

**Town of Needham
Select Board
Minutes for March 10, 2020
Needham Town Hall
Select Board's Chamber**

6:15 p.m. Executive Session: (Exception 3: Potential Litigation & Collective Bargaining)

A meeting of the Select Board was convened by Chairman John Bulian. Those present were Maurice P. Handel, Matthew D. Borrelli, Daniel P. Matthews, Assistant Town Manager Dave Davison. Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick and Select Board member Marianne B. Cooley were not present. Recording Secretary Mary Hunt joined the meeting at 6:45 p.m.

Motion by Mr. Handel that the Select Board vote to enter into Executive Session.

Exception 3 - To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares.

Second: Mr. Borrelli. Unanimously approved 4-0.

6:45 p.m. Informal Meeting with Citizens: No activity.

7:00 p.m. The public portion of the Select Board meeting of March 10, 2020, was convened by Chairman John Bulian.

7:00 p.m. Proclamation Needham Community Council:
Mr. Bulian read a proclamation recognizing the Needham Community Council on its 90 years of service.

Motion by Mr. Handel that the Select Board approve and sign a proclamation recognizing the Needham Community Council for its 90 years of service to the residents of the Town of Needham.

Second: Mr. Borrelli. Unanimously approved 4-0.

7:02 p.m. COVID-19 Public Health Update:
Timothy McDonald, Director of Health and Human Services gave the Board an update on the Town's response to COVID-19. He said a State of Emergency was declared today by Governor Baker. Mr. McDonald commented on the latest guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control. It is recommended a 14-day quarantine for anyone returning from Italy, South Korea, Japan, China, or Iran. He said the senior citizen population, and people with underlying health conditions are most at risk. A handout was given to the Board titled "Stop the Spread of Germs." Mr. McDonald encouraged the public

to avoid close contact with sick people and to stay home when sick. He said the symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, shortness of breath, or cough. Mr. McDonald said Needham's building and maintenance department will be cleaning town buildings and schools more frequently, focusing on high contact surfaces (doorknobs, railings, bathroom fixtures). He encouraged people to wash hands frequently with warm water and soap for 20 seconds or more. He said Needham has activated its Emergency Response Plan and is coordinating with the Superintendent of Needham Public Schools, religious organizations etc., to make sure the latest information is up to date and consistent. He asked the public to focus on the guidance from the town.

Mr. Bulian said people must take personal responsibility to prevent the spread of the disease. He asked about community gatherings and meetings. Mr. McDonald said some types of large gatherings, travel, and non-essential meetings will be reduced to stop the risk of infection.

Mr. Handel asked about the Center at the Heights and where residents can find the latest information and testing kits. Mr. McDonald said residents can check the Town's website, and, if they feel sick, to call their primary care physician who will assess the situation and recommend testing if necessary.

Mr. Borrelli asked about school coordination and trips abroad. Mr. McDonald said he is in daily contact with the school superintendent who will make appropriate decisions regarding school travel, sports, and large gatherings. He noted the Governor strongly discouraged people from international travel.

Mr. Matthews commented on further guidance coming from the Town. Mr. McDonald said people should practice common sense distancing techniques, and that further guidance will be forthcoming on large scale meetings and gatherings.

Mr. Bulian asked residents to enroll in the Town's emergency alert system by texting "Needham" to 67283 and to go to needhamma.gov for more information.

Mr. Davison said the Select Board may soon be asked to approve and allow temporary remote participation by members of some committees and boards.

The Board thanked Mr. McDonald for the update.

7:24 p.m.

Solarize Needham Update:

Paul Dellaripa of Solarize Needham updated the Board on the status of the program. A PowerPoint presentation was viewed. Mr. Dellaripa gave a brief background of the program, commenting on greenhouse gas emissions related to transportation, electricity, industry, commercial and residential, and agriculture. Mr. Dellaripa said there are currently 450 homes in Needham with solar PV, with potential for another 450 more homes. He said interested homeowners and more homes

appropriate for solar energy have been identified. Mr. Dellaripa commented on the Solarize Plus Needham Team, marketing and outreach efforts. He discussed challenges including a relatively short campaign (ending April 30th), awareness, making contact with homeowners, motivating them to take action, and challenges for the heat pump program. He talked about the future of the program.

Discussion ensued on cost, outlay, payback period, and heat pumps.

Mr. Handel said education and promotion after the program ends on April 30th would be beneficial.

Mr. Matthews asked about initiatives in neighboring towns. He said it would be helpful to see specific examples of things other towns are doing to help build public support and consensus.

Mr. Bulian said the initiative has helped build awareness of solar energy in Needham.

