

## Minutes of the Selectmen's Work Session March 17, 2020

Members present: Scott Young, Chairman, and Bryant Scott, Brian Monahan  
In attendance: Fire Chief/ Emergency Management Director Scott Whitehouse, Town Clerk Christine Bane, Safety Committee Members Ellen White and Linda Pape

The Selectmen's Work Session was called to order at 5:30PM.

The first order of business was to elect a new chairman of the Selectboard. Bryant Scott nominated Scott Young for the position. Brian Monahan seconded the nomination. A vote was taken:

Bryant Scott – Aye, Scott Young - Aye, Brian Monahan – Aye

Scott Young will serve as Chairman for the upcoming year. It was noted that this is the first time since 1986 that 3 men have sat on the Board of Selectmen.

The minutes of the March 10, 2020 Work Session were reviewed and approved. Board members reviewed and signed contracts for the Police Department for the upcoming year, with some explanation of benefits for the newest Board member, Mr. Monahan. Other contracts and notices of pay rate will be ready for the March 24<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Joann Brown was appointed as an alternate Library Trustee. Other appointments are postponed until a later date.

The remainder of the business of the meeting revolved around the current Covid-19 situation. Safety Committee members, Ellen White and Linda Pape were in attendance to hear any updates and recommendations from Emergency Management Director Scott Whitehouse.

Governor Sununu has suggested that gatherings be limited to no more than 50 people and that social distancing be practiced; the federal government recommendations are for 10 per gathering. This meeting and future meetings will be held in the Conference Room which can accommodate approximately 10 to 20 people while practicing the 6 foot social distancing guideline. March 24<sup>th</sup> is the next scheduled Selectmen's Meeting; attendance may be limited.

The Selectmen discussed operations at the Town Hall. Many transactions may be completed online, and residents will be encouraged to do so. Payroll for Town employees should not experience any problems as remote access is available. The Building Inspectors will have information posted on the website so that they may be contacted by cell phone to complete inspections and issue permits.

Scott Whitehouse briefed the Board members on some recent meetings he has and information he has concerning the Covid-19 situation in NH and surrounding states, along with thoughts for the Selectmen to consider.

- If the Town Hall is to remain open, Chief Whitehouse suggested having residents make "reservations" for the business they wish to conduct so as to limit the number of people in the building at any one time. It was noted that, this being Tuesday, the lobby was pretty busy, but social distancing seemed to be in practice. People have varying degrees of social distancing awareness along with varying degrees of concern over the virus.
- Chief Whitehouse is not permitting public access to the Fire Station in an effort to limit the exposure experienced by his personnel. The board agreed that restricting access to both the

Fire and Police Stations was a good practice at this time. For both departments, concerns and inquiries will be answered by phone, with limited exposure to the public on calls.

- The Fire Department has established protocol for possible contact. They would get higher priority for testing. Bryant Scott spoke about some legislation being put forward that would address compensation for first responders who contract Covid-19 while on a call.
- Testing for the general public is limited at this point and not until every metric is present.
- As Fire Warden, Chief Whitehouse cannot suspend burning, but residents must go through the State/online to apply. There will be a \$3.00 service fee.
- Chief Whitehouse reported on the status of the department's supplies on hand and on order. With the Emergency declaration in place, many of the supplies he purchases during this time will qualify for a 75% reimbursement from the federal government.
- The State will have routine and regular teleconferences with Emergency Management Directors. Strafford County has a teleconference on Wednesday.
- The Governor now closed bars and restaurants and places of assembly.
- The disaster declaration has a classification of 3. Both Rockingham and Grafton County have confirmed cases. There is no statewide mapping at this time, only by counties. The Chief expects this to get worse in the next 14 days. Massachusetts has a couple hundred cases.
- The Chief suggested basic, ferocious handwashing as protective measure as well as **frequent** sanitizing.
- Out of caution, it was Chief Whitehouse's recommendation that the Town Office be closed to prevent contact with people who don't even know they have the virus. He welcomed the Selectmen to call him with any questions.

Not related to the Covid-19 situation, Chief Whitehouse told the Selectmen that he had ordered the ambulance and 94% of equipment that had been approved at Town Meeting. He is pleased with the price they received which is slightly less than the last estimate. It will be ready in 120 -150 days.

Following this discussion with Chief Whitehouse and based on his recommendation, the Board unanimously decided to close the Town Hall to walk-ins at 7:00PM Tuesday evening, March 17<sup>th</sup>. Employees will continue to work normal hours as they are able, practicing safe hygiene and helping residents by phone and via the internet, as discussed earlier in the meeting. The Selectmen will reassess the situation on a week to week basis. The upcoming Planning Board meeting will be postponed and the Board of Adjustment is tentatively planning a virtual meeting. The Selectmen's Office will prepare a statement for the website and for the Strafford Community Facebook page.

Town Clerk Chris Bane was in attendance to discuss with the Selectmen the working of her office with this closing. Mr. Young stated that he believes the State will offer a grace period for vehicle registrations. Surrounding states have extended temporary tags. New cars may be registered at the DMV in Concord, but Ms. Bane pointed out that the registration of a vehicle from a private sale must begin with the Town. Until the Board meets in a week, they want the Town Office to be completely closed to the public, even transacting business in the parking lot.

Recycling Center was discussed and it was agreed that it should remain open for now. Most of the activity takes place outside and for a fairly short duration. The operators have been advised to limit contact one another in close quarters; they are already taking precautions with hand sanitizing and wearing gloves.

There being no further business to address, a motion was made and seconded to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 6:58PM.