

**TOWN OF WINCHENDON
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES
MONDAY, APRIL 13, 2020 6:30 P.M.**

**-- Conducted by Remote Meeting --
Zoom Meeting ID: 510 406 680**

Present:

Audrey LaBrie, Chairwoman
Barbara Anderson, Vice-Chairman
Amy Salter
Rick Ward
Michael Barbaro

Keith R. Hickey, Town Manager
Linda Daigle, Executive Assistant
Taylor Tower, Administrative Assistant

List of Documents Presented at Meeting:

- Introduction to Remote Meeting (attached)
- Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §20 (attached)
- Board & Committee April Vacancy Notice (filed)
- Junk Dealers: Second Hand Articles License Renewal Applications
 - Daniel Brewer (filed)
 - Pattie's Jewelry (filed)
- Toll Booth / Voluntary Boot Drive Date Change Request – Friends of Old Murdock (filed)
- Report of the Town Manager (attached)
- Minutes approved:
 - Monday, March 30, 2020 Regular Meeting
 - Thursday, April 2, 2020 Regular Meeting

Due to Governor Bakers recent Executive Order and state of emergency declaration with the outbreak of the Coronavirus (COVID-19), this meeting was conducted remotely through Zoom Meeting. The public was notified how to join the meeting through instructions noted on the agenda.

Chairwoman, Audrey LaBrie, called the meeting to order at 6:30PM.

LaBrie confirmed members present and persons anticipating to speak by calling their name and asking for a response in the affirmative: Barbara Anderson, yes; Michael Barbaro, yes; Amy Salter, yes; Rick Ward, yes; and Audrey LaBrie, yes. Staff members present and responding in the affirmative were Keith Hickey, Town Manager, Linda Daigle, Executive Assistant and Taylor Tower, Administrative Assistant.

LaBrie asked each speaker this evening to please state their name before each presentation, comment or question and that all votes would be taken by roll call.

LaBrie read the "Introduction for Remotely Conducted Open Meetings" which noted Governor Baker's recent Executive order of Mach 12, 2020 and outlined the guidelines and ground rules for the meeting this evening.

LaBrie advised all participants that the meeting was being recorded and cautioned screen sharing. When asked if anyone besides the Town was video or audio recording the meeting, there was no response.

LaBrie asked if anyone had any questions to which there was no response.

1. SELECTMEN'S COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Ward stated that in response to the current pandemic, the Annual Town Election that was previously scheduled for May 4th has been postponed, although a new date has not yet been established. In an effort to protect election staff and voters, early ballots can be mailed to your residence. More direction can be found on the Town Clerk's webpage.

Barbaro reminded residents of the importance of the 2020 Federal Census, which is critical in receiving federal funding. This census can be found at <https://my2020census.gov/> and takes only 5-10 minutes to complete and submit. He also wished to remind all residents to call their neighbors and check in on the elderly. It is critical that our elderly population avoid the store as they are the most vulnerable, and we must do everything to ensure they are provided with the resources that they need to stay safe and protected. Barbaro thanked first responders and noted that without them, we would be in a world of hurt.

Anderson noted that the Massachusetts State Legislature passed municipal relief legislation, allowing the town to push back the due date for real estate, personal property tax and water and sewer bills. To assist taxpayers during this challenging time, real estate and personal property taxes typically due on May 1st will now be due June 1st and the deadline to apply for exemptions on taxes has been extended from April 1st to June 1st. Additionally, interest and penalties will be waived on any property and excise tax, betterment assessment, water or sewer bill with a due date on or after March 10, 2020 if payment is made by June 30, 2020.

LaBrie stated that the Earth Day Cleanup originally scheduled for April 25th has been postponed with no current date rescheduled. She continued to say that residents may notice that the DPW is flushing hydrants through the month of April. Water may appear discolored but should clear up upon running the faucet.

LaBrie announced that The Montachusett Public Health Network has released a new (MPHN)-COVID -19 hotline for questions. Those interested may dial 1-844-968-3323 for more information.

LaBrie said that she hopes all are doing well as we navigate through these tough times. While it's scary now, we will get through it together.

2. **PUBLIC COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:** None were heard.

