

Town of Needham
Select Board
Minutes for March 27, 2020
By Zoom Video Conference

3:00 p.m. A meeting of the Select Board was convened by Chair John A. Bulian. Those participating were Maurice P. Handel, Matthew D. Borrelli, Marianne B. Cooley, Daniel P. Matthews, and Kate Fitzpatrick, Town Manager. Also participating were Tim McDonald, Health and Human Service/Director, Dave Davison, Assistant Town Manager/Finance, Theodora Eaton, Town Clerk, Roger McDonald, Information Technology/Director, and Denise Garlick, State Representative. Recording Secretary Mary Hunt recorded the meeting remotely.

Mr. Bulian announced this open meeting is being conducted remotely consistent with Governor Baker's Executive Order of March 12, 2020 due to the current state of emergency from the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus. He noted all public gatherings have been suspended, and as such the requirement of the open meeting law to have all meetings in a public, accessible, physical location are suspended, and public bodies can meet remotely. Mr. Bulian stated the meeting will not include public comment and that the Needham Select Board and all attendees are convening by Zoom. He said all supporting documents used at this meeting are available on the Town's website.

3:04 p.m. COVID-19 Update:
Tim McDonald, Health and Human Services/Director said the COVID-19 outbreak is a serious situation affecting Needham, the Commonwealth, and the country. He explained the steps taken by the Town to inform and educate residents of the danger and the steps they can take to keep themselves and everyone safe. He highlighted social distancing to minimize the spread of the virus, strongly suggesting Needham residents follow guidance not to congregate in large groups and keep 6 feet between people. He noted retailers are doing their part to maintain social distancing, and asked residents to do so as well. He commented the challenges can have a profound effect on mental health including less exercise and interaction with friends and colleagues. He noted available services in Needham include the interface referral service where people are matched up with a clinician for help in facing and finding solutions to the challenges. Mr. McDonald said approximately 2,500 cases of COVID-19 have been reported in the Commonwealth, noting the number of cases announced is not representative of the total number of cases in the community due to limited testing. He confirmed testing is not available in the volume necessary for the public or broad sectors of society, noting things are improving at a modest rate. He noted the nine cases announced this week in Needham are the "tip of the iceberg." Mr. McDonald implored residents to continue social distancing. Mr. McDonald highlighted new, more strict directives from Governor Baker. He said the Town is working hard to assist seniors and people in the "high risk" categories of heart disease, lung disease, and diabetes to make sure they have the services they need at this challenging time. He noted the travelling meals program, CATH lunch

program, community calls to neighbors/friends, nutrition programs, and the grocery delivery program are being replicated to assist senior citizens.

Mr. Bulian asked about the number of people recovering and post recovery concerns.

Mr. McDonald said one of the challenges is that people are contagious before being symptomatic, noting the severity of symptoms vary dramatically. He noted there are younger patients who have had severe symptoms, but for the most part, the most severe cases are with people in the high-risk categories. He said the Needham resident who recovered is in very good physical health after rest, fluids, and time at home. He said other residents have not been as fortunate and have required hospitalization. Mr. McDonald said data supporting immunity for people who have had COVID-19 and who are exposed again is lacking.

Mr. Borrelli asked how first responders are being protected. He also asked about taxes being due and how the Town can help people who may have trouble paying.

Mr. McDonald said Needham is a well-resourced town due to planning, noting it does have personal protective equipment but is also pursuing ways to get more gear. He said Needham had approved a donation of 100 masks to the sister city, Daxing, China at the beginning of the pandemic in China. He said Daxing has now offered masks and other forms of PPE to Needham as the virus now escalates in the United States. He said the chiefs of the Police and Fire Departments are working closely with the Public Health Department regarding PPE. Ms. Fitzpatrick added that significant disinfecting is occurring at the Police and Fire Departments, and steps are being taken (i.e. taking temperatures) when employees arrive at work.

Mr. Davison said the State Legislature is working on a bill to give communities the ability to extend the deadline for bills that come due during the duration of the state of emergency. He said when the bill is signed into law by the governor, the Select Board will be asked for the appropriate extensions.

Mr. Handel asked about coordination with the Beth Israel Hospital and whether there is anything the town can do to help the Hospital? He asked about communications with continuing care communities.

Mr. McDonald said the Town Manager has a weekly call with the CEO and the public health department is working closely with staff, including infection control, at the hospital. He said some PPE will be donated to the hospital, and alternate care sites and community screening options are being explored. He said the hospital may need to rely on the Town once more supplies and PPE are available. Mr. McDonald said public health nurses are speaking with clinical staff at long term care facilities and the Public Health Department is also in contact with culinary staff about best practices and ways to change operations in light of the pandemic.

Ms. Cooley referred to the long-term care facilities, asking if proper social support and continuing care is being given? She said she is concerned with social isolation. She asked for clarity on the length of time a person needs to stay home after symptoms have subsided, suggesting people must be aware of the guidelines.

Mr. McDonald said the state has issued strong guidance for skilled nursing and rehabilitation facilities that restrict how they operate and allow visitors. He said most have been instructed to provide food in non-community settings and are now delivering meals. He commented staff are continuing to think how to balance social interaction in the context of an outbreak. Mr. McDonald said the Town, out of an abundance of caution, issued guidance to employees that after 72 hours symptom free, people can return to a work setting. He said CDC guidelines are different.

Mr. Matthews thanked Mr. McDonald for the report and said Town staff have been terrific throughout the emergency. He commended residents for their patience as changes have been made very quickly. He emphasized the situation will go on for quite a while, changing weekly. Mr. Matthews said while 80% of the cases are not severe, the ones that are can be very bad or even fatal. He said a community effort is needed to stop the spread of the virus, and that he believes most people understand the situation. He reiterated people over age 60 are at risk whether they have underlying conditions or not, noting most homes in Needham have someone 60+ living in it or have contact with someone over age 60. He said a sustained effort is necessary and people need patience.

