be closed.
- No caddies allowed.
- No golf carts allowed, with certain exceptions to ensure ADA compliance
- Push carts may be used. Players must either carry their own bag or use a push cart.

- All golfers must use their own golf clubs. Sharing golf clubs or renting golf clubs is not allowed.
- All golfers must maintain proper social distancing of at least 6 feet at all times.
- Groups of players are restricted to no more than 4 players at one time.
- Tee Time Policy must be 15 minutes between groups.
- Golfers must stay in their car until 15 minutes before their tee time and must return to their car immediately following play.
- Online and remote payment options must be utilized.

The Greenside Grille at the SSCC continues to offer a local takeout and delivery menu Wednesdays - Sundays from 3-8pm. That menu is available on their website.

School

Yesterday, the School Department rolled out new remote learning plan guidelines for teachers and for parents, which include results from the district wide survey the School conducted in late April. The Schools will employ a blended model of learning consisting of asynchronous delivery of core academic content, coupled with synchronous opportunities for students to engage with district faculty and staff. The Remote Learning Plan 2.0 Guideline for Parents can be found on the School's website at hinghamschools.com."

Mr. Fisher asked when the Town of Hingham would be in a position to offer guidance on the reopening plans for retail shops as well as dine-in eating at restaurants. Mr. Mayo stated that he is anticipating new guidance from the Governor on May 18th and will update the public as appropriate. He also said that he has received inquiries from residents regarding the opening of summer camps and activities. Mr. Mayo said that he anticipated that there would be new guidance available soon as well.

Public hearing on the request of National Grid to install and maintain approximately 95 feet of 2-inch gas main in Hull Street

Present: Dennis McCaffery and Mary Mulroney of National Grid

Ms. Mulroney read the following petitions from National Grid to the Town of Hingham:

"National Grid hereby respectfully requests your consent to install and maintain approximately 95 feet, more or less, of 2-inch gas main in Hull Street, Hingham from the existing 6-inch gas main in Hull Street, Cohasset, westerly in the common driveway to house number 212, to replace and abandon the existing inch and a half bare steel gas main."

Public hearing on the request of National Grid to install and maintain approximately 475 feet of 2-inch gas main in Wompatuck Road

"National Grid hereby respectfully requests your consent to install and maintain approximately 475 feet, more or less, of 2-inch gas main in Wompatuck Road, Hingham from the existing 3-inch gas main in Planters Field Lane westerly to house number 17 Wompatuck Road to replace and abandon the existing 2-inch bare steel gas main and the 2-inch coated steel gas main in Wompatuck Road."

Ms. Mulroney advised that these two street openings are part of the main and service program that National Grid has recommended and is part of a larger gas main project that has been taking place in Town.

Ms. Johnson asked Mr. McCaffery to update the Board on the gas main project that has been taking place on Route 228. He explained that, as of the meeting date, they had installed 4,020 feet of the total 7,600 feet of pipe anticipated in the project. He added that the crews have encountered ledge as they are proceeding towards Rt. 3A. He said that crews will be drilling test holes on Rockwood Road this week and will start full-time work there next week. He anticipated that the completion date of the project would be the end of June, with the possibility of stretching into July.

He also highlighted a few COVID-19 protocols that National Grid has put in place as relates to their Hingham projects. He said that they have shifted 8,000 employees to work from home, including their 24/7 call center. They have also paused non-essential work and have added safety protocols for their essential workforce. They have also stopped shutting of service for non-payment and have paused collections efforts. He explained that crew leaders evaluate the safety of their work environments on a daily basis and must report any COVID-19 related violations. Employees are required to report any COVID-19 symptoms to their supervisor. Face coverings are required for all National Grid employees. Safety protocols have been put in place for emergencies when entering a home is required. He reported that work crews are trying to maintain social distance when possible when working in the street and are arriving to job sites separately. He indicated that their protocols would change as guidance from the Governor evolves.

Ms. Power remarked that she had read through the National Grid safety protocols and felt that they were very well thought out reassuring.

