

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
MEETING MINUTES – May 7, 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 CATV Government Channels: 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.

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 meeting 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.

Chairman Perreault noted that the Public Comments portion of the agenda has been suspended for this meeting.

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.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES – APRIL 27, 2020 REGULAR MEETING**

Chairman Perreault reported that the approval of the April 27, 2020 Meeting Minutes will be postponed to the next regularly scheduled Selectmen's Meeting.

## **PUBLIC INFORMATION AND INPUT SESSION DEDICATED TO COVID-19**

Chairman Perreault indicated that tonight's meeting will be in the form of a public information and input session dedicated to the COVID-19 pandemic. Town staff will provide an update regarding the pandemic and its impact on the Town of Northborough. Live public input will not be available during tonight's meeting.

The Town invited residents to submit questions regarding COVID-19 pandemic in advance of tonight's meeting via email at [covid@town.northborough.ma.us](mailto:covid@town.northborough.ma.us) by Wednesday, May 6<sup>th</sup> at 4pm. Approximately 46 questions were received by the deadline and will be answered this evening.

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

### **Board of Selectmen**

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

### **Board of Health**

Glenn French, Chair  
Dennis Costello, Temporary Health Agent

### **Town Staff**

John Coderre, Town Administrator  
David Parenti, Fire Chief  
William Lyver, Police Chief  
Scott Charpentier, DPW Director  
June David-Fors, FYS Director  
Liz Tretiak, Senior Center Director  
Jason Little, Finance Director  
Andrew Dowd, Town Clerk  
Kathy Dalglish, Cable Access Director

### **School Department**

Greg Martineau, School Superintendent

## **REPORTS FROM TOWN STAFF**

### **Town Administrator**

Mr. Coderre summarized the Town's continued response and outreach efforts to the COVID-19 pandemic. He stressed the importance of getting information directly from Town departments or through 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 residents to subscribe to Town News and CodeRed via the Town website.

### Fire Chief

Chief Parenti provided an update on the continued efforts of the COVID-19 Task Force, which includes himself, Interim Health Agent Dennis Costello, Police Chief William Lyver, Town Administrator John Coderre, DPW Director Scott Charpentier, Finance Director Jason Little, School Superintendent Greg Martineau, Senior Center Liz Tretiak, Family & Youth Services Director June David-Fors and Town Clerk Andrew Dowd. The Team meets several times during the week to put plans into action based not only on current events, but looking to future as well. He explained the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and its constraints on personal information that can be shared regarding those that have tested positive for COVID-19. As of today's date in Northborough, there are 98 active cases, of which 63 are those living in skilled nursing or assisted living facilities. A total of 52 people have recovered.

### Senior Center Director

Senior Center Director Liz Tretiak reported that Town staff has identified at risk residents and reached out to each individually to ensure their well-being. Over the last several weeks, calls have been made to all of those residents over the age of 65. She reported that telephone calls will continue to be made to ensure that needs are being met for at-risk and residents over 65. At this time, there have not been any crises situations identified. She added that a new Northborough Community Resource guide has been created. She asked residents to call the Senior Center to receive a hard copy or the guide can be found on the Town website. She added that several programs and support groups are continuing to be offered remotely. She encouraged Northborough residents who need assistance, are looking for information or who just need emotional support, to contact the Senior Center through the Town website, email or by telephone.

### Family & Youth Services Director

Family and Youth Services (FYS) Director June David-Fors indicated that the FYS Department continues to assist and support those in need by email and telephone. The FYS Department has access to an extensive network of social service agencies and resources. A list of essential services is located on the Town website. Ms. David-Fors highlighted the community organizations that are available to residents, including Helping Hands, Northborough Food Pantry, Youth & Family Network and the Northborough Interfaith Clergy Group to name a few. She noted that the Northborough Special Benevolent Fund, Northborough Helping Hands and the Northborough Food Pantry are all in need and are accepting charitable donations.

