

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES – April 13, 2020**

7:00 p.m. - Chairman's Introduction to Remote Meeting

Chairman Perreault stated that this Open Meeting of the Board of Selectmen was being conducted remotely consistent with Governor Baker's Executive Order of March 12, 2020, due to the current State of Emergency in the Commonwealth due to the outbreak of the "COVID-19 Virus.

Chairman Perreault added that in order to mitigate the transmission of the COVID-19 Virus, the Town has been advised and directed by the Commonwealth to suspend public gatherings, and as such, the Governor's Order suspended the requirement of the Open Meeting Law to have all meetings in a publicly accessible *physical* location. Further, all members of public bodies are allowed and encouraged to participate remotely.

Chairman Perreault noted that the Order allows public bodies to meet entirely remotely so long as reasonable public access is afforded so that the public can follow along with the deliberations of the meeting. Members of the public who wish to view this meeting may do so by tuning into Verizon Channel 30 or Charter Channel 192, or by live stream at stream at <http://bit.ly/2vAySI9> or by visiting the Town's Website and going to the Department of Cable Access Television and click "what's playing live". He added that ensuring public access does not ensure public participation unless such participation is required by law.

Chairman Perreault noted that the Public Comments portion of the agenda has been suspended for this meeting, but that he expects and intends to restore it at a future meeting.

Meeting Business Ground Rules

Chairman Perreault covered the ground rules for effective and clear conduct of the business. Each speaker on the agenda will be invited by name to provide comments, questions or motions. He asked that participants hold until their name is called.

Chairman Perreault asked members of the Board to mute their phone or computer when not speaking and to speak clearly and in a way that helps generate accurate minutes. Those responding were asked to wait until the floor was yielded to them. Members were asked if they wish to respond to the comments of others, to do so through the Chair, taking care to identify themselves.

Lastly, any votes taken this evening will be done by roll call to ensure that the records of the vote are clear and accurate to the members attending the meeting remotely.

Chairman Perreault confirmed that the following members and persons anticipated on the agenda were remotely present and could be heard.

Jason Perreault, Chairman
Dawn Rand, Vice Chairman
Timothy Kaelin, Clerk
Leslie Rutan
Julianne Hirsh

John Coderre, Town Administrator
William Lyver, Police Chief
David Parenti, Fire Chief
Andrew Dowd, Town Clerk
Scott Charpentier, DPW Director
Jason Little, Finance Director
Fred George, Town Moderator
Casey Melon, Health Agent
Ann Labonte, Public Health Nurse
Kathy Dalglish, Cable Access Director

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – MARCH 23, 2020 REGULAR MEETING

Selectman Rand moved the Board vote to approve the minutes of the March 23, 2020 meeting; Selectman Rutan seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Hirsh	“aye”	Rand	“aye”
Rutan	“aye”	Perreault	“aye”
Kaelin	“aye”		

UPDATE REGARDING COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Coderre introduced Health Agent Casey Mellin and Public Health Nurse Ann Labonte. Ms. Labonte provided an update on the number of cases to date and reviewed the procedures relating to quarantine requirements and protocol. She also discussed the HIPPA restrictions and how it relates to the information that can be distributed to the public.

Mr. Coderre stressed the importance of getting information directly from the Town website, which is updated on a regular basis, to avoid being misinformed. The Department of Family & Youth Services, the Senior Center, Food Pantry and other civic organizations are constantly in communication ensuring that the needs of the community are being met. He urged anyone in need of assistance to reach out through the many venues that distribute communication.

Public Health Nurse Ann Labonte exited the meeting.

Health Agent Casey Melon thanked Ms. Labonte for all that she is doing to keep Northborough safe. He also commended Town staff on the amount of information that is presented and continuously updated on the Town website.

DISCUSSION IN CONSULTATION WITH TOWN MODERATOR REGARDING POSTPONEMENT OF APRIL 27, 2020 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

Mr. Coderre indicated that Chapter 53, Section 10A of the Acts of 2020 gives towns the option to extend deadlines to approve municipal budgets, and expands the authority of Town Moderators, in consultation with the Board of Selectmen, to delay Town Meetings for up to 30 days where a warrant has already been posted.

Town Moderator Fred George referenced his draft declaration which laid out the rationale for his recommendation to postpone Town Meeting by the maximum 30 days allowable under the law to May 27, 2020. Following a discussion with the Board it was acknowledged that, in all likelihood, Town Meeting will need to be extended again at a later date.

