

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MARCH 18, 2020
REGULAR SESSION

Members Present: David Andrade, Nelson Almeida, Justin Sullivan, Chris Zorra

Absent: David Viera

Town Administrator: Shawn E. Cadime

Chairman Andrade opened the meeting at 7 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and moment of silence.

He announced that, in accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 20(f), any person recording the meeting must notify the Chairman. The Board of Selectmen is recording via audio and visual.

Chairman Andrade stated that members of the public are not in attendance due to the restrictions regarding the COVID-19 outbreak. In the event of a public hearing, arrangements will be made. The meeting is streaming live on TV9 as always. The Board is trying to comply with directives from federal and state governments.

Mr. Cadime said they will have to figure out how to implement access to public hearings.

BOARD AND COMMITTEE OPENINGS UPDATE

Mr. Sullivan announced that volunteers are needed on the Capital Improvement Committee (1 Board of Selectmen appointment), Commission on Disability (5-13 BOS), Conservation Commission (1 BOS), Economic Development Committee (4 BOS), Energy Committee (1 BOS), Historical Commission (2 BOS), Recycling Committee (up to 2 BOS), Zoning Board of Appeals (2 Alternates).

PRIORITY MATTERS

Consider the Conditional Offer of Employment to Lori Trenteseaux for the Position of Clerk in the Assessor's Office

Mr. Cadime advised the clerk in the Assessor's Office is the appointment of the Board of Selectmen. A member of the Board of Assessors and the Asst. Assessor Lydia Cordeiro sat in on interviews. Mr. Alexander and he interviewed the final candidates.

He recommended the Board extend a conditional offer of employment to Lori Trenteseaux as clerk in the Assessor's Office. He requested authorization to make the appointment following the background check due to the uncertainty of future meetings and because that office has an overload of work.

In an effort to remain consistent with previous appointments, Mr. Almeida expressed concern that the applicant had several short term employments.

Mr. Zorra agreed. He asked how many applied.

Mr. Cadime said at least ten people.

Mr. Zorra wanted to make sure unsuccessful candidates are notified the position was filled. He heard someone found out he/she didn't get the job by reading the agenda.

Mr. Cadime said letters are sent out. He mentions that during the interview process.

A motion was made by Mr. Sullivan, seconded by Mr. Zorra, and it was

VOTED: 3 Ayes; 1 Nay; To extend a conditional offer of employment to Lori Trenteseaux to the position of Clerk in the Assessor's Office. Further, to authorize the Town Administrator to make the appointment.

The vote: Mr. Sullivan – Aye; Mr. Zorra – Aye; Chairman Andrade – Aye; Mr. Almeida – Nay..

Accept the Resignation of Roger Coreas as Patrolman 3rd Class

Mr. Cadime stated that Mr. Coreas is a new hire. He has an opportunity to take over the family business.

A motion was made by Mr. Sullivan, seconded by Mr. Zorra, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To accept the resignation of Roger Coreas as Patrolman 3rd Class.

Accept the Resignation of Ronald Charron as Special Police Officer

A motion was made by Mr. Sullivan, seconded by Mr. Zorra, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To accept the resignation of Ronald Charron as Special Police Officer.

Mr. Almeida thanked former Police Chief Charron for his many years of service to the Town.

Mr. Zorra remembered the chief visiting the elementary schools.

NEW BUSINESS

Consider and Sign the Memorandum of Lease and Lease Agreement for Cellco Partnership d/b/a Verizon Wireless, for Use of a Telecommunications Tower at Property Located at 1494 Fall River Avenue

Mr. Cadime said this is for the radio project.

A motion was made by Mr. Sullivan, seconded by Mr. Zorra, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To sign the Memorandum of Lease and Lease Agreement for Cellco Partnership d/b/a Verizon Wireless, for use of a telecommunication tower at property located at 1494 Fall River Avenue.

Consider the Request to Rezone Property Located at the Corner of Taunton Avenue and Elder Street; Plat 12, Lots 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, and 495 from Highway Business to Local Business and Forward to the Planning Board for a Public Hearing

A motion was made by Mr. Sullivan, seconded by Mr. Zorra, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To approve the request to rezone property located at the corner of Taunton Avenue and Elder Street; Plat 12, Lots 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, and 495 from Highway Business to Local Business and forward to the Planning Board for a public hearing.

Consider the Request to Rezone Property Located at Plat 16, Lots 30 and 32, from R-4 to R-2 and Forward to the Planning Board for a Public Hearing

Chairman Andrade said this is a residential rezone. It appears they want to put more houses in that area.

Mr. Cadime said it is property off Lincoln Avenue.

A motion was made by Mr. Sullivan, seconded by Mr. Zorra, and it was unanimously

VOTED: Not to forward the request to rezone property located at Plat 16, Lots 30 and 32, from R-4 to R-2 to the Planning Board.

