

Board of Selectmen

July 28, 2020

Remote meeting via telephone conference call

Present:

- Board of Selectmen: Ms. Mary Power (Chair), Mr. Joseph Fisher, and Mr. Bill Ramsey
- Mr. Tom Mayo, Town Administrator
- Ms. Michelle Monsegur, Assistant Town Administrator

Call to order: 7:00 pm

Ms. Power 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.”

Ms. Power asked if anyone was recording the meeting and there was no response from the public.

Approval of Minutes

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to approve the minutes dated June 25, 2020. Ms. Power seconded

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: abstain

Ms. Power: yes

Vote: Mr. Ramsey made a motion to approve the minutes dated June 30, 2020. Mr. Fisher seconded

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Water Company Transition

Ms. Power noted that in 72 hours, after nine years of hard work, the Town of Hingham would own its own water company for the first time in 132 years. She commented that all ratepayers should have received a letter from the Weir River Water System containing some important information about water service transition activities. She said that some colleagues from Suez have joined the meeting and welcomed Jason O'Brien, Jonathan Mongie, Mike Leahy, Mike Arruda, and Gee Soto. Jonathan Mongie said it was a pleasure working with the Town of Hingham and Aquarion and was pleased with the quick transition. He highlighted some things that they had accomplished in the past five weeks since the contract was signed including:

- All Aquarion employees, except one who left on her own accord, have moved over to Suez. Suez is about to begin contract negotiations with the current union.
- Ratepayers were sent the letter, mentioned by Mary, which outlined billing and customer service updates. Aquarion will be temporarily taking care of all the billing post transition and Suez will be doing all the meter reading and the reporting of data. Aquarion will transfer all the billing revenue to the Town. Mr. Mongie noted that there would be no e-billing for the next six months, until Suez gets its new billing system up and running.
- He said that a new logo has been chosen for the Weir River Water Company; the company is currently co-branding all its vehicles with the Weir River Water System logo and the Suez logo.
- The company is planning an onsite visit and a welcome to the employees on the first day of operations on Monday, August 3. He noted that, because of COVID-19, the company is not able to have the kind of celebration that it would have liked. The company is also planning a welcome Zoom call with all three towns as well.

Ms. Power noted that, if customers have any questions about water service or problems, for example a broken meter, they should call Suez at 781-740-6695. She added that this phone number would be monitored and answered 24 hour a day. Mr. Mongie said that there is a separate phone number for billing questions. Ms. Power thanked the members of the Eversource and Aquarion teams. Mr. Mongie echoed her comments.

Mr. Fisher asked for some information on the billing process. Mr. Mongie said that the billing process would be identical to what Aquarion currently offers. He added that there would be a final bill from Aquarion for water consumption up to, and including, July 31. He said that, in an attempt to keep the same billing cycle that customers are used to, the Weir River Water System would be issuing its first bill just days later and the following month will go back to a regular billing schedule. He commented that, if customers wish to pay their bill online, they should still go to Aquarion's website to do so during the interim period. Mr. Fisher and Mr. Mongie both mentioned the importance of noting the correct account number when paying their bills because customers will have a new account number with the Weir River Water Company.

Mr. Ramsey said that he was happy to hear that all members of Aquarion's bargaining unit were offered jobs by Suez. Mr. Mayo said that the Town recently welcomed the new Water Superintendent, Russell Tierney. He noted that Mr. Tierney would be working on behalf of the Town to help manage the union contract.

Ms. Power asked if there were any questions or comments from the public and there were none. Ms. Power concluded by saying that the Town plans to commemorate this very significant milestone with a Town-wide celebration as soon as Covid allows.

Ms. Michelle Ayer, Chairman of the School Committee, thanked Mary Power for all she has done for the Town during the transition of the water company. Mr. Fisher and Mr. Ramsey also noted that Ms. Power's efforts have been tremendous. Ms. Power also thanked John Asher, Tom Mayo, Michelle Monsegur, John Coughlin and Susan Murphy for their contributions and hard work during the process.

