



MANCHESTER-BY-THE-SEA

BOARD OF SELECTMEN • TOWN HALL
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MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

April 6, 2020 6:30p.m. Virtual Meeting
<https://join.startmeeting.com/communication2>
Virtual Meeting 425-535-9843

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Boling, Ms. Driscoll, Mr. Bodmer-Turner and Ms. Jaques, Mr. Steinert

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT: Town Administrator, Mr. Federspiel, BOS Clerk, Ms. Hunter, Chief Fitzgerald

GUESTS: Town Moderator, Mr. Wilson and BOH Member, Dr. Bradley, Finance Committee Members, Mr. Creighton, Mr. Oldeman, Mr. Pratt, Ms. Harrison, Ms. Mellish and Mr. Weld

PRESS:

Mr. Boling called the BOS meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

Mr. Boling welcomed participants to the virtual meeting. He requested participants online to ask questions and make comments through the chat window and participants on the phone to state their name if you wish to speak and speak when recognized. If for some reason you are not called to speak please remind the Chairman, you wish to speak.

Mr. Boling added the Board will take public input and comment at the end of the meeting.

1. Interview Board of Health Candidate Tonya Colpitts

Ms. Colpitts stated she holds a PHD in microbiology and immunology and is currently an Investigator at Boston University School of Medicine, Mosquito-Virus Lab. Ms. Colpitts was joined on the call with her 5-year old son.

Mr. Boling thanked Ms. Colpitts for speaking with the Board this evening. Ms. Driscoll asked if Ms. Colpitts would be available to participate in Board of Health meetings. Ms. Colpitts stated she would be available. Ms. Jaques thanked Ms. Colpitts for speaking with the BOH and knows she is an excellent fit for the Board.

Mr. Steinert asked Ms. Colpitts if she thought the Town should be doing more to control mosquitos. Ms. Colpitts stated it is always a balance more spraying might help but there are other considerations. She does believe more could be done to control

Covid-19 and suggested gloves at the entrance to Crosby's to eliminate multiple hands products.

Mr. Bodmer-Turner stated he was impressed with her qualifications and thank her for the comment regarding Crosby's.

Mr. Boling asked about lifting restrictions imposed for Covid-19 protection and what testing metrics needed to be in place prior to lifting restrictions. Ms. Colpitts replied it was important to have a significant number in the community tested and to make decisions based on test results. She stated it is going to be a challenging problem for municipalities in the Commonwealth. Mr. Boling thanked Ms. Colpitts for stepping up and volunteering.

Ms. Jaques moved to appoint Ms. Colpitts to the Board of Health, Mr. Bodmer-Turner seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Review of Timing for Annual Town Elections and Town Meeting

Town Elections and Annual Town Meeting will take place at Manchester Essex Regional High School (MERHS). Mr. Wilson met with Superintendent Beaudoin and Mr. Urbas and confirmed MERHS would be available for both Town Elections and Annual Town Meeting.

Mr. Wilson stated the Declaration of Continuance has been extended from April 13, 2020 to May 4, 2020 and will be continued to the confirmed dates for Annual Town Meeting. In consultation with Dr. Bradley the earliest likely date for Annual Town Meeting is June 22, 2020 with Town Elections scheduled for the following week on June 30, 2020.

Mr. Boling stated the BOS would need to finalize the ballot 35 days prior to Town Election and asked if Board members had any questions.

Ms. Driscoll asked if on June 22, 2020 social distancing requirements had not been lifted could the meeting be held outdoors. Ms. Jaques asked if there were legal implications to holding the meeting outdoors due to a conflict with the guideline of only 10 people in close proximity. Ms. Jaques believes the first choice should be the auditorium or gymnasium.

Mr. Bodmer-Turner does not believe holding the meeting outdoors is feasible and suggested waiting to hold Town Meeting until restrictions are lifted and to continue Town funding month to month under the FY20 budget.

Mr. Wilson indicated an outdoor Town meeting would need to be fully explored and would be a last resort.

