

MINUTES OF THE SELECT BOARD

Monday February 1, 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: Maryann Driscoll, Beth Barnhorst, Dr. Kathy Hollister-Deputy Health Agent, Peter Rice, Brad Greeley, Dr. Anthony Coniglio, and Curt Springer.

Chairman Stewart opened the public session meeting at 7:00PM. 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 20, 2021

Selectman Maher made a motion to table the approval of the minutes of the Select Board Meeting of January 20, 2021. Selectman McGuckin seconded and the motion carried unanimously, 3-0.

2. Public Questions and Answers.

Maryann Driscoll, spoke to the importance of the Town's Master Plan and Zoning Ordinances and requested the Select Board consider developing a system for the town to interface its Zoning Applications with the DES Wetlands Application requirements

Chairman Stewart thanked Ms. Driscoll for her suggestions and stated that while the town is somewhat hamstrung by what it can do with regard to regulation of docks, the Conservation Commission can choose to not recommend approval based solely on conservation elements and what they feel are conservation problems with a project.

Ms. Driscoll stated that there are 5 function points that are part of the DES application and it is her understanding that there is a way for the town to weigh in on those and that DES would welcome comment.

Chairman Stewart stated that the town only has the powers that the state gives it and it is hard for the town to weigh in if an application does not have elements that rise to a level considered an issue by Conservation. If individuals have issues, they should raise them with the state. The town cannot put itself in the position of weighing in with regards to one resident vs. another unless something has risen to the level of causing Conservation to do so. Chairman Stewart further stated that the Planning Board is

currently proposing several adjustments to the Zoning Ordinances, including those relative to docks, and holding public hearings.

Chairman Stewart said he would be happy to arrange of Zoom meeting with Ebin from DES to speak to the concerns of residents.

Beth Barnhorst, a member of the Conservation Commission, spoke in favor of a Master Plan that will start to take a look at what New Castle might look like in the next 5, 10 or 20 years. She further stated that she would like to make it clear that the Conservation Commission was instructed that it needed to stay within its lane and was not allowed to weigh in with regards to the extension of the dock. What was approved was the replacement of the existing deck and sea wall.

Brad Greeley, expressed his belief that the town should investigate its possible options.

Chairman Stewart spoke in support of investigating how the town can be more involved in the decision making and that a first, good step would be to invite Ebin to speak to residents. Chairman Stewart also spoke to the importance of working on the town's Master Plan.

Peter Rice spoke in favor of protecting New Castle's environment.

Kate Murray stated that it was her understanding that DES is supposed to consider how such docks could affect how others use the area.

Chairman Stewart stated that to the best of his knowledge, DES primarily investigates navigation within the channels and proper mooring sizes, not necessarily recreation.

3. New Business.

a. Covid Update

Selectman Maher stated that the number of positive Covid-19 cases have continued to improve over the past two weeks, with a current positivity rate of 4.9 %, 193 hospitalizations and 4662 active cases. Two weeks ago, the number of active cases was 6226. Selectman Maher reminded people to remain vigilant with mask wearing, washing hands and remaining socially distant, stressing that there are much more contagious variants to be aware of.

Dr. Kathleen Hollister, Deputy Health Agent, thanked Selectman Maher for reminding people to remain vigilant, and stated that it is anticipated that the more contagious variant will be the predominate variant by mid-March. It is possibly 50% more transmissible and was the driving force for the lock downs in England prior to Christmas. Variants are a common result when the numbers of cases are high, so we need to remain vigilant in order to keep the numbers going down to avoid another spike. Fewer numbers of Covid mean fewer variations. Dr. Hollister further stated that residents of the town have started to receive their vaccines, and that the state is working on its issue with scheduling second appointments.

Dr. Hollister closed by stating that the Johnson and Johnson vaccine should be approved for distribution shortly and that she wanted to address concerns expressed with its effective numbers being lower than the two- shot vaccines. Dr. Hollister stated that the important numbers that need to be stressed are that the Johnson and Johnson vaccine has 100% success rate in preventing hospitalizations and deaths from

Covid and has success with the South African variation as well. It has an 85% in preventing severe disease at home.

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

b. Coalition Communities 2.0

Selectman McGuckin gave a brief update on what was formally known as the Donor Receiver Towns, which is now referred to as "SWEPT", stating that there is a movement for a bill to appear before the house that was similar to the bill passed back in the 1990s. There is currently no date for this bill, but this bill would increase the state education line on tax bills for certain towns in order to fund other towns. Presently, there is a movement among 20 to 30 towns to hire a lobbyist to act on our behalf to block this bill from being approved. Selectman McGuckin stated that he will continue to keep the town apprised of the advancement of this bill.

c. Mosquito Control

Selectman McGuckin spoke in favor of maintaining a relationship with the current company.

Selectman Maher agreed, stating that the email the Select Board received today from the incumbent company was very informative and provided a very specific breakdown of what he provides for the town and that a savings of \$4,000 may not be worth the risk of switching companies.

Chairman Stewart stated that in the past he has asked questions to try and qualify the services provided for the cost and had asked for the current vendor to lower his costs to no avail. Chairman Stewart suggested that given there is another vendor offering the same services for less, the Select Board ask the current provider if he would be willing to reduce is cost.

All members agreed and instructed the Administrative Assistant to negotiate a price reduction.

d. Neighborhood Water Improvement Program Update

Chairman Stewart gave a brief description of the Neighborhood Water Improvement Program stating there has not been a significant amount of progress with the roads involved since their last meeting, but it does sound like at least one road, Spring Hill/Lavenger's is still interested in moving forward with the project. The next steps will be having conversations with Portsmouth regarding their process of taking over private water lines and speaking with the engineers with regards to moving forward with engineering and getting some updates on how the engineering fees will be financed.

e. Town Projects Update

Selectman Maher stated that the windows have been installed and the siding will mostly likely commence after the anticipated storm.

f. Alternative Date for Next Select Board Meeting

Selectman Maher made a motion to move the next Select Board meeting scheduled for February 15th to February 16th at 7pm via Zoom due to Presidents' Day.

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

Selectman McGuckin took the opportunity to publicly thank new resident, Dr. Anthony Coniglio, for his invaluable help with providing information and resources to Dr. Hollister with regards to Covid-19.

Selectman Maher and Chairman Stewart expressed their appreciation as well.

Dr. Coniglio thanked the Select Board for their acknowledgement.

4. Old Business

No old business was discussed

5. Committee Reports

The Fire Department monthly report will be attached to the minutes.

6. Adjourn

Selectman Maher offered a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:03pm.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Smith
Recording Secretary