Request for installation of new gas service at 5 Merrill Street

Mr. Mayo said that the Town has received a petition from a resident to connect a gas line to a resident at 5 Merrill Street. He added that, since Merrill Street was paved within the last five years, it is subject to the Five Year Street Opening Moratorium. He said that the Town's policy is not to open a street that is under the moratorium. Town Engineer J.R. Frey noted that both streets on which the residence has frontage are moratorium streets. He said that the resident has asked some questions regarding the condition of the street. After a site visit, Mr. Frey reported that there was no settlement, but rather some reflective cracking, which is typical for the type of micro surface, used over a previous patch in the pavement. He categorized it not as damage, but a part of the physical condition of the asphalt and not currently in need of repair. He said that installing a new service line would require additional excavation, which would require a temporary patch followed by a final patch and additional settlement. He recommended denial of the opening of the street.

Ms. Power gave some background on the Road Moratorium and the Road Building Program in Hingham, emphasizing the effective use of tax dollars.

Mr. Radar, 1 Alexandra Way, explained that he recently built a new house at 5 Merrill Street, with a gas heating system. He said that there is a crack in two locations in front of his property. He suggested that this would be a logical place to cut the road and connect to the gas main. He hoped that they could connect to the gas service and fix the road at their own expense.

Mr. Fisher explained that the Board usually defers to the expertise of the Town Engineer on issues such as this. He asked how Mr. Radar would provide heat to the house if the request were denied. Mr. Radar said they would have to use propane tanks in the interim. Mr. Fisher noted that the requested work is not an emergency repair or work mandated by the State.

Ms. Power asked if Mr. Radar had just recently learned of the Road Moratorium. He stated that he had learned about it some time ago, but had been exploring other options in the meantime. She asked Mr. Frey to write a summary of his findings and said she would like an opportunity to make a site visit prior to a decision. She said that Board would make a decision at their meeting next week.

She asked if there were any comments or questions from the public and there were none.

Temporary Mooring Regulations

Chairman Power recognized Harbormaster Ken Corson and asked him to summarize the recommendation he had provided to the Board for consideration. Mr. Corson explained that these temporary recommendations would loosen some of the restrictions that had been adopted on May 26, 2020. He said that this would allow rafting of up to three vessels on a mooring or anchor in the harbor, which is not currently allowed. He said that the State had relaxed some of their COVID-19 regulations on July 3, 2020. He felt that this was an appropriate relaxing of the Town's regulations given the current state of COVID-19 in Massachusetts. He added that the only boats that are allowed to anchor in World's End are restricted to those vessels that have a current (2020) Hingham mooring permit.

Mr. Fisher asked about the duration of the new regulations. Mr. Corson said that they would be in place for one year, unless there is a change to the State's regulations, at which time the Town could

change its own regulations. Mr. Corson said that he felt the new regulations were consistent with good boating safety. Mr. Ramsey felt that these new regulations would be a welcome change with boaters.

Ms. Power asked if there were any comments or questions from the public.

Mr. Jim Rando, 39 Binedale Road in Braintree, of the Metropolitan Yacht Club, thanked Mr. Corson for loosening the regulations and asked him to explain the justification for requiring a Hingham mooring permit for anchoring in World's End. Mr. Corson said that the Town limited the boats to those with 2020 mooring permits in an attempt to limit navigational and safety issues. He also said that a large number of 2020 Hingham mooring permit holders are not Hingham residents and added that the Town is not limiting anchoring to residents only.

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion, Pursuant to Article 15 of the Town of Hingham General By-laws, the Board of Selectmen hereby acknowledges, reviews, and approves, to the extent necessary, the Harbormaster's proposed amendments to the Temporary Mooring Regulations, as adopted on May 26, 2020, and hereby replaces Section 14 and Subsection E and F of Section 15 with the following:

§ 14 Special Situations

- (i) Floats constructed to hold a house, building, shack, or provide living quarters will not be permitted in Hingham Harbor. Any of these floating structures present prior to January 1, 2010 may be permitted as long as its owner obtains a Moored Float Permit.
- (ii) No more than three (3) vessels shall raft or tie together.

§ 15 World's End Mooring Area

E. Rafting

Rafting is permitted in this mooring field only when safe conditions allow, provided that the vessels:

- (i) Are properly secured and fended;
- (ii) No more than three (3) vessels shall raft or tie together; and
- (iii) Do not impede or interfere with the navigation of vessels through the mooring field.