OTHER BUSINESS

Discuss Other Topics not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chairman 48 Hours Before the Meeting

Mr. Cadime stated the Board had authorized two conditional offers of employment for Dispatch.

The background checks came back. The department is currently down two positions and has been operating with overtime for the past eight months.

He requested the Board appoint Kelly Langborg as full time dispatcher and Charles McLaughlin as a part time dispatcher. Mr. McLaughlin is a dispatcher with the State and will not need training. The Director of Communications will alter her work schedule and will work from midnight to 8 a.m. to help out.

A motion was made by Mr. Sullivan, seconded by Mr. Zorra, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To appoint Kelly Langborg as full time dispatcher and Charles McLaughlin as part time dispatcher.

Fire Chief Michael Healy, in his capacity as Emergency Management Director and head of the Task Force, provided an update. He met with Mr. Cadime and department heads. As of Monday, town hall is closed. All town buildings are closed. Non-essential personnel were sent home.

Residents can drop payments in the drop box at the entrance to town hall or pay on-line. Anybody who wants to come to any department face to face must call to schedule an appointment.

Chairman Andrade noted that some of this is in response to the Governor's order that came out on Sunday.

Chief Healy said they want to operate and provide services to citizens in a very safe manner. Only ten people allowed in town hall. Paramedics are in the lobby to screen as people enter.

Chairman Andrade said this is to prevent sick individuals coming into and contaminating the building.

Chief Healy said anybody who needs to go to the building and health departments can call to make an appointment. They are stressing on-line permitting and payments or drop off at the box in front of town hall. It is safe and secure.

The operation at town hall seems to be working fine. Some non-essential employees are asked to come in at least once a week to pick up what they need.

Chief Healy said the Superintendent of Schools is part of the task force. Schools are closed until April 6. Only essential employees are working.

The public safety complex, library, senior center, and DPW office are closed. Few employees are at the public safety complex.

Inspections are being done mainly in new construction and holding off on remodeling. Chief Healy asked people to be patient. They are trying to figure out a safe way to do inspections.

Chairman Andrade said the director of the senior center is in the building. People can call her or town hall.

Chief Healy said department heads are always available to take phone calls. Adjustments are made daily. This is unprecedented times. The task force spends a lot of time on ideas and doing everything possible. The Chief assured that the team is doing a phenomenal job collecting information, sharing and adjusting to the needs of each department to make sure everything possible is being done to cover the needs of the Town of Seekonk.

Chairman Andrade clarified that all matters that come to town hall are important and all staff is essential. However, the task force, specifically Mr. Cadime and Chief Healy, evaluated and determine priorities. Board of Selectmen members voted last week to limit the number of meetings. Time sensitive and critical items need a quick response and others can be put off.

Chief Healy advised it was determined that Mr. Cadime will be the public information officer on the town side and the Supt. of Schools for the schools. The Chief and Mr. Cadime will discuss any press releases going out. Board members will receive copies.

The Chief said they have looked at upcoming events; namely, the town election and town meeting but no decision was made.

Chairman Andrade stated that these developments have taken the time from regular business such as the presentation of the School Department budget and public hearing on the FY'21 budget.

Chief Healy reported currently there are no cases of the Coronavirus in Seekonk. Bristol County has reported five. The number in the state has gone up to 218. It appears that most people are abiding by the restrictions – staying home and doing what they are supposed to do. Restaurants are posting signs for takeout only.

Chief Healy will have a conference call with NEMA for an update. They are tracking all costs associated with that. Fire, Police, Health and DPW have expended money to ensure our employees are protected.

Chairman Andrade added the emergency declaration on Monday as well.

Chief Healy asked people to be patient. We are all in the same boat. Even though they are public servants, they need protection as well.

Regarding discussion on using the Code Red message, Chief Healy does not recommend that at this time. He noted all information is out there. He suggested Code Red could be used for the upcoming town election. He knows some people might not agree with him. He said the public is very well informed nationally, local, and via social media.

Chief Healy said his job is to make the best decisions for the town. He is not going to worry about offending some people. He wants people to stay home while they do whatever possible to keep people safe.

Mr. Cadime thanked the Chief and members of the task force for their hard work. He said they know their job very well. He noted that he has worked about 55 hours on the COVID-19 this week and it is only Wednesday.

He said that people cannot listen or react to social media. He made it a point to make sure task force members stay focused and come up with a goal and a plan.

Mr. Cadime said there might be a lot of decisions on the federal, state and local levels that are not popular. There could be a lot of deaths from this. Nobody wants to see local businesses shut down, but we can make that up later on. We cannot replace lives. We need to make sure that people stay alive and stay healthy.

All town buildings will be deep cleaned.

