

TOWN OF WENHAM
Board of Selectmen
Meeting of April 21, 2020
Town Hall, 138 Main Street

Pursuant to the Open Meeting Law, M.G.L. Chapter 30A, §§ 18-25, written notice posted by the Town Clerk delivered to all Board members, a meeting of the Board of Selectmen (BOS) was held on Tuesday April 21, 2020 at 5 pm virtually on zoom.us.

The Town of Wenham has a three-member Board of Selectmen elected for three-year terms with one seat up for election each year. Catherine Harrison (2020); John Clemenzi (2021); Jack Wilhelm (2022)
The Board of Selectmen serve as the chief executive body of the Town. The board's duties include in part appointing the Town Administrator and other board/committee members, developing goals and policies, preparing the town report, the annual budget, and presenting the warrant for Town Meeting.
The Board typically meets the first and third Tuesday of each month at 6:30 pm in Town Hall. The BOS meetings are posted on the Town calendar. All meetings are open to the public and may be viewed on local cable channels HWCAM.org or YouTube HWCAM.

Please be advised that this open meeting is being broadcast live via Zoom and recorded for playback on-line, video on-demand viewing at hwcam.org. The listings of matters are those reasonably anticipated by the Chair 48 hours before said meeting, which may be discussed at the meeting. Not all items listed may in fact be discussed. Items may be taken out of order and at times that differ from those listed below. Other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law. All participants wishing to address the Board of Selectmen must indicate so in the Zoom meeting chat.

In response to the Covid19 Virus pandemic, the Massachusetts Governor closed all non-essential businesses and issued stay at home advisory. To comply with the Governor's orders that there be no gatherings, this meeting took place virtually. It was confirmed all could be heard and votes would be taken by roll call.

Call to Order - With a quorum present, Mr. Wilhelm called the meeting to order at 5 pm.
Selectmen present: Jack Wilhelm, Chair; John Clemenzi, Vice Chair; Catherine Harrison, Clerk
Also present: Anthony Ansaldi, Town Administrator; Catherine Tinsley, Recording Secretary

Executive Session Police Department Captain; FY20

VOTE: The BOS voted unanimously by roll call vote to enter into executive session under M.G.L. Ch. 30A, § 21 (2) To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel regarding the Police Captain Contract and Fiscal Year 2020 and to and return to open session.

The Selectmen returned to open session at 6:35 pm

Also present for open session: Jackie Bresnahan, Director of Administrative Services, Chris Holak, Interim Finance Director; Margaret Hoffman, Planning Coordinator Sherrie LeBlanc, Treasurer/Collector; Alex Begin, Chair Finance & Advisory Committee; Steve Ozahowski, Assessor; Police Captain DiNapoli, Police Chief Perkins, Fire Chief Kavanagh, Fire Deputy Chief Baxter
Jim Reynolds, Council on Aging Director; Nicci Roebuck, Executive Assistant

Reports

Town Administrator

- Departmental weekly updates during COVID-19 crisis

The Board recognized the work from Town Administrator & Department Heads to provide these weekly reports.

Mr. Wilhelm reiterated his concern with town finances and asked for cash flow projections, finance reports, expense reports, and receipts for FY20 be provided to the BOS as soon as possible. He continued to talk about the possibility of revenue shortfall if residents do not pay property taxes.

Ms. Harrison noted this is an evolving situation and the BOS be kept informed.

Mr. Clemenzi asked these reports be weekly and made available to the Finance Committee as well.

Mr. Wilhelm noted at the last meeting with Hamilton BOS, they agreed to meet in a couple weeks. Mr. Wilhelm questioned if there was anything new over the past couple weeks that warranted meeting again and asked for feedback from Hamilton regarding a proposed agenda.

Consent Agenda

Approved 05.12.20

- Meeting Minutes: Open Session - March 31, 2020; April 7, 2020; April 13, 2020; April 13, 2020 Jt with Hamilton BOS
VOTE: The BOS voted unanimously by roll call vote to approve all items in the consent agenda including BOS Open Session –March 31, 2020; April 7, 2020; April 13, 2020; April 13, 2020 Joint with Hamilton BOS.

New Business

- Discussion & Potential Approval of Proclamation declaring May 3-9, 2020 Children’s Mental Health Week
The Parent/Professional Advocacy League (PPAL) requesting Wenham proclaim May 3rd through May 9th Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week. PPAL vision is to provide hope for children with mental health needs and their families through education, advocacy, outreach and support. Ms. Harrison read the proclamation.
VOTE: The BOS voted unanimously by roll call vote to approve the proclamation declaring May 3rd through May 9th as Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week in the Town of Wenham.

- Veterans Committee
- Memorial Day Update
- Discussion and Potential Approval of the Veterans Gift Account

Mr. Wilhelm reported the veteran’s committee met on April 14 and decided to not hold public services / parades on Memorial Day as done in the past. Flags will be placed on all veteran’s graves.

The veterans committee does not have access to funds and agreed to request the BOS establish a Veteran’s Gift Account.