Mr. Matthews said dealing with human caused climate change will take a lot of work all around the world.

The Board thanked Mr. Dellaripa for the update.

7:45 p.m.

Cable License Renewal Process:

Sandy Cincotta, Support Services Manager spoke with the Board regarding renewal licenses with all three cable television providers in Needham expiring in calendar year 2022: RCN expires 7/9/2022, Verizon expires 8/14/2022, and Comcast expires 12/17/2022. She said the Town has engaged Attorney Peter Epstein, Epstein and August, LLP., to advise on the license renewal process for the three companies at the same time. Ms. Cincotta said as part of the license renewal process, each company should provide to the Town a letter stating they want to start the process of renewing their license. She said, thus far, letters have been received from RCN and Verizon. A letter from Comcast is expected within the next three months. Ms. Cincotta said she has worked with the Town Manager to engage with Attorney Epstein on the renewal process to renew the licenses at the same time. As part of the process, Ms. Cincotta asked the Select Board authorize the Town Manager to sign and send acknowledgement letters to RCN, Verizon, and Comcast. Ms. Cincotta said ascertainment hearings will be held in the fall and spring.

Motion by Mr. Handel that the Select Board authorize the Town Manager to sign and send acknowledgement letters to RCN, Comcast, and Verizon.

Second: Mr. Borrelli. Unanimously approved 4-0.

7:47 p.m.

Property Tax Assistance Program:

Members of the Property Tax Assistance Committee & Taxation Aid Committee including Elizabeth Handler, Chair, Paul Dawson, Jill Kahn, Helen Newton, Evelyn

Poness, and Rick Zimbone appeared before the Board to discuss the Property Tax Assistance Program.

Ms. Handler referred to a memo titled “Property Tax Aid to the Elderly and Disabled and Property Tax Assistance Committees” dated February 3, 2020.

Mr. Zimbone thanked the Select Board for the opportunity to talk about the property tax assistance program. He referenced discussion from a year ago when increasing the amount of funding for the program was contemplated. He said at that time a request for \$50,000 was made, however the Select Board asked for additional data to support the request. Mr. Zimbone said data from the last three years is provided, saying the number of awards has been increasing much faster than available funding, causing the average award amount to drop. Mr. Zimbone commented on senior citizen income relative to home prices is a driving force for people applying for assistance. He asked the Board to consider increased funding of \$50,000, as it is anticipated there will be more applications this year.

Mr. Matthews said the information is helpful and he would like to see the voluntary contributions increase. He asked what is the metric in deciding the proper contribution? Mr. Zimbone said based on the trend, the numbers will continue to increase as there are many folks who have not applied for assistance. He commented the funding amount should be addressed on an annual basis.

Mr. Borrelli commented the trends showing the average award is decreasing, saying the average award in 2017 was \$1,233 and now it is half that number. He said the Town should try to get people back to at least that average amount. He said he is sympathetic and wants people to be able to stay in their home, and a benefit should be given and substantial enough to those in need. He said increasing voluntary contributions should be a focus.

Ms. Poness said applications are being accepted. She noted current market conditions, saying many people depend on income from investments.

Mr. Handel said all factors should be considered so that people can stay in the community.

Mr. Bulian agreed with comments; however, he does not believe the program should be used in a way to make up for people's personal investing decisions. He said he likes the program and appreciates the work of the committee.

Mr. Zimbone said income and assets are considered when an application is received. He said the program is for folks with a small pension who may also rely on social security.

The Board thanked the committee for their work and said the program is helpful to people who need it.

8:06 p.m. Town Manager:
David Davison, Assistant Town Manager appeared before the Board with 3 items to discuss:

1. Minuteman School Update

Mr. Davison told the Board he is pleased to report the new school is a success. He said enrollment numbers are higher than some skeptics believed were achievable. Mr. Davison said enrollment stands at 604 students, up from 521 a year ago, noting the figure includes the withdrawal of the Town of Belmont. He said Needham's enrollment is 24 students this year, up from 21 students last year. He encouraged the Select Board to tour the building if they haven't already done so and that the facility meets the demands of the 21st century. He commented the operating budget is up 1.4% for FY2021, mindful of the current year assessment of \$1,084,000. He said part of the reason for a smaller increase was a change in the allocation of assessments to communities being more gradual.

Mr. Matthews said the biggest challenge was getting the enrollment. He said the Town is committed to vocational education even though the number of towns reduced from 16 to 9. He added the district provides outstanding programs.

Discussion ensued on student enrollment and the member agreement.

