

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES – May 18, 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. He added that ensuring public access does not ensure public participation unless such participation is required by law. Chairman Perreault noted that this meeting will allow for Public Comment. He indicated the various ways that the public may view or participate in this meeting as listed on the posted agenda. Public comment will be limited to 3 minutes per person.

Chairman Perreault reminded all participants and attendees that this meeting is being recorded and others will be able to see you.

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 those who wish to speak under Public Comment will be admitted to the meeting as an Attendee and will be asked to provide their full name and address for the record.

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.

Board of Selectmen

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

Town Staff

John Coderre, Town Administrator
David Parenti, Fire Chief
William Lyver, Police Chief
Scott Charpentier, DPW Director
Jason Little, Finance Director
Andrew Dowd, Town Clerk
David Kane, MIS Director
Dana Volke, Cable Studio Assistant
Fred George, Town Moderator

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – APRIL 27, 2020 REGULAR MEETING

Selectman Rand moved the Board vote to approve the April 27, 2020 Meeting Minutes, Selectman Rutan seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – MAY 7, 2020 REGULAR MEETING

Selectman Rand moved the Board vote to approve the May 7, 2020 Meeting Minutes, Selectman Kaelin seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

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

7:10 p.m. - RICHARD CURRIER – AMERICAN LEGION

To consider an application to change the officers and the manager for the All Alcoholic Club License for premises located at 402 West Main Street.

Mr. Currier introduced himself as the current Post Commander of the American Legion. He indicated that the officers and directors of the Vincent F. Picard Post #234 d/b/a American Legion have changed since they were last formally updated several years ago. He has also been appointed to serve as the manager of record.

The Officers/Directors are as follows:

Richard Currier, President and Manager of Record
 William Callaghan, Vice President
 Matthew Edwards, Treasurer
 James Clifford, Clerk

It was noted that Detective Sergeant Brian Griffin conducted a background check on all of the above and has no concerns to report. Mr. Currier is TIPS Certified.

Selectman Kaelin moved the Board vote to approve the application as submitted by Vincent F. Picard Post #234 d/b/a American Legion to change the officers and the manager of record for their All Alcoholic Veterans Club License for premises located at 402 West Main Street; Selectman Rutan seconded the motion; the roll call was taken as follows:

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

7:15 p.m. - BRAD MILLER – MILLER FARM, INC.

To consider an application for a Common Victualler License as submitted by Brad Miller d/b/a/ Miller Farm, Inc. for premises located at 277 Main Street.

Mr. Miller introduced himself as the new owner of the former Trombetta’s Farm located at 277 Main Street. Miller Farm will be operated similar to the previous use. The license is needed for the outside picnic tables. There is no seating inside the building.

Selectman Hirsh moved the Board vote to approve the application as submitted by Brad Miller d/b/a Miller Farm for a Common Victualler License for premises located at 277 Main Street with the condition that the licensee receive satisfactory inspections by the Building, Fire and Health Departments; Selectman Rand seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

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

FRED GEORGE – TOWN MODERATOR

Postponement of May 27, 2020 Annual Town Meeting

Town Moderator Fred George recommended to postpone the Annual Town Meeting within the maximum 30 days allowable under the law to June 22, 2020.

Mr. Coderre added that because the Town operates under the open town meeting structure and because public gatherings of no more than 10 persons is discouraged, Town Meeting should be postponed. Town staff is preparing to hold the Annual Town Meeting on June 22nd. In the event that the Governor does not provide further guidance regarding the conduct of Open Town Meetings, or if it cannot be held safely, the Town will move forward with the 1/12 budget.

