

Wolcott Emergency Selectboard Meeting Minutes

March 20, 2020

All Minutes are draft until approved by the Selectboard
Please see future Minutes for approval of these Minutes

Note: Some of those present were at Town Office, others participated by phone.

Present: Kim Gravel, Mike Davidson, Richard Lee, Linda Martin, Kurt Klein
Employees: Belinda Clegg, Lucien Gravel, Deborah Klein
Public: Ryan Bjerke, Jim Ryan, Dan Noyes, Bill Cotten, Katie Black
Reporter: Doug McClure, *Hardwick Gazette*

Kim called the emergency planning discussion meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

Linda wished to add to the meeting's subject list a discussion about use of Town Office by AA and other boards and commissions.

Town Clerk/Assistant Clerk contingency plan

The discussion is to address ways to keep the Town Clerk and Assistant Clerk safe, whether there should be reduced hours, and a contingency plan should both individuals become ill at the same time.

The Town Office is currently closed to the public. Belinda is working as Town Clerk and Treasurer, and Allison Bigelow is working as Assistant Clerk. Individuals who need to do research are permitted in the office by appointment. Those who enter must first wash their hands. Social distancing is being practiced. Surfaces are sanitized throughout the day. The public may access personnel by phone or email. Tax payments, dog license fees, or correspondence may be mailed in or dropped through the door slot.

Belinda is in the process of adding an individual who would be authorized to sign checks. Belinda will check with the Secretary of State's Office about the possibility of having an Assistant Treasurer. Belinda will check with the bank to see if electronic signatures would be accepted.

Road Crew contingency plan

The Highway Department is closed to the public. The road crew should be instructed on proper hand washing and use of gloves. The Highway Department does have reciprocity, to some extent, with the Elmore Highway Department. More information is needed. Mutual aid agreements with surrounding towns is recommended, or perhaps a County-wide agreement. Lucien said the towns all work together, and have a good relationship. Lucien thinks the crew should still come into the garage to work on the trailer and backhoe. It was suggested inside activities be limited as much as possible, or that schedules be staggered. Lucien will look into it.

The road crew needs to continue working since it is important to keep the roads in good condition, particularly for emergency vehicles. Lucien said there are three or four additional people who can help with grading. Scheduling will be important.

Fire Department contingency plan

Ryan has been talking with Jim Holton, the Fire Chief. Ryan knows the department would like personal protection equipment. Although the State is working on obtaining this gear, the Fire Department may be lower on the distribution list. It was suggested there could be a request for local donations of N95 masks made on Front Porch Forum. We would need to check with the State to ensure the safety of protective gear made by 3-D printers before being used. The Sheriff's Office is also looking for masks and protective gear. The State Department of Health is trying to get masks for all first responders, but it is a matter of priority. Dan Noyes will pass on to the Town what information he hears on that issue. The Fire Department has a County-wide mutual aid agreement.

Transfer Station safety and contingency plan

The current Transfer Station attendant intends to continue working. Tomorrow morning he will be provided with sanitary supplies, and gloves which are to worn at all times, particularly when handling cash. It was suggested the attendant be provided with a box in which citizens can place their payment so that the attendant can maintain a safe, six-foot distance from people.

If the attendant is unable to work, the procedure has been that a Selectboard member fill in. Not all board members may wish to work at the Transfer Station, and it may not be advisable for them to do so. It might be that the Transfer Station would be open only one or two weekends each month.

The question arose about what to do if Selectboard members become sick and there is no quorum. Dan Noyes stated the Senate is addressing the issue of open meeting laws in the coming weeks.

List of vulnerable/elderly citizens; volunteers for support

The Town has not been receiving calls seeking information on resources. A recent check was made on elderly folks. Since we do not have a community response team in place, if people wish to volunteer, they should be referred to established organizations. Ryan will put together a list. Dan stated that many community groups within the County are currently coordinating volunteers. We should hear more from Capstone Community Action within a few days.

Meals on Wheels is providing meals on a limited basis for those in need. Schools are providing meals to children up to age 18. Information regarding meals for children will be placed on the Town website.

Reduced hours, visitors in Highway Dept./Town Office, non-essential meetings

The Highway Department and Town Office are closed to the public. For those with limited public access to Town Office, safety precautions are enforced.

The Selectboard needs to continue to meet. Meetings will continue by tele-conference. Minutes will be taken, and meetings will be recorded.

The Development Review Board and the Planning Commission meetings can be delayed until the end of April. The board can then re-evaluate the situation. Should there be a need for an emergency meeting, that can be brought to the board's attention.

Motion by Mike to suspend all committees and boards, other than the Selectboard, from meeting in Town Office until April 30, 2020. Seconded by Linda. Roll call vote: All in favor.

Tax penalty relief for those impacted by pandemic

Discussion ensued regarding the Town's ability to delay a penalty for late payment of property taxes by those who could demonstrate a negative financial impact due to the pandemic. It was suggested the State should provide guidance to all Towns. Dan indicated this is being discussed at the State level. Dan will keep the Town informed of what develops.

Dog license late fees

Dog licenses are due by April 1. A penalty is assessed for licenses obtained after that date. Proof of rabies vaccination is required at the time of licensing. The concern is that some veterinary offices are closed or have limited hours. Some people cannot, or do not wish to leave their homes right now. This could affect the ability of some folks to get their dogs vaccinated. Dog owners with proof of vaccination are to submit their paperwork and payment by mail or by dropping it through the Town Office door slot by the April 1 deadline.

Motion by Kurt to suspend late fees on dog licenses until May 31, 2020. Seconded by Richard. Roll call vote: All in favor.

Requirements for remote video calling for Selectboard meetings

Remote video calling in for Selectboard meetings could be set up but would require the use of lap tops. The concern is that would complicate the process. The board will continue with the phone in option used for this meeting. It was suggested that in the future the Town may wish to purchase a Polycom phone system with multiple lines as used for conference calls. That will be placed on a future agenda once the full board starts meeting again in person.

Sick leave policy

If an employee needs to self-quarantine, the recommended time period is 14 days. Currently, full-time Town employees are granted five sick days per year, and five days vacation after one year. What if an employee doesn't have a full five days of sick time? The Town does not want anyone to come to work if they are sick. It is unclear what the response will be to this issue on the federal level. Linda and Belinda will talk to other Towns to see how they may be addressing this issue and report back to the board. Mike suggested the probationary period for the new Highway Department employee be waived.

AA use of Town Office

Alcoholics Anonymous currently meets each week at Town Office. The president has recommended gatherings not exceed ten people. The group consists of more than ten people. Questions arose regarding sanitation and safety, or even potential liability. For now, AA is not to use Town Office for their meetings. Suggestions were offered for alternative venues or ways of meeting for the group. Contact information for other potential meeting spaces will be provided to the group by Mike.

Health Officer, Animal Control Officer safety concerns

The Health Officer and the Animal Control Officer would like to have respirators for use in dealing with a situation they are working on. Belinda will check with the County Health Department to see if any are available. Or it may be possible to borrow some.

Adjourn

Motion by Richard to adjourn. Seconded by Linda. Roll call vote: All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 7:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Deborah Klein

*Next Selectboard meeting Monday, March 23, 2020
Phone in option available - see Town website*