### School Superintendent

School Superintendent Greg Martineau thanked Mr. Coderre and Town staff for their support and constant communication. This has helped tremendously in the School Department's planning efforts. Since the schools were physically closed in mid-March, students continue to learn on-line with their teachers. He thanked the parents for helping the teachers during this time. Students will continue to receive their education on-line through June 16<sup>th</sup>, while planning efforts are ongoing looking ahead to the start of classes in the Fall.

## **ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

Chairman Perreault stated that questions were received from 16 residents. In some cases, more than one question was submitted by the same person.

### **Jim Dunlap**

Will all residents have to wear masks? Mr. Coderre answered that as of today, under the Governor's Order, masks or face coverings are required in public places where you cannot socially distance from others.

How will the Town enforce "no gatherings"? Chief Lyver indicated that public parks are patrolled several times per day. The focus is on education and awareness. For those that are gathering and not socially distancing, the Police Department will initially offer a mask rather than a ticketed fine.

Will residents who have no sign of the virus have the opportunity to be tested? Mr. Coderre answered that he is not aware of any plans for widespread testing at the local level. He recommended that residents who have been exposed or are experiencing any symptoms contact their primary care doctor.

How does the Town break down those who have contracted COVID-19? Chief Parenti reviewed the total positive cases and explained how cases are broken down, specifically as they relate to skilled nursing and assisted living facilities.

### **Richard Sweet**

Is there a way to purchase Town trash bags through a drive thru to avoid physical contact? DPW Director Scott Charpentier answered that some local retailers selling Town trash bags are offering curbside pick-up. You can purchase bags at Wegmans, Rocky's Hardware and Roach Brothers. He added that residents can also call the DPW Office for trash bags.

### **Erica Zeiger**

Will there be in-person voting on June 30<sup>th</sup> or is it only mail-in options? Town Clerk Andrew Dowd answered that there will be in-person voting at the Middle School on June 30<sup>th</sup>. He explained the process to obtain a ballot by mail for those who do not wish to vote in-person. Ballot request forms are available on the Town Clerk's webpage.

### **Gayle Kellicker**

Why are Police not breaking up groups of 5 or more on school grounds? Chief Lyver indicated that public parks are being patrolled on a regular basis, adding that there are many instances where those who are gathering are from the same residence.

### **Jorge Del CID**

Will the Town run massive tests? If so, when and how? Health Agent Dennis Costello recommended that residents follow the guidance of the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the Department of Public Health (DPH), adding that information regarding plans for widespread testing is not known at this time. The State will continue to update local officials as testing protocols evolve.

Why can't you give general information about the general areas of positives cases in Town? As Chief Parenti explained earlier in the meeting, HIPAA strictly limits personal information to be shared regarding those that have tested positive for COVID-19.

Is there a Task Force for possible surge in the summer? Mr. Coderre reiterated that a local COVID-19 Task Force is already in place and will remain active until there is no longer a need.

### **Carol Chione**

What extra costs can we assume for the future to better protect our Town against COVID? Mr. Coderre answered that in addition to reduced revenues as a result of COVID-19, the Town will continuously monitor and plan for additional expenses, such as those related to opening up facilities (personal protection equipment (PPE), cleaning costs, etc.) in a way that will safely protect customers and employees. All eligible expenses are being tracked to ensure that the Town is reimbursed by the Federal and State Governments for any qualifying expenses.

### **Michael Powell**

Will the Northborough Police interact with residents who are outside exercising and clearly practicing social distancing? Chief Lyver encouraged residents be outside and to practice social distancing.

Can the Town break down how many of the Northborough cases are in long-term care/residence facilities? As Chief Parenti explained earlier, as of today's date in Northborough, there are 98 active cases, of which 63 are those living in skilled nursing or assisted living facilities. A total of 52 people have recovered.

