

Town of Adams Massachusetts 01220-2087

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BOARD OF SELECTMEN

TOWN HALL BUILDING
8 PARK STREET

TOWN CLERK
ADAMS MASS.

CLERK _____

**Wednesday, March 25, 2020, 6:00 p.m.
MEETING MINUTES**

CALL TO ORDER: On the above date the Board of Selectmen held a meeting on the first floor of Adams Town Hall. It was announced that Members Blanchard and Duval were attending the meeting remotely for COVID-19 emergency purposes under 9410 CMR 29.10(5). The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chairman Hoyt. Present were Vice Chairman Bush and Member Nowak. Also present were Town Administrator Green and Town Counsel St. John III.

Chairman Hoyt read the Governor's order.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The minutes for the *March 4, 2020* meeting were submitted for approval. *Motion made by Member Nowak to waive reading the minutes for March 4, 2020 and approve them as submitted, second by Vice Chairman Bush. Roll Call Vote: Chairman Hoyt, Vice Chairman Bush, Members Nowak, Blanchard and Duval. Motion passed.*

PUBLIC COMMENT: *Public Comment was taken by conference call number 413-743-8300 x202.* There were no calls received for public comment.

NEW BUSINESS

COVID-19 Update: *Town Administrator Green* gave an overview of the situation. He advised this is a rapidly changing situation and the Town was providing a measured response to protect public health and safety and provide continuity of services. The timeline of emergency events and decisions was reviewed. Highlights included the Governor issuing a State of Emergency, and the Town of Adams issuing a State of Emergency. A shift was then made to provide unified an Emergency Command System in a North Adams emergency operations center (REOPS). Subsequently, the Governor provided an open meeting law amendment emergency order to suspend public access to public meetings, to include use of online or telephone services and eliminating quorum requirements in the room so members may attend remotely. The closing of bars and restaurants except for takeout meals took place, followed by an expanded closure of non-essential businesses. The Board of Health and Police Department are watching for health and public safety issues. An advisory was issued to stay at home, avoid unnecessary travel and activities, to avoid gatherings of more than ten people in the community. and for those over seventy years old and those with underlying conditions to limit social interactions as much as possible. The School District suspended all operations and the meal programs are for pickup only. State Representative Barrett and Senator Hines were praised for their support of those out of work, and Representative Barrett is working very hard for municipal and constituent services. Town essential services were outlined as being the Police Department, Department of Public Works, Custodial Services, Wastewater Treatment Plant and Inspectional Services. Physical distancing strategies for these areas were outlined. The Department of Inspectional Services is still providing permitting. The Library is closed, and all other offices are working with essential staff only from Monday through Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The Council on Aging is available by telephone and van drivers are on call. He thanked Town staff for putting on the Western Mass Food Bank to address the local need. The local number of COVID-19 cases were reviewed.

Importance was given to ensuring the safety of emergency services. He requested citizens not flush wipes especially as cleaning out the equipment puts staff at risk. *Chairman Hoyt* advised that the Town of Adams continues to be a part of the Berkshire Emergency Operations Center. The center may be called at (413) 662-3614 from Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. to address questions, or by email to nbcovid@gmail.com and they will respond as they are able to do so. Other resources are available through the www.Mass.Gov website for the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Berkshire Medical Center phone number (855) BMC-LINK from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. seven days per week and the MEMA line for private businesses (508) 820-2094 on Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. For information on unemployment visit www.Mass.Gov as they posted information about the unemployment process and have links to virtual meetings on how to apply. Other resources are available through the Small Business Administration (SBA) and through an economic assistance grant by Berkshire United Way. Additional information as it becomes available may be found through www.1Berkshire.com on the COVID page. *Member Nowak* advised the main responsibility of the Town is the public safety of its residents, and explained that personal distancing, washing hands, not touching your face, nose and eyes will make a big difference. He praised those in town that have begun to do this and advised it is time to do these simple things that make a difference in this COVID Virus epidemic. It was noted that the small business stimulus package will hopefully be signed tonight and a suggestion was made to assign a Town Planner or a designee to this so the local municipalities and government will have support for the community. *Vice Chairman Bush* requested citizens support the local businesses wherever possible by donating to the local businesses that have donated to us over the years. *Town Administrator Green* updated the Board that Police Chief applications are being accepted until March 27th and the committee will move forward because the work can be done remotely. A zoning public hearing for 40U and 40R and for the Commercial Street rezoning will need to take place once restrictions are relaxed. *Member Duval* noted that the Town has passed the budget deadline and Town Accountant Beverly will have a budget to present to the Selectmen soon. *Town Administrator Green* advised he spoke with State Representative Barrett regarding what actions the Town of Adams can take regarding Town Meeting and the municipal budget. He noted that the legislation has passed the House of Representatives and is at the Senate. Once passed, the Town will know how to go forward accordingly. If the Town is not able to do the budget by July 1st provisions will be made to continue operations with the previous allocations from the last budget.