F. Anchoring

No vessel may anchor in World's End without a 2020 Hingham Mooring/Docking Permit. Vessels with a 2020 Hingham Mooring/Docking Permit may anchor in World's End provided that the vessels:

- (i) Are properly anchored;
- (ii) Take appropriate measures to avoid interfering with other moored or anchored vessels;
- (iii) Maintain at least fifty (50) feet of distance between vessels or rafted vessels;
- (iv) Do not impede or interfere with the navigation of vessels through the mooring area as determined by the Harbormaster or designee; and
- (v) No overnight anchoring without prior written Harbormaster approval, exception to section 9.

Mr. Ramsey seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Ms. Power noted that the Board had received a petition to loosen the regulations from Mr. Fulton. She said that the Board has reviewed the document and appreciated Mr. Fulton sending it to them.

COVID-19 Update

Cases:

Massachusetts remains in Phase 3 Step 1 at this time. As of today, the DPH reports 116,182 probable and confirmed cases in Massachusetts, of which 9,018 are in Plymouth County. As of last Wednesday, the DPH has reported 283 cases in Hingham.

New Guidelines:

The State has announced a new travel order that will go into effect this Saturday, August 1, 2020. Starting August 1, all visitors entering Massachusetts, including returning residents who do not meet an exemption, are required to:

1. Complete the Massachusetts travel form prior to arrival, unless they are arriving from a lower risk state designated by the DPH, and
2. Quarantine for 14 days or produce a negative COVID-19 test result that has been administered for up to 72 hours prior to arrival in Massachusetts.

Failure to comply may result in a \$500 fine per day. Exemptions to these rules include:

- Individuals coming from lower risk states which, as of today include, Connecticut, Hawaii, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont
- Transitory travel through Massachusetts
- Persons commuting for work or school
- Patients seeking or receiving medical treatment
- Military personnel travelling under orders
- Workers providing critical infrastructure services

Massachusetts residents are urged to limit out of state travel only to lower risk COVID-19 states. More information is available on [Mass.gov/info-details/Covid19travel order](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/Covid19travel-order).

Town Services

Town Hall is, in part, reopened, but only to employees, in an attempt to better serve the residents during the pandemic in as safe a way as possible. The Library continues to provide pre-order and curbside pick-up services. The DPW has returned to full staffing though there are some services that are still under the previous restrictions.

Discussion regarding communications received by the Board of Selectmen's office regarding flags on Fire trucks

Ms. Power explained to the public that the Board posted their agenda for this meeting on Friday, July 24, 2020, in accordance with the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law. She said that, after the agenda was posted, the Board of Selectmen received a significant amount of communication with respect to this issue. She noted that it has also been covered in print media and on television. She said that, on Friday when the agenda was posted the Board could not have anticipated the amount of response it would

receive with regard to this matter, prompting the Board to revise its agenda to include this discussion. Ms. Power explained the process and protocol the public could expect for this discussion. She then asked Mr. Fisher to read a statement that he had recently released to media outlets.

Mr. Fisher read the following:

“The Board of Selectmen has consistently supported our Public Safety Departments. We have a proud history of recognizing and valuing the contributions made by the men and women who serve the Town with distinction and honor.

“In recent months, we have seen protests around the country in the wake of the deaths of George Floyd, Brianna Taylor and others, with increasing questions about the role of Police in society and a growing call among some activists to “defund the Police.” Indeed, at our Town Meeting last month, there was a citizen ‘hold’ placed on our proposed budget for the Police Department. In response, the Board of Selectmen stood with our men and women in blue. I personally stood up, on behalf of the Board, to acknowledge the issues of racial and social injustice that have motivated calls for increased scrutiny of budgets in numerous cities across the country. I further stated, in unequivocal language at Town Meeting, that those concerns were not justified in Hingham because, in our town, Police officers perform to a high level of professionalism, are sensitive to issues of fairness and justice in our community, and they are ultimately accountable to the Board of Selectmen on matters of policy and discipline. I concluded my statement with a pledge that this Board would remain vigilant, and would respond with care and compassion, to residents who might come forward with concerns about racial and social justice.