What are the plans for Town Meeting and what are the contingency plans regarding the FY2021 budget if Town Meeting has to be postponed indefinitely? Mr. Coderre answered that the Town Moderator was only allowed to postpone Town Meeting by 30 days, which is how the May 27<sup>th</sup> date came to be. As long as the Governor restricts public gatherings of no more than 10 people, it will be impossible to hold Town Meeting. There are provisions that allow municipalities to move into the new fiscal year on a 1/12 budget basis working with the Division of Local Services of the Department of Revenue. He added that very few municipalities have held Town Meeting, as everyone is waiting to receive information regarding stimulus funding and State Aid from the Federal and State Governments.

### **Lisa Maselli**

Why is the Town putting so much emphasis on State Aid before reworking the budget? Mr. Coderre answered that although State Aid, as a percentage of the budget, has been declining over the years, it is the Town's second largest source of revenue. Based on the last recession, the Town is anticipating at least a 17% reduction in State Aid, which amounts to \$1M.

Why can't the budget be rewritten assuming much less and plan for the worst, but hope for the best? Mr. Coderre answered that this is exactly how the Town is approaching the FY2021 budget. The Town is forecasting a realistic worse-case scenario for State Aid and a realistic worse-case scenario for local receipts. Municipalities are in a holding pattern

until information is known regarding pending Federal Funding for State and Local Governments.

What is the process for revising the Town Meeting Warrant given the economic downturn due to COVID-19? Chairman Perreault explained the annual process of developing the Budget and the Town Meeting Warrant. He noted that the Board of Selectmen previously approved the FY2021 Budget and the Town Meeting Warrant, which sets the table for FY2021 expenditures. Moving forward, nothing needs to be done to revise the Town Meeting Warrant. The Town is in the process of reassessing various budget scenarios to be presented to the Appropriations Committee, Financial Planning Committee and the Board of Selectmen, adding that the School Department is doing the same thing. Following due public process, modifications will be recommended on the existing warrant articles at Town Meeting with recommendations being offered by the various Boards and Committees.

### **Lesley Shore**

Who is in charge of organizing the Town's response to COVID-19? As explained earlier, Fire Chief Parenti stated that a COVID-19 Task Force meets several times during the week, and includes himself, Interim Health Agent Dennis Costello, Police Chief William Lyver, Town Administrator John Coderre, DPW Director Scott Charpentier, Finance Director Jason Little, School Superintendent Greg Martineau, Senior Center Liz Tretiak, Family & Youth Services Director June David-Fors and Town Clerk Andrew Dowd. He extended his appreciation to everyone who serves on the Team.

### **Liz Nolan**

Is there a plan in place to support small businesses once restrictions are lifted? Mr. Coderre reviewed the information and support efforts for small businesses that was provided during the April 27<sup>th</sup> Selectmen's Meeting. Small businesses are encouraged to join the 495 Corridor Chamber of Commerce who continuously offers resources, information and assistance to small businesses. The Town will continue to work closely with the Chamber of Commerce, which is the primary liaison between the business community and Town Government.

Is there a plan to have a more connected and involved economic development committee? Mr. Coderre answered that it's possible that a new initiative may result from the efforts of the upcoming Master Plan Implementation Committee.

With the continued restrictions for public meetings, how will public comment be handled for upcoming meetings? Chairman Perreault stated that the Town is working on providing the correct levels of technical security and training for Board and Committee members and he anticipates adding back the public comments portion of a Selectmen's Meeting Agenda beginning with their meeting on May 18<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Coderre indicated that Town staff and elected officials remain available via email and phone to serve the public. He added that Town staff has been working on developing the proper infrastructure, software, policies and training to support a safe and appropriate opportunity for public comments.

Considering the separation of employment of Health Agent Casey Mellin, will the Interim Health Agent approach the pandemic differently in any way? Interim Health Agent Dennis Costello answered that he will continue to work closely with the local COVID-19 Task

Force, State Department of Public Health, Center for Disease Control and the Public Health Nurse.

**Christine Cobb**

Will the use of masks be enforced by the Police and will fines be given for not wearing them at required times/places? As stated earlier, Chief Lyver indicated that the focus will be on education awareness and compliance. For those that are gathering and not socially distancing, the Police Department will initially offer a mask rather than a ticketed fine.

