

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Meeting Conducted Via Virtual Meeting (ZOOM Meeting)**

**March 24, 2020**

**6:00 PM**

**PRESENT:** Chairman Michael J. Hickey, Jr., Susan G. Salamoff, Vice-Chair, Jonathan H. Freedman, Clerk, Richard P. Jennett, Jr., and Karen Adelman-Foster

**ALSO PRESENT:** Town Administrator Melissa A. Malone, Chief of Police James Hicks, Director of Dept. of Public Health James White, Deputy Town Administrator Bill Chenard, Director of Dept. of Public Works, Jeremy Marsette, and Executive Assistant Joan M. McNamara

**ABSENT:** None

Chairman Hickey called the meeting to order at 6:00PM, and noted that the Meeting is being recorded by Pegasus and Zoom.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and a moment of silence was observed for those protecting our rights and freedoms and in memory of Police Chief Arena who recently passed away. Chief Arena rose through the ranks from Patrolman to Chief of Police. Thank you so much to Chief Arena and may he rest in peace.

Mr. Chenard, Deputy Town Administrator, gave instructions to the public on how to participate via zoom meeting.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

James White, Director, Dept. of Public Health, gave a public health update on COVID-19 cases: Positive cases are 2; total cleared are 7; total number that tested negative were 11; tests pending are 2; and number of quarantined are 12.

Mr. White instructed citizens to go to [www.mass.gov](http://www.mass.gov) to view a link to a comprehensive list of essential and non-essential businesses on the website.

Mr. White also notes that there have been a number of people congregating on tennis and basketball courts. Those courts have been cordoned off. However, the parks are still open. All are urged to remain six feet apart and maintain social distancing.

We have a list of resources on our website plus a phone number to contact for those who do not have a computer: 508-647-6540.

Police Chief James Hicks spoke about his continued role during COVID. His focus is on continuity of operations of the Town and reverse 911 calls. He and the Natick Police Department are here to support the Department of Public Health. They are also focusing on emergency management services and personal protection equipment (PPEs).

Melissa Malone, Town Administrator: Ms. Malone noted that she is continuing to take part in daily briefings and updates on regulations, laws, and options being considered by Commonwealth leaders. We want to represent comprehensive guidance to all our residents and businesses. We will ensure the website has information as it becomes available.

Karis North, Esq., Town Counsel: Ms. North spoke about her role as Town Counsel during COVID-19. I am assisting the leadership team in keeping them up to date on messaging from the Governor and keeping track of any changes in State and Federal Laws. She notes two particular legislative changes being considered:

(1) The Governor's Bill that deals with Town Meeting. There are also discussions around how cities and towns spend their money if they have not completed a town meeting by the beginning of the fiscal year.

(2) The Governor has also introduced a new piece of legislation today which includes tolling for permit and related applications so that if Boards and Commissions cannot meet, there are no constructive Grants of Approvals, and permits that are in existence do not expire. Attorney North was informed that these pieces of legislation could be considered as early as March 26, 2020.

Jeremy Marsette, Director DPW – Mr. Marsette updated the Town with a phone number for non-emergency issues: 508-647-6550. He also noted that the DPW has suspended operations of bulk waste pickup and pink bag pickup. The recycling center will remain open with hours of Thursday and Friday, 8:00am-12:00n and Sat and Sunday 8:00am-3:30pm. Please do not flush any wipes down the toilet.

### **CITIZEN'S CONCERNS**

No Citizens' Concerns were raised during this evening's meeting.

### **DISCUSSION AND DECISION**

#### **A. COVID-19**

Financial Update presentation with the outbreak of COVID-19

Ms. Malone made some opening remarks about where we were last year at this time and how things have changed since March 1, 2019. She made it clear that our community is strong, and together we will get through this.