“Last week a resident did come forward with a concern. He sent an email to the Board of Selectmen that questioned whether the thin blue line flag should be displayed on a fire truck. He stated, ‘The thin blue line flag has undoubtedly become a political symbol most often used to counter Black Lives Matter and the fight against rampant Police brutality. While Hingham is blessed with a remarkable Police force and these problems may not be as relevant in our quiet little town, the symbols are still representative of issues that our country is confronting as a whole.’

“The resident reminded us that just a month ago, the Board of Selectmen had refused a request to fly the rainbow flag, also known as the Gay Pride Flag or the LGBTQ+ Pride Flag, on Town property. Why then, was the thin blue line flag allowed? In fact, the Board had made its decision to decline flying the rainbow flag, not because we didn’t support its message of inclusivity. Instead, it was because of the Town’s long-standing practice to limit flag displays on Town property to the flag of the United States of America, the flag of the Commonwealth, the flag of the Town of Hingham, the POW MIA flag, a flag in memory of Veterans of WWI, as well as flags flown to commemorate Peace Officers Memorial Day on May 15 of each year. The Town’s flag practice had been explained by Town Counsel in a public session of the Board of Selectmen in June.

“The resident’s request to remove the thin blue line flag from the fire truck was forwarded to the Fire Chief. I understand that the Fire Chief consulted with the Police Chief and with the Town Administrator, each of whom recognized that displaying the thin blue line flag was inconsistent with the Town’s flag practice. Their decision was not based on any ill will towards our Police heroes. It did not reflect a

decision to belittle the sacrifices made by those who put their lives at risk every day. Rather, the decision represented the consistent implementation of the Town's practice concerning the public display of only official flags on Town property. This was a practice that had been applied in the prior month to the rainbow flag with the same result.

"No group has more respect for the men and women of the Police Department than the Board of Selectmen. We demand from them a commitment to public service combined with high levels of skills and an appreciation of the sensitivity needed to deliver public safety in a challenging environment. In return, we pledge our ongoing support and appreciation. To highlight the importance of public safety, the Board of Selectmen is currently on track to call for a Special Town Meeting this fall to request funds for the purchase of property to construct a state of the art Public Safety Complex as the new Police Headquarters and North Fire Station. We plan to proceed with the Public Safety Complex despite financial constraints imposed by the current pandemic because of the high priority we place on the needs of the Police and Fire Departments.

"While there is room for discussion of the best ways to show support for our Public Safety personnel, there is no place in Hingham for the hate and vitriol that have been targeted toward the resident who asked us to look into the public displays of the thin blue line flag. In the last week, he has received numerous threats against his property and against his life. The harassment is ceaseless and vicious. It has recently expanded to target the welfare and safety of his family. Such conduct debases any attempt of public discourse and makes hypocrites of those who call for respect of public safety officers while simultaneously threatening the safety of others. When petitioning the Board of Selectmen leads to name-calling, character assassination, intimidation, and threats of physical violence, this only serves to deface all flags that we might choose to display in honor of our Peace Officers. For this Board of Selectmen, our support for the men and women who serve this Town is unwavering."

Ms. Power thanked Mr. Fisher for his statement and commented that he put into words many things that she had been thinking. Mr. Ramsey agreed with Mr. Fisher's comments, adding that the Board has the utmost respect for the Police Department and Fire Department.

Directing her question to Town Administrator Tom Mayo and to Legal Counsel John Coughlin, she asked how the resident's email became part of the public domain. Mr. Mayo gave the following response: "Upon receipt of a request for a public record by a member of our Fire Department, I asked the Fire Chief to fulfill the request and provide the record. The record was not redacted as redaction is not a requirement of the public records law, nor would that be consistent with our [POLICY OR PRACTICE??] regarding the issuance of public records."

