



## Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Selectmen

Date: March 19, 2020 – Special Meeting  
Time: 7:00 p.m.  
Place: Audioconference Broadcasted Live from McCourt Social Hall  
Memorial Town Hall, Spencer, MA  
Present: Administrator Gregory and Health Agent Daoust  
Present via audio: Chairman Pepe, Vice Chair Monette, Clerk Berthiaume,  
Members Hicks and Woodbury  
Chief Parsons, and Moderator Shemeth

Chairman Pepe called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m.

### Chair to Announce Format for Meeting / Compliance with Revised OML Regulations

Chairman Pepe announced that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the State has revised the Open Meeting Law regulations to allow the Board of Selectmen to meet remotely under certain conditions, including live broadcast, which is being done by Spencer Cable Access.

### Review & Act on Joint Declaration of Town-wide Emergency due to COVID-19

Administrator Gregory reported that he and the Board received an Emergency Declaration for the Town of Spencer which went into effect at midnight on March 16<sup>th</sup>. He will forward the signed joint declaration to the Mass Emergency Management Agency (MEMA).

*A motion to declare a Joint Declaration of Town-wide Emergency due to COVID-19 (Hicks/Berthiaume) passed with a roll call vote: Woodbury-yes, Berthiaume-yes, Hicks-yes, Pepe-yes, Monette-yes*

### Town Administrator Update on Coronavirus / COVID-19

Mr. Gregory reported the following:

As of today, there are no confirmed COVID-19 cases in the Town of Spencer. There are 328 cases in the State, with 14 in Worcester.

A notice has been posted on the Town website with links to the CDC and the Mass Department of Public Health websites. Both provide guidance to the public.

Mr. Gregory reported:

- All municipal buildings are closed to the public until further notice, with the exception of the Police Station.
- All municipal buildings are being thoroughly disinfected.
- Highway Department personnel are limited to one person per Town vehicle.
- All public hearings and meetings are cancelled, except for the Board of Selectmen and joint Selectmen/Finance Committee budget meetings.

- The Annual Town Meeting Warrant has not been posted; therefore, the Board may vote to schedule a future meeting date and suggests Thursday June 4<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm.
- Awaiting direction from the State to authorize a change of date for the Annual Town Election. Currently, the only way to make a change is through a court order.
- Regular COVID -19 preparedness meetings are taking place with the Fire Chief, Police Chief, Health Agent, and School District, and audioconferences are being held with MEMA and the Department of Public Safety.

## **Review and Act on Municipal Department Closures / Cancellation of Public Meetings and Public Hearings**

In addition to the closure of all municipal buildings to the public, the Transfer Station hours were reduced from two days per week to one day per week which resulted in complaints from many residents.

*A motion to keep the Transfer Station open two days per week (Hicks/Berthiaume) passed with a roll call vote: Woodbury-yes, Berthiaume-yes, Hicks-yes, Pepe-yes, Monette-yes*

The two day per week Transfer Station schedule will begin the week of March 23rd.

*A motion to cancel all public meetings and hearings until the Coronavirus is abated (Hicks/ Woodbury) passed with a roll call vote: Woodbury-yes, Berthiaume-yes, Hicks-yes, Pepe-yes, Monette-yes*

*The motion was amended to exclude the Board of Selectmen, Board of Health and joint Finance Committee meetings (Hicks/ Woodbury) passed with a roll call vote: Woodbury-yes, Berthiaume-yes, Hicks-yes, Pepe-yes, Monette-yes*

Mr. Gregory will contact the Chairman of Board and Committees to notify them of any changes.

Dr. Hicks said that in the interest of employee safety, the only employees working in municipal buildings should be public safety and highway personnel. He noted that the SEBRDS completely shut down.

*Dr. Hicks moved to have only essential municipal personnel reporting to work and anyone else will remain on paid status and not charged sick time. The motion was not seconded.*

Chairman Pepe pointed out that the private sector has the infrastructure to easily work from home, unlike the Town, which having employees work from home could put the security of the network system in danger.

Mr. Gregory said the Town's IT company, ClearCom, has advised that working remotely it is not as simple as flipping a switch, there are security concerns, including the lack of proper anti-virus software in homes. He is not completely ruling it out and said it needs to be carefully examined.

Ms. Berthiaume pointed out that Town employees are key to keep the Town running and need to remain at work. Mr. Monette, Mr. Woodbury, and Mr. Pepe agree. Dr. Hicks wants to have a discussion each week on the agenda to reassess the situation.

### **Review and Act on Employee Use of Accrued Sick Leave**

Mr. Gregory said he is not comfortable adjusting sick leave for union employees, or the terms of the union agreement. If a nonunion employee becomes infected with COVID-19 and doesn't have enough sick leave accrued, it can be advanced to them. Dr. Hicks said in his opinion, the union would not go to court over this considering the State of Emergency.

### **Review and Act on Postponement of Annual Town Meeting**

Mr. Gregory recommends canceling the May 7, 2020 Annual Town Meeting date and scheduling on June 4, 2020 at 7 pm.

*A motion to cancel the May 7, 2020 Annual Town Meeting and convene on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 7 pm (Woodbury/Hicks) passed with a roll call vote: Woodbury-yes, Berthiaume-yes, Hicks-yes, Pepe-yes, Monette-yes*

*A motion to cancel all public meetings and hearings until the Coronavirus is abated (Hicks/ Woodbury) passed with a roll call vote: Woodbury-yes, Berthiaume-yes, Hicks-yes, Pepe-yes, Monette-yes*

*The motion was amended to exclude the Board of Selectmen, Board of Health and joint Finance Committee meetings (Hicks/ Woodbury) passed with a roll call vote: Woodbury-yes, Berthiaume-yes, Hicks-yes, Pepe-yes, Monette-yes*

Mr. Gregory will contact the Chairman of Board and Committees to notify them if anything changes.

### **Review and Act on Postponement of Annual Town Election**

Awaiting direction from the State to authorize a change of date for the Annual Town Election.

### **General Discussion on Coronavirus / COVID-19 Response**

Dr. Hicks suggests Chief Parsons make an announcement to alert the public with information on any local coronavirus cases. Chief Parsons will make the call if notified to do so by Health Agent Lisa Daoust and noted the need to protect HIPPA.

### **Discussion on Future BOS Meetings / Joint Budget Meetings with Finance Committee**

A joint audioconference has been scheduled on March 24<sup>th</sup>.

*A motion to adjourn at 7:45 pm (Hicks/Monette) passed with a roll call vote: Woodbury-yes,*

*Berthiaume-yes, Hicks-yes, Pepe-yes, Monette-yes*

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Savoie  
Executive Assistant

Referenced documents: Revised OML Regulations, Joint Declaration of Town-wide Emergency