Mr. Bodmer-Turner moved to hold Town Elections on June 30, 2020 at MERHS, Ms. Driscoll seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Covid-19 Update –

Mr. Federspiel updated the Board on Town preparedness:

- As expected there have been a growing number of calls and both Fire and Police Departments are keeping up with the calls.
- One Fire Fighter was confirmed positive for Covid-19he is doing well.
- Two fire fighters tested negative.
- The early decision to have police officers work one week on with 12 hour shifts and one week off is working well.
- PPE and supplies are in good shape.
- White Beach parking and social distancing remains a challenge.
- The Town has mutual aid in place if needed.
- Financial assistance in the form of a small grant has been received.
- Nurses are busy with contact tracing and doing an excellent job.
- BOH is meeting weekly to updating numbers in Town.

Mr. Wilson thanked Mr. Federspiel and Chief Fitzgerald for their help and support over the past weeks.

Ms. Driscoll stated she is frustrated about White Beach and would like to see a solution that meets the needs of Ocean Street residents and reinforces the fact that the beach is closed.

Mr. Bodmer-Turner is concerned about testing delays for Public Safety personnel and the need to speed up testing in order to maintain full staffing. Dr. Bradley stated testing sites are assigned a lab and many labs have a back log of up to 7 to 10 days. Ms. Jaques stated her main concern is to keep the Town's first responders healthy.

Dr. Bradley reiterated Governor Baker closed all state beaches and parkways and the Town closed all beaches and parks. Mr. Boling asked if the White Beach issue was due to non-residents. Chief Fitzgerald stated the department has issued 10 parking tickets at White Beach over the past weekend.

Mr. Bodmer-Turner asked if blocking the street was a better solution than dealing directly with people. Chief Fitzgerald is working with DPW to block all parking at White Beach with barrels and sawhorses to reinforce that the beach is closed.

Ms. Furlong stated blocking the road at both ends is not helpful to the residents many of whom are elderly. That would mean no deliveries of mail, medical supplies and groceries. She supports blocking parking. Mr. Meahl stated no parking at Singing Beach is working well.

Mr. Steinert supports putting up barriers. Ms. Driscoll would like an update at the next Board meeting to hear how the barrels and sawhorses are working to stop parking.

4. Budget Discussions in Light of Covid-19 Economic Impacts (with Finance Committee)

Mr. Boling stated last week the Finance Committee with the BOS discussed the financial impacts of the Covid-19 shut down on Town finances. Discussion focused on

steps the Town could take to mitigate tax hike impact to residents. Initial steps discussed included:

- Deferring capital projects
- Use of reserves to reduce tax rate
- Possible ways to support businesses in Town
- How to manage the District School building debt
- Cutting back on spending by \$660K to allow for a 0% tax levy in the coming year.

Mr. Federspiel stated Mr. Boling had summarized the discussions indicating the Town's current FY21 budget assumes a 2 ½% tax increase. Plan B will identify additional areas of reduction. While it is always tempting to achieve savings through reduced capital spending and restore some capital spending. Mr. Federspiel does not want the Town to fall too behind on capital projects. The Town will review the new proposed positions in DPW and hopefully hold off on the use of reserves while evaluating the economic hit to the community.

Mr. Boling requested comments from the Board. Ms. Driscoll stated there was a lot to think about and she would be interested in hearing from Department Heads regarding how they can shift and adjust their budgets. Mr. Federspiel stated conversations with Department Heads is on the agenda for next week's staff meeting and all FY21 budgets are being reviewed.

Ms. Jaques stated she agreed with Ms. Driscoll and will rely on the Department Heads and Finance Committee to provide guidance. Ms. Jaques is interested in how the Town can help small businesses. She understands that at least one community is making grants available from \$5K to \$20K and would like to know how other communities are working with State and Federal agencies to provide support for small businesses. Ms. Jaques recommended the Chamber of Commerce as a resource for small businesses.

Mr. Steinert suggested not doing too much right now. He believes the financial impact on the Town may have consequences for several years and he would like to see the Town evaluate the situation over time.

Mr. Bodmer-Turner was interested in knowing how the Town would provide tax relief in a fair and judicious way. He supports the use of reserves and cutting back on capital expenditures. He believes the objective for Plan B needs to be achieved with a clear understanding of overarching goals from changing capital expenses and salaries but with a clear understanding of what items will be impacted.