Mr. Coughlin added, "This matter involves an email communication that was submitted to a public body, the Board of Selectmen, regarding a policy matter. This was not a confidential personnel record or something similar. This was a communication to an elected body regarding something that is a matter of public policy. Those kinds of documents are generally considered public records under the Public Records Law. Also, under the Open Meeting Law, if the Board would deliberate about that as a body, because all three members received it, at a public meeting then it also would become a public record. This was a communication that was submitted voluntarily to the Town. It was not information collected by the Town or included in a Town database or anything similar to that. The Secretary of State's Public

Records Guide generally indicates that these types of names, addresses and other general information are not considered exempt under the Public records Law, unless there is a specific reason for it, for example, a social security number would be. I would also note that there are some other specific exemptions under the Public Records Law for home addresses and telephone numbers and personal email addresses for judicial employees, some public safety employees, and other officials but those are specific exemptions that don't apply generally to other communications that are received by the Town."

Ms. Power agreed with Mr. Ramsey that Mr. Fisher's statement captured much of essence of what she had been thinking over the past couple of days. Ms. Power asked Mr. Fisher if she and Mr. Ramsey could add their name to his statement, thus making it a statement from the entire Board of Selectmen. Mr. Fisher agreed and appreciated her request. Mr. Fisher commented on the challenges of operating as a Board under the constraints of the Open Meeting Law which does not allow Board members to speak to each other regarding matters directed to the Board unless in an open meeting format. Mr. Ramsey also agreed to affix his signature to Mr. Fisher's aforementioned statement.

Ms. Power made some additional comments on the happenings of the past several days. She commented that Hingham has always prided itself on civil discourse for a very long time. She also commented on the sadness of the tone of the discussion, comments and letters, not limited to the discussion of the thin blue line flag, but to the rainbow flag request as well. She said that many of the comments have been "unnecessarily personal" and some have been "directed at one our fellow citizens. Some of them have been mean-spirited and the result is that it has become divisive. I think that when things get divisive, they get in the way of listening, understanding and working together to find a path forward, which has really been the hallmark of this Town for 400 years."

Ms. Power also noted that, after a discussion with Town Counsel on June 4, the Board was advised that, if the Board would like to consider flying flags outside of the long-standing practice, the Town should adopt a formal Flag Policy. It was recommended that such a policy should outline a process for evaluating requests and associated guidelines. She felt that it was important to act consistently. She added that recent events regarding the flying of flags have indicated to her that the community would like the exploration into and the establishment of a written flag policy. Mr. Fisher supported Ms. Power in her suggestion of exploring a written flag policy. Mr. Ramsey felt that "when it comes to the First Amendment and government action, the importance of consistency cannot be overstated." He also supported the exploration of a written flag policy that would address a consistent practice as well as some of the concerns the Board had received over the last few months.

Ms. Power asked if there were questions or comments from the public. She noted that, for the purpose of allowing as many comments as possible, the Board would allow three minutes of comment per person.

Ms. Laurie Freeman, 269 High Street, thanked the Police Chief and Fire Chief for their service and commended the Board for their eloquent statement explaining the flag decision. She also said, "As a mother and a resident, I stand up in support of sons and daughters of Hingham families who write respectful letters to the Board expressing their concerns about the inclusivity of the Hingham community and I am shocked to hear the vicious attacks that the Hingham family has received for their son daring to express his opinion in support of black lives to the Board. I want to thank the young man

for his actions and I want to apologize to him on behalf of us older adults that he is being treated in this outrageous manner.” Ms. Power said that, with writing a respectful letter to the Board that addressed concerns and asked questions, the young man was doing what the Board hopes the public will do to engage with their government.

Andrew Turner, 172 Wompatuck Road, expressed his agreement with the actions of the Board. He felt that the flag had recently become a political statement and did not feel it belonged on Town fire trucks. He suggested that the thin blue line suggested a broader narrative of an “us vs. them” mentality. In response to the social media posts and news articles and related comments, he addressed the Fire Chief and the Police Chief with the following comment: “I admire your decisiveness, your action and your thoughtfulness.” He suggested that “there are less offensive, less combative ways to honor the life and service of Sgt. Chesna” and encouraged the Board to pursue those.

