

**Town of Needham
Select Board
Minutes for Wednesday, June 3, 2020
By Zoom Video Conference
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81178733033>**

5:00 p.m. Call to Order:
A special 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, and Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick. Recording Secretary Mary Hunt recorded the meeting remotely.

Mr. Handel 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. Handel 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 www.needhamma.gov.

5:03 p.m. Select Board/Town Response to Current National Crisis:
Ms. Cooley read a statement acknowledging the current national crisis and which expresses the unanimous sentiments of the Select Board.

Motion by Ms. Cooley that the Town of Needham stands with all well-meaning people in remorse and resolution over the most recent examples of racial disparities and racism in America. We denounce the actions and inactions of the police officers involved in the incident that lead to the death of George Floyd. The behavior is unacceptable and out of line with the high standards and professionalism that we hold our officers to in Needham. For healing to begin, there must be a transparent and honest investigation. In Needham, we continue to take action to ensure that what happened to George Floyd and to many other black victims never happens here. Needham's police officers undergo cultural diversity training and practice community policing principles including de-escalation techniques. Our officers continue building and growing relationships every day, getting to know people for who they are, not for the color of their skin, their beliefs, or orientation. They are here to protect each and every person in our town, and they serve us honorably and well. As evidenced by peaceful vigils and protests across this country, people of every color demand an end to the racism and intolerance that has led to the undeniable deaths of so many Americans. These are difficult times. Hatred

and discrimination will not be cured through violence. We encourage continued dialogue and hard work to end racial injustice.

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

5:06 p.m. Presentation by Police Chief Schlittler About Community Policing in Needham: Mr. Handel stated the actions of some police officers across the country do not reflect the incredible work being done by the Needham police force. He said the Needham police department emphasizes and promotes training and cultural diversity, use of force and de-escalation tactics. As a town, he said, we are committed to ensure that this good work continues through the work they do every day to keep our community safe.

John Schlittler, Chief of Police read a statement saying “First and foremost, the senseless killing of George Floyd is a tragedy. We denounce the actions of any of the police officers involved that resulted in the death of Mr. Floyd. This type of behavior is unacceptable and not in accordance with the high standards and professionalism we hold all officers to. We are heartbroken for the family of George Floyd. While what happened to George Floyd happened 1,400 miles away from Needham, it resonates deeply with all of us here. While it may be uncomfortable to talk about racism, it is only by speaking about it that we can begin to overcome it. We understand and support the peaceful protests of police brutality against people of color past and present. We are listening to your message of love, grief, anger, and call for justice. We see your pain, we see your anger, and see your frustration. We will support necessary reform. We support you and stand with you. I am proud of the men and women of the Needham Police Department who come to work every day to provide the highest level of professional police services to all people they encounter. Police officers say they took the job to help, serve, and protect people. This must be all people, regardless of differences. There is no exception. We will continue to strive to earn trust and respect. We will strive to preserve life above all else. This was clearly not the case in this tragedy and others like it. We will continue to train and relay that message to make sure that it is the case with our officers from the top down. Inclusion, mutual respect, and partnership will be our driving force.”

Chief Schlittler spoke about de-escalation training and annual training opportunities that all involve some level of de-escalation. He commented on the annual Use of Force review and the Massachusetts criminal justice training Use of Force model. He commented on defensive tactics, the importance of having knowledge of the Use of Force policy, and proper escorting handcuffing, open hand techniques, blocks, strikes, baton use, and taser use. He spoke about firearms training and various decision-making drills to test an officer's ability. He said the police force in Needham is very fortunate to have a robust training program.

Mr. Bulian commented on the recent silent vigil in Needham. He asked how the police department handle, prepare, work with, and keep people safe when there is a large gathering?

Chief Schlitter said 99% of protests are peaceful, but there must be a game plan ready for anything that may transpire. He said generally, police have shown support at a vigil by staying on the periphery of the event, but that aspect may change because of what police officers are doing across the country. He said mutual aid is set up, but he anticipates protests in Needham to be very peaceful.

Mr. Borrelli thanked Chief Schlitter for his statement. He said police safety is also important. He commented on the situation in Minneapolis and the proactive training steps in Needham on use of force. He thanked Chief Schlitter for his service.

Mr. Matthews said it is a tough time and he appreciates the work of the police force.

Chief Schlitter said the support the department receives from the community, Select Board, and Town Manager resonates with the officers. He said it has been a difficult set of circumstances with the pandemic and the situation in Minneapolis. He said the department has made positive inroads in the community, but there is still work to be done.

Ms. Cooley said she appreciates the report from Chief Schlitter. She said it was impossible to watch what happened in Minneapolis and not feel outrage and heartbreak at the same time.

Mr. Handel thanked Chief Schlitter for his commitment and that of his department.

5:25 p.m.

Pride Month Proclamation:

Mr. Matthews read a proclamation declaring June 2020 to be Pride Month in the Town of Needham.

Motion by Mr. Matthews that June 2020 be declared Pride Month in the Town of Needham and that all residents be encouraged to recognize and acknowledge the contributions of the LGBTQ members of our community as we continue to advance the principles of liberty, equality, and inclusivity for all.

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

5:29 p.m.

Town Meeting:

Ms. Fitzpatrick reminded the Board Town Meeting will be held next week, June 8, 2020 at 5 p.m. at Memorial Park Field. She said every effort has been taken to ensure social distancing and to keep people safe. She said people can rest assured everything that can be done, is being done in cooperation with all departments. She said a map will be posted on the Town's website showing Town Meeting Members where each precinct may enter for Town Meeting.