Ratifications:

Wastewater Treatment Plant Assistant Mechanic/Operator II: Todd B. Syrett. *Chairman Hoyt* read the letter from the Town Administrator recommending ratification and noted the start date is fluid as the COVID-19 situation unfolds. It was noted that the Town is mandated to have seven staff at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. *Motion made by Vice Chairman Bush to ratify Todd B. Syrett to the position of Assistant Maintenance Mechanic / Operator II at the D12A Step 1 rate of \$18.64 upon completion of all hiring requirements, second by Member Nowak. Roll Call Vote: Chairman Hoyt, Vice Chairman Bush, Members Nowak, Blanchard, and Duval. Motion passed.*

Adult Services Librarian: Eleanore Goerlach. *Chairman Hoyt* read the letter by Town Administrator Green letter recommending ratification of Ms. Goerlach. It was noted that the start date is fluid pending the reopening of the Library. It was noted that there is a reduction in services and no lending of materials for safety. It was explained that this position is necessary for grants and maintaining staffing levels. *Motion made by Vice Chairman Bush to ratify Eleanore Goerlach to the Adult Services Librarian position at the Grade 7 Step 1 rate of \$19.74 per hour upon successful completion of all hiring requirements, second by Member Nowak. Roll Call Vote: Chairman Hoyt, Vice Chairman Bush, Members Nowak, Blanchard and Duval. Motion passed.*

Acceptance of Quitclaim Deed and Approval of Real Property Donation Agreement: Parcel B, Zylonite Station Road. *Chairman Hoyt* briefly reviewed the history of the property donation. Town Counsel St. John III advised that the deed comes from National Grid and the property was purchased from the Ziemba family. New England Power Company wishes to donate the property to the Town for strictly conservation and no other purposes. The deed contains an easement which permits New England Power Company to maintain it, and National Grid needs to ensure that the wildlife that grows there is appropriate and not invasive. The obligations are National Grid's to maintain the property. The Conservation Commission needs to accept it. He noted that the document appears to be appropriate, there are no liens against the property and there is no liability for creditors. The Conservation Commission is expecting the materials but needs to vote on it. No questions were raised by Board Members.

Approval of PILOT Agreement Grove Street Solar Installation. Town Administrator Green advised this is a payment in lieu of taxes or "PILOT" proposed solar agreement which is already permitted. It was explained that it is in the tax code that this type of installation does not pay taxes and would have to enter into a PILOT Agreement. Exhibit B at end of the proposed Pilot noted the amount of \$58,650, based on an agreement to pay \$11,000 or more in electric current. The developer is in the design phase and would like to have all legal nuances completed. PILOT agreements were explained and it was noted that agreements like this are done to meet what could be a losing venture to the Town. Due diligence was noted as having been done in calculating what is best for the Town and negotiations were done. It was advised that the Town enter into the agreement. Tax exemptions were clarified, and it was noted that permits have already been approved, as it was being worked on for over a year and had already gone through the Conservation Commission. It was noted that the Building Inspector has been in touch with the firm to go over site work. Minor changes to the agreement were noted as being language changing both start and quarterly dates. This agreement would encompass Fiscal Years 2021 through 2041 and the Board would need to authorize the Town Administrator to sign this on behalf of the Town. It was pointed out that there is a one-time setup for solar panels and there would be a need to review it again if there were any changes. The formula is calculated by megawatts. Responsibility for maintenance was discussed briefly and it was noted that an independent company would be managing the maintenance. Concern was expressed about the removal of the solar panels from the land after the 20-year agreement, which will have to be looked at by the Zoning Board for special permitting. It was noted there may be an insurance policy or bond to ensure structures are taken down. *Motion made by Vice Chairman Bush to authorize Town Administrator Green to sign the PILOT Agreement for the Grove Street solar installation on behalf of the Town, second by Member Nowak. Roll Call Vote: Chairman Hoyt, Vice Chairman Bush, Members Nowak, Blanchard and Duval. Motion passed.*

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Town Administrator: *Town Administrator Green* thanked Town staff, and especially the Police Department and Department of Public Works for pulling together. He advised of the tremendous collaboration with the local communities to align responses and planning is being done with Mayor Bernard, Cheshire Town Administrator St. John IV, and State Representative Barrett. He expressed appreciation to State Representative Barrett and North Adams Mayor Bernard for the ability to have a volunteer manned regional emergency operation in Northern Berkshire County. He appealed to constituents to stay home as this is a rapidly growing crisis. He asked citizens to practice physical distancing and to limit travel. *Member Nowak* thanked Town Administrator Green and Chairman Hoyt for keeping everyone informed and pointed out that a person can be a carrier before any symptoms appear and to follow the guidance. He advised that people are working around the clock to find medicine and vaccines and to keep in mind that once more testing kits are made available more cases will be noted. *Vice Chairman Bush* advised he helped the Council on Aging put on the Food Bank and praised Council on Aging Director Girenti and Outreach Coordinator Proper for excellent and efficient management of it.