Selectman Rand moved the Board vote, in consultation with the Town Moderator and under the authority of Chapter 53 of the Acts of 2020, to postpone the April 27, 2020 Annual Town Meeting to May 27, 2020; Selectman Rutan seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Hirsh	"aye"	Rand	"aye"
Rutan	"aye"	Perreault	"aye"
Kaelin	"aye"		

DISCUSSION OF POSTPONEMENT OF MAY 12, 2020 ANNUAL TOWN ELECTION

Chairman Perreault recused himself as he is a candidate in the upcoming election. Vice Chairman Rand conducted this portion of the meeting.

Mr. Coderre indicated that under Chapter 45 of the Acts of 2020, and following discussions with the Town Clerk, it is recommended the Town delay its local election until June 30, 2020, the latest possible date allowable under the law, in order to maximize the amount of time available for residents to vote by mail-in-ballot. The postponement will provide for posting of the new date on the municipal website at least 20 days prior thereto and reduces the time by which a person must register to vote to 10 days before the rescheduled date.

Selectman Hirsh moved the Board vote, under the authority of Chapter 45 of the Acts of 2020, to postpone the May 12, 2020 Annual Town Election to June 30, 2020; Selectman Kaelin seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Hirsh	"aye"	Rand	"aye"
Rutan	"aye"	Perreault	"recused"
Kaelin	"aye"		

DISCUSSION AND VOTE ON THREE LOCAL OPTIONS FOR TAX RELIEF OFFERED BY CHAPTER 53, SECTIONS 10 & 11 OF THE ACTS OF 2020

Finance Director Jason Little indicated that the Finance Department recommends adoption of three local options for tax relief pursuant to Chapter 53, Sections 10 & 11 of the Acts of 2020 in order to provide the maximum amount of assistance to residents in response to the

COVID-19 crisis. This relief is similar in concept to what is being offered on the state and national level by extending due dates for income taxes. The three options below are the full extent of what the Town is authorized to offer per the State's legislation. The provisions of the act would be for FY2020 only and would sunset automatically. He reviewed the following:

Local Option to extend the Due Dates of Property Tax Bills

Mr. Little indicated that this option would allow for the changing of the due date for fourth quarter FY2020 property taxes, for which the bills have already been mailed. The printed due date was May 1, 2020 and this option would change the due date to June 1, 2020.

Local Option to Extend the Due Date for Exemption and Deferral Applications

Mr. Little indicated that this option would extend the deadline for FY2020 Exemption and Deferral Applications from April 1, 2020 to June 1, 2020. The exemptions considered are those that are granted by statute (various clauses of MGL Chapter 59), which are enumerated in a table accessible to the public from the Assessor's webpage. Extending the deadline is likely to have minimal impact as most FY2020 exemptions have already been applied for in the Fall of 2019. However, this option would give the Assessors the greatest amount of flexibility to consider applications that may be returned through June 1, 2020 if any new eligible parties come forward.

Additionally, Deferrals (MGL Chapter 59, Clause 41A) allow qualifying seniors to delay paying taxes on their property, while the balance owed accumulates interest at 8% annually. Deferrals are rarely sought out in large part due to reverse mortgages offering more favorable terms. Again, extending the deadline would allow the Assessors the greatest amount of flexibility to consider applications returned through June 1, 2020.

Local Option to Waive Interest on Certain Payments Made After Due Dates

Mr. Little indicated that this option would allow the Tax Collector to waive interest and other penalties for late payment of any excise, tax, betterment assessment with a due date on or after March 10, 2020 where payment is made after its respective due date but before June 30, 2020. This section does not permit waiver of interest and penalties regarding bills with due dates before March 10, 2020 or if the bill is not paid by June 30, 2020.

Mr. Little indicated that if the Board chooses to adopt the three local options for tax relief pursuant to Chapter 53, Sections 10 & 11 of the Acts of 2020, the Town would take the required action to notify taxpayers.

Selectman Rutan moved the Board vote to adopt three local options offered by Chapter 53 of the Acts of 2020 to provide the maximum amount of assistance to residents in response to the COVID-19 crisis, as follows:

1. Extend the due dates of Property Tax bills from May 1, 2020 to June 1, 2020
2. Extend the deadline for Exemptions and Deferral Applications pursuant to Mass General Law Chapter 59 from April 1, 2020 to June 1, 2020
3. Waive interest and other penalties for late payments of an excise, tax, or betterment with a due date after March 10, 2020 provided the bill is paid by June 30, 2020.

Selectman Rand seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Hirsh	“aye”	Rand	“aye”
Rutan	“aye”	Perreault	“aye”
Kaelin	“aye”		

REVIEW OF PERSONNEL POLICES DURING STATE OF EMERGENCY

Mr. Coderre indicated that for transparency purposes it's important for the public to know that the Town continues to pay its employees during the Governor's mandated shutdown, as most communities throughout the commonwealth are doing. Employees continue to come into the office on a rotating basis and work remotely as appropriate. The only employees that are exempted are seasonal, temporary and library pages. He acknowledged the loyalty of Town staff and thanked them for going above and beyond during this time of crisis. Members of the Board expressed their support of Mr. Coderre's recommendation and thanked the Town staff for their efforts.

