

Approved

Town of Grantham Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes April 8, 2020

The meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order at 5:01 PM on Wednesday, April 8, 2020, by Chairman Garland. As Chair of the Grantham Select Board, due to the COVID-19/Coronavirus and in accordance with Governor Sununu's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this Board is authorized to meet electronically, and these reasons shall be reflected in the minutes. Please note that there is no physical location to observe and listen comprehensively to the meeting, which was authorized pursuant to the Governor's Emergency Order. However, in accordance with the Emergency Order, this is to confirm that we are meeting telephonically, the numbers were posted on the notice for the meeting as a toll-free number with a pin.

Present on the Call: Chairman Peter Garland; Selectman Constance Jones; Selectman Warren Kimball; Town Administrator Melissa White; Police Chief John Parsons; Fire Chief Justin Hastings; and Board Clerk Emily Owens

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

March 25, 2020 – A motion was made by Selectman Jones to approve the regular meeting minutes as written; seconded by Selectman Kimball. *Unanimously approved.*

CONSENT CALENDAR

1. Payroll Manifest - 589
2. Accounts Payable Manifest – 666/716
3. Yield Tax Levy – M/L 234-127-000; 525 Howe Hill Road - \$602.70
4. Building Permit Applications
 - a. 172 Dunbar Hill Road; M/L 233-123-000 – addition
 - b. 47 Smith Hastings Road; M/L 207-008-000 – addition
5. Veteran's Tax Credit Application:
 - a. M/L 214-060-000; 13 Spring Valley Drive
6. Application for Elderly Exemption
 - a. M/L 237-018-000; 775 Route 10 South
 - b. M/L 226-013-000; 820 Dunbar Hill Road
7. Correspondence
 - a. Anonymous Letter: An anonymous letter was received from a resident on Miller Pond Road regarding the condition of a property on Tall Timber Drive.
 - b. Sullivan County Manager Email: An email was received from Sullivan County Manager, Derek Ferland, letting towns know the municipal leadership is here to support residents during the COVID-19 situation.
 - c. State of NH Department of Transportation (2): A letter was received from NHDOT Commissioner, Victoria Sheehan letting towns know the State building is open, by appointment only, but employees can still be reached by email and phone. The second letter from DOT was an updated Red List of state and municipal bridges for 2019.
 - d. State of NH Department of Environmental Services: An email was received from NHDES announcing the closure of their offices to the public. NHDES will now accept emails from local authorities and commissions, in lieu of wet signatures, on Wetland Permit by Notice and Expedited Permit applications.

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- e. Comcast: A letter was received from Comcast regarding COVID-19 and their commitment to customers.
- f. Keys to the Valley Newsletter: The March 2020 version of the newsletter was received.
- g. Town Clerk/Tax Collector: The annual Board of Tax and Land Appeals request for the final date of the tax bill was completed and submitted by Town Clerk/Tax Collector Ken Story.

A motion to approve the Consent Calendar as written was made by Selectman Kimball, seconded by Selectman Jones. *Unanimously approved.*

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Chair Garland invited members of the public on the conference call to speak, there being none, he proceeded to the next meeting item.

OLD BUSINESS

Response to Linda Bohrer re Kennebec Lumber: Town Administrator White suggested the Board review the information available again and Selectman Jones requested that a response be ready for the next meeting. Chair Garland clarified that the Board should have Mrs. Bohrer's letter, two notices of decisions from the Supreme Court, and a response by Town Counsel. The Board agreed to review the draft response to Mrs. Bohrer at their next meeting, scheduled for April 22, 2020.

Partial Survey of the Class VI Portion of Miller Pond Road: The notices went out late last fall and the sixty-day window has long passed. The Grantham Conservation Commission asked the Board of Selectmen if they planned on having Consolidated relocate the utility pole in the middle of the road. A motion was made by Selectman Jones authorizing the Town Administrator to contact Consolidated to move the pole to a specific location that will not interfere with the proposed entrance to the Town forest, seconded by Selectman Kimball. *Unanimously approved.*

Miller Pond Road Safety and Drainage Improvement Project: Currently there is no update on this item.

Emergency Operations Plan Updates: The Board of Selectmen and Town Administration have participated in the daily government COVID-19 conference calls. Selectman Kimball commented that the calls have provided regular updates to a constantly changing situation. The Board and Town Administration had a Town Emergency Operation meeting regarding town operations. Town Administrator White stated daily town operations are continuing to run smoothly despite the building being closed to the public. Chair Garland asked if the Transfer Station situation had resolved itself. Town Administrator White summarized the situation as construction and demolition material was being placed in the common household trash hopper, resulting in, the Town Transfer Station staff speaking with residents. Chief Parsons felt the issue had been resolved by speaking with the Resident, explaining questions or concerns should be directed to Supervisor Chris Scott, and the Resident's removal of the discussion from the Grantham Parents Facebook page.

Hazard Mitigation Plan Updates: The plan is for this to be updated telephonically over the next few months with assistance from the Planning Commission.