Mr. Bulian asked about the supply of ventilators at Beth Israel Hospital.

Mr. McDonald said the situation continues to change. He said BID has sufficient capacity right now, but there is concern of a spike in patients. He said most of the surge in demand would come from major academic medical centers, and it is unclear how less acute patients would be handled. He commented a ventilator is not just a piece of equipment but needs a team of skilled professionals to run it. He mentioned the Town has a new website dedicated to COVID-19: needhamma.gov/coronavirus as well as a new “notify me” group.

3:30 p.m. Consider Delaying the Annual Town Election:

Ms. Fitzpatrick said she and Tedi Eaton, Town Clerk, recommend the Select Board consider postponing the upcoming town election on April 14, 2020 to May 26, 2020. She said the law allows for a new voter registration deadline of 8 p.m. 10 days prior to the election and to reuse printed ballots.

Ms. Eaton said the legislation allows municipalities to postpone a municipal election up until June 30, 2020. She said she is hopeful the Select Board will move to postpone the election to a date to be determined, suggesting May 26, 2020.

Discussion ensued on early voting and absentee voting by mail, the possibility of one polling location for the election to cut down on the number of workers, and

Town buildings used as polling locations which are currently closed. Ms. Eaton said it would be helpful to encourage residents to vote early by mail. Mr. Borrelli suggested a “Frequently Asked Questions” flyer be prepared to answer questions.

Motion by Mr. Handel that the Select Board vote to postpone the 2020 Annual Town Election currently scheduled for April 14, 2020 to May 26, 2020.

Second: Mr. Borrelli. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

Mr. Matthews suggested consolidating polling locations for this election as many older poll workers may not want to work and said personal protective equipment should be available for poll workers. He asked for a recommendation from the Town Clerk and Town Manager in the next few weeks.

Ms. Fitzpatrick announced several public hearings are scheduled for the Select Board meeting on April 15, 2020 and asked the Board to consider moving the meeting to April 14, 2020. Mr. Bulian said the Board will consider the suggestion at their next meeting, tentatively scheduled for Friday, April 3, 2020.

3:45 p.m.

Consider Delaying the Annual Town Meeting:

Ms. Fitzpatrick said in consultation with the Town Moderator and Town Clerk it is recommended the Select Board postpone the Annual Town Meeting to June 8, 2020. She said she believes action by the Legislature is necessary to make the change, but it is prudent to have a date so people can plan accordingly. She noted the issue is a common problem across the Commonwealth and anticipates legislative relief.

The Board concurred it is prudent to announce the new date to give Town Meeting Members advanced notice.

Motion by Mr. Handel that on the recommendation of the Select Board the Annual Town Meeting be postponed until June 8, 2020.

Second: Mr. Borrelli. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

3:49 p.m.

Annual Town Meeting Warrant:

Ms. Fitzpatrick suggested some articles be removed from the Annual Town Meeting Warrant to help in planning purposes. She listed the following Articles be postponed until the 2020 fall Town Meeting:

- Article 9 Town-Owned Land Surveys
- Article 11 Billing and Collection Software Application
- Article 20 Transportation Improvement Fees
- Article 24 First Baptist Church Porch Preservation
- Article 25 First Parish Church Steeple
- Article 26 Needham Community Farm Growing Bed Expansion
- Article 27 Trail Identification Design
- Article 28 Walker Pond Restoration and Preservation

Article 29 Claxton Field Lights and Skin Renovation Design
Article 30 Resurfacing the Synthetic Track at DeFazio Complex
Article 31 Community Preservation Fund (CPC Administration Budget, Annual Reserves, Required Reserves)
Article 35 Pollard School Air Conditioning System Design
Article 38 Athletic Facility Improvement Fund
Article 39 Capital Improvement Fund
Article 40 Capital Facility Fund

Mr. Borrelli suggested Town Meeting Members be notified that the fall Town Meeting may be two nights.

Mr. Handel noted the time required for the Annual Town Meeting may be reduced. He said it is a balance.

Motion by Mr. Handel that the Select Board vote to remove the following Articles from the 2020 Annual Town Warrant:

**Article 9 Town-Owned Land Surveys
Article 11 Billing and Collection Software Application
Article 20 Transportation Improvement Fees
Article 24 First Baptist Church Porch Preservation
Article 25 First Parish Church Steeple
Article 26 Needham Community Farm Growing Bed Expansion
Article 27 Trail Identification Design
Article 28 Walker Pond Restoration and Preservation
Article 29 Claxton Field Lights and Skin Renovation Design
Article 30 Resurfacing the Synthetic Track at DeFazio Complex
Article 31 Community Preservation Fund (CPC Administration Budget, Annual Reserves, Required Reserves)
Article 35 Pollard School Air Conditioning System Design
Article 38 Athletic Facility Improvement Fund
Article 39 Capital Improvement Fund
Article 40 Capital Facility Fund**

Second: Mr. Borrelli. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

3:54 p.m. Discuss Date for Fall Town Meeting:
The Board agreed to wait a few days to decide on rescheduling the 2020 fall Town Meeting.

The Board announced the next Select Board meeting will be held on Friday, April 3, 2020 at 3 p.m.

3:54 p.m. Adjourn:

Motion by Mr. Handel that the Select Board vote to adjourn the Select Board meeting on Friday, March 27, 2020.

Second: Mr. Borrelli. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

A list of all documents used at this Select Board meeting are available at:

<http://www.needhamma.gov/Archive.aspx?AMID=99&Type=&ADID=>