

Select Board Meeting Minutes
May 7, 2020 Virtual Meeting

Select Board members present: Melissa Makepeace-O'Neil/Chair, Elaine Puleo, and April Stein
Staff present: Becky Torres/Town Administrator; Linda Avis Scott/Administrative Secretary
Guests: Paul Lyons/Town Moderator, Susie Mosher/Town Clerk, Rita Farrell/FinCom, Walter Tibbetts/Fire Chief & Emergency Management Director, Police Chief Dan Fernandes, Catherine Hilton/Board of Health, Penny Kim and Mike Vinskey

Makepeace-O'Neil calls the meeting to order at 5:30pm.

Agenda Review: No changes.

Public Comment: Penny Kim thanks all for carrying on the work of the Town.

Discussion Topic:

1. Annual Town Meeting Planning under COVID-19 Conditions/State of Emergency: Paul Lyons appreciates all present for attending and participating in planning for annual town meeting. Lyons reviews his document "ATM Planning Mtg. via Zoom – Thursday, May 7, 2020"; the focus for planning is the safety and legitimacy of the annual town meeting and the need for clear communication with townspeople. Stein appreciates Lyons' document and recommends planning for a 6.27.20 meeting via Option A and notes concerns about associated costs and the use of technology. Torres: the election has to be tied to a location in Shutesbury so coordination with town meeting will be needed if it takes place in a location different than the election. Puleo: if annual town meeting takes place later than the election, there will be a transition of roles before annual town meeting occurs, i.e. Select Board, FinCom and Town Clerk; even if an outdoor venue is used, use of a location that allows participants to stay in their vehicles is urged. Mosher asks about the possibility of obtaining a waiver to use the school for both or either the annual town meeting and election and notes that FinCom appointments are not tied to elections therefore only the Town Clerk and Select Board would change. It is confirmed that FinCom appointments are related to the fiscal year. Lyons: if there is legislation allowing the postponement of municipal elections, the elected positions would be tied to the new date. Torres: because municipal elections are statutory, the date cannot be changed. Makepeace: the drive-in model would have the best interconnected communication system. Stein: the drive-in would serve safety and technology needs. Rita Farrell is concerned that the distance to the drive-in would discourage participation. Puleo, noting that it would be cumbersome, cites the potential use of the UMass clicker system for voting. Puleo has asked State Senator Jo Comerford about a hybrid option, i.e. allowing the use of Zoom along with in person/car participation. Mosher: drive-in registration and voting by raising a card out the car window would work. Puleo: with such a system, there would be fewer people needed for counting; use of a UMass parking lot would be much closer than the Northfield drive-in; a "chat" system could be used for questions. Lyons recognizes that communication out to cars will work well, however, communication from participants will be more difficult, i.e. use of cell phones may prohibit some participants. Makepeace-O'Neil suggests surveying residents about which option they would attend. Penny Kim notes that with a postponement of annual town meeting to after 6.30.20, the budget can be managed and asks what else has to be accomplished during the meeting.

Farrell: the CPC articles are required by statute. Torres: there are options for the budget. Mosher asks which warrant articles could be postponed. Torres: articles associated with the budget could be postponed therefore it is recommended that the Select Board “sign up” for a 1/12 budget; capital items can be delayed; there is one citizen petition and if the town goes to the 1/12 budget, citizen petitions cannot be considered. Lyons: moderators are concerned about residents that want to speak and may be required to use a device, i.e. cell phone, to do so. Puleo: in that case, there would need to be someone wearing PPE with a sanitized roving microphone. It is noted that attendance at annual town meeting is often related to warrant article topics. Stein suggests using a tent in the field behind town hall. Makepeace-O’Neil asks how many cars will fit in the school parking lot and reaffirms the need to poll residents. Lyons asks Tibbetts and Fernandes for feedback. Fire Chief Walter Tibbetts: the layout of cars needs to account for accessibility and the ability for cars to leave safely which will add to the amount of space needed; bathroom facilities are available at the school. Catherine Hilton reports there are maybe 60 marked spots in the school lot. Torres will look into the potential cost for using the Northfield drive-in. Puleo has preliminary feedback that the use of a UMass parking lot may be possible and will look into the specifics noting that no facilities will be available. Mosher: while understanding the need for legitimacy, citizens need to share responsibility for annual town meeting. Puleo: this will be a much more abbreviated town meeting; participants will need to come and stay. Torres: the reports from boards and committees will not be included and the schools and Finance Committee can be encouraged to hold advance educational Zoom meetings. Tibbetts supports holding advance discussions noting that as long as the meeting is streamlined, people will stay. Puleo: advance presentations could be recorded and/or online materials provided for reading. Lyons: these ideas have some inherent appeal, however, there still needs to be open participation during annual town meeting; the time-consuming nature of a roving microphone is noted. To Lyons question, Farrell agrees to investigate with the Coalition whether the CPC articles need to be considered before the end of the fiscal year. Lyons: there is legislation allowing annual town meeting to be postponed to a date after 7.1.2020. Lyons notes that the discussion began with the assumption that annual town meeting will be held on 6.27.20 and asks for other opinions. Torres: technology is being used to keep the work of the town going; it will be very difficult if technology cannot be used for annual town meeting; the Legislature has been asked to allow the use of Zoom which has been approved for use by representative town meeting. Lyons: the moderators’ association has requested that permission to use a virtual platform be given to towns with less than 600 voters. Torres suggests the number of voters be raised to 2,000. Makepeace-O’Neil cautions against disenfranchising those without internet. Mosher: there could be options that are not mutually exclusive options. Makepeace-O’Neil: perhaps there could be a group Zoom. Lyons: the Select Board will have to decide whether to ask the Legislature to raise the number of voters; disenfranchisement is a real concern. Stein: the irony is that the very small towns do not have good internet access; to Mosher’s point, however it is held, the meeting will not be perfect. Torres: small groups seated in chairs 6 feet apart under a small tent could view the meeting via Zoom. Puleo: although before/after thorough cleaning would be needed, use of all the classrooms and other spaces in the school would allow everyone to be in the same building; there would need to be an experienced tech person in each room. Stein: social distancing will be a problem. Puleo brainstorms a

