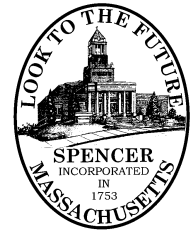


Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Selectmen



Date: May 4, 2020
Time: 6:00 p.m.
Place: Audioconference Broadcasted Live from McCourt Social Hall
Memorial Town Hall, Spencer, MA
Present: Administrator Gregory
Dialing in: Chairman Pepe, Vice-chair Monette, Clerk Berthiaume, Members Hicks
and Woodbury.
Health Agent Lisa Daoust, Chief Parsons, Chief Darrin, Town Clerk Laura Torti
Moderator William Shemeth and Parks Commissioner Rob Churchey

Chairman Pepe called the meeting to order at 6:29 p.m. and announced the meeting is being conducted remotely consistent with Governor Baker's Executive Order of March 12, 2020, pursuant to the current State of Emergency in the Commonwealth due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 Virus. In order to mitigate the transmission of the COVID-19 Virus, we have suspended public gatherings, and as such, the Governor's Order suspends the requirement of the Open Meeting Law to have all meetings in a publicly accessible physical location. We are meeting remotely and broadcasting live on Spencer Cable Access to ensure public viewing access. Public participation is not mandatory unless such participation is required by law.

Review & Act on Coronavirus / COVID-19 Response/Update

Health Agent Daoust reported:

- A reverse 911 went out on April 30th. The total number of active COVID-19 cases in Spencer is currently 20 with 14 active cases and 6 that have recovered.
- Per Order of the Governor, as of May 6th, face coverings are required when social distancing is not possible.
- Town Hall is being disinfected on May 5th.
- Running low on masks and gloves; waiting for an order to arrive.
- All public recreation areas in Town remain closed until further notice and will reevaluate the situation after the Governor's update on May 18th.

Dr. Hicks noted that the Parks Commissioners need to be involved in the closures as a statutory requirement. Decisions need to be made whether to open the beach at Luther Hill Park and offer swimming lessons. He suggested contacting the Spencer Fair as well.

Parks & Rec Committee Chairman Rob Churchey said the Committee will meet with the Health Agent after the Governor's update on May 18th and present their strategy to the Board at a future meeting.

Chief Parsons reported:

- Participating in multiple COVID-19 webinars with MEMA and FEMA regarding COVID-19 reimbursement. Reimbursement will not occur until the Declaration of the State of Emergency has expired
- Has extra masks available to provide to the Health Agent

Chief Darrin reported:

- Provided statistics for the first month of lockdown which will be sent to the Board.
- The Police Collaborative is strategizing on enforcing mask requirements in a respectful manner to gain compliance.

Town Clerk Torti reported:

- Confirmed with State Elections Division that two separate warrants should be used for the Annual Town Meeting and Annual Town Election.
- Reverse 911 phone call notifying residents Election Ballots are available and encourage people to vote by mail.
- An advertisement will be placed in the New Leader on early voting and will include a sample ballot.

Review & Act to Reschedule Annual Town Meeting (ATM)

Administrator Gregory advised the Board to choose a date later in June to hold the ATM and suggested June 30th.

Moderator Shemeth recommended moving the date to end of June.

A motion to move the ATM date to June 30, 2020 (Hicks/Woodbury) passed 5/0 with a roll call vote: Berthiaume-yes, Hicks-yes, Monette-yes, Pepe-yes, Woodbury-yes

Review & Act on Public Input for Future Remote Meetings of the Board of Selectmen

Administrator Gregory reported that remote meeting software platform “GoToMeeting” was purchased by the Town to allow the Board to meet remotely. It allows meetings to take place via telephone audio only, video, or a combination of both with up to 251 participants. The Board discussed opening the meetings to allow citizen input and after researching, the recommendation is to move forward with the audio version only as there is less chance for technical issues to occur. A time could be set aside on the agenda for public input and at that time, the Chair would ask members of the public who wish to speak to provide their name and address and hold comments until the Chair has a list is of all public commentators. After that, each will be called upon by name and allow to speak for an amount of time to be determined. Chairman Pepe asked Members to think about the appropriate amount of time.