3. **PUBLIC HEARINGS:** There were none scheduled.

4. APPOINTMENTS/RESIGNATIONS:

4.1. Board of Selectmen Board and Committee Vacancies - LaBrie read aloud the current notice of vacancies, which can be found on the Board of Selectmen's webpage. Letters of interest can be sent to the Town Manager's office at 109 Front Street.

5. PERMIT/LICENSE APPLICATIONS:

5.1. Junk Dealers: Second Hand Articles License Renewals - LaBrie named the two applicants up for renewal this evening and noted there were no issues from department heads. She asked if there were any questions or comments from the Board; none were heard. She indicated that the Board would be passing over the application for Ed's Scrap Metals as the application was incomplete.

Barbaro moved to approve the Junk Dealers: Second Hand Articles License Renewals effective on May 1, 2020 for the following:

**Daniel Brewer, 900 Lincoln Avenue
Pattie's Jewelry, Inc., Sherrie Erlenmeyer, 15 Central St.**

The motion was seconded by Anderson. With a roll call vote of all aye, the motion carried unanimously.

- 5.2. Toll Booth / Voluntary Boot Drive Date Change Request – Friends of Old Murdock - LaBrie noted that due to the current state of emergency with the COVID-19 virus, Friends of Old Murdock are requesting a date change from May 30, 2020 to September 5, 2020 for their Boot Drive to benefit the Senior Center.

Barbaro believes it to be prudent to not approve any new applications and to cancel any boot drives that are scheduled until we are able to relax the social distancing rules and the state is in a better place. Anderson noted that the proposed rescheduled date for this event is on Labor Day Weekend and she asked if approval was sought from the Police and Fire Chiefs. Hickey answered no. The applicant, Moe Ward, stated that she planned to check with the Police and Fire Chiefs at the end of June, and that historically, Saturday during Labor Day Weekend is not busy in terms of traffic, as folks are already at their destination for the weekend. She continued to state that as Barbaro indicated, if the pandemic has not cleared up by then, the Friends of Old Murdock will cancel the event in order to protect their volunteers and donors. Rick Ward said if we cancel all current approved boot drives, staff from the Town Manager's Office will need to call Pop Warner, as they have a boot drive scheduled for May 9th, and inform them of the decision.

Barbaro moved to cancel the two scheduled boot drives at this time.

Labrie mentioned that she would like to see the applicants come forward at a later date to propose their rescheduled date.

Labrie asked if there are any seconds to cancel two currently scheduled boot drives and come together at a later unknown date.

Anderson seconded Barbaro's motion.

Barbaro indicated that he would like to see the boot drives be added as an agenda item to the first meeting in June; at which point we should have a better idea where we stand. Labrie clarified if this motion passes this evening, the Board will bring this as an agenda item to the first meeting in June.

Labrie asked if there was further discussion.

Ward clarified that the Town will not have any boot drives until the governor lifts the stay at home advisory.

Barbaro stated that he wished to amend his motion to include the language of revisiting this topic at the first meeting in June, seconded by Anderson.

Barbaro motioned to cancel the two scheduled boot drives and to revisit the topic at the first meeting in June, seconded by Anderson. With a roll call vote of all aye, the motion passed unanimously.

6. BOARDS/COMMISSIONS/COMMITTEES/DEPARTMENT: N/A

7. NEW BUSINESS: There was no new business tonight.

8. OLD BUSINESS: There was no old business tonight.

9. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT:

1. Financial Updates-

Massachusetts State Legislature recently passed municipal relief legislation. This legislation provides communities the authority to change the dates of the May elections and Town Meeting due dates on property tax bills and waive interest on taxes due. The May 4th Town election and May 18th Town Meeting have been tentatively scheduled for June 15th and 29th. With the Town Meeting date changing, the closing of the warrant will also change. The warrant can't close any more than 45 days prior to Town Meeting. Once the Town Meeting date is determined, the Board should vote to reestablish the warrant closing date. Due dates on taxes have been deferred to assist property owners. They include:

- a. Real estate and personal property taxes normally due on May 1st will now be due June 1st.
- b. Applications to apply for exemptions of taxes have been extended from April 1st to June 1st.
- c. Interest and penalties will be waived on any property and excise tax, betterment assessment, water or sewer bill with a due date on or after March 10, 2020 if payment is made by June 30, 2020.

