

**Town of Needham
Select Board
Minutes for Friday April 14, 2020
By Zoom Video Conference
<https://zoom.us/j/248178576>**

7:00 p.m.

Call to Order:

A meeting of the Select Board was convened by Chair John A. Bulian. Those participating were Maurice P. Handel, Matthew D. Borrelli, Daniel P. Matthews, Marianne B. Cooley, and Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick. Also participating were Tim McDonald, Health and Human Services/Director and Dave Davison, Assistant Town Manager/Finance. 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 as advised and directed by the Commonwealth. And, as such, suspending the requirement of the open meeting law to have all meetings in a public, accessible, physical location while encouraging and allowing members of all public bodies to participate remotely. Mr. Bulian stated the meeting will not include public comment and the Needham Select Board and all attendees are convening by Zoom, as posted on the Town's website identifying how the public may join. He said all supporting documents used at this meeting are available on the Town's website.

7:02 p.m.

Reorganization of the Board:

The Board accepted nominations for reorganization of the Select Board:

Motion by Mr. Matthews that the Select Board vote to nominate Maurice P. Handel to serve as Chair of the Town of Needham Select Board.

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

Motion by Mr. Handel that the Select Board vote to nominate Matthew D. Borrelli to serve as Vice-Chair of the Town of Needham Select Board.

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

Motion by Mr. Borrelli that the Select Board vote to nominate Marianne B. Cooley to serve as Secretary/Clerk of the Town of Needham Select Board.

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

Motion by Mr. Handel that the Select Board vote to approve the Select Board's regular meeting schedule for the year as printed, subject to changes as necessary during the course of the year.

April 28, 2020
May 12, 2020

August 18, 2020
September 8, 2020

November 24, 2020
December 8, 2020

February 23, 2021
March 9, 2021

May 26, 2020
June 9, 2020
June 23, 2020
July 21, 2020

September 22, 2020
October 13, 2020
October 27, 2020
November 10, 2020

December 22, 2020
January 12, 2021
January 26, 2021
February 9, 2021

March 23, 2021
April 14, 2021*
April 27, 2021
*Wednesday

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

Motion by Mr. Matthews that the Select Board vote to appoint Sandy Cincotta to serve as Committee Secretary for the Town of Needham Select Board.

Second: Ms. Cooley. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

Motion by Mr. Handel that the Select Board vote to appoint Mary Hunt to serve as Recording Secretary for the Town of Needham Select Board.

Second: Ms. Cooley. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

Mr. Handel took over the meeting as Chair of the Needham Select Board.

Mr. Handel and the Board thanked Mr. Bulian for his leadership during the year.

7:09 p.m.

Public Hearings- Eversource Energy Grant of Locations:
Maureen Carroll, Eversource Energy Representative discussed with the Board 3
Eversource Energy Grant of Locations.

1. 37 John Street

Ms. Fitzpatrick said all paperwork is in order.

Mr. Handel invited public comment. No comments were heard.

Motion by Mr. Borrelli that the Select Board approve and sign a petition from Eversource Energy to install 37 feet of conduit in John Street. This work is necessary to provide electric service to 37 John Street, Needham, MA.

Second: Ms. Cooley. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

2. 141 Edgewater Drive

Ms. Fitzpatrick said all paperwork is in order.

Mr. Handel invited public comment. No comments were heard.

Motion by Mr. Borrelli that the Select Board approve and sign a petition from Eversource Energy to install 35 feet of conduit in Edgewater Drive. This work is necessary to provide electric service to 141 Edgewater Drive, Needham, MA.

Second: Ms. Cooley. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

3. 189 Edgewater Drive

Ms. Fitzpatrick said all paperwork is in order.

Mr. Handel invited public comment. No comments were heard.

Motion by Mr. Borrelli that the Select board approve and sign a petition from Eversource Energy to install 11 feet of conduit in Edgewater Drive. This work is necessary to provide electric service to 189 Edgewater Drive, Needham, MA. Second: Ms. Cooley. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

7:13 p.m. Open & Continue Hearing: Spiga Restaurant – Change of Ownership, Manager and Beneficial Interest

Ms. Fitzpatrick asked the Board to consider continuing the public hearing to May 12, 2020, with the expectation that the hearing will likely be rescheduled again to a later date in May, once the Select Board determines its exact schedule. She said it is hoped the public hearing could be held at Town Hall when it reopens.