Mr. Cadime urged residents to stay focused with press conferences from the President and Governor. The town website is constantly updated. Residents can sign up for news and notices. He urged them to sign on to the COVID-19 system to receive notifications. Some personnel have been trained on Code Red. He suggested that residents listen to the notices to eliminate calls to dispatch

He said residents can call all departments in town hall.

Mr. Cadime said the Board of Selectmen has provided tremendous leadership to provide resources needed to make the community safe. The town has enough cash on hand until the end of July even if people are not paying their bills. Payments can be mailed or placed in the drop box outside town hall.

The concern is planning for the future. It is important to make sure public safety is as healthy as possible to prevent any spread.

Chairman Andrade said the town election is still on right now. Schools are closed until April 6. They do have an alternate location for the election if necessary.

Mr. Cadime explained cancelling the election would require a vote of the Board and a letter signed by a member of the State Legislature. It required 2/3 vote. The other piece would be to petition the court. It could only be postponed until the end of May. There is emergency legislation that would grant the Secretary of State authority to make the decision as to postpone the election. Some communities have gotten a court order to postpone.

The town meeting can be pushed back. The Governor is trying to get legislation that would alleviate some of the deadlines placed on the budget and town meeting as well as quorum requirement.

Mr. Zorra asked about contacting UniBank to eliminate fees.

Mr. Cadime said he would have the treasurer look into it.

Mr. Almeida urged residents to be patient and let the task force do their job.

Chairman Andrade mentioned that Mr. Viera wanted to attend the meeting. He is older and has underlying health issues.

He noted there might be some items of urgency but others that might not be that pressing.

Mr. Sullivan felt the Board should continue to meet. He doesn't have an issue with abbreviated agendas. They need to be sure they carefully choose items that need to be addressed. There will be an abundance of items to address when this is over. He felt they should continue to conduct business as long as Board members are healthy and get a quorum. It would be OK with him if the Superintendent of Schools presented the budget.

He said the Board should get updates from the Town Administrator and Chief Healy.

Chairman Andrade felt contacts should be limited.

Mr. Zorra said they have to continue town business. He intends to attend meetings if he is healthy.

Mr. Sullivan said he understands Mr. Viera's position.

Chairman Andrade said he recommended that Mr. Viera not attend meetings. However, he said he would be here. Something might have happened since their conversation.

Mr. Almeida said the Chairman sets the agenda. He plans on attending meetings if he is healthy.

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TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Radio Project

Mr. Cadime explained that restrictions have been placed on the vendors traveling here. It was pushed back a week. Work continues.

Animal Shelter

Mr. Cadime advised that furniture was delivered. They are still going through the punch list. Occupancy should happen by the end of the month.

BOARD OF SELECTMEN LIAISON REPORTS

Aitken School Expansion Building Committee Report

Mr. Zorra said the next meeting is on hold. He is not sure what is going to happen. They should be coming in to pull permits.

Senior Center Phase II/540 Arcade Avenue

Mr. Cadime reported two bids came in. There was supposed to be a meeting at the end of the month. Not sure what will happen.

Mr. Zorra asked about Donald Lewis Drive.

Mr. Cadime said he denied the request to have DPW go out there and sweep stone. He doesn't think DPW should be on private property. The Board can overrule his decision.

Mr. Zorra said the sweeper threw the rocks on the properties. Residents are not happy.

Mr. Almeida said he had requested a report on problems with local motels. He asked if there were any restrictions regarding the Coronavirus. He requested an executive session for the next meeting. He said the Board needs to take care of it.

Chairman Andrade asked about restrictions on restaurants.

Chief Healy said no.

Mr. Sullivan thanked the members of the task force. They have done a great job. He also thanked residents who have reached out to help seniors and others in need. There is a lot of generosity and kindness in the community. He asked people to support the local restaurants through take-out.

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Mr. Cadime noted that Doorways Food Pantry will be closing because there are no volunteers to man it. He noted any senior in need of food should contact Mrs. Faria at the senior center.

Chairman Andrade cautioned people to stay home and not congregate in large groups. There were calls about the playground. It has been corded off. Children will want to go outside and to the basketball courts. Residents are asked to make sure there are not large groups. Police will patrol the areas.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Mr. Zorra, seconded by Mr. Sullivan, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To adjourn at 8:21 p.m.

The vote: Mr. Zorra – Aye; Mr. Sullivan – Aye; Mr. Almeida – Aye; Chairman Andrade – Aye.

Respectfully submitted,

David Viera, Clerk

Prepared by:

Patricia Gamer, Secretary

Items Distributed at the March 18, 2020 Board of Selectmen Meeting

Resume of Lori Trenteseaux for position of Clerk in the Assessor's Office

Notification from Chief Enos of resignations: Roger Coreas as Patrolman 3rd Class and Ronald Charron as Special Police Officer

Lease Agreement for Cellco Partnership d/b/a Verizon Wireless

Documentations of Rezone of Properties