Mr. Creighton stated Mr. Boling had captured the discussion well. The Finance Committee is interested in supporting those most seriously impacted businesses, taxpayers, laid off workers and individuals with reduced earning power. There is a significant variable in timing going forward, two to three months, seven to eight months regarding how long it will take for individuals and the Town to climb out of the situation. It is projected to take two times longer to recover than the descent. Clearly,

we are looking at the remainder of FY20, FY21 and likely into FY22. Mr. Bodmer-Turner made a good point what level of relief and budget cut levers can be utilized:

- Capital
- Operating expenses for the Town
- Cooperative effort with the School

The Committee is waiting to hear from Mr. Federspiel and Town Department Heads to see how they can modify their budgets. Mr. Oldeman stated he is interested in hearing from Department Heads how they plan to prioritize their budgets. What needs to be done and what can be deferred in their FY21 budgets.

Ms. Mellish stated the Manchester Housing Trust is partnering to provide rent subsidies for small businesses. The Finance Committee would like to find something to help small businesses and understands the sense of urgency.

Ms. Harrison stated there are 2 levels in Town, businesses and landlords. The solution to one or the other will make both of them whole. Mr. Federspiel noted that providing targeted property tax relief is problematic given State law.

Ms. Harrison went onto say, Department Heads will be reviewing their budgets in order to help to get to a 0 % tax increase. Additionally, she is recommending not funding the fire engine fund, not updating the sidewalk from Masconomo Park to the Beach with the remainder of funding coming from reserves to reach a \$660K decrease in spending. Ms. Harrison added we are using the rainy-day fund because it is raining.

Ms. Jaques stated she hopes businesses will be informed that the Town is looking into ways that may help them.

Mr. Steinert stated the Town is going to be living with this situation for a while. He indicated there were different areas for consideration and it is necessary for the Town to identify what problem we're solving. He outlined the condition of the Town, taxation issue because of downturn in the economy and capital management and operating. Mr. Steinert is concerned the Town is not planning for multiyear economic downturn and it is not included in current discussions. Mr. Steinert believes this situation will stretch over the next 3 years it cannot be looked at year to year.

Ms. Mellish asked for clarification of the 0% tax increase and the impact that has on the levy long term. Mr. Federspiel indicated the 2 ½% if not imposed this year will be banked and the levy capacity can be increased down the road. This year the Town cannot raise taxes if residents do not have money to pay it.

Ms. Jaques asked Mr. Boling if the Town was looking at the District budget. Ms. Erdmann, Chairperson, School Committee stated the District is reviewing their FY21 Budget.

Mr. Federspiel stated property tax revenue is the Town's primary source of revenue. There may be a decrease in excise tax revenue and if the summer season is impacted the decrease in revenue could be an additional \$100K. Mr. Boling indicated other local

taxes are impacted mentioning the meal tax revenue. Mr. Bodmer-Turner indicated the beach loss of revenue would be offset by not hiring beach personnel.

Mr. Steinert asked Mr. Creighton how much revenue loss was projected from loss of property taxes? Mr. Creighton stated the Committee has not made that projection. Ms. Harrison stated during the 2007-2008 financial crisis when people lost huge amounts of capital, they still paid their property taxes. Ms. Mellish stated the majority of property taxes are paid by banks and that will not change. Mr. Creighton stated the logic is sound but there may be a delay with property tax revenue.

Mr. Boling stated the Board will accept the guidance and feedback from this evening. Mr. Federspiel working with the Finance Committee will provide additional scenarios working toward zero or lower than zero defining how big Plan B should be.

Mr. Steinert stated he is concerned about revenue and believes we should model flat local revenue and worse case 5% to 10% decrease. The total revenue line decline in taxes, receipts and state aid needs to be estimated.

Ms. Jaques would like to understand more about the projected impact on revenue and how long the ripple impact will last. Ms. Jaques is comfortable with the 0% increase and suggests looking at 1.5% increase.

Mr. Bodmer-Turner stated he understands Mr. Steinert's concern and he would like to see a decrease in current expenditures of 2 ½% and 3 ½%. **The Town does not know** the impact of the lack of revenue from summer programs, thus this and other project expenditures require adjustment.