Motion by Mr. Borrelli that the Board vote to continue the Spiga Restaurant Change of Ownership, Manager and Beneficial Interest Public Hearing to May 12, 2020.

Second: Ms. Cooley. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

7:14 p.m. Open & Continue Hearing: Stormwater Mitigation Assessment

Ms. Fitzpatrick said public participation is beneficial to the discussion on Stormwater Mitigation Assessment, proposing the meeting be continued to May 12, 2020, with the expectation that the hearing will likely be rescheduled again to a later date in May, once the Select Board determines its exact schedule. She said it is hoped the public hearing could be held at Town Hall when it reopens.

Motion by Mr. Borrelli that the Board vote to continue the Stormwater Mitigation Assessment Public Hearing to May 12, 2020.

Second: Ms. Cooley. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

7:16 p.m. 2020 Annual Town Meeting School Department Warrant Articles:

Anne Gulati, Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Operations provided the Board with an explanation of two articles contained in the Annual Town Meeting Warrant relating to school operations: Foster Care Transportation Reimbursement and Special Education Reserve Fund.

Ms. Gulati said Article 43 - Foster Care Transportation Reimbursement is a request to allow the Town to receive federal reimbursement for foster care transportation. She explained that the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires children in foster care to remain in their school of origin, as long as it is deemed in the best interest of the child. Ms. Gulati referred to her letter dated January 11, 2020 to the Needham School Committee explaining the methodology that could reimburse a share of transportation costs through Title IV-E, a section of the Social Security Act administered by the DCF that provides federal reimbursement to states for services provided to children in foster care and other child welfare services.

Discussion ensued on authorizing the district to enter into a contract seeking federal reimbursement under statute M.G.L. C. 44 s. 70 allowing for supplemental foster care transportation reimbursement. She said if authorized, the Needham Public Schools will begin submitting claims in FY2021, based on transportation expenses of this year estimated to be approximately \$14,000, which could yield a reimbursement of \$2,800 in the first year of implementation.

Ms. Cooley asked for clarification and whether the request must be made yearly?

Ms. Gulati said the request is made one time but requires Town Meeting and Select Board approval to enter into the agreement.

Mr. Borrelli referred to transportation and the public school budget. He asked if transportation is still being paid for or have things relaxed because of the lack of transportation over the past month due to the current state of emergency?

Ms. Gulati said transportation has been the subject of much discussion as it is an essential service and because the closure, due to the state of emergency, has had a devastating impact on transportation companies. She stated two of the three transportation companies used by the Town are experiencing financial difficulties and all are requesting some level of payment in order remain viable and resume service when school reopens. She said work continues and hopes payments can be made very soon.

Ms. Gulati referred to a second warrant article request - Special Education Reserve Fund to allow the School Department to establish the fund. She referred to her letter dated January 14, 2020 to the Needham School Committee. She said the reserve fund, if approved by a majority vote of the School Committee and Town Meeting, would provide “a transparent and manageable way to address extraordinary and unanticipated increases in special education, special education tuition, and special education transportation expenses.” She said it is hoped the reserve fund can be created and funded over time, potentially beginning with the FY2022 school year budget.

Ms. Cooley noted the change from the current practice of asking for a reserve fund transfer from the Finance Committee or as part of the budget process. Ms. Gulati said Ms. Cooley is correct.

Mr. Borrelli noted the initial target fund balance of \$750,000. Ms. Gulati said getting to that level would take several years and requires a majority vote of the School Committee and the legislative body to create the fund.

The Board thanked Ms. Gulati for the information and discussion.

7:27 p.m.

Town Manager:

Ms. Fitzpatrick noted Denise Garlick, State Representative has joined this Zoom meeting.

1. Close June 15, 2020 Special Town Meeting Warrant

Ms. Fitzpatrick reviewed the three articles in the Special Town Meeting warrant and asked the Board to close the warrant.

Discussion ensued on Article 4: Appropriate for Traffic Consulting & Engineering (Highway Commercial 1 Zoning district).

Motion by Mr. Borrelli that the Board vote to close the warrant for the June 15, 2020 Special Town Meeting, subject to minor technical corrections to be made by the Town Manager, Town Counsel and Bond Counsel.

