

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
APRIL 15, 2020
REGULAR SESSION

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

Town Administrator: Shawn E. Cadime

Chairman Andrade opened the meeting at 7:15 p.m. via teleconference.

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

Chairman Andrade advised that Fire Chief Michael Healy and Director of Communications Carol Ann Days were also in attendance on line.

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), Economic Development Committee (4 BOS), Energy Committee (1 BOS), Historical Commission (2 BOS), Recycling Committee (up to 3 BOS), Zoning Board of Appeals (2 Alternates).

PRIORITY MATTERS

Reconsider 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

At Mr. Sullivan's request, a motion by Mr. Almeida, seconded by Mr. Viera, was amended as follows and unanimously:

VOTED: To forward the request to rezone property located at Plat 16, Lots 30 and 32 from R-4 to R-2 with the recommendation that the Planning Board not approve the request.

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

Prior to the vote, Mr. Sullivan explained that additional homes built would put a burden on schools. The \$15,000 taxes would not match the additional \$30,000 cost to schools. He wanted to preserve Seekonk the way it is.

Per Act of April 2, 2020, Consider the Extension of Time for the Following:

The Application for Exemption Deadline Moved from April 1, 2020 to a Date not Later than June 1, 2020

The Real Estate and Personal Property Bills Due Date from May 1, 2020 to a Date no Later than June 1, 2020

The Excise Bills due after March 10, 2020 can have Interest and Penalties Waived if paid in full by June 30, 2020

Mr. Cadime stated that he has spoken to the treasurer and assessor.

The application for abatement is extended until June 1, 2020. The real estate and personal property taxes extended to June 1, 2020. Interest will start to accrue on June 2, 2020. Demand bills will go out on June 30th. Motor vehicle taxes should be paid by May 20. Demand notices will go out on June 30th as well.

Chairman Andrade clarified that this is a result of legislation signed by Governor Baker after the last Board meeting.

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

VOTED: To approve the extension of time for the following as per the Act of April 2, 2020:

The application for exemption deadline moved from April 1, 2020 to a date not later than June 1, 2020;

The Real Estate and Personal Property bills due date from May 1, 2020 to a date no later than June 1, 2020; and

The Excise Bills due after March 10, 2020 can have interest and penalties waived if paid in full by June 30, 2020.

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

In discussion prior to the vote, Mr. Sullivan asked about the cash flow.

Mr. Cadime said he got an updated cash flow number from the treasurer today. The lockbox is caught up and an additional \$1M dollars went into revenue stream. It's looking very good. There shouldn't be any major impacts on revenue.

Mr. Sullivan asked if there are minor impacts.

Mr. Cadime said cash flow is very good right now as long as people continue to pay taxes. He has weekly updates with the Finance team.

Mr. Zorro inquired how interest would be applied to unpaid motor vehicle excise taxes.

Mr. Cadime said it would go back to the original due date.

Mr. Viera noted he is concerned about the upcoming year.

Chairman Andrade advised that Mr. Cadime will present a proposed budget at the next meeting to discuss potential reduced revenue coming in.

Mr. Viera said the Town could be in big trouble

Mr. Sullivan advised that he had the opportunity to listen to a MMA conference call. The preliminary budget shortfall for this year and next year is significant - \$300M to \$400M for this year and approximately \$2B for next year. Chapter 70 will take a hit.

Mr. Viera asked if schools are on board regarding concerns.

Mr. Cadime noted the state numbers are not in. There is conversation that Chapter 70 might be significantly impacted. He has tried to maintain the School Department requests. At some point will have to go to the schools and discuss the revenue numbers.

Mr. Viera would like to put schools on notice sooner than later.

Mr. Cadime said Seekonk is in a better position than other communities. He intends to talk to schools once there is an indication on numbers from the state.

Mr. Sullivan said the schools passed a 3.2% increase in February based on estimates and rough idea from the state. So much has changed due to the current situation. The schools have got to think about a possible level-funded budget.