Are all school grounds closed, including tracks and tennis courts? School Superintendent Greg Martineau answered that school grounds are open and accessible to the public with the exception of the playgrounds. Residents are encouraged to enjoy the grounds providing they practice appropriate social distancing. DPW Director Scott Charpentier stated that the same applies to municipal parks.

How are rules communicated to the Town citizens when not everyone is online/social media? Mr. Coderre answered that the Town is using many available options to communicate to the public, including physical postings at all Town facilities, Town website updates and through the Local Cable Access Channels. In addition, personal telephone calls are being made to seniors and those at-risk. He encouraged residents to contact Town Departments directly for information as well.

When will decisions be made about Town events, including Memorial Day and Applefest? Chairman Perreault answered that a traditional Memorial Day ceremony will not be held this year. Veterans Agent Justin Sousa is going to create a prerecorded Memorial Day Observation that will be broadcast on Memorial Day for viewing through Cable Access Channels and Social Media. Mr. Coderre added that other Town programs and events, such as Summer camps, Applefest and Summer concerts, will be on hold until the Governor lifts the Order on gathering in public places of no more than 10 people.

**Mitch Cohen**

How many residents currently take advantage of the Senior Tax Work-Off Program? Mr. Coderre briefly reviewed the program, adding that approximately 12 residents currently take advantage of this program and receive a \$1,000 credit towards their taxes. This program is coordinated through the Senior Center and will be on hold until all proper safety precautions are in place to protect those taking advantage of the program.

**Suzanne Cieslica**

When will Boards and Committees be able to meet again? As stated earlier, Mr. Coderre answered that Town staff has been working on developing the proper infrastructure, software, policies and training to support a safe and appropriate opportunity to resume public meetings.

**Laura Ziton**

Can the Selectmen please address when they will resume public comments again? As stated earlier, Mr. Coderre answered that Town staff has been working on developing the proper infrastructure, software, policies and training to support a safe and appropriate opportunity to resume public comments.

**Millie Milton**

Are the original salary increases and raises proposed in the budget being reconsidered and if so, how? If not, why? Mr. Coderre answered that the FY2021 Budget includes the last year of contracts for all bargaining units and includes a 2% cost of living increase. He does not anticipate scheduling meetings with all five bargaining units to renegotiate the FY2021 cost of living increase, seeing that negotiations for the successor agreements with all five unions will begin during FY2021. The Town will have a better sense of its financial status in the Fall when talks will begin.

**Additional questions are as follows:**

- Do Towns in Massachusetts individually have the authority to override any of the State regulations or direct their own strategy or phases of re-opening?
- How does Northborough intend to enforce some of these policies?
- What are the penalties for the Town of not enforcing State policies?
- What authority, if any, does the Town have to direct it's own recovery and enforce its own policies?
- Are we able to direct our own as long as we stay within State guidelines?

Mr. Coderre answered that the Town will continue to operate under the Governor's guidance in order to ensure much needed consistency and predictability for residents and businesses alike. Municipalities are required to comply with the Governor's Orders. The Board of Health has designated the Police Department as the enforcement agents of the Board of Health. He added that if any issues arise that warrant additional action specific to Northborough, the Board of Health will take appropriation action.

**Mitch Cohen**

Are there any debt projects the Town may consider accelerating to take advantage of the current low finance rates and likely hungry contractors who may bid very aggressively? Are there any existing debt issuances that might benefit from being refinanced? Finance Director Jason Little answered that the Town works closely with a financial advisor, who is painting a dismal picture for municipal debt at this time, due to the reaction of credit agencies to the stimulus funds not being afforded at the State and Local levels. In consultation with the Town's financial advisor, the current plan is to continue on with short term financing that offers fairly low interest rates, adding that our existing debt is at fairly low interest rates, with some below 2%. Mr. Coderre added that there are a couple of significant DPW projects that are shovel-ready in the case that stimulus funding is provided for that purpose.