Second: Ms. Cooley. Unanimously approved 5-0 by roll call vote.

2. COVID-19 Update

Ms. Fitzpatrick told the Board there are 28,163 cases of COVID-19 statewide, including 108 confirmed cases in Needham (46 people who have recovered), as of today. She noted the large increase over the number reported last week, due in part, to increased testing at long term care and assisted living facilities. She said the National Guard is in Needham and are prioritizing facilities that treat and house the most vulnerable population. She said as testing capacity increases for the general population, it is anticipated there will be a higher rate of cases. Ms. Fitzpatrick implored residents to stay at home, practice social distancing, wear a face mask when out in public, and wash hands as much as possible. She directed people to the Town website www.needhamma.gov/coronavirus for the most up to date information. Ms. Fitzpatrick commented residents have generously donated masks, personal protective equipment, hand sanitizer, and Be Bold power bars for workers. She said many people have indicated they would like to see more good news stories and she asked people to share their stories at www.goodnews@needhamma.gov.

Mr. McDonald said he is pleased more testing is available at long term care facilities and that group homes are also being tested. He commented the Building Commissioner and the Fire Chief are working together to help the group homes with their back-up planning and contingencies should staff become ill.

Mr. Handel thanked Mr. McDonald and all of the first responders and employees who are working under great duress to keep everything going.

Mr. Matthews concurred. He said the pandemic experience is new for everyone, noting his appreciation to residents who are following the rules and guidelines.

Mr. Borrelli asked Mr. McDonald how Needham is doing in “flattening the curve” and the number of available hospital beds?

Mr. McDonald said the town is working closely with the BID - Needham hospital. He said as a community hospital, there is not as large of an inpatient bed volume as is the case in Boston medical centers. He said there is concern testing is not broadly available and that the town has some catch up to do, especially in long term care facilities and group homes. He said it is too early to figure out if Needham is approaching or at peak levels. He commented on the efforts by residents to follow guidelines, which is part of the reason the town is seeing regular and expected growth.

Mr. Borrelli asked Mr. Davison if he had noticed residents being affected; unable to pay their bills? He also commented the Board will consider ways to help the business community.

Mr. Davison said posting of receipts is lagging due to employees working from home. He said property taxes are being paid comparable to last year's pace. He noted delays on departmental receipts as some offices do not have staff, and most bills are paid by mail. He said he anticipates a decline in several types of receipts and "in-kind" reduction in expenses i.e. participant programs and program expenses. He commented on interest income, permitting and licensing, and closed establishments unable to pay until they are up and running again. Mr. Davison it is highly unlikely the legislature will take action on the state budget until well into the summer, noting many assumptions will need to be made relative to adjustments. He said he feels Needham is on a good track, as a number of articles have been withdrawn from the Annual Town Meeting, in part due to preparation time or to conserve resources. He said the situation is being monitored.

Ms. Cooley said she is glad to hear property taxes are coming in as "normal." She asked about the Property Tax Assistance Program, surmising more money will be needed. Ms. Cooley shared her concern for the level of testing in Massachusetts, noting the rate of positive tests relative to the number of tests overall. She said today was one of the highest rates, in excess of 30%, suggesting only the sickest people (in senior facilities) are being tested. Ms. Cooley said testing is not being done in the general community, noting there are cases showing up at hospitals. She commented any semblance of returning to "normal" will depend on the ability to test, isolate, and contact trace quickly to avoid spreading the virus. Ms. Cooley concluded we are not anywhere near that point.

Mr. Davison said property taxes and donations to the Gift of Warmth fund are coming in regularly. He reminded the Board the Property Tax Assistance Program application deadline has been extended to May 15, 2020. He said the level of need won't be known for another four weeks.

Mr. McDonald noted a New York Times opinion piece about immunity if one had a mild or severe exposure to the virus. He said he is very interested in "herd immunity" because so many people have been exposed to the virus and the safety of reopening businesses. He said the local level has comparatively little control, so

the focus has been on long term care facilities, group homes, donations, and recruiting volunteers.

7:49 p.m. Board Discussion:

1. Committee Reports

No Committee Reports were made.

7:51 p.m. Adjourn:

Motion by Mr. Bulian that the Select Board vote to adjourn the Select Board meeting on Tuesday April 14, 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=>