A PowerPoint presentation was shown with the following financial highlights:

Town Administration has begun Financial Modeling given anticipated reduced revenue. Financial models are preliminary and will evolve as new information is available. This review contains an initial forecast of FY20 year-end estimates of revenue and expenses. This presentation also contains information that will impact FY21. Natick relies heavily on tax levy revenue (real estate tax) and also our local receipts. The impact of COVID-19 has been on our local receipts. Those local receipts were estimated at \$17.9m. At this time we anticipate local receipts for the year to come in closer to \$13.6m.

We are looking to find savings on the Operating expense side. We will be working with all departments in the coming weeks to determine savings that may be present due to services not being offered.

We have a general stabilization fund that is for unforeseen and catastrophic expenses. We have a balance of approximately \$5 million in that fund. Town Meeting, in fall of 2019, approved an appropriation of \$250,000 into this fund. That has created a safety net which we will need to utilize in this coming year. Another fund is our operational stabilization fund. This fund is different in that it is for sustained economic downturn. The balance in this fund is \$4.1 million. Ms. Malone showed a graph of when the funds were transferred into the individual accounts. Capital Stabilization is at roughly \$5 million. Capital stabilization assists in roads and maintenance in all of our facilities (schools and municipal buildings) and infrastructure like roads and parks.

Ms. Malone discussed planning ahead and next step topics:

- Continue to provide essential services to residents.
- Attempt Bond Refinancing (within levy and excluded debt). Last Tuesday when we went to market, the market's volatility proved to be exponential. It has put the interest rates back to the 1880's. We will continue to assess the market conditions and hopefully move forward.
- Broad discussion with all Town departments about expenses FY 20 & revised FY 21. These broad discussions will affect how we move forward with FY21 budgeting.
- Implement hiring freeze for any new positions. We are asking for support from the Board to implement a hiring freeze and we would ask the same from the School Committee.
- Assess impact of new federal and state legislation.
- Cease all non-essential operating expenses.
- Continue to update FY20 year-end projections.
- At this point, it seems like we may need a reserve fund transfer to cover COVID-19 costs for FY 20. We would need to seek approval from the Finance Committee before year end.
- Revise FY21 budget.
- Discuss possible creation of CV-19 Task Force to deal with the issues that we believe will be present for many months to come and to talk about the financial implications. This group, as opposed to the Financial Planning Committee, would have a member from the health department to have a seat at the table. This Task Force could also complete a post-mortem

when this is behind us to see what we have done very well and what we could have done better for the next issue that may arise.

B. Decision regarding postponement of March 31, 2020 annual town election

Ms. Packer, Town Clerk spoke regarding the Town election. She noted that we are now postponing, but later on we will make a formal decision to state a date for the next election. The Board of Selectmen must determine a date at least 20 days prior to the Election date so that it can be posted and made available to all of the residents. We are able to use all of our existing ballots that are already here. Ms. Packer added that she has placed an additional order for absentee ballots as there will be an increased request for absentee voting and early voting by mail.

In a motion by Mr. Freedman and seconded by Mr. Jennett, the Board of Selectmen moved to postpone the March 31, 2020, Annual Town Election, to a date no later than June 30, 2020, to be chosen after consultation with the Town Clerk, the Town Administrator, the Health Agent, and Public Safety.

The Board, by Roll Call Vote, Voted 5-0-0 to Approve.

The vote was as follows:

Ms. Salamoff	Yes
Mr. Freedman	Yes
Mr. Jennett	Yes
Ms. Adelman-Foster	Yes
Mr. Hickey	Yes

**ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion by Mr. Jennett, seconded by Ms. Salamoff, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn the Board of Selectmen's Meeting at 8:15PM.

Ms. Salamoff	Yes
Mr. Freedman	Yes
Mr. Jennett	Yes
Ms. Adelman-Foster	Yes
Mr. Hickey	Yes

Meeting Date March 24, 2020

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Richard P. Jennett, Jr., Clerk

\_\_\_\_\_, 2020 Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes Approved by the Board of Selectmen on  
\_\_\_\_\_, 2020

**All documents used at this Board of Selectmen meeting are available at:**

<https://naticktown.novusagenda.com/agendapublic/MeetingView.aspx?MeetingID=740&MinutesMeetingID=-1&doctype=Agenda>