

BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING

March 20, 2020

Chairman Gregory B. Bendel called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. in Room 9 of the Town Hall. Present were Selectmen Kevin A. Caira, Jonathan R. Eaton, Michael V. McCoy and Jomarie F. O'Mahony. Also present was Town Manager Jeffrey M. Hull.

Chairman Bendel asked those present to rise and he led the pledge of allegiance.

Chairman Bendel stated that pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, members of the public who wish to watch the meeting may do so in the following manner: WCTV (Channel 9 – Comcast xfinity, Channel 37 – Verizon FiOS, and livestream wctv.org). No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings in real time, via technological means. In the event that we are unable to do so, despite best efforts, we will post on the town's website an audio or video recording, transcript or other comprehensive record of proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting.

Chairman Bendel thanked members of the Board of Selectmen, town employees and the viewers at home. He advised that the meeting is being broadcast live, in a different style than one is used to. Chairman Bendel advised that the purpose of the emergency meeting is to update members of the Board and the community on the latest information available regarding the COVID-19 health crisis and the Town of Wilmington's response to date.

He stated that the Board is practicing social distancing, limiting the room to no more than 10 people, including board members and staff, and he is hoping to keep the meeting relatively short.

Chairman Bendel emphasized that there are no confirmed cases in Wilmington as of this moment.

He urged residents to stay informed through postings on the Town's website and by following the Town's Twitter page, the Board of Health Facebook page, the Police and Fire Departments on both Twitter and Facebook, WCTV and Wilmington Apple. He also encouraged residents to sign up for the Town's Emergency Notification System. Chairman Bendel noted that this system enables the Town to provide critical information in a timely manner. He stated that time-sensitive notifications can be customized on how messages are received either by home, mobile or business phones, email address, text messages and more.

Chairman Bendel expressed his appreciation to the School Department and Dr. Brand for the work they are doing and have been doing to keep our kids safe and engaged while they are outside the walls of our school buildings. In addition, he expressed appreciation to the schools for continuing to provide meals to those in need.

Chairman Bendel thanked the Wilmington School Committee for continuing to meet and move school operations forward during difficult times. He stated that, like many residents, he streamed their remote meeting the previous evening. He advised that he has been in regular communication with Chairman Jenn Bryson and expressed appreciation for her leadership during this time.

Chairman Bendel thanked local businesses who have stepped up to help out residents. The stories being shared are remarkable and there are too many to share. He offered special thanks to grocery stores and their workers who have worked tirelessly to keep shelves stocked and have made changes in their hours to accommodate our seniors. He encouraged residents to join him in supporting local businesses by taking advantage of take-out orders and delivery options.

Chairman Bendel assured members and residents that the Health and Recovery Coordinator and Veterans' Services Officer will remain available for individuals who need assistance through this stressful time.

On behalf of the Board, Chairman Bendel thanked the first responders, medical personal and the Crisis Management Team who are working around the clock to keep residents safe.

Chairman Bendel advised that, as of this date, the Annual Election will be held as scheduled but noted additional information will be provide in the coming days.

Chairman Bendel advised that at a later time in the meeting the Board will be asked to vote to declare a state of emergency, noting that the Town Manager will provide information at that time.

TREASURY WARRANTS

Chairman Bendel asked for a motion to accept the Treasury Warrants. A motion was made by Selectman Eaton, seconded by Selectman O'Mahony and by the affirmative vote of all, it was

VOTED: That the Board of Selectmen accept Treasury Warrants 37, 37A, 38 and 38A.

SHELLY NEWHOUSE, HEALTH DIRECTOR, RE: UPDATE ON COVID-19 CASES

Ms. Newhouse advised that, at this time, she did not have any updates. She stated that there are currently no positive cases of COVID-19 in Wilmington. The Board of Health encourages residents to continue to practice social distancing.

Ms. Newhouse stated that she continues to receive updates from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health by conference call and electronic reporting.

