

# Board of Selectmen

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June 2, 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

## **Call to order: 7:05pm**

Ms. Johnson 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 the Minutes**

**Vote:** Ms. Power made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 14, 2020 meeting and the May 19, 2020 meeting. Mr. Fisher 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 June 1st, the Department of Public Health (DPH) began reporting both confirmed and probable COVID-19 cases and deaths. This change is in accordance with guidance from the CDC to include "probable" COVID-19 cases and deaths in data collection and reporting efforts. This change will increase the number of cases and deaths reported in Massachusetts. Starting June 1st, the newly reported totals are a result of a retrospective review of probable cases and deaths dating back to March 1, 2020. Probable cases are individuals who have not been tested by the standard viral (molecular) test. They have either 1) had a positive antibody test and either had COVID-19 symptoms or were likely to be exposed to a positive case, or 2) did not have an antibody test but had COVID-19 symptoms and were known to be exposed to a positive case. Probable cases also include individuals whose death certificate listed COVID-19 as a cause of death but who were not tested. As of today, DPH is reporting 101,163 cases in Massachusetts, of which 8,228 are in Plymouth County. As of last Wednesday, DPH was reporting 254 COVID-19 cases in Hingham. The number of hospitalized COVID-19 patients has been slowly decreasing since April 21, according to DPH data. The percent of people testing positive for

COVID-19 continues to decline as well. Please remember to follow the state's Safer at Home Advisory and only leave home for healthcare, permitted work, shopping, and outdoor activities. Frequent handwashing and social distancing remain critical, and face coverings are still required when you can't maintain 6 ft. of distance from others in public.

### State Guidance

State guidance on summer camps and youth-serving programs was released yesterday. We are working through it as a community and will have more to report next week. On June 1, the Governor issued COVID-19 Order No. 35, which allows for preparation by certain businesses for Phase II reopening. Included in the Order for Phase II preparation is outdoor restaurant dining service. The Governor's order authorizes the Town to approve expanded outdoor table service at restaurants, subject to state and local public health and safety restrictions. The Order relaxes both liquor license and zoning regulations and gives authority to the Board of Selectmen (as the local licensing authority) to approve expanded outdoor table service areas. Prior to the approval of outdoor table service areas, the Order requires that the Board of Selectmen establish the process for approving such requests. I have established a Restaurant Reopening Working Group consisting of Town staff and Town Counsel to (1) recommend the approval process for the Board's review and adoption as required by the Order, (2) create a uniform and efficient application process for outdoor table service approvals, and (3) make recommendations to the Board of Selectmen in connection with such applications. The goal of the Working Group is to facilitate the reopening of Hingham restaurants in accordance with the Governor's reopening plan in a manner that is consistent with the health and safety of the public, including social distancing, fire code, and safety in areas such as sidewalks and parking areas. The Working Group is made up of staff from the Selectmen's office and our Health, Building, Land Use & Development, Police, and Fire Departments. We will create a separate email address that will be shared with all restaurants in Hingham for submission of applications and questions. A recommended process will be provided to the Selectmen for review as soon as possible, and a preliminary communication will be sent to all restaurant owners by the end of this week to explain the process we are working through.

### Town Meeting

We continue to work with the Town Moderator and various department on plans for this year's outdoor Town Meeting at the Hingham High School multi-purpose field. General guidelines are as follows:

- Please bring your own face covering. All Town Meeting attendees and staff must wear a face covering for the entire Town Meeting, including while waiting in line to register, unless exempted by Governor Baker's Order No. 31. Face coverings must cover each attendee's nose and mouth and fit snugly against the side of the face.
- We encourage attendees to wear sunscreen and bring their own water, hats, and/or personal umbrellas for shade.
- All attendees will be seated 10 ft. apart.
- Hand sanitizing stations will be available throughout the venue.
- Microphones will be sanitized after each use.
- Restrooms will be cleaned and sanitized as needed.
- A cooling station will be available near the restrooms.
- Water stations will be available throughout the venue.

**Do not** attend Town Meeting if:

- You are feeling ill or are experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms such as fever (100.3° and above), cough, shortness of breath, or sore throat;
- You have had “close contact” with an individual diagnosed with COVID-19. “Close contact” means living in the same household as a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, caring for a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, being within 6 feet of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 for 15 minutes or more, or coming in direct contact with secretions (e.g., sharing utensils, being coughed on) from a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, while that person was symptomatic; or
- You have been asked to self-isolate or quarantine by your doctor or a local public health official.

We will post an outdoor Town Meeting framework on our website tomorrow and we encourage citizens to read that document for more details about how this year’s Town Meeting will work. “

Mr. Mayo then read the following statement from Police Chief Glenn Olsson regarding the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, MI:

“Chief Glenn Olsson and the men and women of the Hingham Police Department, along with the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, and forces across the country, condemn the actions of the four Minneapolis police officers that resulted in the senseless and tragic death of George Floyd.

As officers, we also share the feelings of the everyday person. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the Floyd family. We are all shocked and upset by the actions of the Minneapolis police officers. Those actions are in direct conflict with the rules, values, and training Hingham Police Officers live by. We cannot allow actions like this to go unpunished.