The Board discussed the Annual Town Meeting warrant.

Motion by Mr. Bulian that the Board vote to amend Article 21 - in the 2020 Annual Town Meeting Warrant as follows:

That the main motion under Article 21 be amended by deleting the sum \$4,003,168 and inserting in place thereof, the sum of \$3,939,433 and by deleting the items “library furniture, \$84,168” and “library space planning, \$60,000.”

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

Mr. Handel urged all Town Meeting Members to review information on the Town’s website and the presentations explaining each article to be voted upon.

Mr. Matthews emphasized the Town’s website has very robust information about Town Meeting on June 8, 2020. He encouraged Members to review the information in advance of the meeting, beginning with the Moderator’s plans for the format of the meeting, health precautions, arrival prior to the 5 p.m. start time, and avoiding socializing, and that people should dress in layers. He said the usual presentations have been videoed and are available on the Town’s website. He commented people must be informed ahead of the meeting so the evening can run smoothly.

5:36 p.m.

Economic Development Activity

Ms. Cooley updated the Board on ways the Town is trying to help restaurants and merchants reopen. She said picnic tables are now on the Town Common, in the Heights, and at Eaton Square. Ms. Cooley said more tables will be placed at Greene’s Field and the Chestnut Street parking lot. She stated parking lots are now permitted for use as an option for restaurants to serve customers. Ms. Cooley said discussion of using parking along the street is being considered, as long as it is safe. She asked restaurants and merchants to bring forward any proposal they may have that would help their business reopen successfully. Ms. Cooley commented on changes the state has made regarding outdoor dining, asking the Board for their thoughts on how to work with the alteration of premises and outdoor dining proposals. She requested the Board consider placing Economic Development Activity discussion on the agenda for the next Select Board meeting on June 9, 2020, and perhaps longer, as necessary. Ms. Cooley acknowledged outdoor table service would require notice be sent to neighbors and a public hearing be held.

Mr. Handel thanked Ms. Cooley and Sandy Cincotta for their work in responding to the issue. He said Needham is becoming a model for other towns in how it is responding to help restaurants and merchants.

Mr. Borrelli concurred the Board should meet weekly to expedite requests to amend licenses. He said site visits by the Select Board would be helpful to find out what restaurants need. Mr. Borrelli said restaurant owners will need direction and an accepted framework from the Town to open quickly.

Mr. Matthews said things are fast moving and favors having the subject on the agenda for the next month or so, until things stabilize. He said contacting the Common Victualler and Liquor Licensees would be helpful, suggesting a workshop to explain regulations. He said the Town can have a role in facilitating discussion.

Ms. Cooley concurred, and license holders have been contacted.

Mr. Bulian said Ms. Cincotta will help restaurant owners navigate how things need to be done for a successful reopening.

5:50 p.m.

Personal Remarks:

Mr. Handel recognized Mr. Bulian to make personal remarks concerning the events of this week.

Mr. Bulian said the pandemic has affected everyone, made more difficult by what is happening in many cities in the nation. He said he was particularly shocked at the ordering of military personnel in Washington, D.C. to use tear gas and rubber bullets on peaceful protesters. He said he can never forgive looters who harm businesses already hurting and who only want to get “back on the feet.” He asked, “What purpose does it serve to harm businesses and people already hurting?” Mr. Bulian said he is moved by and very supportive of people peacefully protesting around the country, and people in silent vigil as witnessed in Needham. Mr. Bulian reiterated the Town Meeting Moderator’s phrase at every Town Meeting that “we are one community; we are one Town Meeting.” He said people need to come together as a town, state, and country, acknowledging he is not sure how that will happen. Mr. Bulian said the pandemic does not seem real and that over 100,000 people have died and are still dying. Mr. Bulian said as a small business owner, he understands the frustration of people wanting to get back to their lives. He said everything the Select Board does is to help the Town and people get back to normalcy, acknowledging there is a long way to go. Mr. Bulian said he is pleased by what Police Chief John Schlittler had to say. He concluded, Needham is a special place but there is still a way to go with the pandemic, economic hurt, and people suffering because of many of the transgressions that have taken place in this country. He said he looks forward to being a part of helping Needham get back on its feet.

Mr. Matthews said times are challenging, but we can make it through. He said there are no guarantees and the burden lies on us. He said people need to be careful, honor their obligations, be persistent, resolute, and be good neighbors.

Mr. Handel said it is important people recognize we are all in this together, and that no one should be targeted. He said we all face a common problem and we all need to work together.

Ms. Cooley said everything since the tragedy with George Floyd is all highly regrettable, and only makes the challenge more difficult. She said she doesn’t want

to forget what started this latest round, which is the recognition of systemic racism in the United States. She said the point can't get lost in everything else that has happened. Ms. Cooley referred to Lee Pelton, president of Emerson College who has said he is "sick and tired of being sick and tired." She said it is one thing to recognize that for us, in a position of white privilege, that we feel like we haven't been here before. But, if you are black or brown, it is something you live with day in and day out. She said we come from a different place with the privilege that we have, and it is up to each and every one of us to do our best to learn and understand what that's like, to let some of those situations of haunting nightmares that people live with day in and day out. She quoted Maya Angelou saying "do the best you can until you know better, and when you know better, do better." She said she hopes we can all do better.

5:55 p.m.

Adjourn:

Motion by Mr. Bulian that the Select Board vote to adjourn the Select Board meeting of Wednesday, June 03, 2020.

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