

Minutes

SELECT BOARD

Monday, March 16, 2020 6:00 p.m.
Town Hall, 5 Academy Hill Road

Select Board present: Phil Kantor; John O'Rourke, Chair

Others present: Dan Fentin-Thomas, FCAT; Veronique Blanchard, Carl Nelke, Board of Health; George Murphy, Emergency Management Director; Janet Chayes, Open Space Committee; Tom Hutcheson, Town Administrator; Lisa Turowsky, Assistant to the Town Administrator

Minutes

March 9, 2020

- **On a motion from O'Rourke to approve the minutes of March 9, 2020, seconded by Kantor, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Warrants

- **On a motion from O'Rourke to approve the vendor warrant of \$762,047.11, the payroll warrant of \$112,025.11; and the payroll deduction warrant of \$28,118.27, seconded by Kantor, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

New Business

Update on state and local information and activities

O'Rourke declared a State of Emergency for the Town; the declaration is in the meeting record. The effect of the declaration is to bring state resources to bear on the state of emergency as it relates to Conway's vulnerable population. The state of emergency is effective immediately and will last until the Select Board decides that the state of emergency no longer exists. EMD Murphy will be working on reverse-911 for the Town's most vulnerable residents tomorrow morning. Murphy wanted clarification that the closure of Town office buildings that is going into effect would apply to all Town buildings, including Highway and Fire Departments; yes, it is. The closure applies to the public, not to staff/persons working for the Town. The plan to check in on vulnerable residents, including elderly people who receive support services, was discussed. O'Rourke emphasized a plan is needed to make sure that they're being checked on. Murphy's list hasn't been updated since Dave Chichester was the EMD; Ginny Knowlton updated the list before she retired.

- **On a motion from O'Rourke to close all Town offices to the public for the duration of the state of emergency in Conway, seconded by Kantor, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Update on state and local information and activities

O'Rourke stated there are no cases of COVID-19 in Franklin County at this time, saying "hopefully we can keep it that way." Public meetings can be done remotely or by face-to-face meetings with social distancing. Presently the maximum number of people allowed in any meeting is 25. We all need to keep away from large crowds. The website will be kept up to date, on a daily basis if possible. Transfer station attendants are taking precautions at the transfer station, including wearing gloves, per Nelke. Kantor believes our community is "already riddled with virus." Testing is supposedly now available, but people are still having trouble getting tested.

Policy and criteria for postponing Town Meeting

The policy and criteria for postponing Town Meeting was discussed.

Other policies and procedures: sick pay

Hutcheson noted that COVID-19 is a lengthy disease; from the onset of symptoms to recovery could take 5 to 6 weeks. It was agreed that employees will be allowed to accrue negative sick days

to be paid back later. Hutcheson proposed that new sick time be accrued at half the rate while the other half being used to pay back negative sick time.

- **On a motion from O'Rourke to approve the new sick-time policy during the public health emergency, seconded by Kantor, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Other policies and procedures: telecommuting

- **On a motion from O'Rourke to approve the telecommuting policy for the duration of this health emergency, seconded by Kantor, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Hutcheson distributed a draft of the memo he will send to members of committees, boards, etc. It was noted that these meetings will be open to the public who can call in with a dedicated phone number and PIN; this complies with the new rules in our state for open meetings. This is the preferred option for when social distancing considerations come into play.

- **On a motion from O'Rourke to approve the memo, seconded by Kantor, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Meetings Attended by Select Board Members

Kantor went to the Town Caucus and an emergency school meeting re: food services, education initiatives, pay for hourly workers, the need for MOAs with unions, how they're going to deal with everything going forward. Monday and Tuesday have been designated snow days.

Public Comments

None.

Old Business

DCR offer to buy Chapter 61 land: announcement and waiver of 120-day right-of-first-refusal period

Kantor said some clarification of DCR's request is needed. DCR wants to buy a conservation restriction on this land because it is an important piece of undeveloped land; most of it is designated national heritage land. DCR wants the deal to be publicly announced and sent along with a waiver for signature and a certificate of announcement that the Clerk signs. The signed forms will go back to DCR. There will be no substantial impact on Town taxes because the land is already in Ch. 61. DCR's ownership will result in a loss to the tax base of about \$2,000/year.

- **On a motion from O'Rourke to sign the waiver of notice period, seconded by Kantor, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Review draft of Town Meeting warrant

Hutcheson reviewed the draft Town Meeting warrant. John Moore's citizens petition (Article 25) had a technical error; there is a placeholder on the draft warrant. Moore needs to get the revised petition back to the Town Clerk. Article 24 is a placeholder for a Planning Board article that has not been submitted; the Planning Board has not moved on a possible article revising the marijuana section.

Items Not Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance of the Meeting *None.*

Town Administrator update [Note: much of this was obsolete information by the time of this meeting.]

Committees

I'm working with the Board of Health to create a job description for an on-call transfer station attendant, as that seems to be a need, to clarify the Board's expectations of such an employee, mainly regarding availability.

Tom Shaw is selling some land he hopes will be farmed; I've forwarded that information to the newly revived Agriculture Commission.

The Planning Board has requested that the March 26 Planning Board hearing on the citizens' petition to amend the marijuana by-law will be videotaped by FCAT.

Departments

I've been dealing with a great deal of information being generated related to the COVID-19 pandemic. As we saw earlier, I've proposed a couple of policies, and may have more depending on what the Select Board, Board of Health, and other Town officials believe would be helpful.

John Robertson reports that the MMA's top priority for COVID-19 emergency legislation is allowing boards and committees to meet remotely without a quorum being physically present. I've also asked him to consider extending the deadline Towns have for their Town meetings; extending the 30-day period in Ch. 39, Sec. 10A for postponing town meetings to make it renewable if the emergency is ongoing; and enabling the executive body to approve a Town operating budget and expenditures from free cash, stabilization funds, overlay reserves, and other reserved Town funds for the ensuing fiscal year, subject to amendment and ratification by Town Meeting after the emergency.

I've asked our EMD to be sure our reverse-911 system is in place should we need to get a message out to residents regarding COVID-19.

There are various U.S. Census "Questionnaire Assistance Centers" in Franklin County for those who have questions.

Concerns of Selectmen

None.

Mail

A notice that there is a three-week suspension of business establishments such as restaurants, bars, hotels, brew pubs, pouring permit holders, among others, being allowed to sell such beverages. There shall be no food or drink for on-premises consumption during the suspension.

There was an email from Children's Advocacy center cancelling the April 13th flag-raising

Announcements

None.

Next meeting: Scheduled for Monday, March 23, 2020 at Town Hall, 6:00 p.m.; joint meeting with Finance Committee at 6:30 p.m.