

## **MINUTES OF THE SELECT BOARD**

**Wednesday January 20, 2021, 7:00 PM**

**Via Zoom**

**Present:** William Stewart, Chair, Tom Maher, Selectman, Dave McGuckin, Selectman, and Jennifer Smith, Administrative Assistant to the Select Board and Recording Secretary.

**Public Participants via Zoom:** James Cerny, Thomas Smith-Town Treasurer, Dr. Kathy Hollister-Deputy Health Agent, Ken McDonald-Admin Project Coordinator, Curt Springer.

Chairman Stewart opened the public session meeting at 7:05PM. Selectman Stewart explained the nature of the meeting, indicating it is considered an Emergency Meeting which meets all the State requirements of posting, and noted the availability of a phone number to call if a participant could not connect via Zoom. Selectman Stewart explained the criteria for Emergency Meetings, and stated that all votes by the Select Board would be roll call votes.

### **1. Approve Select Board minutes of January 4, 2021**

Selectman Maher made a motion to approve the amended minutes of the Select Board Meetings of January 4, 2021. Selectman McGuckin seconded and the motion carried unanimously, 3-0.

### **2. Public Questions and Answers.**

Thomas Smith, Town Treasurer and Chairman of the Budget Committee, noted that salaries for elected officials in the town have not seen an increase since 2005, with the exception of the position of Town Clerk/Tax Collector. That position's salary has increased from \$9,200 to \$21,000 in 15 years. Mr. Smith requested that the Select Board recognize this significant disparity and as a result consider taking action on the matter when they prepare the FY22 budget.

Chairman Stewart stated that the board will certainly take it under advisement and discuss it during budget time.

### **3. New Business.**

#### **a. Covid**

Selectman Maher stated that the number of positive Covid-19 cases have modestly improved over the past two weeks, with a current positivity rate of 6.8 %, 254 hospitalizations and 6200 active cases. Two weeks ago, the number of active cases was 6236. Selectman Maher reminded people to remain vigilant with mask wearing, washing hands and remaining socially distant.

Dr. Kathleen Hollister, Deputy Health Agent, thanked Selectman Maher for reminding people to remain vigilant, particularly now that there are new, more transmissible, variant strains of the virus in the US. Dr. Hollister said her focus tonight will mostly be about Phase B, which will be opening to people this Friday, January 22, 2021. Dr. Hollister listed off the criteria for individuals eligible for signing up for the vaccine this Friday as 65 years of age and older and people who are under 65 with defined medical conditions that put them at significantly higher risk for Covid illness and death. These latter individuals will require their physicians to register them for the vaccine. Also included in Phase 1B will be residents and staff of residential facilities for people with intellectual developmental disabilities, corrections officers and staff working in correctional facilities, and first responders and health workers who aren't already vaccinated. This phase will be about 300,000 residents of New Hampshire.

Dr. Hollister further stated that she will send out an email after this evening's meeting disseminating the same information as her presentation.

Starting at 8am on January 22, 2021, people will be able to register for vaccines at <https://vaccines.nh.gov> or people can call 211, the Covid Hotline, for assistance. It is expected that the wait on these calls will be exceedingly long.

When registering, people will have to present basic information about themselves. The address given should be one's physical address. New Castle residents should not use P.O. Boxes as their address.

That is really important information that DHHS has not put out.

The other important fact is that couples will need separate emails for registering for the vaccine.

People will not need individual phone numbers or have the ability to receive texts.

After registering, people will wait for a confirmation email. This could take 4 to 5 days. Once this notification is received, they will then be able to schedule a vaccine appointment. The actual appointment could be 2 or 3 weeks out.

On January 26<sup>th</sup>, eligible individuals will begin receiving the vaccine for Phase 1B at different locations. The State has been receiving 17,000 to 18,000 vaccines weekly.

It advised that people check their spam folders every single day and do not use work emails to register, as they usually have more filters that direct emails to spam.

Dr. Hollister stated that there is an additional light at the end of the tunnel. Johnson and Johnson and Astrazeneca both have finished their Phase 3 trials and they have been busily writing up the Emergency Use Authorization applications. Both plan to have the applications submitted next week. This means that maybe by mid-March we will have a more consistent, higher number of vaccines per week. The federal government is also planning to enhance the roll out with producing some needed components, such as vials, caps, tubes, etc.

