

Minutes of the Selectmen's Work Session March 24, 2020

Members present: Lynn Sweet, Chairman, and Scott Young,
In attendance: Tax Collector Judy Dupré, Town Clerk Chris Bane, Fire Chief/Emergency
Management Director Scott Whitehouse.

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

Tax Collector Judy Dupré was in attendance to speak with the Selectmen about upcoming lien notices. She was seeking their approval, in light of the State of Emergency, to send out notices of liens on unpaid 2019 taxes. Three notices of unpaid taxes had already been sent out and the Town would incur some expense in postponing this step. The Selectmen were in agreement with her request to send out the notices as they are merely a notification of the registering of the lien; properties are not in immediate jeopardy. The question deeding may be revisited at a later date. The Town's ability to recover charges for these mailings was discussed.

The Selectmen responded to several questions that Chris Bane asked about the Selectmen's plans for recently tax deeded property. They clarified that the Town had diligently fulfilled its legal obligations concerning these properties.

The ZBA will meet Wednesday, March 25th via the Zoom account of one of the members. The Town will investigate having its own Zoom account to avoid the use of someone's personal account. Board members asked that the notice of the electronic meeting be posted on the Town's website.

The Selectmen reviewed and signed contracts and notices of pay rate for Town employees.

Emergency Management Director Scott Whitehouse spoke with the board members and updated them on Covid-19 related news.

- Some new legislation protects Chief Whitehouse and his personnel against lost wages and medical expenses, up to a certain point, if they contract the virus in their capacity as an EMT or firefighter.
- If residents are experiencing symptoms of the virus, they are to call 211 and will be directed to stay in place at home unless symptoms worsened and they believe they need to go to a hospital. Many of the suspected cases are just the flu. The availability of testing is limited at this point, but is expected to improve in the coming days. First responders are supposed to receive priority testing.
- At this point, the National Guard would only be called out to set up temporary hospitals.
- The Governor routinely holds press conferences at noon.

The Selectmen discussed the possible need for a change in Town Hall operations having been closed to the public for a week. Tax Collector Judy Dupré and Town Clerk Chris Bane reported that they have been able to conduct business and are assisting residents as best they can by phone and internet. The office staff has plenty of work to do and sufficient space to maintain social distancing. The Town Office therefore, will continue to operate as it has and closed to the public for the time being.

The Selectmen approved the waiving of the Town's portion of online registration fees as long a period as the State waives its fees.

The Town's contract assessor, KRT, whose office is located in Massachusetts in closed for two weeks as directed by the State's Governor. They hope to begin spring assessing when they are permitted to return to work. NHDRA notified the Town of the results of the 2019 ratio study, setting our overall equalization rate at 79.1%. The study is based on qualified property sales in 2019 relative to the property's assessed value; properties in Strafford are currently assessed at approximately 79% of market value.

The Selectmen discussed appointments to the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Conservation Commission. Charlie Burnham was re-appointed to the Zoning Board, effective April 1, 2020. Ashley Rowe, replacing Susan Arnold, was appointed to the Zoning Board, also effective April 1, 2020. Lynn Sweet was appointed as an alternate member of the Zoning Board, with the same effective date. Mike Ferber was appointed to the Conservation Commission, with Susan Barnes and Dave Perkins re-appointed to the Conservation Commission, all with an effective date of April 1, 2020.

The Selectmen reviewed a Class VI Road Release for a property on Pig Lane. The document must be resubmitted to the Town with additional/corrected information and then signed by the Selectmen and recorded at the registry prior to receiving a building permit. The Selectmen would like to speak with Greg from Messenger, Inc about their plans for the repair and upgrade to the road. The Selectmen's Office will ask Greg to attend the Selectmen's work session on March 31st.

Hill Library is applying for a grant for a "Little Free Library" and need 2 locations in Town where it might be placed. Our own library will be one location. Ms. Holman, Library Director, was wondering if the Selectmen could make a suggestion for a second location. Several ideas were briefly discussed with no specific location seeming to be appropriate. It was suggested that they put out a request for family to host it on their own property, perhaps near the road.

One of the members of the Board of Selectmen serves as an ex-officio member of the Planning Board. Scott Young has served in that position, and before him, Lynn Sweet. Brian Monahan was nominated to serve as the ex-officio member. He accepted the nomination and it was unanimously accepted. They briefly explained his duties and gave him a copy of the current NH Planning Board and Land Use Regulation manual.

A member of the Board of Selectmen also serves on the Safety Committee. Scott Young volunteered to fill that position. The committee communicates as necessary, and holds meetings 4 times a year.

There being no further business to address, a motion was made and seconded to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 6:54PM.