2. Annual Town Meeting Warrant

Mr. Davison updated the Board on changes to the draft Annual Town Meeting warrant. He highlighted several changes to the warrant since the last version including Article 20 - Appropriate Transportation Improvement Fees, Article 24 - Appropriate for First Baptist Church Preservation and Restoration, Article 26 - Appropriate for Needham Community Farm Growing Bed Expansion, Article 32- Appropriate for General Fund Cash Capital, and Article 41 - Stormwater Stabilization Fund.

The Board thanked Mr. Davison for the update.

8:18 p.m. Appointments and Consent Agenda:
Motion by Mr. Handel that the Board votes to approve the Appointments and Consent Agenda as presented.

APPOINTMENTS: No Appointments were made at this meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA *=Backup attached

1. **Approve a date change for the Jog Your memory 5K event to be held on September 13, 2020 instead of the originally approved date of September 20, 2020.**
- 2.* **Approve open session minutes of December 13, 2019 and February 25, 2020.**

3. Accept the following donations made to the Needham Community Revitalization Trust Fund: \$1000 from New Year's Needham Inc and \$10 anonymous cash donation.
- 4.* Approve a Road Event form from Melissa Lassonde of Needham Baseball and Softball, to hold its opening day parade in Needham on May 3, 2020 from 7:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. The route of the parade was approved by the following departments: DPW, Police, Fire, and Park and Recreation.
- 5.* Approve a One Day Special Wines & Malt Beverages License for Richard Lunetta, of the Needham Exchange Club, to host its Biannual Business Meeting on April 16, 2020 from 6:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. The event will be held in the Memorial Park Field House, 92 Rosemary Street, Needham.
- 6.* Approve a One Day Special Wines & Malt Beverages License for Sandra Robinson, of the Needham Community Council to host its Needham Community Council 90th Open House event on Tuesday, March 31, 2020 from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. The event will be held at the Needham History Center & Museum, 1147 Central Avenue, Needham, MA.
7. Accept a \$34.22 donation made to the Needham Health Division's Substance Prevention Alliance of Needham (SPAN) from the Farm Grill & Rotisserie in Newton, MA.
8. Accept the following donations made to Needham Youth & Family Services to be used towards future Youth & Family Services programs: \$25 from the Hulbert family; and \$25 from the Maffeo family.
9. Accept a \$50 donation made to Needham Youth & Family Services towards the Wearing Confidence: Girls Group program from the Fisch family.
10. Accept a \$850 donation made to Needham Youth & Family Services from the Needham Community Council. The money is to be used towards supplies for the Project VAN: Volunteers Around Needham program.
- 11.* Water & Sewer Abatement Order #1288.
- 12.* Accept \$15,200 gift from Children's Hospital for the purpose of funding a Parking and Trip Generation Evaluation for Children's Hospital, Founders Park.
13. Grant permission for the following residents to hold block parties:

Name	Address	Party Location	Party Date	Party Rain Date	Party Time
Celia Carboni	42 Greenwood	Greenwood	7/18/20		
7/19/20		3pm-11pm			
	Avenue	Avenue			

Second: Mr. Borrelli. Unanimously approved 4-0.

3. Highway Commercial 1 Work Plan & Schedule
Mr. Davison presented a proposed work plan and schedule for advancing the Highway Commercial 1 Zoning conversation. He said the Planning Board will

discuss the work plan and schedule at its meeting on March 17th. He commented on Assumptions, given the unique location of the property which is limited to Muzi/Channel 5 site. He said the land use to be studied initially will consist of 50% standard office uses and 50% R&D uses and a minor retail component. He said improving the intersection at Highland Avenue and Gould Street is a goal.

Mr. Borrelli questioned some of the assumptions, commenting further discussion with the Planning Board is necessary. He said a small-scale residential component should be considered, not precluded. He suggested starting with prior zoning than previously drafted and amended, and that he wants more information on the FAR. Mr. Borrelli said much more discussion is needed before moving forward.

Mr. Matthews commented the Assumptions are acceptable but should be prioritized for modern zoning. He said the public must be informed as to why zoning changes are necessary for the area between Highland Avenue and the railroad tracks. He suggested the current document of Assumptions, Plan, and Schedule should be the starting point.

The Board agreed their comments should be shared with the Town Manager.

8:33 p.m. Board Discussion:

1. Committee Reports

Mr. Davison reported that on Monday, March 9, 2020, the Ways and Means Committee held a public hearing on the Health and Human Services budget. He said Representative Garlick, Vice Chair of the committee arranged for the hearing to be held in Powers Hall.

8:35 p.m. Adjourn:

Motion by Mr. Handel that the Select Board vote to adjourn the Select Board meeting of Tuesday, March 10, 2020.

Second: Mr. Borrelli. Unanimously approved 4-0.

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

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