



Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Selectmen

Date: March 22, 2021
Time: 6:00 p.m.
Place: Audioconference Broadcasted Live from McCourt Social Hall
Memorial Town Hall, Spencer, MA
Remote: Chairman Hicks, Vice-Chair Woodbury, Clerk Howard, Members Berthiaume and Pepe, and Administrator Gregory
Also remote: Health Agent Daoust

Chairman Hicks called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and announced that 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 currently meeting remotely and as such, all votes will be taken by roll call in accordance with Regulation 940, CMR 29.10 of the Open Meeting Law.

Review and Act on Meeting Minutes of February 8 and March 8, 2021

A motion to approve the meeting minutes of February 8, 2021 (Woodbury/Howard) passed 5/0 with a roll call vote: Berthiaume-yes, Hicks-yes, Howard-yes, Pepe-yes, Woodbury-yes

A motion to approve the meeting minutes of March 8, 2021 (Woodbury/Howard) passed 3/0 with a roll call vote: Hicks-yes, Howard-yes, Woodbury-yes, Berthiaume and Pepe abstained

Citizens Input

Bill Shemeth, 6 Dale Street requested that Town Staff reach out to funeral homes, convenience stores, and others to assist them with obtaining vaccinations.

Review and Act on Coronavirus / COVID-19 Response

Mr. Gregory

Health Agent Daoust reported:

- There are currently 767 confirmed Coronavirus cases in Spencer, with 18 active.
- Residents may dial 211 for the DPH call center.
- Residents may call her if they need assistance booking a vaccine.
- Rutland will arrange for a second round of vaccines for homebound Spencer residents.
- SEBRSD staff will receive a second dose of the vaccine at the DPHS Clinic in April.

- Howe Village and Prouty Senior Living residents have all been vaccinated

Discussion on Issuing Permits for Events Including the Spencer Fair

Effective today, the State moved into Phase 4, Step 1 of the Governor's reopening plan. Mr. Gregory reported that guidance allows large capacity venues of 5,000 or more to operate at up to 12% of capacity, which will allow up to 1,200 people outdoors at the Spencer Fairgrounds. Prior to holding an event, the Fairgrounds must submit a COVID plan to the Department of Public Health (DPH), which includes appropriate social distancing and hygiene measures.

Bob Knight, representing the Fairgrounds said he completed the form required by DPH and is waiting to hear back. He explained that the Fairgrounds cannot continue without income and he is looking to hold events to recoup lost revenue; if not, the facility is in jeopardy of going out of business. The plan is to have several events this spring and summer with a portion of the proceeds directed to the Fairgrounds and requests the Board's support.

Mr. Gregory said he is aware that the Fairgrounds have held smaller scale events in the past which did not require approval or license from the Board. It is the larger events with entertainment which require approval of an Entertainment License.

Mr. Knight asked if the fundraising events and other smaller scale activities will need approval by the Board. Dr. Hicks said in those situations an email to the Administrator is sufficient and if a license is required it will be determined by Mr. Gregory.

Bill Shemeth noted that COVID relief funds are available to assist large venues with lost revenue. Mr. Knight said he is applying for a grant.

Keith Kerrigan with Terptown said he is organizing multiple events to raise funds to benefit the Fairgrounds. They will be small events held at the Fairgrounds strictly for fundraising, without entertainment.

Mr. Pepe pointed out that the Administrator will also need to determine if any events will require an internal tech review.

Aaron Keyes from SCA suggests entry to events be granted only if an individual tests negative for COVID or has proof of vaccination. Mr. Knight pointed out that the DPH guidelines do not require vaccinations and requests this not be a requirement. Dr. Hicks said it can be discussed at a later date, if necessary; the hope is to have a 70 % vaccination rate in the coming months.

Mr. Pepe asked Mr. Knight to keep the Board apprised of any issue with the operational capabilities of the Fairgrounds.

Review & Act on Plan for Reopening Town Hall

Mr. Gregory spoke with Town Counsel and is in the process of drafting Town Hall reopening plan and will ask the Board to act at the April 12th meeting to reopen on April 20th. The reopening plan will consist of cleaning, social distancing, sign-in sheet for contact tracing and posted signage. The Town is subject to a ten-person limit per 1,000 square feet of indoor accessible space and based on the square footage, eighteen residents are allowed at one time.

Dr. Hicks noted that in-person public meetings are not possible at this time due to the 1,000 square feet limitation.