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 May 27, 2020 Annual Town Meeting to June 22, 2020 at 7pm; Selectman Kaelin seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

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

ANDREW DOWD – TOWN CLERK

Set polling hours for June 30, 2020 Town Election

Town Clerk Andrew Dowd indicated that recent legislation has allowed for all voters to vote by mail during the spring municipal elections. To date, the Town Clerk’s Office has mailed approximately 225 ballots to Northborough voters. It is evident that the vast majority of Northborough voters will likely take advantage of the vote by mail option due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Dowd stated that the law requires that the polling place be open for a minimum of 4 hours and must be open by 12noon at the latest. Normal polling places are usually open from 7am-8pm. In line with many of the area communities who have reduced their polling hours, he recommended that the Board execute the Town Election Warrant, which indicates that the polling place will be at the Melican Middle School on Tuesday, June 30, 2020 from 12pm – 7pm.

Following comments and questions from members of the Board, Mr. Dowd 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.

Selectman Rutan moved the Board vote to approve and execute the June 30, 2020 Town Election Warrant as submitted by Town Clerk Andrew Dowd; Selectman Kaelin seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

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

FY2021 BUDGET UPDATE

Mr. Coderre reviewed the typical budget process, which involves the Board of Selectmen, the Appropriations Committee and the Financial Planning Committee. He indicated that tonight’s budget update is to provide the Board with a general idea of where the budget stands as it relates to the COVID-19 pandemic. Its impact on the Town’s finances has been immediate with reduced revenues, new costs, and near complete uncertainty regarding state and federal assistance. Tonight’s update will include amendments that are being proposed to what was the level service budget previously presented to the Board at their March 23, 2020 meeting.

Mr. Coderre reported that in terms of a revised revenue projection for State Aid, the Town is assuming a 17% reduction in State Aid, which is approximately \$1 million. The most recent forecast from the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation indicates a potential reduction in State revenues of 14%. Based upon a review of the last three previous recessions, the highest single year reduction in State Aid to the Town was 17%. While this assumption has many variables, not the least of which is when the economy will open back up, the estimated reduction of 17% leans heavily to the “worst-case scenario.”

Mr. Coderre indicated that with regard to Local Receipts, which include the elastic revenue sources that tend to move with the economy, such as hotel and meals taxes, building permits and motor vehicle excise (MVE), the Town’s revised forecast assumes a 14% reduction, which is \$631,000. This assumption is based upon previous recessionary experiences, coupled with the impacts to-date from the shutdown of non-essential businesses and the likelihood that any phased reopening will be slow to improve these revenues. He added that Northborough has an allocation of approximately \$1.3M in Federal relief funds that will become available at some point. These funds can only be used for direct expenses associated with fighting COVID-19. It is not known when or if the funds will be allowed for general revenue replacement.

Mr. Coderre indicated that although his update will discuss overall revenue trends and will refer to the K-8 and Algonquin Regional High School (ARHS) Budgets, it will focus primarily on amendments to the General Government departments. He stated that the School Superintendent presented the School Committee with a revised FY2021 K-8 Budget on May 14th that proposed to reduce the original 3.15% budget increase down to 1%. The Superintendent is also scheduled to present a revised FY2021 ARHS Budget on May 20th, and it is anticipated that the overall budget increase of 3.31% will be reduced to 1.5%, resulting in a reduction of Northborough’s Operating Assessment from 4.36% to an estimated 2.31%. He added that the Town has not received any updated information from the Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School.

Mr. Coderre indicated that \$427,305 in reductions to the General Government departments is required in order to bring in a 1% budget increase comparable to the K-8 Schools per the revenue sharing model. The reductions include elimination of the vacant Facilities Manager position, the 50% General Fund share of the Assistant DPW Director position (the remaining salary was cut from the water & sewer enterprise funds), potential furloughing of Recreation staff, and elimination of the newly expanded Thursday hours at the Library. The reductions also include postponement of the Classification/Compensation Study and a reduction in the amount of call firefighter wages to better reflect the recent decline in call ranks. The total salary related reductions amount to \$266,234.

Mr. Coderre reported that reductions also include a proposed reorganization of the Assessor’s Office to bring field work into the office. The proposed reorganization is expected to have a net savings of approximately \$32,860. He added that other areas of reduction include various consulting and supply lines for \$71,751; reductions in all departmental travel and training for \$28,960; and \$27,500 in reduced capital and equipment expenditures from the operating budgets of the Police, Fire, DPW and MIS/GIS Departments.