Ms. Newhouse noted that it is nice to see families getting fresh air by going out for walks and riding bikes.

She reminded residents to limit gatherings to ten people, the importance of frequent handwashing and to maintain the recommended six foot distance. Ms. Newhouse stated that by adhering to this, Boards of Public Health are hoping to "flatten the curve". She advised that there are currently 413 confirmed cases in the Commonwealth.

Chairman Bendel asked if there were any questions or comments for Ms. Newhouse. Members expressed their appreciation to Ms. Newhouse for keeping the Board abreast as the situation evolves. Members of the Board asked if there is any action the Board can take to assist her.

Ms. Newhouse advised that as testing becomes available, she expects to see a spike in the number of positive diagnoses.

Selectman Caira stated that there is an increasing number of athletes who have tested positive. He noted that the athletes have said they feel great and are asymptomatic. Ms. Newhouse stated that the younger population tends to have mild symptoms and brings the virus to the more vulnerable population. She stated that experts in epidemiology believe that limiting exposure by practicing social distancing will be successful.

Chairman Bendel stated that this continues to be a fluid situation and noted that there have been meetings and conference calls since the Health Director became aware of three people who may have contracted coronavirus. He stated that because one was a parent with children in two of the schools, the Superintendent cancelled school on March 12 and March 13 and the Public Buildings Department cleaned and disinfected the six school buildings. Chairman Bendel advised that on

March 13 personnel cleaned the Buzzell Senior Center, Fourth of July Building and the former Town Hall. On Saturday, March 14, employees disinfected the Town Hall and on Monday, March 16 the Wilmington Memorial Library was cleaned and disinfected. He advised that the total square footage of buildings disinfected was 718,000. On behalf of the Board of Selectmen, Chairman Bendel expressed his appreciation to the custodial staff.

Chairman Bendel stated that earlier in the week he participated in a conference call held with the Town Moderator, Town Counsel, Chairman of the Finance Committee, Town Manager and others to address the joint meeting of the Finance Committee and Planning Board. The meeting initially scheduled for Tuesday, March 17 has been continued to Tuesday, May 12 at 7:00 p.m. The change in the joint public hearing has a domino effect on the Annual Town Meeting which has been continued until May 30. Chairman Bendel advised that the dates are subject to change if the virus continues and requires social distancing. He stated that he and the Town Manager have been in constant contact and applauded the Town Manager for keeping him informed of developments.

JEFFREY M. HULL, TOWN MANAGER, RE: LOCAL RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Town Manager Hull stated that this first came about last Thursday with the School Department closing the schools. He advised that the Emergency Management Team has met on several occasions to keep public and Town personnel as safe as possible. Town Manager Hull advised that effective Monday, March 16, the Town closed its buildings to the public. He assured the Board and residents that the Town is continuing to provide services and assume operations without permitting access to the public. Town Manager Hull advised that this will continue for the foreseeable future.

Town Manager Hull advised that the library typically operates Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. and on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. He advised that the library has altered its hours and will be operating Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The library is advising patrons to hold on to materials and late fees will be waived. The Elderly Services and Veterans' Services Departments will keep their regular hours of 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Town Manager Hull advised that the Town is preparing for the prospect of a shelter in place order and have identified particular individuals who are critical to ensuring the process of paying employees and vendors. He noted that limited personnel will be in on Tuesdays and Fridays and identified the individuals as the Town Manager, Assistant Town Manager, Payroll & Benefits Coordinator, Finance Director/Town Accountant and Assistant Finance Director/Town Accountant.

Town Manager Hull advised that department heads have been provided with Virtual Private Network (VPN) access which will enable them to work from home, if necessary. He stated that he recognizes that the weather is improving and he has closed the playgrounds and parks to minimize the opportunity for people to gather together.

Town Manager Hull reviewed department contact information, changes to programming and the services that are continuing to be provided.