New Business

Review & Act to reappoint Brenda Cloutier as a member of the Board of Registrars for a term to expire on March 31, 2024

A motion to reappoint Brenda Cloutier as a member of the Board of Registrars for a term to expire on March 31, 2024 (Pepe/Woodbury) Berthiaume-yes, Hicks-yes Howard-yes, Pepe-yes, Woodbury-yes

Initiate Town Administrator Evaluation Process

Mr. Gregory noted that his employment contract requires that his annual evaluation be complete prior to the Annual Town Election on May 11th.

Chairman Hicks asked the Board to return their completed evaluation forms to him by April 20th and will discuss further at the April 26th meeting.

Old Business

Review and Act on Pine Grove Cemetery Citizen Petition to Place Nonbinding Ballot Question on the Annual Town Election Ballot

Dr. Hicks and Ms. Berthiaume own burial plots at Pine Grove Cemetery, therefore recused themselves from the discussion.

Vice Chair Woodbury noted that the Pine Grove Citizen Petition is in order and may be placed on the Annual Town Election Ballot.

A motion to place the Pine Grove Cemetery Citizen Petition Question on the Annual Town Election Ballot (Howard/Woodbury) passed 3/0 with a roll call vote: Pepe-yes, Howard-yes, Woodbury-yes, Berthiaume and Hicks abstained

Report on the Planning Board Expense Account Audit

Administrator Gregory reported that Melanson CPA, the firm who audited the Planning Board revolving account indicated that there were no findings, and all expenses were in

compliance and properly recorded. The firm is looking for a signature from the Board. Dr. Hicks said his concern was with expenses paid from the account and is pleased that all is in order. Mr. Woodbury said he is disappointed in the report noting that he was able to find thousands of dollars in uncollected fees and questioned why the account required a transfer at Town Meeting if there were no procedural problems. Dr. Hicks would like a call with the Auditor to discuss these questions.

Ms. Berthiaume pointed out that Scanlon and Associates did not find any issues during their annual audit and after hiring a second firm, Melanson CPA, again there were no issues found. She questioned the need to look into this any further.

Jonathon Viner, Planning Board Chair said the expenses were not properly recorded and that the audit was not conducted properly; he believes this needs to go to law enforcement, noting that an accounting ledger reflects payroll paid from the Planning Board expense account. Dr. Hicks said a call will be arranged with the auditor. Mr. Pepe said if the scope was not made clear to Melanson CPA, any additional requests must be worthwhile to move this forward.

Town Administrator's Report

FY2022 Budget Update & Review of Calendar

Mr. Gregory reviewed the FY2022 draft budget and reported that he removed the facilities maintenance position to free up funds for the SEBRSD budget request and have a balanced budget, without the use of free cash. If the District comes back with a reduced budget, the position may be put back in at a later date.

The Insurance Advisory Committee voted to recommend moving the Town's dental insurance to the MIAA plan, resulting in a \$10,000 savings.

Additional funds were added for Snow and Ice as well as a recording secretary for ODIS in the amount of \$3,000.

Dr. Hicks said he met with the SEBRSD Superintendent and Comptroller and they agreed to work together with the Town. He urged Board Members to attend the joint Finance Committee on March 23rd when the District makes their budget presentation.

Mr. Pepe noted that the use of ESSER funds will raise the assessment by \$210,245, which will increase the Town's contribution in future years. He suggests a Proposition 2 ½ may be needed to fund the SEBRSD request.

Review May 6, 2021 Annual Town Meeting Draft Warrant

Mr. Gregory reviewed the draft Annual Town Meeting Warrant consisting of 31 Articles. The Warrant is scheduled to close at the April 12th Board meeting, however it may remain open until the April 26th meeting, if necessary.

Citizen's Input

Matt Defosse, Paul's Drive, asked why the Planning Board audit was only done for fiscal 2017 through 2019 and not through the current date. Mr. Gregory said the Board voted to have an audit for that time period.

Bill Shemeth, Dale Street, asked if the Town Clerk will hold early voting and vote by mail for the Annual Town Election.

Lyne Steven's, Pine Grove Cemetery, contacted the Town Planner to inquire about possible grants for the Cemetery and is awaiting a response.

Board Member and Staff Comments

Dr. Hicks clarified that a recent newspaper article erroneously reported that the Mary Queen of the Rosary food pantry is distressed. He said food is available for Spencer residents needing assistance and Easter baskets will be provided as well.

Adjournment

A motion adjourn (Howard/Woodbury) passed 5/0 with a roll call vote: Berthiaume-yes, Hicks-yes Pepe-yes, Howard-yes, Woodbury-yes

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Savoie
Executive Assistant

Referenced documents: Pine Grove Cemetery Citizens Petition and Financials; FY2022 Budget and Calendar