Cynthia Doe, 99 Lazell Street, asked if legal counsel was consulted prior to releasing the email from the resident. Mr. Mayo responded that counsel was not consulted before releasing the email. He added that the Town receives many requests for public records and each time, including this one, the Town follows the same practice. Ms. Power directed Ms. Doe’s second question to Police Chief Glenn Olsson. Ms. Doe asked what steps had been taken to ensure the safety of the individual who wrote the letter. Chief Olsson, 8 Amber Road, said that the Police has been in touch with the individual and his family multiple times, have taken Police reports from the family documenting the incidences and have added patrols to the area. He said that the family was happy with the level of services the Police has been providing to them. Mr. Mayo expressed his pride in the professionalism of the Police.

Pam Harty, 7 Meadowview Road, speaking on behalf of Hingham’s Unity Counsel, read the following statement: “The Hingham Unity Council was formed to encourage people to have meaningful in person discussions about our differences, to hear each other’s perspectives and experiences, to gain understanding, to promote empathy and support for all our community members. The members of the HUC are distressed by the discourse on social media surrounding the thin blue line flag displayed on a Hingham fire truck. We don’t believe this is what Hingham stands for. We believe Hingham stands with our Weymouth neighbors as they mark the anniversary of the death of Officer Chesna in a horrific killing as he upheld his duty to serve and protect. We believe Hingham stands with our black community as they protest unjustified killings of black men and women and demand systemic reform. We believe Hingham stands with our Police and first responders. We believe Hingham stands for the right to question public officials, existing policies and status quo. We believe Hingham stands for civility and empathy even when we disagree. We believe Hingham can stand together to grieve and remember all of the women and men whose lives were taken too soon. We urge everyone in the Hingham community to push their capacity for empathy a bit further and consider entering into a deeper interpersonal dialogue beyond the world of social media. Let’s listen more and post less. The Hingham Unity Council supports the decision of our Town officials to remove the thin blue line flag from Town property until there is a more complete understanding reached about the significance of its display and what it represents to all members of the Hingham community. In the upcoming months, the HUC will continue to present opportunities for this kind of dialogue and exchange and hope you will join us.” Ms. Power thanked the members of the HUC who joined Ms. Harty in this statement.

Melissa Smith, 223 South Street, made several comments including expressing her support for a comprehensive flag policy.

Katie Sutton, 245 Levitt Street, thanked the Board and the Chiefs for their hard work on this sensitive issue. She thanked the Police and Fire Departments for their service to the town and supported the removal of the flag from the fire truck.

Ed Johnson, 108 Ward Street, son of a Police Officer killer in the line of duty, hoped that we could still honor our fallen Police Officers. He expressed empathy for the family of Sgt. Chesna.

William Dresser, 1 Windjammer Way, asked if the Board would adopt a flag policy for both Town property and private property. Ms. Power commented that any policy that the Board may adopt would only apply to Town property.

Hannah Connolly, 25 Cedar Street, commented that she was supportive of the removal of the thin blue line flag.

Ms. Lisa Shetty, 175 East Street, asked whom the Police and Fire Chiefs reported to and what was the process for determining that the flag should be removed. She also asked why it was still flying on the fire truck. She made some additional observations and comments regarding the Back the Blue rally that took place in front of Town Hall today. Ms. Power commented that the Board of Selectmen act as the Police Commissioners and are responsible for all hiring decisions for Police Officers. She said that, in the six years that she has served on the Board, she has hired more than 20 Police Officers as well as many promotions and felt that she could attest to the quality and caliber of Hingham's Police Officer candidates. Mr. Fisher commented that the Board personally interviews all Police candidates and does its best to make sure it is hiring the best candidates for Hingham and felt the Board has been successful. He also noted that the Police and Fire Chiefs report directly to the Town Administrator. He noted that the Board did not have a meeting nor did it have a vote on the topic and said that the Board is not allowed to discuss issues outside of a public meeting. Mr. Mayo added that he worked with the Chiefs in the decision to remove the flag. He also said that the Town is working towards a respectful way of working with the Fire Department to remove the flag. Mr. Ramsey also commented on the reiterated the high caliber of the Hingham Police Officers. Chief Olsson also commented on the extensive screening process for the Department's candidates and said that he is really proud of the Department's officers. He also commented on the tremendous pressure the officers have been under during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the current social unrest and responsibility they feel for the actions of officers in other areas. He encouraged communication between the residents and officers.