method for people to enter and exit the school. Police Chief Dan Fernandes appreciates Puleo's idea and notes that the school has an intercom system that could broadcast the meeting and police officers will be present to help; wearing masks and staying 6 feet apart will be adequate and by using the school, weather issues will be eliminated and it is a familiar accessible location. Stein: Zoom needs to be an option for those that are not comfortable attending in person. Fernandes: there are phones as well as intercom in each room. Puleo: with so few people, there may need to be written ballots. Lyons recommends avoiding paper ballots. Mosher: election workers can be available to count votes. Fernandes: traffic will be controlled and only a certain number of folks will be allowed into the school at a time. Tibbetts: because there are facilities and it is a familiar space, use of the school is one of the better options. Mosher: if the building is shut down for a period after use, no extra cleaning will be needed. Hilton concurs, after five days there will be no virus left. Torres: the school was thoroughly cleaned after it closed. Lyons: use of the school may work; voting on Zoom from home may be problematic. Mosher does not think Zooming from home can be accommodated. Fernandes: being so far from the norm, the school will be more inclusive than any other option. Mosher: a way for the election to be as self-contained as possible will be figured out. Lyons: separating the election from town meeting will be a benefit for every year. Torres: the installation of a drop box at town hall is being worked on; it can be used for ballot drop off and tax payments. Tibbetts: with all that is going on, the use of the school will be the most inclusive. Torres notes that easing of restrictions at the State level will still be needed, i.e. no groups greater than ten and recommends encouraging the use of remote technology. Makepeace-O'Neil: if all participants are within one building, remote technology may not be needed. Lyons: the issue was about holding virtual meetings. Lyons thanks everyone present and notes the need to keep planning momentum going. Lyons likes the option of a survey for feedback from townspeople and asks if NextDoor can be used in an informal way. Stein emphasizes the need to use the Town Announce system. Fernandes recommends the use of posters and CodeRed. Torres: via the MLP, Crocker will send a Town email about the spring newsletter and other timely news to the 87% who have subscribed to Shutesbury.net; 155 newsletters were mailed 5.7.20 to nonsubscribers. Torres continues: for Town communication, use of the Town Announce system is encouraged; due to an increase in the number of subscribers, there is now a fee for the use of Town Announce; Survey Monkey will be used for the survey; survey cards could be used for write-in responses. Mosher recommends the use NextDoor to steer townspeople to the Town website. Lyons: the need to consider Option B may be necessary if there is no legislation to support the use of technology. Puleo does not think legislation is needed in order to have participants in different rooms. Puleo and Torres will check in with legislators and note State Senator Jo Comerford, Chair of the COVID-19 Task Force, is listening to municipalities. Lyons notes that the limit of group size to 10 is still in place. Torres recommends a meeting close to 6.1.20 to reassess plans for annual town meeting. All agree to reassess during the 5.26.20 Select Board meeting.

At 7:02pm, Puleo moves and Stein seconds a motion to adjourn the meeting. Roll call vote: Stein: aye, Puleo: aye, and Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; the motion carries.

Documents and Other Items Used at the Meeting:

1. Paul Lyons' "ATM Planning Mtg. via Zoom – Thursday, May 7, 2020"

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Avis Scott
Administrative Secretary