Mr. Coderre reviewed the process moving forward. As the Town Moderator and Board of Selectmen just voted to postpone Town Meeting to June 22, 2020, the below schedule would be followed to finalize the proposed budget changes in preparation for Town Meeting action.

- May 20, 2020: the Regional School Committee votes on a revised FY2021 Budget and Assessment
- May 27, 2020: the Financial Planning Committee meets to review and vote on the revised FY2021 Capital Budget and postponed projects
- May 28, 2020: the Appropriations Committee meets to review the revised K-8 School Budget, ARHS Budget and General Government Budget
- June 4, 2020: a Joint Meeting with the Board of Selectmen, Appropriations Committee, Financial Planning Committee and K-8 School Committee is held to review the total impacts of the proposed budget changes for Town Meeting
- June 8, 2020 Board of Selectmen hold a public hearing on the revised budget and vote their recommendations

Mr. Coderre indicated that the Town is moving forward using a worse-case planning scenario that leaves the Town of Northborough with a balanced and viable budget to be presented at the June 22nd Town Meeting. The proposed budget will take into consideration everything that was presented this evening. If Federal relief funds were to become available over the next several months, that would only better the worse-case scenario. He anticipates that another Town Meeting may be necessary in the Fall.

Mr. Coderre indicated that if Town Meeting cannot be held on June 22nd due to the ongoing emergency, the Town will prepare a 1/12 budget for the Board of Selectmen's consideration to be approved in accordance with the process outlined in Chapter 53 of the Acts of 2020.

Mr. Coderre noted that the complete Revised Budget Update document can be found on the Town Administration webpage, and the School Superintendent's K-8 and Regional budget reduction documents are available on the School website.

Chairman Perreault thanked Mr. Coderre, Finance Director Jason Little, School Superintendent Greg Martineau, as well as the Department Directors for their efforts in this long arduous process.

Members of the Board extended their appreciation to Mr. Coderre and Town staff.

In response to a question from Selectman Rutan, Mr. Coderre spoke to the advantages that the Town has over other communities due to its Financial Trend Monitoring System and the policies, procedures, cooperation and collaboration that were put in place by design over the years.

In response to a question from Selectman Hirsh, Mr. Coderre indicated that the best opportunity for public comments relating to the budget will be at the Public Hearing to be held by the Board of Selectmen on June 8th and at the June 22nd Town Meeting. In the meantime, comments can be submitted via email directly to the Town Administrator, which he will forward to the appropriate committee.

In response to a question from Selectman Hirsh, Mr. Coderre explained the rationale with presenting a revised budget at the June 22 Town Meeting versus moving forward with a 1/12 budget on month-to-month basis.

In response to a question from Selectman Rand, Mr. Coderre reviewed the policies and procedures relating to the Stabilization Fund. He does not anticipate having to draw from the Stabilization Fund in FY2021.

At the request of Chairman Perreault, Mr. Coderre reviewed the process if the Town were to move forward with a 1/12 budget. He indicated that approval of the monthly budget would be needed by the Board of Selectmen and the Department of Revenue. He added that a formal budget will have to be adopted prior to the setting of the tax rate in November,

REPORTS

Julianne Hirsh

- In honor of Memorial Day, paid tribute to the members of the Armed Forces who made the ultimate sacrifice. Encouraged residents to visit the War Memorials to pay tribute in a manner allowed through proper social distancing.
- Stressed the importance of communicating the dates of Town Meeting and Town Election to residents through as many venues as possible.
- Questioned what is in place for Town leadership in the event that Mr. Coderre is not available? Mr. Coderre responded that the Finance Director would be appointed to serve as the Acting Town Administrator.
- Questioned if an Interim Assistant Town Administrator can be appointed? Mr. Coderre responded that he has engaged a consultant to help with the recruitment of an Assistant Town Administrator, adding that he appreciates that the Board understands the critical nature of this position.
- Requested that a discussion be added to the next meeting agenda regarding a new Economic Development Committee. Chairman Perreault responded that he will take this request under advisement considering how stretched Town staff is at this time given the pandemic and the state of emergency currently in place.

