

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
INTERVIEW SUB-COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES – March 29, 2021**

7:00 p.m. - Introduction to Remote Meeting

Selectman Perreault stated that this Open Meeting of the Board of Selectmen Interview Committee is 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 COVID-19. In order to mitigate the transmission of the COVID-19 Virus, the Town of Northborough has been advised and directed by the Commonwealth to suspend public gatherings, and as such, the Governor's Order suspends the requirement of the Open Meeting Law to have all meetings in a publicly accessible physical location.

Selectman 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. He added that ensuring public access does not ensure public participation unless such participation is required by law. This meeting will not feature public comment. He indicated the various ways that the public may view or participate in this meeting as listed on the posted agenda.

Meeting Business Ground Rules

Selectman Perreault covered the ground rules for effective and clear conduct of the business. He asked those present to mute their phone or computer when not speaking and to speak clearly and in a way that helps generate accurate meeting minutes.

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.

Selectman Jason Perreault
Selectman Scott Rogers
Zoning Board of Appeals Clerk Paul Tagliaferri

INTERVIEWS FOR THE ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS (ZBA)

Selectman Perreault noted that tonight's meeting is to conduct interviews for the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). Two regular voting seats are up for reappointment of which the incumbents are seeking reappointment; and one alternate seat is up for reappointment of which the incumbent is not seeking reappointment. In addition, there are four new applicants that will be interviewed this evening. The incumbents will be interviewed on March 31st, after which time he and Selectman Rogers will deliberate and arrive at their recommendation for appointments to be presented to the Board of Selectmen for their consideration at their meeting on April 12, 2021.

Selectman Perreault noted that he and Selectman Rogers are substituting regular Interview Committee members Selectmen Rutan and Kaelin who perceive themselves to have a

conflict of interest with respect to some of the applicants. He added that ZBA Clerk Paul Tagliaferri will be present during the interviews to provide information about the ZBA and to answer any questions the applicants may have.

Lastly, he noted that in the interest of conducting the open interviews as fairly as possible, he contacted each of the applicants by email asking them to not view the YouTube livestream in advance and during the interviews being conducted this evening. He asked applicants that if they are viewing the livestream to please discontinue doing so. He also asked that family members or friends of the applicants not share any information about the interviews.

John Wixted

Selectman Perreault informed Mr. Wixted of tonight's interviews and the process leading up to the Interview Committee's recommendation for appointments or reappointments to the ZBA at the April 12, 2021 Board of Selectmen Meeting.

Mr. Wixted indicated that he has been a resident of Northborough since 2004. He explained that his interest in volunteering for the ZBA is the result of being involved with the Town due to traffic and safety issues in his neighborhood. He continued to gain interest in Town affairs once he started to understand the workings of Town Government. He wants to play a role in making the Town better. He added that over the course of the last year or so, he has learned that process is an important component of the ZBA in terms of what the intent of the zoning bylaws and zoning regulations are and how they can be applied in a sensible, straight forward and honest fashion in line with the goals of the Master Plan.

Mr. Wixted indicated that his understanding of the role of the ZBA is that it is a Board that allows for interpretation of the zoning bylaws under certain circumstances when applicants are seeking a variance. Their role is to understand the intent of the zoning bylaw and to apply that knowledge when considering an application to determine what is good for both the applicant and the Town. The ZBA needs to come to a reasonable solution when considering applications that allows residents to enjoy their property within the guidelines of the zoning bylaws.

Mr. Wixted indicated that he had a conversation with a former ZBA member and understands the time commitment and preparation required, both in meetings and outside of meetings. Along with his responsibilities to his profession and his family, he is able to make a commitment to serve in good faith. Although he does not have specific professional qualifications to serve on the ZBA, he has lived in Northborough for a long time and has spent a lot of time over the past year reading the zoning bylaws and various regulations in Town and feels that he now has a good understanding of how the Town is governed.