Selectman Kaelin moved the Board vote that during the current period retroactive to Monday, March 16, 2020, through and including the Board of Selectmen's meeting currently scheduled for Monday, May 11, 2020, the Town of Northborough will, subject to appropriation, continue to pay the regular wages to all Town employees, excluding on-call and temporary seasonal employees and library pages, for their regularly scheduled work hours, provided that employees to be paid are expected to be ready, willing, and able to perform work that may be requested or required by the employee's supervisor during their regularly scheduled work hours to be paid during this period, and provided that the Board's vote is without prejudice and shall not establish a binding precedent, and provided further that the Board reserves the right to reconsider this motion and vote upon proper notice and after a discussion and vote held during the course of a properly posted public meeting of the Board. Nothing in this motion limits any rights that any employee may have to take vacation, sick, or personal leave during this period; Selectman Rutan seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Hirsh	“aye”	Rand	“aye”
Rutan	“aye”	Perreault	“aye”
Kaelin	“aye”		

FY2020 BUDGET UPDATE

Mr. Coderre indicated that the FY2020 budget is forecast to close out in the positive, albeit with less Free Cash at year-end than usual. The Finance Team continues to review the data for FY2021 and the State has a consensus hearing scheduled for April 14th that will give the Town its first glimpse into the impacts on the Commonwealth's finances. From the preliminary numbers run so far, Northborough could be facing revenue reductions of between \$2-4 million in FY2021, with a big piece of that being the Town's willingness to cut services verses using its taxing capacity.

Mr. Coderre provided an update on the FY2020 Budget as follows:

The Revenue Update for FY2020 includes:

Tax Receipts

- Taxes represent 80.4% of revenues at \$52.43 million
- \$13.35 (25%) remains to be collected
- 4th quarter bills mailed are due May 1st
- If local options to extend due date to June 1st and waive penalties and interested are exercised, there will likely be a small impact on collections
- Given the timing of the pandemic, it is not anticipated that significant reductions in tax collections will materialize in FY2020 year-end

State Aid

- State Aid is 8.8% of revenues at \$5.77 million
- \$1.34 million (23%) remains to be collected
- No indication State intends to cut 4th quarter aid payments
- State Stabilization Fund (rainy day fund) has \$3.5 billion for possible backfilling of FY2020 aid
- State revenue consensus hearing scheduled for April 14th to discuss potential FY2020 & FY2021 impacts
- Any shortfall in State Aid would have to be offset by unexpended appropriations at year-end

Local Receipts

- Local receipts are 6.8% of revenues at \$4.46 million
- \$772,000 (16%) of target remains to be collected
- Local receipts include: Motor Vehicle Excise (MVE), Hotel & Meals tax, Interest & Penalties, Payment in Licenses & Permits, Fines and Investment Income
- MVE represents \$2.56 of \$4.46 million in Local Receipts with \$495,000 uncollected
- Hotel & Meals revenues is budgeted at \$449,000 with \$384,000 collected to date
- Any shortfall in Local Receipts would have to be offset by unexpended appropriations at year-end

Mr. Coderre indicated that overall, the FY2020 budget is projected to close in the positive. Local Receipts are contracting in 4th quarter and will continue into next fiscal year. He added that while he does not anticipate the need to tap into Financial Reserves to balance the FY2020 budget, relatively minor revenue target shortfalls will need to be covered by unexpended appropriations. The main outcome is that FY2020 year-end Free Cash will be lower than past years, resulting in less available resources to support subsequent budgets.

Mr. Coderre reviewed the strengths heading into FY2021 as follows:

- Strong Financial Reserves
- Low reliance on one-time revenues
- Low debt
- Excess Levy Capacity of \$2.2 million
- Low reliance on intergovernmental transfers

- Strong Free Cash Policy
- Strong Capital Investments
- Newest elastic revenues not used to fund services
- Diversified tax base
- Strong Overlay Account balance
- Stimulus funding

Mr. Coderre acknowledged the experienced Staff, as well as Board and Committee members who successfully navigated the last recession and put into place the policies and practices that have strengthened the Town's financial condition.

