

Town of Needham
Select Board
Minutes for Tuesday, September 29, 2020
By Zoom Video Conference
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7987822802>

5:00 p.m.

Call to Order:

A meeting of the Select Board was convened by Chair Maurice P. Handel. Those participating were Matthew D. Borrelli, Marianne B. Cooley, Daniel P. Matthews, John A. Bulian, Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick. Recording Secretary Mary Hunt recorded the meeting remotely.

Mr. Handel announced the purpose of this special Select Board meeting is to take positions on remaining warrant articles for the October 4, 2020 Special Town Meeting. He said public comment is not anticipated. He noted Article 17 - Citizen's Petition is the topic of discussion.

Ms. Cooley referred to discussion with proponents for Article 17 - Citizens Petition at the Select Board meeting of September 22, 2020, saying it appears the public position as discussed, is somewhat at odds with the Executive Summary on the website (equaljusticeneedham.org) and other available information. She commented, in terms of what the proponents are saying, the topic is definitely something the town wants to support, and feels is an important topic. However, she noted the request from the petitioners directs the Select Board to do a number of things across many organizations and committees in Needham. She said how that works and is coordinated makes sense that it could fall under the scope of Needham United Against Racism Initiative (NUARI), which is looking broadly across a variety of organizations and town government. She commented it is appropriate for Article 17 - Citizens Petition to be referred back to the Select Board as part of an overall coordination effort to understand and bring an organized proposal back to the town.

Mr. Borrelli said he made his comments clear after the proponents' presentation at the Select Board meeting on September 22. He said right now the Town is embarking on NUARI, reiterating his request that Article 17 - Citizens Petition be postponed until the Annual Town Meeting in 2021, as the Town must do its work and see what may come from those discussions to move forward in understanding the problems. He said it is clear the proponents are not going to postpone Article 17 until Spring 2021. Mr. Borrelli said he has issues with language in the article, as well as some of the 'Where As' statements. He said the best course of action at this time, which he supports, would be to refer the article back to the Select Board to look at some of the issues along with the work of NUARI.

Mr. Matthews said race equity is an important part of the work for the Select Board this year and in the coming years. He commented on discussion last week with the petitioners, saying there are some broad areas of agreement, some specific

disagreements, and some differences on individual language items. Mr. Matthews said the purpose, which he believes everyone at the table shares, is to advance the work of race equity. He noted the efforts being pursued by NUARI, the Select Board, the school department, and other town agencies, commenting incorporating Article 17 - Citizens Petition into that work and referring the subject matter to the Select Board makes a lot of sense.

Mr. Bulian concurred that the referral makes sense. He said he understands and agrees with his colleagues with respect to the elements of the petition that may be at odds with each other, and the executive summary vs. bullet points the proponents are looking to explore. He noted however, the petitioners are asking/directing the Select Board to establish a committee, which Mr. Bulian said is already being done. He agreed that it makes a lot of sense to refer the item back to the Select Board at Town Meeting. He commented he is hopeful Town Meeting members will agree. Mr. Bulian reiterated the Select Board is actively engaged in moving the issue of racial equity forward.

Mr. Handel said he believes the Citizens Petition is well intended and tracks closely, in many respects, to what the Town is already doing. He commented it is good Town Meeting will weigh in, but the most prudent course to accomplish the work already begun is to vote to refer Article 17 back to the Select Board.

Motion by Ms. Cooley that the Select Board vote to recommend that the subject matter of Article 17 - Citizens Petition: Resolution to Request A Study of Systemic Racism in Needham be referred back to the Select Board, and that the Select Board shall report back to the 2021 Annual Town Meeting or sooner.

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

Ms. Fitzpatrick noted the next Select Board meeting is scheduled for Sunday, October 4, 2020 at 12:45 p.m., just prior to the start of the Special Town Meeting.

5:08 p.m.

Adjourn:

Motion by Mr. Bulian that the Select Board vote to adjourn the Select Board meeting of Tuesday, September 29, 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=>