Maddy Cooper, 70 Central Street, Norwell, MA, expressed her respect and support for the Police and Fire Departments but encouraged them to find another way to honor fallen officers other than the blue line flag.

Corey Martin, 35 Rockwood Road, expressed support for the Town's decision to remove the flag, consistent with the Town's flag practice. She encouraged the Town working with the Fire Union to get the flag released.

Jenney Weymouth, 179 Main Street, asked for a timeline for the removal of the flag from the fire truck. Mr. Mayo expected the flag to be removed in a couple of days.

Ellen Whalen, 156 Prospect Street, asked when the Peace Officers Memorial Flag flies at Town Hall. Mr. Fisher said that it is flown on National Law Enforcement Officers Day, January 9, and on Peace Officers Memorial Day, May 15, every year.

Mr. Dan Nardo asked the Board to elaborate on the difference between a “practice” and a “policy” with regard to the flying of flags. Mr. Mayo commented that a “policy” is a written document that outlines the actions the Town will take and a “practice” sometimes accompanies a “policy” and sometimes doesn’t. Town Counsel, John Coughlin, added that “a policy is typically a document that is in writing and adopted by an official with the authority to adopt it, for example the Board of Selectmen have policies and procedures that are contained in a document. A practice is simply a management tool that is used by the Administrator to operate the Town on a day-to-day basis. There are many practices that the Town has implemented over the years that have not been formalized into a written policy.”

Manny Oppong, 5 Nutty Hill Road, thanked the Fire and Police Chiefs for making a very difficult decision to remove the flag.

Jessica Greenwood, 24 Greenfield Road, asked how long the Fire Department typically flies the flags in honor of Sgt. Chesna. Fire Chief Steve Murphy stated that, after Sgt. Chesna’s death, the Fire Department displayed the thin blue line flag for approximately two months.

David Cedroni of WATD News, 57 Franklin Street, Duxbury, MA, asked what the process the Town would use to remove the flag from the fire truck. Ms. Power asked for everyone’s patience while the Town Administrator works respectfully with the Fire Department to remove the flag.

Tien Do-Suarez, 3 Beechham Place, was in full support with the Police and Fire Departments. She encouraged them to speak to their employees about racial injustice and unconscious bias and to ask what the thin blue line flag means to different people. She added that this discussion could be a way for Hingham to grow as a community and to support one another.

Ms. Power thanked everyone for attending the meeting and for their comments.

Vote: Mr. Ramsey made a motion that the Board of Selectmen adopt the statement in substantially the form attached hereto as an official statement of the Board of Selectmen. Ms. Power seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Ms. Power noted that she would like the Selectmen’s Letter posted on the Town’s website. Mr. Ramsey added that he would like the letter to be sent to those residents who have signed up for updates from

the Town's website. Mr. Fisher was in full support. Mr. Fisher and Ms. Power said that tonight's conversation showed the community's confidence in and respect for their Public Safety leadership.

Public Comment

Ms. Power noted that there were no comments from the public.

Selectmen/Town Administrator Reports

Ms. Power said that the Board and Town Moderator Michael Puzo would continue to interview residents who have filled out Talent Bank applications.

Ms. Monsegur: Nothing to report

Mr. Mayo thanked the Police personnel that he had an opportunity to meet with during the past week. He also passed along condolences to SSRECC supervisor Kathy Costa who recently lost her husband to cancer.

Mr. Fisher thanked Ms. Power for her leadership.

Mr. Ramsey acknowledged the passing of Mr. Charlie Chittick. He said that Mr. Chittick was a respect member of the community and a respected Veteran who served in the Korean War.

Ms. Power thanked the businesses who participated in the Summer Sidewalk Sales. She encouraged people to patronage the downtown merchants and restaurants. She also appreciated the great effort the School Department is making to undertake the reopening of the Public Schools.

Ms. Power recognized Kerry Ni, Chairman of the School Committee. Ms. Ni thanked Ms. Power for the support the Board has shown the School Committee.

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Ramsey seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Meeting adjourned at 9:35 pm

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