Mr. Wixted indicated that he has never appeared as a petitioner before the ZBA or Planning Board. He did work with an architect when planning an addition to his house and after a review of the zoning process decided to not seek a variance at that time. He noted that in the last year or so he has offered a lot of input at both ZBA and Planning Board hearings. In terms of preparation and research relating to the ZBA and the zoning bylaw, he had a conversation with a former ZBA member. He also researched various ZBA job

descriptions, and although he did not find anything specific for Northborough, he did find some information from other Towns.

Mr. Wixted indicated that he does not regularly attend Town Meeting and when he has been at a Town Meeting he was not there for any specific interest.

Mr. Wixted asked what the ZBA would be looking for in a new member? Mr. Tagliaferri responded that although the ZBA does not develop or review the zoning bylaws, it's important for ZBA members to have a deep understanding of the zoning bylaws and how they should be enforced. He added that it would be an advantage to have some legal knowledge. It's also important to be immersed in the community, to have the ability to review large amounts of data and to be able to make tough decisions.

Mr. Tagliaferri added that he served on the ZBA first as an alternate for approximately 2 years before being appointed as a voting member 4 years ago.

Jonathan Rea

Mr. Rea confirmed that he did not view the YouTube live stream of the prior interview, nor did he receive any communication regarding the prior interview from others.

Selectman Perreault informed Mr. Rea of the purpose of tonight's interviews and the process leading up to the Interview Committee's recommendation for appointments or reappointments to the ZBA at the April 12, 2021 Board of Selectmen Meeting.

Mr. Rea indicated that he has been a resident of Northborough since 2012. He explained that his interest in volunteering for the ZBA is the result of his continued interest since applying to the ZBA back in 2019. He noted that 3 very important components of Town Government are the roles of the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board and ZBA. All are high impact jobs that make the most impact and require a lot of commitment and preparation. He wants to serve on a Board or Committee that makes the most impact and ZBA does just that. He added that his interest in serving on the ZBA has nothing to do with recent concerns brought to the Town's attention by his neighborhood.

Mr. Rea indicated that his understanding of the role of the ZBA is that they are responsible for understanding and interpreting the zoning bylaws in terms of variances and special permits in order to better support the development of the Town. He understands that the time commitment is extensive, adding that he is able to prioritize his time to make this commitment. As far as his qualifications to serve on the ZBA, he indicated that professionally he has served as a leader in a business development department of a medical device company for the past 25 years. He is responsible for mergers and acquisitions and acts as part negotiator, part lawyer and part finance. He has experience in interpreting legal agreements and making sure that everyone involved has the same understanding. He has also had experience dealing with situations that are both ambiguous and complex.

Mr. Rea indicated that he has not ever appeared as a petitioner before the ZBA or Planning Board. He did provide input at a Planning Board meeting relating to traffic and safety concerns on Bartlett Street due to the recent increase in distribution companies in that area.

In terms of preparation and research relating to the ZBA and the zoning bylaw, he noted that he has been an interested observer of both the ZBA and Planning Board meetings and as a result has gained a sense of the various applications that appear before them. He has also had conversations with ZBA and Planning Board members.

Mr. Rea indicated that he has attended Town Meetings for the past 4 or 5 years and recalled one interesting Town Meeting article concerning a duplex zoning issue. In response to Selectman Perreault's question whether he was referring to a citizen petition warrant article concerning duplexes, Mr. Rea said he did not recall the article specifically, but it may have been. Mr. Rea also mentioned other matters that had been before the Planning Board and ZBA, and candidly stated he considered those to be more interesting to him than zoning-related articles at Town Meeting.

Mr. Rea asked what the ZBA does in best practice and where does there need to be improvement? Selectman Perreault responded that ZBA members need to invest a lot of time to understand the zoning bylaws and the legal framework in which they operate under in order to arrive at decisions that are desired and suitable and will withstand any legal appeal. It's also important for ZBA members to be able to navigate and have an appropriate and full consideration of the matters before them in order to arrive at sound decisions. Selectman Rogers agreed with Selectman Perreault, adding that ZBA members need to be able to consider each application with an understanding that will result in delivering a fair decision.