Mr. Cadime felt the town is not at a level-funded budget. The Superintendent of Schools is prepared to have some reductions that would be down to a 2% increase. Turn-around time for the economy is looking like the first quarter of next year's fiscal year.

COVID-19 Updates

Chief Michael Healy, head of the task force, provided an updated via teleconference. He advised the task force has been meeting at 10 a.m. every Monday and Friday via conference call with updates. A big concern is the medical waste left in business parking lots. He has been going around with the health agent and making arrangements to accommodate what was requested, such as barrels to discard rubber glove and masks. The Board of Selectmen gets daily updates. Some businesses were handing out rubber gloves and masks. Unfortunately, the town experienced one death from the virus.

Chief Healy said staffing at Public Safety is holding strong. He thanked all of the employees. Fortunately, no one working on the front lines came down with the virus.

Tests done to some have come back negative. A lot of planning is done remotely.

The Chief thanked businesses and residents who have dropped off donations of food, supplies and protective gear. A lot of planning is done remotely. They are dealing with questions via e-mail and social media. Tough decisions are being made. He asked people to be patient. He thanked the members of the Board for their support. The task force has made decisions that are not always accepted by some.

He asked residents to adhere to the Governor's guidelines and wear a mask whenever possible, social distancing, check on each other and, hopefully, it will be over.

Mr. Viera thanked Chief Healy for the excellent job he has done and the rest of the staff. .

Mr. Cadime reviewed the items as signed by the Governor on April 2. Town meeting was allowed to delay beyond June 30 due to a public health state of emergency. A town meeting already called can recess until five days after a public health emergency and renewable up to another thirty days. If town meeting does not adopt an annual budget before June 30, the Board of Selectmen can notify the Director of Accounts at the Department of Revenue of a budget amount sufficient for the operation of the town during the month of July but not less than 1/12 of the total budget approved in the current fiscal year. Communities are allowed to use free cash and undesignated fund balances and use of revolving fund.

The Board approved the matters concerning tax deadlines. Restaurants are allowed to sell sealed containers of alcohol for off premises. Also, retirees are allowed to return to work ignoring the statute of limitation regarding the hours worked.

Mr. Cadime does not anticipate any shortfalls in the town's finances. The state is seeing a significant shortfall in revenues and an increasing demand on the health care fields and other departments throughout the state. Tax revenues were supposed to be \$31.2B and are projected at \$26.8B. .

Some businesses might be able to reopen in a month. An economic rebound will be a U vs. V. A U is a gradual rebound; a V is a faster rebound. That will determine what to expect.

In terms of a budget being passed, this year will probably see a joint session of the legislature to approve the numbers and try to balance and rectify a balanced budget based on what is being submitted by the Governor.

There was a conference call with all superintendents. DESE indicated the Governor will make a determination soon regarding going back to school or cancelling for the remainder of the year. MCAS testing is cancelled.

April 15, 2020

-5-

As a member of the task force, Chairman Andrade commended those out there who are exhausted and working around the clock. Their efforts are not going unnoticed. He thanked Public Service employees and those working from home. .

Mr. Zorra commended Chief Healy for doing a phenomenal job as the Emergency Management Director.

Mr. Sullivan commended Chief Healy and the Health Agent. He said everyone is doing extraordinary work.

NEW BUSINESS

Consider Approving the Regular Session Minutes of March 12, 2020, March 18, 2020, March 26, 2020 and April 1, 2020

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

VOTED: To accept the Regular Session minutes of March 12, 2020, March 18, 2020, March 26, 2020, and April 1, 2020.

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

OTHER BUSINESS – None.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 7:38 p.m., Mr. Viera motioned, seconded by Mr. Sullivan, to go into Executive Session to conduct negotiations with DPW AFSCME Council 93 and Dispatch AFSCME Council 93 per M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21(a)(3) as having the discussion in open session would be detrimental to the litigation or bargaining position of the town; not to return to open session.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Prepared by:

David Viera, Clerk

Patricia Gamer, Secretary

Exhibit to rezone property at Plat 16, Lots 30 and 32 from R-4 to R-2 was include in the packet for the Board of Selectmen meeting of April 15, 2020.