VOTE: The BOS voted unanimously by roll call vote to approve the request from the Veterans Committee to establish a Veterans Gift Account to receive donations from the community for special projects and needs of our veteran community.

- COVID-19 Discussion
 - Update from the Board of Health & Public Health Nurse Maribeth Ting
 - Discussion and potential approval of Emergency Order Under Declaration of Public Health Emergency as provided by the Board of Health

Ms. Ting reported on the COVID19 virus in Wenham that there have been 7 positive tests. Ms. Ting reiterated that there are many more positive cases but due to minimal testing these numbers are low and reminded residents to stay home, wear masks, and wash hands

Ms. Ting confirmed the Governor has cancelled school for the remainder of the school year.

Dr. Ting, chair of the Board of Health spoke on the criteria for COVID -19 testing that there are categories and priorities for COVID testing. Those that are high risk to spread the disease i.e. first responders, health care workers. The criteria are being adjusted accordingly.

Mr. Wilhelm questioned if the other towns have agreed to close the rail trail citing he heard Wenham was the only town to close the trail and the trail is being accessed through other towns. Ms. Ting responded the closure was due in part because of the proximity of parking, and the inability to maintain 6 feet distance on the trail and board walk.

Police Chief Perkins responded that closing the trail was the responsible thing to do, but it does not seem other towns along the rail trail closed their sections.

Town Administrator notified abutting towns of Wenham ‘s intention to close the trail / parking.

On April 15, 2020 the Board of Health passed an emergency order under the Declaration of the public health emergency that face coverings be worn by:

- The public entering into any essential business as defined by the Governor.
- All employees of essential business when interacting with the public or within 6 feet.
- The public while in common areas and communal spaces and must exercise physical distancing.

VOTE: The BOS voted unanimously by roll call vote to support the Emergency Declaration Under the Public Health Emergency (to wear a face covering) as provided by the Board of Health on April 15, 2020.

- Update from Joint Meeting with Hamilton BOS

Annual Town Meeting/Annual Town Election

The Wenham BOS is coordinating with the Town of Hamilton when to hold town meeting and town elections pending the governors’ actions. For the purpose of discussion, tentative dates in June are being considered.

- Discussion and Potential vote to waive late payment interest (penalty) for 4th quarter real estate bills

This action provides a one-month grace period for late real estate payments made through May 31 to the town.

Vote: The BOS voted unanimously by roll call vote, in accordance with Chapter 53 of the Acts of 2020 entitled “An Act to Address Challenges Faced by Municipalities and State Authorities Resulting from COVID-19”, to waive the interest and penalty for the 4th quarter real estate tax bills due on May 1st through May 31, 2020.

- Discussion and Potential vote on FY20 Cost Reductions

Mr. Ansaldi gave a brief summary that the BOS, by majority vote, requested that he made recommendations for FY20 cost reductions. Mr. Ansaldi identified that the BOS discussed and came to consensus on the following in executive session for a total cost savings of \$114,877 through June 30, 2020.

- Not open Pleasant Pond FY20 savings \$6,938 (gate keepers/ life guards)
- Department of Public Works (DPW) not hire part-time/ summer help, deferring street capital, tree maintenance, tree plantings \$102,813
- Facility cost savings by not hiring part-time / summer help \$3,750
- Suspend part time position in the Town Clerk's office - \$1,376

The Town's revenue and expenses will continue to be monitored as the (COVID) crises unfolds. There are additional categories that could be discussed for additional cuts if necessary.

Mr. Wilhelm spoke on his anxiety that the town may see a shortfall in revenue during the crisis, and noted his concern is not necessarily shared by everyone. Although he hopes his concerns about the cash flow are unfounded, reductions have been made and others discussed pending review of future revenue reports.

Mr. Wilhelm observed that the town of Hamilton needs to agree to any changes made to the Library as a joint program.

The FY21 budget is being reviewed and considered by the BOS and finance committee in light of the changing circumstances.

VOTE: The BOS voted unanimously by roll call vote to authorize the reduction of expenses as presented by Anthony Ansaldi in the amount of \$114,877 with reductions in the areas of Pleasant Pond, facilities, department of public works, and Town Clerk's office as discussed.

- Other matters, as may not have been reasonably anticipated by the Chair (Discussion Only)

Mr. Ansaldi said that in 2012 a Citizen Petition was put forth to Town Meeting, and approved, to make elections the first Thursday after the opening of town meeting, effective 2013. He noted this was never memorialized in the Town Bylaws. He questioned incorporating these into the bylaws at the next town meeting

Mr. Wilhelm asked for Town Counsel to opine on this matter .

Steve Ozahowski thanked everyone for their work and opined that this crisis is short term and hoped the long-term perspective can be kept in view and to continue to work in the present environment.

Mr. Wilhelm recalled that Maryann Streeter has offered to donate 2 (5 -foot tall) tulip trees to the town, with the intention for one to replace the birch tree on the town hall lawn and the other to be planted in Pingree Park. The Town Administrator will follow up with the tree warden.

Adjourn: *The selectmen voted unanimously by roll call vote to adjourn at 7:41 pm.*

Respectfully Submitted By

Catherine Tinsley

4.27.2020