

**Meeting Minutes of the Regular Meeting of Hanover Board of Selectmen held via conference call on Monday, April 20, 2020 @ 6:00 PM**

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Present via Zoom Conference call: Chairman John Tuzik, Vice Chairman Emmanuel Dockter, Selectman David Delaney, Selectwoman Jocelyn Keegan and Selectman John Barry. Also present Town Manager (TM) Joe Colangelo and via conference call Executive Assistant Janet Tierney, and Finance Director (FD) Lincoln Heineman.

At 6:00 p.m. the Chair opened the meeting.

The Chair informed everyone watching that they may share their comment or questions by hitting star 9 or raising their virtual hand. The Chair asked for any public commentary.

Seeing none, the Board moved on to the Covid-19 update from Fire Chief Blanchard. The Chief informed the Board that the Town has sufficient personal protection equipment for the next few weeks. Chief Blanchard had personally gone and picked up the surgical masks supplied by MEMA. He informed the Board that there are currently 34 confirmed cases Coronavirus in Town with, as of this morning, no new cases this week. The Ambulance had transported 83 patients with Coronavirus symptoms, 13 in the past week.

The Chief informed the Board that Mobile Integrated Health had visited 6 patients in this week and had received positive feedback on the service.

Chairman Tuzik commented that he had visited the operation and they are doing a great job.

Selectman Delaney commented that his family had personally used the Mobile Integrated Health service. He went on to say that luckily the test was negative for the Coronavirus. He thanked the Fire Department and the Mobile Integrated Health workers for all their help.

The Board thanked the Chief, the Fire Department and the Mobile Integrated Health workers for the great job they are doing.

The Chief commented that Hanover has a lot of good, dedicated employees and volunteers who have stepped up, noting that it is really something to see.

The Vice Chair asked the Chief if ambulance receipts are being tracked and if they are going up or down.

The Chief informed the Board that it is tough to tell because of the lag time. Things had been slow for a few weeks so the last Comstar report had shown the numbers as going down, however that number fluctuates. There has not been a drop in insurance reimbursements yet. The Board thanked the Chief.

Approved  
6/15/2020

The Clerk via teleconference presented a PowerPoint presentation regarding the upcoming local election and requested that the Board consider shortening the hours of the election on June 27<sup>th</sup> to 5 or 6 hours in order to limit person to person contact. The Clerk proposed that shortening the hours would reduce the number of election workers necessary to staff the election and therefore lessen the amount of personal protection equipment required.

The Clerk further requested that the Board allow her to mail out the ballots she had printed and allow for a longer period for residents to vote via mail.

The Clerk suggested that shortening the hours would lessen the cost of the election and offset the expense of mailing the ballots.

The Chair opened the discussion up for questions from the Board.

Selectwoman Keegan inquired about the process for picking up an absentee ballot.

The Clerk informed the Board that the early voting by mail allowance is no excuse absentee voting. Anyone interested in voting by mail must apply, and the application is available on the Town Website. She went on to say that people can fill it out, scan it and email it back to the Clerk's Office or drop it off at the Town Hall via the mail slot. She informed the Board that the normal election hours are 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. She is proposing those hours be shortened to 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. or 4:00 p.m. noting that the middle of the day tends to be the busiest.

The Board expressed concern that it would be difficult to come in and vote during those hours for emergency workers and other individuals who are still going to work.

The Clerk informed the Board that she had sent the ballots to print and the printed ballots have been delivered to Town Hall. Also, she informed the Board that she has had the voting machines coded to read the ballots. She asked the Board to consider giving their approval tonight for her to mail the ballots out tomorrow.

Vice Chair Dockter noted that the Board had been discussing financial issues at the last meeting, in particular the CPA, and asked the Chair if it was o.k. to discuss that issue at this time.

The Chair approved. The Vice Chair went on to say that should the Board decide to reduce the CPA there are two ways to approach it. One would be a legislative Home Rule approach and the other would be via Town Meeting vote and ballot question. He noted that the question of the approach should be addressed before the mailing of the ballot question can be answered as the ballots would need to be updated and reprinted if the ballot question approach is chosen. However, the Vice Chair informed the Board that he prefers the legislative approach which would not require the reprinting of the ballots.

The Clerk informed the Board that the two step process of printing the ballots and coding the voting machines to read the ballots has a cost of about \$3,700.00. She was advised that the most

streamlined way to change the ballots at this point would be to reprint them and recode the machines. The alternatives would be too cumbersome and not provide any cost savings.

The Chair asked the Clerk what the questions were that she needed answers for this evening and also for an overview of the timeline of the voting by mail process.