The Hingham Police Department’s mission is to protect the safety of our community. We remain committed to doing so without prejudice or the use of unnecessary force. We stand in solidarity with the citizens of Hingham and will continue to work with the community as partners and treat all citizens with dignity and respect. “

### **Update on Town Services**

Ms. Michelle Monsegur gave the following update:

#### Selectmen’s Office

“Yesterday, our office received word that the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection approved the Water Supply Business Plan for the Weir River Water System, without conditions. This is a huge milestone in the water system transition process and it represents a massive team effort by Town staff, elected officials and volunteers, Town Counsel, and our consultants. With the help of the Finance branch of our COVID-19 Incident Management Team (IMT), we submitted our first round application for COVID-19-related reimbursements under the CARES Act to Plymouth County in the amount of \$60,000. Many thanks to Sue Nickerson, Heidi Gaul, and Sharon Perfetti for their work to track and document all of our COVID-19-related expenses since March.

#### Town Clerk

Our Town Clerk, Eileen McCracken, wants to remind everyone about alternative voting options for this year's Town Election on June 27, 2020 to minimize the risk of COVID-19. Applications for both Absentee Ballots and Early Voting Ballots are [available for download on the Town's website](#). You may also request a ballot in writing or by email to the Town Clerk. Completed Absentee Ballot and Early Voting Ballot applications must include your signature and can be emailed to [TownClerk@hingham-ma.gov](mailto:TownClerk@hingham-ma.gov), mailed to the Town Clerk at 210 Central Street, Hingham MA, 02043, or dropped off in the drop box in the Town Hall driveway. Residents who complete these applications will receive a ballot by mail and must return it to the Town Clerk by June 27th. There will be no in-person early voting this year, but there will still be in-person voting on Election Day itself. We would like to remind Linden Ponds residents that their precinct has been moved, so anyone at Linden Ponds who wishes to vote in person may go to the Middle School for this Town Election.

#### Information Technology Department Update

In addition to our Health Department, our IT Department has been one of the busiest during this period. Steve Becker and his small but very capable team were responsible for helping employees across our organization set up and troubleshoot issues with their work laptops, desktops, and printers from home. They have responded to over 500 Help Desk calls and requests since we began working remotely, on top of quickly learning the Zoom platform and assisting staff and boards with Zoom requests each week. The IT team continues to support our COVID-19 Incident Management Team, coordinating COVID-19 updates and messaging for our website and social media pages, troubleshooting issues with our phone system, and working with Harbor Media and an outside vendor to complete upgrades to the audiovisual equipment in the Selectmen's meeting room at Town Hall.

#### Conservation Department Update

Although you haven't seen them in the office, Loni Fournier and our Conservation team have been hard at work over the last few months advising homeowners, real estate agents, contractor, permit holders, and others on conservation regulations, policies, properties, and projects. Staff have been accepting new applications, conducting site inspections, corresponding with applicants/representatives, and preparing memos for the Conservation Commission, which has been meeting regularly via Zoom. They continue to respond to potential violations and to monitor conservation properties for downed trees, trash, signage maintenance, and other issues. They also reviewed applications and issued permits for Turkey hunting season, which ended on May 27th."

Mr. Fisher asked if temperatures of residents would be taken upon entering Town Meeting. Mr. Mayo answered no, explaining that Town officials have been advised that taking temperatures is not a reliable indicator of a problem. Instead, the Town is asking residents to make sure they are healthy, practice social distancing, and to wear a mask while attending Town Meeting. Mr. Mayo also commented that residents will be sitting 10 feet away from each other during the meeting. Mr. Mayo also added that there would not be an opportunity for remote participation in Town Meeting.

Ms. Power clarified that remote participation is not something that the Town of Hingham is able to participate in because of Hingham's Open Meeting form of government. Ms. Power also commented

that some residents are concerned if there will be ways to get out of the sun during Town Meeting. She also had received some questions with regard to restrooms and accessibility concerns. Mr. Mayo said that there will be ADA compliant bathrooms available near the concession stand. The concession stand will remain closed, but the shaded area adjacent to the concession stand will be available in case people would like to get out of the sun. He added that this area will have a cooling mist system as well as additional tents to allow people to escape the sun. Mr. Mayo advised that wheelchairs can roll on the turf surface and added that staff, clearly identified in red shirts, will be on hand to assist residents.

Ms. Johnson encouraged creative thinking in helping Hingham's restaurants with their reopening plans, including ways to create a larger footprint for outdoor dining. She suggested the possibility of dining on the sidewalks or in parking areas if permissible. Town Counsel Susan Murphy said that she has been assisting with the restaurant reopening working group and has been helping to implement the Governor's order as well as with public health and safety concerns. She added that most of the landlords and business owners have been very proactive. The Derby Street Shoppes have submitted a conceptual plan to Susan Sarni at the Health Department and Police Chief Olsson, which includes retail pick-up areas and potential seating areas. She said that they are beginning to work with tenants and management in the Shipyard. She added that the Square Café has already submitted an application for some sidewalk seating. She also commented that the Downtown area will prove challenging due to narrow sidewalks, but the group is exploring other options like dining on the tunnel cap. She said that the group is working quickly to identify solutions because the Governor may allow outdoor seating, subject to approval, as early as Monday, June 8. She also said that the IT Department is in the process of creating a centralized email for the working group to help streamline requests and questions from the restaurants. Ms. Johnson acknowledged that the Downtown area will be the biggest challenge in the reopening process and added that she was looking forward to reviewing the plan.