Mr. Fisher asked if the Hull Street project was contingent upon approval from Cohasset. Mr. McCaffery stated that the gas main involved was located in Hingham and the connecting pipes were located in Cohasset, which they are not connecting at this time. He explained that he didn't think approval from Cohasset would be necessary as connecting those pipes would only require a street opening permit, not a grant of location as is required for the gas main work. It was also noted that abutters for these projects have been notified and that the working hours would be during the day. Mr. McCaffery advised that both projects would have minimal noise and would be completed in 3-10 days.

Ms. Power welcomed Mr. Frey to the team and asked when the work would commence and the duration of the projects. Ms. Mulrone advised that work would begin as soon as approved by the Town. She said that the Hull Street project would take approximately three days and the Wompatuck Road project would take up to ten days. Ms. Johnson requested that National Grid place door hangers to remind abutters of the work.

National Grid: Hull Street

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to approve the petition of National Grid to install and maintain approximately 95 feet of 2-inch gas main in Hull Street. The gas main will originate at approximately #203 Hull Street, Cohasset, connecting into the existing 6-inch gas main and continue westerly under the paved surface of Rt. 228 (Hull St.) into the common driveway to completion at approximately #212 Hull Street, Hingham. This gas main will replace an existing 1.5-inch bare steel decayed main that is approximately 89-91 years old.

This approval is subject to the stipulation of the Department of Public Works as outlined in the letter dated April 24, 2020. Ms. Power seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Ms. Johnson: yes

National Grid: Wompatuck Road

Vote: Ms. Power made a motion to approve the petition of National Grid to install and maintain approximately 475 feet of 2-inch gas main in Wompatuck Road. The gas main will originate at the intersection with Planters Field Lane, connecting into the existing 3-inch gas main and continue westerly to #17 Wompatuck Road. This gas main will replace an existing 2-inch bare steel decayed main that is approximately 92 years old, and an existing 2-inch coated steel decayed gas main that is approximately 70 years old.

This approval is subject to the stipulation of the Department of Public Works as outlined in the letter dated April 24, 2020. Mr. Fisher seconded.

Roll call vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Ms. Johnson: yes

FY21 Budget Discussion and Vote

Mr. Mayo announced that Ms. Monsegur and Ms. Power would leave the meeting in order to participate in a meeting of the Advisory Committee at 7:45 pm. Ms. Johnson thanked them for their hard work on the FY21 budget. Ms. Johnson commented that the Board has been working diligently to construct a FY21 Financial Management Plan that will account for projected revenue deficits. She explained that this plan asks the Advisory Committee to request to Town Meeting a responsible use of Fund Balance (\$3.3 million) in addition to significant financial controls. She stated that the plan has been endorsed by the School Committee and thanked Michelle Ayer, Chair, and Superintendent Austin for their help.

Mr. Fisher thanked Ms. Johnson for her efforts in the creation of the plan. He also commented that they have been looking at internal and external factors when creating this plan. Internal factors they considered were anticipated revenue deficits from real estate taxes and meals taxes. External factors included the amount of State aid that Hingham receives. He noted that they are anticipating a 19% reduction in State aid and added that the Town is moving forward in a fiscally prudent way.

Mr. Mayo added that they are looking at projected revenue deficits and are looking at implementing austerity measures to offset those projections. Mr. Mayo also said that the plan is now available to the public on the Town's website.

Harbor Media: Request for a Capital Expenditure to upgrade camera equipment in Town Hall

Mr. David Jones of the Cable Advisory Committee explained that the Town's local access channel has intended to upgrade to an HD channel since their last licensing agreement with Verizon. He said that they are requesting a fund transfer to upgrade the robotic equipment in the Selectmen's meeting room to support HD. He clarified that the money to do this will be coming from existing cable funds so the Town would not be using any additional funds for this upgrade. He said that they expect the upgrades

not to exceed \$26,675 and stated that they have a quote from a vendor, Unique Access Media. Ms. Johnson clarified that the money used for this project is fee-based and cannot be used for anything other than cable services.

Mr. John Rice of the Cable Advisory Committee clarified that the Verizon local access HD channel is already up and running, featuring a combination of all three current local access channels: education, government and public. He felt that the new channel assignment would be more accessible to the public. He said that their contract with Comcast allows for one more year until they are required to implement an HD channel. Ms. Laura Burns let the community know that the HD channel will be 2131.