Ms. Driscoll stated she was comfortable with a 0% increase in the tax levy but would also like to see a 1.5% increase. Mr. Boling stated he was on the same page and believes the Town does not need to go below 0%. At that point the Town can push reserves lower than where we want them but that is the nature of recovery. Mr. Boling stated in 2008 it was worse 40% of reserves were obliterated.

Ms. Mellish stated she would like to see the levy limit at 0% and if revenues fall short use reserved. Mr. Oldeman stated he agreed with Ms. Mellish and recommends looking at capital expenditures and trimming. Ms. Harrison supports looking at the capital budget and moving toward that recommendation.

Mr. Pratt stated he supported 0% property tax levy and accomplishing the \$660K decrease through capital deferrals, cuts down the road and DPW hires deferred. Mr. Weld agrees with Ms. Harrison and believes the Committee needs to review the budget and we are prepared to answer the call. Mr. Creighton concurs that capital is a good place to start but would prefer to stay away from the use of reserves.

Mr. Dam, DPW Director stated he recognized capital was an easy place to look for cuts but as a professional engineer in 2008 the stimulus funds that became available were for "shovel ready" projects and he would like to see the Town maintain some of those

projects for the future. Mr. Boling thanked Mr. Dam and stated that was a useful consideration.

Ms. Furlong stated she would like to see the Town eliminate the 1.5% surcharge collected for CPC projects. Mr. Federspiel clarified in order to make that happen it would be necessary to hold a Special Town Meeting. He indicated the collection of the 1.5% surcharge was separate from the spending of CPC funds which is currently part of the Annual Town Meeting Warrant.

In order to change the surcharge voters would need to rescind the surcharge at a Town Meeting. Mr. Boling stated the Board has not discussed the possibility of rescinding the surcharge and it is something that would need to be fully discussed.

Mr. Coyne thanked everybody on the Finance Committee and their decision to eliminate non-essential projects like the sidewalk from Masconomo Park to Singing Beach. The Committee's statements for fiscal prudence are essential at this time.

Tom Kehoe thanked everybody and complimented their good thinking and sound ideas during these uncharted times. He appreciated the Board and Committee's commitment to the Town and trusts the Board and Committee for managing a bigger challenge than anyone would have anticipated.

Ms. Hill endorsed the discussion to bring the tax levy down to 0%. She indicated the District's budget should also be flat for FY21. Ms. Hill stated the Master Plan was clear about priorities for the Town and the need to invest in infrastructure. She supports the development of Plan B and Plan C as things move forward.

Mr. Meahl recommends keeping reserves where they are, cutting capital expenditures and eliminating the 1 ½% surcharge for CPC projects. He stated the Finance Committee did a good job and indicated he believes one person from the Board needs to be in charge of costs.

Ms. Hill stated communication should be better and the Board and Committee need to embark on two-way strategy and discussions with the residents. Mr. Meahl added there needs to be greater transparency through the *Cricket* and Town website.

5. Consent Agenda

- BOS Minutes – March 16, 2020 and April 6, 2020
- Approve Little League Banners at Sweeney Park

Mr. Boling suggested Sweeney Park banners could be put up one week ahead of Little League season.

Ms. Jaques moved to approve the Consent Agenda with minutes for March 16, 2020 held, Ms. Driscoll seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Town Administrator's Report

- ✓ State legislation has extended the fourth quarter tax deadline to June 1, 2020. Mr. Federspiel stated most communities were extending the tax due date and the period to request and exemption to the same date. Mr. Federspiel will post the extension date in the *Cricket*, on the Town website and on social media.

Mr. Bodmer-Turner moved to extend property tax due date including requests for exemptions to June 1, 2020, Ms. Jaques seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Driscoll moved to adjourn the meeting, Ms. Jaques seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

7. Other Matters, as May Have Not Been Reasonably Anticipated by the Chairman – Discussion Only.

Meeting Documents:

- Tonya Colpitts – BOH Volunteer Application
- Consent Agenda as listed
- Town Administrator’s Report

Upcoming BOS Meetings

- Tuesday, April 21, 2020
- Monday, May 4, 2020
- Monday, May 18, 2020