### **Public Comment**

William Buckley reported that he started a petition online to have the pride flag flown at the Hingham Town Hall. He said that he has received 3,600 to date. He asked the Board if it would be possible to have the flag flown. Ms. Johnson explained the difficulty in responding to a question during public comment not on the agenda due to the Open Meeting Law. She recommended that a question of this nature be posted on the agenda so that anyone who wished to comment would have an opportunity. She said that the Board of Selectmen have been speaking with legal counsel over the past few weeks to identify the risks and policies that might need to be in place to accommodate a public display other than the statutorily mandated flags of the United States and the Commonwealth. She said that the Town Hall has, on occasion, flown flags in addition to these two, including those directly related to War Veterans and a flag that commemorates the Peace Officer Memorial Day, which memorializes Police Officers who have been killed in the line of duty. She added that the Town of Hingham does not have a policy in place with respect to flying flags other than Veterans flags and the statutorily mandated flags. Ms. Johnson advised that the Board has posted an agenda for a meeting on Thursday, June 4, which will include the discussion of a proclamation endorsing and celebrating Gay Pride Month and endorsing the efforts of the Hingham Pride Project.

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

Ms. Monsegur: Nothing to report

Mr. Mayo: Nothing to report

Mr. Fisher made some comments about the candlelight vigil that took place in Hingham to protest the killing of George Floyd. He expressed his support for those who have demonstrated peacefully in Hingham and elsewhere and joined them in their condemnation of racism. He expressed his faith in the Hingham Police Department made a public pledge of vigilance as a Selectman and as a citizen of Hingham.

Ms. Power noted the recent passing from Covid-19 two Hingham citizens by reading the following statement:

“Emmet Jackson passed away on May 22, 2020. He was a Navy veteran and he and his wife Norma were married for 65 years. They moved to Hingham two years into their marriage. They lived in the Town for 63 years. They raised their family here. Emmet served on the Planning Board. He served on the Advisory Committee. He was the Chairman of the Board of Trustees at the Hingham Congregational Church and was a Corporator for the Hingham Institute for Savings.

Floret Jensen, mother of Town employee Horatio Hemmings, also lost a courageous battle with Covid-19 recently. Floret was a teacher, a nurse, a sister, a friend, and the pillar of her family. She spent her life taking care of others in large and small ways. On behalf of the entire Town, I’d like to extend our condolences to the family and friends of both Mr. Jackson and Ms. Jensen and to all who have lost loved ones to this pandemic.”

Ms. Power also congratulated, on behalf of the Board and the Town, to the members of the Hingham High School Class of 2020. She felt it was important to note the significant academic and civic contributions of this class. She appreciated the creative ways recognize that parents and local businesses have come up with in an effort to celebrate the significant accomplishments of this class.

She also reported that she just attended the Hingham candlelight vigil to stand in support of black lives in memory of George Floyd and all black lives that have been lost to systemic racial injustice in our country. She expressed her appreciation to the Hingham Unity Council, St. John’s, and the Hingham Police Department for creating a safe venue for the people who attended the event, adding that it was a peaceful, moving, and appropriate demonstration and social distancing was practiced. She was very glad to have attended as a representative of the Board of Selectmen.

Ms. Johnson reported that she recently voted in support of the Hingham Education Association Contract, the teachers’ contract with the Town and School Committee and that both parties felt the process was fair and equitable. She stated that there were a number of statutory and regulatory updates to the existing collective bargaining agreement and noted that this agreement would be in place from August 2020 through August 2023. The agreement includes a 2% pay increase, which aligns with the municipal collective bargaining agreement. She stated that she was impressed with how quickly both sides came together during this time of remote schooling

Mr. Fisher excused himself from the meeting at 7:42 pm.

Ms. Johnson made the following statement:

“Like many of you, I feel like I have been caught in an emotional whirlwind. I’m enraged. I’m deeply shaken and I’m profoundly sad. I think about the long and arduous road towards civil rights endured by our black brothers and sisters and embodied in the 50 year-old Civil Rights Act and it seems like a mirage to me. I’m sick over the tragic murders of Ahmad Aubrey, Brianna Taylor and George Floyd, but sicker still in my core and in my heart that these killings follow so many others that caused out outrage that yielded to complacency. Michael Brown, Eric Gardner and all the way back to Rodney King. For the sake of our shared humanity, we must find a better way forward: constructive and engaging, active and ardent voices of change. As Desmond Tutu said, “If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.” We can be neutral no longer. It can start here in our community and it can start tonight.”

Vote: Ms. Power made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Johnson seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: absent

Ms. Power: yes

Ms. Johnson: yes

**Meeting adjourned at 7:42 pm**

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