A motion to adopt the Telephone Audio Option for Citizen Input (Hicks/Woodbury) passed 5/0 with a roll call vote: Berthiaume-yes, Hicks-yes, Monette-yes, Pepe-yes, Woodbury-yes

If an executive session is scheduled a separate call in number will be distributed only to the Board.

Review & Act to Recommend to the Town Administrator Possible Adjustments to FY20 Accrued Vacation Usage for Employees

Administrator Gregory reported that accrued vacation time expires annually on June 30th. On one hand it is discouraging for an employee to relinquish vacation they have earned; however, he struggles with this since employees have an obligation to serve the public. Non-public safety employees have been given the opportunity to work from home.

Dr. Hicks the employees in this situation are not the ones in charge and would like to allow some carryover. Chairman Pepe suggested a limit on the number of hours and time limit to use. Ms. Berthiaume, Mr. Monette, and Mr. Woodbury agreed.

A motion to approve the equivalent of one-week vacation time to be carried over and used by June 30, 2021 (Hicks/Monette) passed 5/0 with a roll call vote: Berthiaume-yes, Hicks-yes, Monette-yes, Pepe-yes, Woodbury-yes

Town Administrator Update

Review and Act on FY2021 Budget Draft

Administrator Gregory reported he is presenting a balanced budget using Pre-COVID numbers, noting the numbers will likely change due to so much uncertainty. He summarized the following budget items:

- The SEBRSD budget number was reduced significantly to \$9.36 million, which represents a 4% increase over FY2021
- Unable to fund a new Highway equipment operator
- The third and final phase of the Comprehensive Road Project borrowing will take place within the next four to six weeks and he is working with the Town's financial advisor on the budget number for the debt service
- A favorable 2.55% increase in health insurance with MIAA. The Altus Dental renewal was not as good with a 6% increase, though still 15% lower than Delta Dental rates.
- Collective Bargaining Agreements are expected to conclude in the coming weeks and sufficient reserves incorporated in the budget.
- The Intermunicipal Agreement with Leicester for the shared Accountant is in place, though the start date has been delayed given the close working quarters in the Accounting Office. In the meantime, copies of the budget and warrant are being provided.
- Concerns over many unknowns including State Aid, motor vehicle excise tax, permits, and meals tax will all be lower than estimated.

- If Town Meeting takes place on June 30th, capital expenses could be deferred, and funds parked in stabilization to address an anticipated shortfall.
- If Town Meeting is not able to occur by June 30th, the beginning of FY2021 will commence with a 1/12 budget scenario based on current fiscal year salaries and expenses.

Mr. Pepe noted the budget will fall short in all areas and will have an impact for a few years. The Board agreed.

Review and Act on Annual Town Meeting Draft

Postponed to a future meeting.

Review & Act on Town Administrator's Evaluation

Chairman Pepe reminded Board members to complete the TA Evaluation and submit to the Executive Assistant by May 8th. It will be finalized at the May 18th meeting.

Request for Executive Session under Mass General Laws, Chapter 30A §21(a), ¶3: to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining for the Police Officers, Police Dispatchers, Utilities & Facilities and Town Hall Clerks Bargaining Units.

At 7:47 pm a motion to meet in Executive Session in accordance with MGL Chapter 30A, §21(a),(3), to conduct strategy in preparation for contract negotiations with respect to collective bargaining for the Police Officers, Police Dispatchers, Utilities & Facilities and Town Hall Clerks bargaining units (Hicks/Monette) passed with a roll call vote: Berthiaume-yes Hicks-yes, Woodbury- yes, Monette-yes, Pepe-yes.

Mr. Pepe stated that an open meeting could have a detrimental effect of the bargaining position of the Town. The Board will not reconvene in Open Session.

The meeting adjourned at 7:47 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Savoie
Executive Assistant

Referenced documents: FY2021 Budget Draft