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NEW BUSINESS

Recreation – Director Emily Rinde-Thorsen sent a letter to the Board on April 1st asking how to proceed with spring sports, Old Home Day, and Music in the Meadow. The Board agreed with the Director’s plan to start scheduling events on June 1st. With regards to baseball, Director Rinde-Thorsen proposed different options and the Board decided that waiting accrues the least cost to the Town. The Board decided that the contracts for Old Home Day and Music in the Meadow should include some language covering the Town in the event the activities are cancelled due to the pandemic. Town Administrator White will follow-up with Director Rinde-Thorsen and make sure the contracts cover the Town.

Director Emily Rinde-Thorsen joined the call to discuss baseball, softball, and scheduling events during the summer. She has let all the vendors and contractors know that the start date will be no earlier than June 1st. Director Rinde-Thorsen received information that softball will not be starting until after June 1st. There is a meeting, tonight at 7:00 PM, to provide an update to baseball and softball, Director Rinde-Thorsen will communicate any changes to the Board.

Town Administrator – Town Administrator White stated that she received an email from a resident that wanted the town to advertise about a town-wide decorating event to be held on April 18th. The idea would be for families to decorate their yards so that families could drive around and see how creative and positive our community is. After consulting with the Emergency Management Team, they felt this wasn’t something the Town could endorse as it would go against the Governor’s Stay-At-Home order, limiting non-essential travel.

The Steppin’ Up fundraiser event that Turning Points Networks hold each year has been canceled due to COVID-19.

The Town received notice from, Health Trust, informing that the health insurance rate will increase by 0.9% as expected.

Eastman Charitable Fund is donating a tree in recognition of Earth Day. Chair Garland suggested the tree be placed on the backroad exiting the Town Hall, near the Historical Society’s memorial trees.

Town Administrator White updated the Board that converting the overflow parking lot for Town Hall into a parking lot with a gravel base is on hold. The Board thought now would be a good time research cost estimates for the project. Town Administrator White thought the only expenses incurred would be for purchasing the material, Engineering, and permitting costs.

The reassessment project was briefly interrupted when Massachusetts’s Governor shut the state down because of COVID-19. Ken Rodgers, President of KRT Appraisal, informed Town Administrator White that they are hoping to bring their employees back this week (the week of April 6). Most of the work can be done remotely. Additionally, Town Administrator White spoke to Sam Greene at the Department of Revenue Administration, and he said that most, if not all assessors and assessing companies are continuing with exterior inspections only. At this point, we (DRA, KRT, and Town Administrator White) believe that the update will be finished according to the contract.

With regards to an update on buildings around Town, Greg is continuing to work on repainting the interior Town Hall office spaces. Additionally, since the Library Trustees have closed the library and locked the book drop box until further notice, Greg will periodically walk through the library building. Also, now that spring is approaching, Greg will be touching base with the electrician on the installation of the new generator for the Transfer Station.

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An updated expense report was provided to the Board.

Additional information regarding the Transfer Station, residents have been reminded through email and the Town's website, that the Transfer Station will be closed for Easter on Sunday April 12th. Also, the Town Office had received a call from a resident, regarding employees at the Transfer Station not wearing masks. The CDC had updated their guidelines to recommend when people are out in public, they wear masks. The employees had been wearing homemade masks, whenever they were in location where they might interact with the public, such as the hopper. Having not taken the call, the Town Administrator was unclear exactly what or when the resident was referring to.

Chair Garland asked if there were any comments regarding the report. Selectman Jones had been reviewing the Town budget and suggested it was time to put a hold on any extra spending. NHMA and other Towns have expressed concern that the pandemic will severely impact revenues for towns. Town Administrator White agreed it would be prudent for the Board of Selectmen to implement a budget freeze for all departments, for all non-essential spending. Selectman Jones agreed with the recommendation. Chief Parsons had concerns about his fifth officer being hired and having the necessary funds to outfit the officer. Selectman Jones expressed her opinion that any expenses like an additional officer would be covered, but extraneous items such as purchasing office furniture, etc., should be delayed. Chief Hastings felt a budget freeze would not impact his department since his biggest expenditure is payroll. Selectman Jones commented that the Board could reevaluate the budget freeze after May or even June. The Board of Selectmen all agreed that a budget freeze is necessary but will evaluate individual department requests, presented to them at meetings, by Town Administrator White. Town Administrator White will send out a memo to all departments informing them of the freeze.

White updated the Board that the Zoning Board meeting for April has been cancelled. The Trustees of the Trust Funds and Cemetery Trustees have not set an April meeting. The next scheduled board meeting is the Board of Selectmen regularly scheduled meeting for April 22nd.

Chair Garland asked if either Chief wanted to provide an update. Chief Parsons stated the police department is currently on baby watch, waiting for several births to occur. Chief Hastings updated the Board, that the fire department had recently rendered mutual aid to Springfield. He stated residents were staying in and there were few medical calls.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Selectman Kimball moved to adjourn, seconded by Selectman Jones; by unanimous vote, the Board adjourned at 5:43 PM.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen will be held telephonically on **Wednesday, April 22, 2020**, at 5:00 PM. Complete details on how to join will be included on the agenda, which will be posted at the Grantham Post Office and on the Town's website calendar at www.granthamnh.net/calendar.

Respectfully submitted,

Emily Owens
Board Clerk