The Clerk explained that with people working remotely and the 3-5 day estimate from the US Postal service for point to point delivery we would be looking at easily a month once the process begins. The Clerk described the process of receiving the ballots via the mail once they arrive at Town Hall and informed the Board that someone in the Finance Department receives all of the Town Hall mail and sorts it into everyone's mailboxes. The Clerk's Office then picks up the mail from their mailbox. The Chair stated that ballots should only be handled by the Clerk's Office and not handled by general Town Hall staff at all.

TM agreed stating that someone from the Clerk's Office must be responsible for handling the ballots.

Selectman Barry questioned if those planning to run in the election would have adequate time to prepare and run. He also suggested the protocol of using of a lockbox and having two individuals present during the handling of the ballots.

Selectman Delaney expressed that he believes shortening the time of the election would dissuade people from showing up to vote or remove their opportunity to vote, noting that if election day is safe for 6 hours it should be safe for 8 hours. He further commented that he wished that the ballots had not been printed already given that a reprint will cost the Town close to \$4,000, 00.

The Clerk informed the board that Hanover can run the Election Day as usual and still take advantage of the mail in voting process.

The Board and the Clerk agreed to make a decision on the timing of mailing the ballots and election hours on or before May 4<sup>th</sup>.

The Board, TM and Clerk discussed the sign bylaw. The Clerk informed the Board that according to the bylaw people can put their signs up on June 6<sup>th</sup>, three weeks in advance of Election Day.

The Board requested Town Counsel's opinion on the enforceability of the sign bylaw.

The Chair informed the Clerk that the Board is unable to provide answers for her tonight and requested that she hold the mailing of the ballots until the Board can provide the answers.

The Chair opened the topic up for public comment.

Vanessa O'Connor, a candidate for one of the contested seats, commented that people voting by mail could complete the process well before the signs are put out. Further stating that with the

limited amount interaction available to candidates, being limited to putting the signs out three weeks in advance would be a disservice to them. Ms. O'Connor's phone reception began to cut out and she agreed to hang up and call back.

The Chair moved to a call from candidate Steve Louko. Mr. Louko expressed his opinion that there are other ways for candidates to get their names out there and did not see the need to have signs plastered everywhere for months at a time. He requested the use of the studio used for Covid updates for additional candidate's nights. HCTV Station Manager Colleen Smith shared that the Junior Women's League had reached out to HCTV and there is a tentative date of June 2<sup>nd</sup> for a Zoom teleconference candidate's night. Mr. Louko identified himself as a member of CPC and began to discuss the possible changes to the CPA. The Chair invited Mr. Louko to stay on the line as the Board intended to discuss possible changes to the CPA later in the meeting. Mr. Louko mentioned that there are five people running for two seats and he is looking forward to a fair race.

The Chair recognized Vanessa O'Connor. Ms. O'Connor expressed that she likes the zoom candidate's night idea and would like to see the time allowed for posting signs measure up a bit better with the time to vote.

Ms. O'Connor questioned if mailings will be encouraged, if standouts leading up the elections allowed and whether or not there is any possibility of having the election with entirely mail in voting. The Chair asked the Clerk to respond.

The Clerk informed Ms. O'Connor that standouts are allowed today as long as the property owner is ok with it, as they are not allowed on public property, and an entirely mail in voting election is possible but not yet allowed in Massachusetts. The Clerk also stated that she is not aware of any guidelines with respect to mailings. The Clerk believes that would be a decision for the individual campaigns as opposed to the Board of Selectmen or the Clerk.

The Chair recognized candidate Rhonda Nyman. Ms. Nyman asked the Clerk what the process is for candidates to access information on who requested and returned a mailed in ballot.

The Clerk stated that this would be handled as a public records request, and that the process may take a little longer than usual due to people working remotely.

Ms. Nyman asked if the Clerk's Office will be extending their hours as the election approaches due to the delay with people working remotely. The Clerk stated no.

FD mentioned that the Town Clerk's Office is currently staffed two days a week and having the Assistant Town Clerk present in the office will help to accomplish having the office staffed.

The Chair asked for any questions. Seeing none, he thanked the Town Clerk and informed her that the Board will get her the answers she requested soon.

The Chair moved on to the next agenda item concerning the FY2021 Budget.

TM and FD presented the “Fiscal Year 2021 Budget Town Manager’s UPDATED FY2021 Budget Presentation”.