Fire Chief Cavanaugh was present and Chairman Bendel noted that Chief Cavanaugh heads the Emergency Management Team. Chairman Bendel noted that it was just one week ago when he was sworn in. Chief Cavanaugh stated that the Town is doing the best it can to keep informed through the Governor, Center for Disease Control and the Department of Public Health and, in turn, keeping the public and employees informed.

Chief Cavanaugh stated that the Fire Marshal has suspended certain fire inspections.

Chief Cavanaugh stated that public safety personnel are taking some additional precautions in non life threatening situations. He stated that they are more deliberate in their actions and he asked the public to be as honest as possible about health issues when calling for assistance.

Chairman Bendel asked if there were questions or comments from the Board. Members asked about personal protection equipment and whether the public safety departments were having difficulty getting supplies. Chief Cavanaugh stated that at this time they had enough supplies. He stated that he was able to order supplies through contacts he had through his personal business and his mother's business, but in the event the situation continues for an extended period of time, the Town may run into difficulties obtaining necessary supplies and equipment.

Selectman Eaton asked whether the Town is having difficulty ensuring that there is hand soap and hand sanitizer available. Town Manager Hull advised that George Hooper, Public Buildings Superintendent, has advised him that the Town has a supply at this time but it is becoming a challenge.

Chief Cavanaugh stated that Representative Robertson reached out to him, asked what he needed and advised that he will submit a request to Massachusetts Emergency Management Association (MEMA) on the Town's behalf.

Selectman Eaton stated that the library offered their 3D printer for the production of N95 masks but was advised the printer is too small.

Selectman McCoy asked the Town Manager whether there could be a grace period on the due date of property tax bills. Town Manager Hull advised that the due date is statutory and is not discretionary.

Selectman Caira asked whether protocols are in place if employees are not feeling well, whether department heads will instruct them to go home. Town Manager Hull advised that there is and noted that there was a situation this week. He stated that they can't direct someone to go home but can have a conversation with them. He also noted that Wilmington has personnel of varying ages including those with school age children that are out of school and employees who may be classified as vulnerable and uncomfortable coming in to work. He stated that employees are being allowed to stay home and use their sick time.

Town Manager Hull advised that, in the event the Board declares a local state of emergency, there is a provision of MGL Chapter 44, Section 31 that recognizes in these states of emergency, there is a greater level of flexibility provided for expenditure of funds. Town Manager Hull read that provision. He provided an example of how this will provide the town flexibility relating to the Health Department's accounts where payments of liabilities incurred may be paid for subject to appropriation from available funds.

Chairman Bendel stated that a conversation was had with Town Counsel who advised it would be appropriate. Discussion took place regarding the benefits of declaring a local state of emergency and whether it would obligate the town. Chairman Bendel noted that the Towns of Billerica and Tewksbury recently issued declarations. Selectman Eaton asked whether the declaration was for a time certain or whether it was indefinite. Town Manager Hull read from the declaration and noted that, essentially, it is the Board's decision.

A motion was made by Selectman Eaton, seconded by Selectman O'Mahony and by the affirmative vote of all, it was

VOTED: That the Board of Selectmen declare a State of Emergency in the Town of Wilmington.

COMMUNICATIONS

Town Manager Hull reviewed a notice from Town Moderator Robert G. Peterson, Jr., advising that he has determined, due to the public health and safety risks posed by the novel coronavirus COVID-19, voters may be unable to attend the Annual Town Meeting scheduled for May 2, 2020. The Town Moderator recognized the state of emergency declared for the Commonwealth and the restrictions on public gatherings issued by the Governor, determined that the Annual Town Meeting be recessed and continue until Saturday, May 30, 2020 at 10:30 a.m. effective 10:30 a.m. on May 2, 2020.

Town Manager Hull reviewed an email from Jaret Balter, President, Wilmington Little League advising that, in light of the current unprecedented health crisis with the coronavirus, the 2020 Opening Day Parade has been cancelled.