Dr. Hollister also stated that she had been asked to look into the possibility of the town having its own vaccination pod. Dr. Hollister stated that unfortunately there are a lot of logistical challenges associated with that process, with the biggest one being that it would create what is called a "closed pod". Currently, there is no vaccine availability for closed pods right now. The only way the town would potentially become eligible to receive vaccines would be once everyone in town became eligible to have the vaccine. What that essentially does is delay vaccines for our residents who are high risk and eligible now. Dr. Hollister opined that the way things are structured right now, it does not seem like it would benefit the majority of the residents of our community, and she stated she would not want to undertake anything that would delay our residents from getting vaccines.

Chairman Stewart thanked Dr. Hollister for all her hard work on gathering this valuable information for the town's residents.

## **b. Sail Portsmouth Proposal**

Selectman McGuckin stated the Town has received a proposal from the organizers of Sail Portsmouth requesting the use of New Castle and UNH properties From July 1<sup>st</sup> through July 5<sup>th</sup> for the annual Tall Ships program. The two ships that the group are proposing to use in the parade this year have freeboards too low to safely moor at the State Pier. As a result, they have requested of UNH the use of their pier and New Castle is being asked for the use of the town's library parking area only. Everything else would be conducted up at the UNH facility and parking lots.

Selectman McGuckin highlighted the group's requests are as follows:

Permission from UNH to moor 2 ships at the UNH pier

Permission from New Castle for the use of the Library parking lot July 2<sup>nd</sup> through July 4<sup>th</sup>, 9:30am to 9:00pm

Permission to run shuttles from the Library to the UNH pier

Permission to post signs directing visitors to the Library parking lot

Permission from New Castle to erect a tent in the upper parking lot located by the Coast Guard Station to serve food and beverages, as well as park a food truck

Permission from New Castle to allow 2 catered evening receptions in the tent located in the upper parking lot

Selectman McGuckin pointed out that while the group is asking for use of the Library parking lot on what is traditionally a very busy weekend for the Town, that parking lot is usually only used by the Town for overflow parking.

Selectman McGuckin concluded by pointing out that UNH will only give their approval if the Town of New Castle gives approval.

Phil von Hemert, a representative of Sail Portsmouth, stated that the group is not looking for a commitment to all the requests at this time, but instead they are proposing an opportunity to explore the options, and suggested a deadline of early April to confirm the details of the plan with the Town, as well as to confirm the ships will definitely be coming.

After a brief discussion, the Select Board agreed to April 1<sup>st</sup> as a deadline for both parties to have all the details of a potential agreement in place.

Chairman Stewart closed the conversation by stating that the Select Board will appoint an individual to represent the Town and work with Sail Portsmouth over the coming months regarding details of the event.

## **c. Great Island Garden Club- request to use the Common – May 22, 2021**

Patricia Lenz, President of the Great Island Garden Club, requested the use of the Common or the Recreation Building to hold the Garden Club's annual plant sale. Ms. Lenz stated that each year club

members, this year that number will be 62, sell flowers and plants from their own gardens as the primary fundraiser for the club. Club dues cover less than half their annual costs.

Selectman Maher opined that the benefit of holding the event outside is that it would allow for better social distancing.

Selectman McGuckin agreed.

Ms. Lenz asked if there would be an admission fee charged at the gate.

Selectman Maher stated that it would be early enough in the season for visitors to indicate to gate staff that they are there for the sale and the town could make accommodations.

Selectman Maher asked if the Select Board would be opposed to letting the club set up the day before the event.

Ms. Lenz stated that would be very helpful and agreed to let the town know which Pavilion the club would be needing.

#### **d. Neighborhood Water Improvement Program Update**

Chairman Stewart gave a brief description of the Neighborhood Water Improvement Program meeting that took place earlier in the week. Representatives of the interested roads are in the process of deciding if they want to move forward with the engineering aspect of the project.

Thomas Smith, Town Treasurer, asked if the engineering costs are to be paid as money up front by residents of the roads.

Chairman Stewart responded that nothing is definitive yet and that he is hopeful the solution will be born out but the next meeting.

#### **e. Town Projects Update**

Selectman Maher stated that the HVAC phase of the Town Hall renovations is now complete, the windows are scheduled to arrive next week and the replacement of the clapboard will commence after the windows have been installed.

#### **f. Special Town Meeting Results - FEMA Maps**

Chairman Stewart announced the results of the Special Town meeting approving the proposed FEMA flood map changes as 102 in favor, 5 against and one abstain.

#### **4. Old Business**

No old business was discussed

#### **5. Committee Reports**

No committee reports were submitted for review.

**6. Adjourn**

Selectman Maher offered a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:05pm.

Selectman McGuckin seconded and said motion carried unanimously 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Smith  
Recording Secretary