Tm informed the Board that he and FD as well as Superintendent Ferron and Business Manager Dr. Tom Raab on the school side had been working together to come up with the “best bad budget”. One where everyone feels luke warm about but can support. He informed the Board they did the best job they could to meet the world we are in.

The Chair thanked TM, FD, Superintendent Ferron, Dr. Raab and all that helped for their hard work and asked if there are questions.

Selectman Barry mentioned that he had received calls from local business owners to discuss challenges they are facing. He asked if the Town is considering offering relief to business owners, specifically with regards to property taxes. Selectman Barry expressed the hope that we can do our best and put forth leadership in asking Town employees to hold off on pay increases in order to keep people employed, in essence asking people to hold the line.

Selectwoman Keegan mentioned that the community is going to be hurting financially and anything the Town can do to stem the tide and keep things neutral is appreciated.

Selectman Delaney thanked everyone for the work including a lot of suggestions they were given from the Board, which were not necessarily going in the same direction, and coming up with something workable. He went on to say that a lot of businesses are in rough shape and that this is a challenging time for residents and businesses alike. He expressed gratitude for the hard work and a hope that the budget will be satisfactory.

The Chair commented that calm seas make lousy sailors and it’s hard to steer a ship in a fog. He further mentioned that these four people and the Advisory Committee have really come through, everyone making a contribution, and all willing to make a sacrifice to make this work.

Vice Chair Dockter thanked TM and FD for the hard lift of the last minute change of the entire budget, he expressed appreciation all the hard work of the Schools and Advisory Committee.

The Chair stated that as Chairman of the Board of Selectmen he endorses this budget and asked his colleagues to do that same.

The Vice Chair stated that he too endorses this budget and is hopeful that with an adjustment to CPA among other things we can get to the goal of a zero percent raise on property taxes. The Vice Chair requested that FD provide the Board with clarification on the CPA level required in order to cover outstanding debt obligations.

Approved  
6/15/2020

Selectman Delaney stated that he endorses this budget.

The Chair opened the discussion of the Draft Annual and Special Town Meeting Warrants and passed it over to the Vice Chair. The Vice Chair explained that under Mass General Law Chapter 44B if you want to reduce the CPA surcharge you have to do it in the same way you enacted it. In Hanover that is at elections and then a subsequent meeting to form a committee. He expressed that the downside of taking that approach you can only vote down to the 1.2 percent so that current debt obligations are covered. Alternatively it could be handled through special legislation through a Home Town Rule petition similar to the steps taken to have the meals tax go to OPEB. Town meeting voted and approved that and then it was sent to the legislature for special legislation. The Vice Chair proposed that the CPA surcharge could be reduced in FY2012 and FY2022 and then return in FY2023. He offered to reach out to Representative DeCoste and Senator Brady to see what their legislative calendar looks like if the Board was interested.

The Board agreed that a decision on whether this would be placed in the warrant or on a ballot would need to be made by May 4<sup>th</sup> but they would need to have final language for an article and also ballot language ready by May 4<sup>th</sup> as well.

Representative DeCoste reached out the Board via text to offer assistance.

The Board discussed attempting to keep the Town Meeting focused on the bare minimum of what is needed. The Chair asked the Board to look at the warrant and directed them to be prepared to discuss what they want on and off the warrant at the next meeting.

The Board discussed that as we get closer to Town Meeting, the Moderator will make the final decision as to whether it is safe enough to hold Town Meeting and that if the Town Meeting is not held prior to July 1<sup>st</sup>, there are mechanisms the Board could use to approve 1/12<sup>th</sup> budgets to get by until Town Meeting is held.

TM gave a quick update on articles he sees as coming off. The Board instructed that those proposing petition articles be contacted and asked if they can postpone their article to a later Special Town Meeting in the fall.

Selectwoman Keegan requested a redline version of the warrant for the next meeting.

Selectman Barry requested that the Board seek guidance from Town Counsel on the CPA, and that the redline version flags any articles the Board needs to give commentary on so that all can prepare and vote on the commentary at the next meeting.

Selectwoman Keegan thanked the Library Staff for being cooperative as they are moving towards being furloughed.

Approved  
6/15/2020

FD mentioned that the Advisory Committee may hold off on adding their commentary because things may change significantly between the warrant print time and Town Meeting. He went on to mention that May 1<sup>st</sup> is the internal print deadline for the Advisory Committee.

TM informed the Board that ideally the Board would decide which articles they want on the warrant by May 4<sup>th</sup> and then take the month of May to work on the commentary.

Selectwoman Keegan stated that the commentary is very important and encouraged the Advisory Committee to have something on the ground for people to pick up and look at going into Town Meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:18 pm