Mr. Coderre reviewed his concerns heading into FY2021 as follows:

- State and local revenues are being hit hard, but it is unclear how deep and for how long
- Financial reserves and expense line reductions are stop gap measures designed to buy time to manage through the immediate health crisis
- Postponement of capital investments and unfunded liabilities are short-term options, but will cost more in the future to catch back up
- Structural budget reductions, including services and staffing levels require thoughtful deliberation and good information in order to make informed decisions
- There is a lot of speculation, but little data because we are still in the middle of the emergency itself
- Moving forward, staff will continue to analyze available data to make FY2021 budget recommendations with the goal of preserving services
- Given the lack of potential revenues, corresponding budget reductions will be developed
- Like prior recessionary periods, the solution will be a combination of expenditure cuts, short-term revenue options, postponement of capital investments and implementation of alternative service delivery models

Lastly, Mr. Coderre stressed the importance of Financial Trend Monitoring, which allows Town staff and Boards and Committees to collectively make difficult decisions, by relying on good information and a thoughtful process. Ultimately, the goal is to protect the Town's overall financial condition while maintaining the level of services that the public expects.

Board members thanked Mr. Coderre for his efforts and for tonight's presentation.

REAPPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS, COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONS

Chairman Perreault thanked and acknowledged Board and Committee members who have asked to be reappointed, as well as those who have asked not to be reappointed at this time.

Selectman Rutan moved the Board vote to reappoint those individuals who appear on the "2020 Reappointment List" to the corresponding Boards, Committees and Commissions; Selectman Rand seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Hirsh	"aye"	Rand	"aye"
Rutan	"aye"	Perreault	"aye"
Kaelin	"aye"		

EXECUTION OF CEMETERY DEED

Selectman Hirsh moved the Board vote to execute Cemetery Deed 1095; Selectman Rand seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Hirsh	“aye”	Rand	“aye”
Rutan	“aye”	Perreault	“aye”
Kaelin	“aye”		

REPORTS**Julianne Hirsh**

- Questioned if the tax relief options that the Board adopted this evening can be forwarded to residents and businesses through CodeRed? Mr. Coderre responded that the tax relief options, as well as the delays of Town Meeting and the local Election will be forwarded to residents via Town News and CodeRed.
- Thanked everyone out there for doing their job, whatever that job may be.

Leslie Rutan

- Thanked everyone for doing so many wonderful things to help others during this crisis.
- Thanked the public safety departments for their efforts. At her request Chief Parenti reviewed the protocol of the Fire and Police Departments to reduce employee exposure to Covid-19 when responding to calls.
- Thanked Town staff and the various community groups for everything they are doing for the community.
- Encouraged the public to obtain information directly from the Town website.
- Encouraged residents to sign up for Town News and CodeRed notifications.

Tim Kaelin, Clerk

- Thanked the Police and Fire Departments for the Easter Drive-by on Sunday.
- Thanked everyone for their efforts in obtaining critically needed personal protection equipment for all public safety personnel.
- Thanked the Chamber of Commerce for their timely information on funding resources for small businesses.
- Urged the public to obtain information directly from the Town website or by calling any Town department rather than through social media. Assured residents that Town staff continues to be available and ready to serve.

Dawn Rand, Vice Chair

- Thanked everyone, especially Chief Parenti, for their efforts during this crisis.
- Thanked Davidian Farms and the Police Department for the Easter Drive-by on Sunday.

Jason Perreault, Chair

- Thanked Town staff for their efforts in doing whatever is necessary in order to keep Town services available to the public.
- Noted that Town staff is considering a dedicated public outreach session for residents to offer input relating to Covid-19 matters in order to allow the Board time to focus on routine matters during their regularly scheduled meetings. Asked that residents be

mindful and do their research before providing input and to be cognizant that services and information provided may vary from community to community. Encouraged residents to reach out to him with input or questions via his email, which can be found on the Town website.

John Coderre

- Encouraged those in need of assistance to please reach out to Family & Youth Services and the Senior Center. Town staff is ready and eager to help.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Coderre suggested that the Board meet next on April 27, 2020.

The Police Chief, Fire Chief, DPW Director, Town Clerk and Finance Director reported on their efforts to date during this crisis.

ADJOURNMENT

Selectman Rand moved the Board vote to adjourn; Selectman Rutan seconded the motion. The roll call vote was taken as follows:

Hirsh	“aye”	Rand	“aye”
Rutan	“aye”	Perreault	“aye”
Kaelin	“aye”		

Meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane M. Wackell
Executive Assistant to the
Board of Selectmen

Documents used during meeting:

1. April 13, 2020 Meeting Agenda
2. March 23, 2020 Meeting Minutes
3. Information packet – Postponement of Annual Town Meeting & Annual Town Election
4. Information packet – Local Option for Tax Relief
5. FY2020 Budget Update presentation
6. Information packet – Reappointments to Boards and Committees
7. Cemetery Deed