Mr. Fisher asked if this expenditure was consistent with the Town's financial plan and Mr. Mayo confirmed that it was.

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to approve the transfer of \$25,675 from the Cable Capital Account to Harbor Media for the proposed Town Hall media equipment upgrades in the Selectmen's meeting room. Ms. Johnson seconded.

Roll call vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Ms. Power: absent

Ms. Johnson: yes

Ms. Johnson noted that the Board and Harbor Media decided to postpone the discussion regarding their by-laws.

Hingham Farmer's Market: Temporary relocation to the Station Street parking lot

Mr. Mayo explained that the Town wanted to open the Farmers Market but had to work within safety constraints associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. He said that the market will be converted to a pre-order, drive-through pick up process and noted that the location has been changed from the Bathing Beach parking lot to the Station Street parking lot. He said that the market would operate under this platform on May 23rd and 30th and that the process would continue to be adjusted as new guidance is available regarding the state of the pandemic.

Mr. Mark Cullings, 44 Spring Street, commented that farmer's markets are on the Governor's list of essential services and that he feels they are more important than ever during this pandemic. He followed up with some information on the pre-order/drive through model they intend to use. He said that up to ten vendors will be allowed and currently have eight ready for the market. He said that they anticipate a need for volunteers and said that they have been working with HinghamLink and the Friends of the Hingham Farmer's Market to administer the volunteer program. He added that volunteers would be clearly identifies and would be responsible for instructions and directions. He noted that there would be a portable bathroom available for vendors and staff only. The market will not be open to pedestrian traffic. He said that he has been working with Chief Olsson and he felt that detail officers would be essential for traffic control. He was disappointed, that at this time, the market would not be able to access the SNAP food assistance program and said that they are working to make this happen in the near future.

Ms. Johnson commended Mr. Cullings for his diligence and hard work in getting the market to open under these difficult circumstances. Chief Olsson said they have spent a lot of time reviewing the process involved in opening the market. He felt very confident that it would be successful.

Mr. Fisher thanked Mr. Cullings and asked if there would be directional signs inside and out of the parking lot to direct customers. Mr. Cullings responded that they plan to combine signage with information from volunteers to explain the process to the public. They also plan to use print and online media to educate the public. He further explained that, upon entrance to the market, a volunteer would ask for the customer's name and would direct them to the vendor to retrieve their pre-paid merchandise. He commented that there would be ample room for cars to pull out of the line if need be and said that customers would also be asked to bring a sign with their name on for easy identification. He stated that ordering instructions are available on the market's website at www.hinghamfarmersmarket.org.

Mr. Fisher also asked Chief Olsson if the construction at the former Settles glass lot would be concurrent with the market hours. Chief Olsson said that he would be in touch with the developer to check but was not concerned that traffic flow would be affected.

Public Comment

None

Selectmen/Town Administrator Reports

Mr. Mayo: nothing to report

Mr. Fisher: noting to report

Ms. Johnson reported that she had taken part in the MBTA Advisory Board meeting earlier today discussing the project FY21 budget for the MBTA. She noted that David Altschuler, the representative for Hingham was on the call as well. She felt that the MBTA was following the same concept that Hingham is following due to the uncertain nature of the economic landscape. She said that the budget they are proposing is based on lower projected ridership revenues and will be augmented by funds they expect to receive from the CARES Act. The proposed budget will be voted on by the MBTA Advisory Board next week and felt that it was important for Hingham to be represented at this meeting.

Ms. Johnson concluded with acknowledging the caring and kindness of people in the Hingham community. She commended the efforts of FLAG, HinghamLink and most recently the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 6053 who contributed money allowing the Veterans Services Office to purchase and distribute grocery gift cards to Veterans. She thanked them for their dedication in helping to support community members who are struggling.

She also noted that Friday, May 15 is Peace Officer Memorial Day, which is held annually in honor of Federal, State and local Police Officers who have lost their life or have been disabled in the line of duty and is observed in conjunction with Police Week. She thanked Veteran Services Officer Keith Jermyn for keeping this tradition alive, though in a different way than usual.

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

Roll call vote:

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

Meeting adjourned at 8:25 pm

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