BOARD TO CONSIDER ESTABLISHING DATE FOR THE NEXT BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING

Town Manager Hull stated that the next scheduled meeting of the Board of Selectmen is April 13. He advised that the Board ought to meet prior to the end of the month. Chairman Bendel stated that he wanted to keep in mind that other meetings have been cancelled.

Selectman Caira offered that the Town meet on Monday, April 6 and that the next meeting following that be as scheduled on April 27. Town Manager Hull advised that one of the items the Board will need to discuss is the Princeton Properties proposal which requires the signature of the Chairman and the Development Agreement will need to be signed off by the Board.

Selectman Caira suggested meeting on Monday, March 30. Discussion took place regarding holding a remote meeting. Selectman Eaton stated that the School Committee meeting was limited to 100 participants and it maxed out. He would like to ensure the Board of Selectmen meeting will have access to as many people as possible. Town Manager Hull stated that the administration has discussed using Zoom for meetings in the coming weeks. It is his understanding that the version John O'Neil, IT Director, is looking at has the capacity for 1,000.

Chairman Bendel asked if there were any questions or comments from the Board. A motion was made by Selectman Caira, seconded by Selectman Eaton and by the affirmative vote of all, it was

VOTED: That the Board of Selectmen's next meeting be scheduled for Monday, March 30, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Members of the Board of Selectmen thanked the Town Manager for the communications to keep them informed during this unprecedented health crisis. They also expressed their gratitude to members of the community who have volunteered to help residents who may need help. Members of the Board also noted that there are nonprofit organizations also willing to provide help.

NEW BUSINESS

Selectman McCoy stated that he hopes that the Board will meet again prior to the end of his term as a member of the Board of Selectmen. He expressed his desire to continue to serve as a member of the Ice Rink Committee and as a representative of the MBTA Advisory Board.

IMPORTANT DATES

Chairman Bendel noted that the dates the Town Manager is about to review are subject to change. Town Manager Hull reviewed important dates including:

- April 1 – Brush Drop-Off – Old Main Street – 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
- April 4 – Brush Drop-Off – Old Main Street – 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- April 6-
- April 10 – Curbside Collection of Yardwaste
- April 6 – Last Day to Register to Vote at the Annual Town Election and Town Meeting
Town Clerk's Office Open 8:30 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.
- April 8 – Brush Drop-Off – Old Main Street – 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
- April 11 – Brush Drop-Off – Old Main Street – 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- April 13 – Board of Selectmen – Town Hall – Room 9 – 7:00 p.m.
- April 15 – Brush Drop-Off – Old Main Street – 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
- April 18 – Brush Drop-Off – Old Main Street – 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- April 20 – Town Offices Closed – *Patriot's Day*
- April 21-
- April 25 – Curbside Collection of Yardwaste
- April 22 – Brush Drop-Off – Old Main Street – 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
- April 25 – Brush Drop-Off – Old Main Street – 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- April 25 – Annual Town Election – Polls Open 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- April 27 – Board of Selectmen – Town Hall – Room 9 – 7:00 p.m.
- May 4-
- May 8 – Curbside Collection of Yardwaste
- May 12 – Finance Committee/Planning Board Joint Public Hearing Relative to the
Warrant for the Annual Town Meeting – Town Hall Auditorium – 7:00 p.m.
- May 30 – Annual Town Meeting – High School Auditorium – 10:30 a.m.

Chairman Bendel stated that the Town is at a critical point in history, each of us need to do our part to stop the spread of the virus. He advised that the top priority of this board is the health and safety of every resident in our community and every employee of the Town of Wilmington who is working to keep our community moving forward.

Chairman Bendel assured residents that the Board is taking this crisis very seriously and will continue to provide updates as soon as possible. He asks the community to remain vigilant, use caution and follow the guidance from public health officials.

A motion was made by Selectman Caira, seconded by Selectman Eaton and by the affirmative vote of all, it was

VOTED: That the Board of Selectmen adjourn.

Meeting adjourned at 6:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Recording Secretary