Due to an anticipated shortfall in the health insurance, the snow and ice accounts and the possible impact of COVID-19 on the budget, I placed a spending and hiring freeze effective immediately on April 8th. Due to more current and retired employees electing Town health insurance coverage than anticipated, the health insurance appropriation over expended by \$118,000, and the snow and ice appropriation will be over expended by \$18,000. Other accounts will be over expended by much smaller amounts. I anticipate a budget surplus in school transportation, veteran services and many other line items throughout the budget that will cover any account shortfalls. The only unknown is covering costs related to Covid-19.

2. Personnel Updates-

- a. There are no personnel updates this week.

3. Project Updates-

Hickey indicated that the Town Clerk, Wendy Stevens, has been working with the Town Clerk Association and the Secretary of State's Office to afford every option for absentee voting.

- a. The Town Clerk received the draft version of the revised Town Charter and Town Bylaws from General Code. The project was spearheaded by former Town Clerk Judy LaJoie approximately two years ago. General Code has reviewed the documents making recommendations to clarification, update legal references and correct any inconsistencies. Over the next few months each Board and Commission will need to review the section of the bylaws pertaining to them prior to presenting both documents to Town Meeting for consideration this fall.

4. Miscellaneous Updates –

- a. I attended a Virtual Legislative Forum for Greater Gardner Chamber of Commerce members with State Senator Anne Gobi and Representative Jonathan Zlotnik, addressing the business needs of our region during the COVID-19 crisis.

Hickey also wished to invite the board to participate in a round table discussion on state finances. The meeting is scheduled for April 14th at 10 a.m., and an invite has been sent electronically to all Board members. Representative Zlotnik indicated that he is confident that the state budget won't be approved until after July. Hickey indicated that it will be a challenge to address our budget needs and it's possible that Town Meeting will be rescheduled to July until we have more information.

Barbaro asked if since a state of emergency has been declared, we are able to bill ambulance calls or Board of Health response. Hickey replied that the town is tracking all pandemic related expenses in separate accounts. Because we are in an emergency, the town hopes to be reimbursed up to 75% of what expenses are incurred. He was not sure about ambulance calls because a revenue is collected on those but Police and Health expenses will be billed out and we hope to have those reimbursed.

LaBrie asked how we are doing with Personal Protective Equipment for our first responders. Hickey replied that he spoke with Fire Chief Smith this afternoon, and we are currently stocked with PPE for all fire employees. Depending on what happens as we approach the anticipated surge, there may be challenges in the future. The National Guard has been helpful with delivering PPE for our staff.

LaBrie asked if there was any further discussion. Ward wished to notify the public that he read in the paper that the Selectmen had established a date of June 29th for the Annual Town Meeting. He clarified that the Selectmen voted to postpone the May Town Meeting but did not vote on an official date.

9. MINUTES:

10.1 Monday, March 30, 2020 - Regular Meeting, including Joint Meeting with Finance Committee – Labrie noted the minutes were amended to correct the date for state income tax filing.

Barbaro moved to approve the minutes of March 30, 2020 as amended, seconded by Anderson. With a roll call vote of all aye, the motion passed unanimously.

10.2 Thursday, April 2, 2020 - Special Meeting - Ward moved to approve the minutes of April 2, 2020; seconded by Barbaro. With a roll call vote of all aye, the motion passed unanimously.

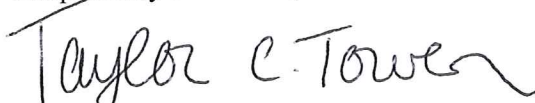
10. COMMUNICATIONS: - Labrie noted the next scheduled meeting will be April 27, 2020.

11. AGENDA ITEMS: N/A

12. EXECUTIVE SESSION: There was no Executive Session scheduled for this evening.

13. ADJOURNMENT: Barbaro moved to adjourn, seconded by Anderson. With a roll call vote of all aye, the meeting adjourned at 7:04 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Taylor Tower
Administrative Assistant