Mr. Tagliaferri noted that it's important for ZBA members to understand how the zoning bylaws are interpreted and should be enforced. It's important that members have a deep understanding of the town's zoning bylaws, for example what separates business west from business east. He added that it would be an advantage to have some legal knowledge. It's also important to be immersed in the community, to have the ability to review large amounts of data and to be able to make tough decisions.

Mr. Rea ended his interview stating that he understands that ZBA members do not just attend monthly meetings. He understands that there is a lot of preparation for matters that can be considered complicated and he is committed to putting in the time. He added that he is deeply involved in the community having knowledge of its many trails. He has experience serving as a coach for Little League baseball, soccer and softball and serves as a member of the Northborough Education Foundation. He feels that he is a highly committed member of the community that is capable of doing the job of a ZBA Member and is asking for a chance to put in the work.

Ashley Davies

Ms. Davies confirmed that she did not view the YouTube live stream of any of the prior interviews, nor did she receive any communication regarding the prior interviews from others.

Selectman Perreault informed Ms. Davies of the purpose of tonight's interviews and the process leading up to the Interview Committee's recommendation for appointments or reappointments to the ZBA at the April 12, 2021 Board of Selectmen Meeting.

Ms. Davies indicated that she has been a resident of Northborough since 2009 and her interest in serving on the ZBA stems from her professional career working with land conservation. She also serves on the Open Space Committee. She has interest serving on a Board or Committee that has more to do with town planning by overseeing the structure of how the community is laid out. For that reason, this seems like a good opportunity.

Ms. Davies indicated that her understanding of the role of the ZBA is that they are responsible for overseeing the ongoing zoning bylaws, considering applications for variances and special permits and reviewing bylaws to bring to Town Meeting. She noted that she understands the time commitment and preparation required, both in meetings and outside of meetings. She is ready and willing to commit to the monthly meetings and the several hours of review in preparation of each meeting.

In terms of her qualifications for serving as a member of the ZBA, Ms. Davies indicated that she is very familiar with what her duties would be as a ZBA member. She serves as a Regional Planner in Agriculture and Conservation for the State of MA, is a licensed attorney and a certified mediator. She works with property owners in reviewing survey plans and site visits to determine allowable uses of their properties within the zoning bylaws of the respective town they are working or living in to ensure that they are giving themselves every opportunity to rightfully do what they want with their property.

Ms. Davies indicated that she appeared before the ZBA as a petitioner when she wanted to build a garage on her strangely shaped lot. She applied for and was granted several variances for minor setbacks. She provided input at a recent Planning Board meeting where she offered her knowledge on the natural resources in the area relative to a special permit application for 0 Bartlett Street. She added that she would like to see the zoning bylaws amended to protect the area of Stirrup Brook and the important natural resources that are just to the north of that site.

In terms of preparation and research relating to the ZBA and the zoning bylaw, she has reviewed most of the zoning bylaws and read up on what guides the ZBA when considering variances and special permits. She also spoke with a ZBA member to get a sense of their experience on the Board and obtained some materials that would help her learn about the ZBA.

Ms. Davies indicated that since 2009 she has attended every Town Meeting except for one with no specific interest in mind. She did find the article relating to a moratorium on solar interesting, but did not publicly express an opinion one way or another.

Ms. Davies asked what qualities would make a ZBA member successful? Mr. Tagliaferri noted that the ZBA does not develop or review the zoning bylaws, but it's important for ZBA members to understand how the zoning bylaws should be enforced. It's important that members have a deep understanding of the town's zoning bylaws and how decisions are made when considering special permits and variances. He added that it would be an advantage to have some legal knowledge. It's also important to be immersed in the community, to have the ability to review large amounts of data and to be able to make tough decisions.

Selectman Perreault noted that Ms. Davies is a member of the Open Space Committee and also serves as the Open Space Committee's representative on the Master Plan Implementation Committee. He asked that if she were to be appointed to the ZBA, would she consider relinquishing her service on these committees? She responded that as a member of the Master Plan Steering Committee, she would very much like to see the implementation process through and would have to think more about this.

Suzanne Cieslica

Selectman Perreault informed Ms. Cieslica of the purpose of tonight's interviews and the process leading up to the Interview Committee's recommendation for appointments or reappointments to the ZBA at the April 12, 2021 Board of Selectmen Meeting.

