

EMERGENCY SELECTBOARD MEETING
March 16, 2020

Present:	Julia Andrews (via phone) Allison Hope (via phone)	Nanette Rogers
Guests:	Joshua Smith (via phone)	Martha Bennett

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Julia explained that this meeting was called to discuss what precautions the Town can take to keep the employees and the community safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. Joshua Smith, Emergency Program Manager for Westford, and Martha Bennett, Town Health Officer, were present in their respective roles.

Nanette stated that a lot of emails have been circulating regarding what towns are doing during the pandemic. Several town offices are closing to the public with the exception of title searches, and those are occurring by appointment only in an effort to minimize the number of people in an office at any given time. Some town offices are closed all together.

A discussion ensued regarding which town employees could work from home to limit exposure. There are programs that the town clerk and treasurer's offices utilize that are not available remotely. This will require the employees in those offices to come in to do the essential work associated with these programs. It was noted that the Planning Coordinator and Zoning Administrator have the most flexibility to work from home. Due to schools and daycares being closed, accommodations will be made for employees who need to be home with their kids.

The Library Trustees met last week and decided to close the library to the public because the schools are closed. This would hopefully keep families home rather than congregating at the library, which defeats the purpose of limiting exposure for the virus to spread.

A suggestion was made to reduce fees if an applicant uses a credit card while processing town business electronically. The Board felt that this is not necessary because the town is still accepting cash and checks by mail or the drop box.

The Selectboard discussed public meetings of boards and committees. Per the Open Meeting Law there must be a physical location with at least one person at the location to allow the public to attend a meeting. The Planning Commission has suspended their meetings for the time being. With regard to the Development Review Board, which has more impact on the community, the Selectboard felt the DRB should continue meeting but use technology as much as possible to mitigate exposure. The Selectboard would like to find a better way for board members and the public to participate in meetings, such as FreeConferenceCall.com. The phone number and access code would be published on the agenda. Each board or committee should set up their own account to avoid times when meetings may overlap.

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For boards or committees, such as the Rec Committee and Conservation Commission, that have non-essential business, they should also suspend their meetings. They will be contacted to pass along this message.

The Town will communicate with the school and post office to let them know what the Town is doing. Nanette thinks the School Board will probably need to meet to discuss the annual meeting and voting scheduled in April. If the vote is not postponed, Nanette wants to encourage voters to vote by absentee ballot to limit the number of voters going to the polling place.

The Road Crew has the least amount of exposure, therefore, for the time being, their department is status quo. They will be encouraged to disinfect equipment, etc.

The Board wants to check in with the Fire Dept. to see if they have any needs. Josh advised of a conference call that is scheduled for all emergency management services to discuss their concerns or issues, such as personal protective equipment.

The Board discussed the best way to inform residents of the steps that are being taken, especially since some residents are not part of Front Porch Forum and some do not have access to the Internet. The phone message will be changed to reflect the closure and how to contact staff. A flyer will be mailed to each household with this same information and it will also include a link to a form for those who need assistance or those who want to volunteer, information for 211 and a link to the CDC website.

The final item discussed was waiving the late fee for dog licenses through May 1st. This does not extend the due date for when dog licenses are due, which is April 1st. The decision to waive the late fee until May 1st was based on the cancellation of rabies clinics and the impact on the availability of veterinarian offices. Dog owners will be encouraged to license their dogs on time if a rabies certificate is not needed and that the license can be processed through the mail.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Julia Andrews, Chair
Selectboard

Nanette Rogers
Town Administrator