Leslie Rutan

- Thanked everyone in the community who is doing their part during this pandemic.
- Good luck and best wishes to the Algonquin High School class of 2020.
- Attended a recent MMA Webinar that provided updated information on legislative efforts relating to COVID-19.
- Noted that a proposal will be considered by the Regional School Committee to change the classroom start time from 7:20am to 8:00am. The classroom start time for the elementary and middle schools will remain the same.
- Wished Sean Bevan the best of luck as he is a finalist for the Algonquin Principal position. Noted that he was a former English teacher at Algonquin.

Tim Kaelin, Clerk

- Congratulations to the Algonquin High School class of 2020. Extended his gratitude for the sacrifices that they have had to make during this pandemic.
- Acknowledged the sacrifices that all students in Town have had to make during this pandemic.
- Reminded residents to support local businesses.
- Noted that the Town Election is on June 30th. Encouraged residents to vote.

Dawn Rand, Vice Chair

- Congratulations to the Algonquin High School class of 2020.
- At her request, the DPW Director shared the following public message:
- Buildings and businesses being closed for weeks or months reduces water usage, which potentially leads to stagnant water inside the building plumbing. This water can become unsafe to drink or use otherwise for domestic or commercial purposes. Northborough Public Works recommends that building owners and managers take proactive steps to protect public health by minimizing water stagnation during closures and taking action to address building water quality prior to reopening.

Jason Perreault, Chair

- Congratulations to the Algonquin High School class of 2020. Extended his appreciation to the students under these unusual circumstances.
- Reminded residents to support local businesses to the extent that you are able.
- Noted that a traditional Memorial Day ceremony will not be held this year. Veterans Agent Justin Sousa is creating a pre-recorded Memorial Day Observation that will be broadcast on Memorial Day for viewing through Cable Access Channels and Social Media.
- Congratulated Veterans Agent Justin Sousa for a recent press article featuring his years of service to our Country. Thanked Mr. Sousa for all that he does on behalf of Veterans.
- Congratulated the 29 recipients of the 10th Annual “Go the Distance Award” as nominated by the Northborough Southborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council. Although a public reception for the recipients cannot be held this year, information about the 29 recipients can be found at www.nspac.org. The district staff and community members who were nominated deserve a moment to know that they have made a positive impact on a special education student this academic year. Chairman Perreault read aloud the name of each recipient.

John Coderre

- Noted that Town staff is reviewing the Governor’s Advisory regarding the initial phases of re-opening the economy. It is likely that municipal buildings and in-person services will continue to be closed to the public until the end of June at the earliest. In the meantime, DPW Director Scott Charpentier is the Chair of a Re-Opening Committee that is planning for a phased-in reopening. He added that decisions will be made about Recreation programs as early as this week.
- Acknowledged the Department Directors, and especially thanked Finance Director Jason Little for the hours of work that went into the Revised FY2021 Budget as proposed this evening.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Mr. Coderre indicated that the Board will next meet on June 8th. He also reminded the Board of the Budget Presentation on June 4th.

EXECUTION OF CEMETERY DEEDS 1096 & 1097

Selectman Hirsh moved the Board vote to execute Cemetery Deeds 1096 & 1097; Selectman Rand seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

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

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

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

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

Meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane M. Wackell
Executive Assistant to the
Board of Selectmen

Documents used during meeting:

1. May 18, 2020 Meeting Agenda
2. April 27, 2020 Meeting Minutes
3. May 7, 2020 Meeting Minutes
4. Information packet – American Legion
5. Information packet – Miller Farm, Inc.
6. Second Declaration to postpone Annual Town Meeting
7. Memorandum and Town Election Warrant
8. Memorandum – FY2021 Budget Update
9. Cemetery Deeds