Ms. Cieslica confirmed that she did not view the YouTube live stream of any of the prior interview, nor did she receive any communication regarding the prior interviews from others.

Ms. Cieslica indicated that she has been a resident of Northborough since 2012. Her interest in serving on the ZBA comes from her interest in land related issues. She has a background in real estate and is entering a time when a volunteer project is coming to a close. With more time on her hands she has viewed a lot of ZBA meetings and feels like this a time for new members that can bring fresh voices and new experiences.

Ms. Cieslica indicated that her understanding of the role of the ZBA is that they are responsible for considering applications for variances in instances where the Zoning Enforcement Officer denies an application for a proposed development or improvement or a change in the structure on a certain piece of land. The ZBA would review the application and either agree with the decision of the Zoning Enforcement Officer or grant a variance. It is also the role of the ZBA to take care of the environment and to preserve the community through the guidelines of the zoning bylaws. She noted that she understands the time commitment and preparation required, both in meetings and outside of meetings and she is able to make that commitment.

In terms of her qualifications for serving as a member of the ZBA, Ms. Cieslica indicated that she is a retired attorney and has worked in both commercial and residential real estate. She has worked closely with Zoning and Planning Boards in New York State in rewriting zoning laws offering different definitions and opportunities. She has never appeared nor provided input at a ZBA or Planning Board meeting.

In terms of preparation and research relating to the ZBA and the zoning bylaws, she has read over the Town Code and some State Codes to refamiliarize herself with some of the topics and terms again. She did not reach out to any ZBA or Planning Board members in preparation of tonight's interview. She noted that she recently served on a focus group for Assabet Park as a parent of three young children. She has had recent conversations with the DPW Director regarding various items and has spoken to Selectman Rogers regarding community wide events coordinated by the Community Affairs Committee.

Ms. Cieslica indicated that in the nine years that she has been a Northborough resident, she has attended 7 Town Meetings. Although she hasn't attended any Town Meetings with one specific interest in mind, she is interested in the White Cliffs and Fire Station projects. She also found the warrant article regarding the solar zoning bylaw interesting.

Ms. Cieslica asked Mr. Tagliaferri what his favorite part of serving on the ZBA is? Mr. Tagliaferri responded that he has a deep interest in what happens in Town and the ZBA is a Board that can make an impact. He enjoys his understanding of the Town's zoning bylaws and how decisions are made when considering special permits and variances. He added that it is not an easy job and ZBA members have to understand the amount of work that goes into every application. She asked how long the ZBA members have served? Mr. Tagliaferri stated that he could only speak for himself and that he has served for approximately 6 years. It was acknowledged that ZBA Members Dick Rand and Mark Rutan are likely the longest serving members.

Selectman Perreault noted that he and Selectman Rogers have not asked candidates to apply for a specific seat whether it be the voting seat or the alternate seat. When they begin deliberations, they will consider appointments or reappointments for both the two voting seats and the alternate seat.

Ms. Cieslica asked how the ZBA would work with the Master Plan Implementation Committee (MPIC)? Selectman Perreault provided information about the makeup of the MPIC and indicated that the Planning Board would undertake any revisions or additions to the zoning bylaws as a complimentary process to the work of the MPIC. Although the ZBA would not work to any significant extent with the MPIC, they may have input at some points during the implementation process.

Selectman Perreault noted that the Board of Selectmen Interview Committee will meet on Wednesday, March 31st to interview the two incumbents. A deliberation will follow before making a recommendation for appointments or reappointments to the ZBA at the April 12th Board of Selectmen meeting. He thanked Mr. Tagliaferri for attending the interviews this evening.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:10pm, Selectman Rogers moved the Subcommittee vote to adjourn; Selectman Perreault seconded the motion. The roll call vote was taken as follows:

Selectman Rogers “aye”
Selectman Perreault “aye”

Respectfully submitted,

Diane M. Wackell
Executive Assistant to the
Board of Selectmen

Documents used during meeting:

1. March 29, 2021 Meeting Agenda
2. Applications to the Zoning Board of Appeals