Do you anticipate the Town will host any career training events or job fairs, whether in coordination with the Chamber or otherwise, once buildings can re-open? Mr. Coderre indicated that the 495 Corridor Chamber of Commerce is considering organizing a job fair. In its partnership with the Chamber, the Town will be happy to promote this event. The Chamber of Commerce holds many events that draw significant crowds.

Can you provide a breakdown of cases and deaths by residential situation such as assisted group living and other unassisted living? Chairman Perrault referred to Chief Parenti's earlier answer to the same question. As of today's date in Northborough, there are 98 active cases, of which 63 are those living in skilled nursing or assisted living facilities. A total of 52 people have recovered.



Can you speak to any diagnosed cases contracted by workers in public places such as grocery stores, pharmacies and other currently open retail establishments? Mr. Coderre answered that the Town is not aware of any issues within local business establishments that are open to the public. With that being said, he reminded residents to practice social distancing.

Are there any changes to workload due to the current situation, both good and bad? Chief Lyver and Chief Parenti answered that calls for service are down due to less traffic, businesses not being open, etc. Those calls that are coming in are related to an increase in domestic violence, drug overdoses and mental illness situations from the stress of the environment. Both expressed their concerns that residents are hesitant to call on their departments in the case of a medical or domestic emergencies. Residents are reminded that both departments are open for emergencies 24/7. On a lighter note, both departments have participated in 64 drive-by birthday celebrations to date.

How seriously is the general Northborough public treating the recommendations to socially distance and wear face coverings? Mr. Coderre answered that the Town has been consistent in communicating the mandated use of face coverings and the importance of social distancing. It seems that residents want to do the right thing in protecting themselves and their fellow Northborough residents.

### **Caitlin Borsini**

How can the Town encourage more markets to switch to curbside pickup and have more pickup times available? Chairman Perreault answered that the Town is not in a position to influence and/or encourage businesses to operate in a certain manner. He encouraged residents to contact the businesses directly to inquire about providing certain services.

Could we consider staggered days/times for recreational use of public space to reduce crowding in trails/skate parks/play areas when they re-open? Mr. Coderre agreed that this is an interesting concept, but it would be difficult to implement. He encouraged residents to enjoy the outside and to socially distance responsibly.

### **FINAL COMMENTS**

School Superintendent Greg Martineau thanked educators and families for their support during this time. Thanked the COVID-19 Task Force for their continued support and partnership.

Board of Health Chair Glenn French indicated that the Board of Health and the Health Department remain fully staffed and will continue to work with the various groups to get through this.

Selectman Hirsh thanked the COVID-19 Task Force for their efforts and thanked the residents for submitting their questions for tonight's meeting.

Selectman Rutan thanked Senior Center Director Liz Tretiak for the outreach efforts to the seniors and at-risk residents. In answer to Selectman Rutan's question, Ms. Tretiak indicated that the general sense is that needs of the residents are being met by their own network of family and friends, but they appreciated the phone call.

Selectman Kaelin thanked everyone for doing their part. He thanked the parents and families who have taken on the task of homeschooling their children. Also thanked the School Department and teachers for their efforts in continuing to provide education to Northborough students.

Selectman Rand thanked everyone for doing their part. Also thanked the Police and Fire Departments for conducting the drive-by birthday parties.

Chairman Perreault thanked those residents who took the time to submit questions and comments in anticipation of tonight's meeting. He assured residents that the Town will continue to be as responsive as possible to the needs of the community. He thanked all who participated in tonight's meeting to provide information to the public. He thanked Town Clerk Andrew Dowd for his efforts with the election process and wished the best of luck to him, his assistant Karen Wilber and the election workers during the time leading up to the election on June 30<sup>th</sup>.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

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

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

Meeting adjourned at 8:25p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane M. Wackell  
Executive Assistant to the  
Board of Selectmen

### **Documents used during meeting:**

1. May 7, 2020 Meeting Agenda
2. April 27, 2020 Meeting Minutes
3. Resident questions