

Meeting Minutes of Regular Meeting of Hanover Board of Selectmen held via conference call on Monday, March 16, 2020 @ 7:00 PM.

Chairman John C. Tuzik present at Town Hall. Present via conference call were Vice-Chair, Emmanuel Dockter, Selectmen: David Delaney, Jocelyn Keegan and John Barry. Also present: Town Manager (TM) Joe Colangelo, and via conference call Assistant Town Manager (ATM) Ann Lee and Licensing Coordinator/Executive Assistant Janet Tierney.

Call Meeting to Order

At 7:00 p.m. Chairman Tuzik opened the meeting. The Chair explained the use of a conference call for the meeting in order to follow federal and state recommendations to practice social distancing and group avoidance in response to the COVID-19 virus. On March 12, 2020, Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker signed an Executive Order suspending portions of the Open Meeting Law to allow public bodies to carry out their duties while adhering to public health recommendations. The Chair read a portion of Governor Baker's order into the record. Other items previously on the agenda for this evening's meeting have been postponed in order to devote the meeting to updates and questions regarding the COVID-19 virus.

COVID-19 Update

Hanover Fire Chief Jeffrey Blanchard gave an update on the actions taken to deal with the COVID-19 health emergency. The Fire Department has developed an incident command structure with Chief Blanchard serving as the Incident Commander. Many departments within the Town will have a role within this structure to meet the needs of the community. Chief Blanchard has developed a command tree and will forward it to the TM and the Board of Selectmen for their review and reference. The TM will serve as the Public Information Officer. The Fire Department is in direct contact with the Board of Health. All current departments that provide public health services will be consolidated into the "Community Health Group" so as not to duplicate efforts. Day Captain Fred Freeman will be coordinating this group. An initiative is being worked on in collaboration with South Shore Hospital to be able to swab and test patients for the virus. The Hanover Department of Municipal Inspections will be handling keeping an active list of volunteers within town. Assistant School Superintendent Dr. Raab and Director of Community Services Tammy Murray will be heading up the community food and supplies services. They will be continuing the Meals on Wheels program for seniors and making sure families are receiving the nutritional assistance they required. Director of Technology Bill Hartigan is handling all communications and making sure staff can easily reach others including arranging this and future meetings. A leadership succession plan has been put in place for each group in the event that anyone within the group becomes ill.

Selectmen Dockter asked the Fire Chief if there's anything from the state or federal level that we could use additional help with. Chief Blanchard stated he has made Representative David DeCoste and Senator Michael Brady aware that fire departments and EMS services in our county are concerned that their supplies of PPE (personal protective equipment) will be depleted and are on backorder. Chief Blanchard thanked the Board of Selectmen for approving funds at their prior meeting for COVID-19 response supplies. The Fire Department has ordered decontamination equipment with some expected to arrive by Friday, March 20th. Chief Blanchard stated they are taking all steps necessary to keep their personnel safe.

Selectman Keegan thanked everyone for their hard work, and asked for a specific location for residents to access information that is reliable. Chairman John Tuzik stated the best place for accurate information at this time would be the Town of Hanover website. The Chair also thanked Selectman Keegan for her assistance with arranging the teleconference meeting this evening.

Selectman Barry thanked everyone for their hard work and suggested the section of the Town website devoted to “what to do if you feel ill” be in a prominent place for easy access. Selectman Barry asked the Fire Chief if he has considered separating his staff into smaller groups at different locations. Chief Blanchard stated he has not gotten to that step yet but the South Shore Vo-Tech may serve as an alternate location for fire staff at some point.

Selectman Delaney mentioned the reoccurring question within Town of how long the situation will last. Chief Blanchard stated he is in regular contact with the Department of Public Health, and watching countries in Europe that are days ahead of us can give some idea. Chief Blanchard stressed that staying at home will hopefully help “flatten the curve” and ease the stress on the healthcare system.

Selectman Dockter asked if a staff member could be selected as a volunteer coordinator for residents to contact if they have questions. Chief Blanchard stated within the Department of Municipal Inspections a staff member has been selected to coordinate volunteers and will be sorting volunteers by skill set.

Public Health Nurse Nancy Funder stated they will be seeking volunteers for various duties around town. Chairman Tuzik asked should these volunteers be registered nurses or have any particular skill set. Nurse Funder stated skilled and unskilled volunteers will be needed if medication and/or a vaccine need to be distributed at some point. Tammy Murray is handling outreach to seniors. Lynn Petrowski is handling students that require meals.

Chief Blanchard stated School Superintendent Matthew Ferron is doing an excellent job managing the schools in a difficult situation, and Director of Finance Lincoln Heineman is keeping track of all expenses and opportunities to receive reimbursement from the federal or state government in the future.

Representative David DeCoste stated many residents have questions regarding state aid for businesses and workers whose employment has been interrupted especially in the restaurant industry. Representative DeCoste stated Governor Baker has proposed a small business loan relief package which hopefully will move quickly through the State House. In addition, the federal government will be proposing a fairly significant relief effort to help small businesses and workers get through this. Representative DeCoste also stated the Registry of Motor Vehicles has extended expiration dates for license renewals, registrations etc.

The Chair opened the meeting to questions or comments from residents on the call. Seeing none. The Chair thanked all of the leadership in town and encouraged everyone to remain calm, civil and smart about this situation, stating that together we can beat this thing and get through it.

The Board will plan on conducting the next Board of Selectmen meeting in this same fashion as this evening.

The Meeting ended and adjourned at 6:39pm.