He noted that there was a large outpouring of the community. He reported that he watched a webinar on COVID-19 which showed that particles from sneezing stays in the air for an hour or more. Statistics of the number of cases in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts were reviewed by age demographics. It was noted that there were four COVID-19 related deaths today in Berkshire County, totaling fifteen currently. More than 6,000 people were tested today. It was announced that regarding payment of taxes, the Tax Collector's office is reachable at 743-8300 x177 on Monday through Thursday between 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. with questions. Citizens can mail them and there is a drop box at the front door at Town Hall. There is an online provision for people to pay, and online fees are being waived during this time. Information is still unrolling statewide and there may be some relaxation of deadlines.

Town Counsel: *Town Counsel St. John III* advised he has worked on the proposed PILOT for the Barrett House and is waiting on a response. He reported he also reviewed and commented on the Change of Manager application by the Pine Brook Pub, and had received a question concerning state Sanitary Building Codes regarding a rental property.

SUBCOMMITTEE AND LIAISON REPORTS: *Member Nowak* advised that he is not meeting officially but instead making telephone calls and emails. He noted that the ASCCC fundraising efforts have stopped due to the COVID-19 crisis. He advised he had put out an email to the Town Administrator and the Chair for their opinion regarding whether the upcoming Susan B. Anthony Celebration festivities are viable or should be postponed. He explained that May 18th is the RSVP date and due to the crisis people are not in a position to know whether to respond or not. The Committee needs to make decisions on either postponing or making other adjustments accordingly. *Vice Chairman Bush* announced that the Banners for Fallen Heroes program is going strong and currently has over thirty applications. He noted he was able to see a draft of what the banners will look like and was impressed. *Chairman Hoyt* advised that she received notice from one of the Police Chief Search Committee Members, Dave Bissaillon, must step down from the committee and the Town will need to find someone to fill the spot. Board Members were asked to provide names to Chairman Hoyt or Town Administrator Green of potential candidates from the business community.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND GOOD OF THE ORDER: *Member Nowak* advised that Governor Baker made an announcement this afternoon that schools will be closed through May 4th. He congratulated the Adams Hoosac Valley Girls Basketball Team for being co-champions of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Division III Girls' Basketball Team since the final game was cancelled. He thanked all healthcare providers in the county and frontline workers for their work fighting the COVID-19 virus as they are the unsung heroes and put their health on the line every day. He expressed that he hoped they would receive the materials needed to protect themselves so they could go home confident that they are not a carrier. *Chairman Hoyt* advised she was impressed with the Hoosac Valley Elementary School social media presence this week and their desire to make things more normal for the elementary school students with regular Facebook announcements. She expressed appreciation for Principal Sawyer's updates. *Vice Chairman Bush* expressed hope that the school prom and graduation ceremonies are able to take place this year. *Member Blanchard* thanked in addition to Town staff and emergency workers, grocery stores, gas stations, and the businesses that are open to provide everyone what they need during this crisis. *Chairman Hoyt* noted she is impressed with Adams Hometown Market's response to get more products in and to extend hours and open earlier for elders, first responders, and the vulnerable population. She noted that there have been a number of restaurants in Adams that made a quick pivot of their business model to adapt to the crisis and she encouraged citizens to order takeout or order a gift certificate online to help out local businesses. There is a Northern Berkshire GoFundMe page to support those in the restaurant businesses at this time. *Chairman Hoyt* noted that March 25, 2020 is Town Administrator Green's one-year anniversary with the Town of Adams and expressed gratitude for his emergency management background. She noted that the Board of Selectmen have to do his annual review.

She requested time and the patience of the Board to collect this information closer to May. There is a plan to have an April 1, 2020 Board of Selectmen meeting and it was noted that agendas are being kept to what has to be covered as logistics and scheduling are not easy in this fashion. She expressed appreciation for the support from Northern Berkshire Community Television to make it all run smoothly.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

#3. To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares;

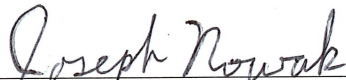
- LOCAL #204, STATE COUNCIL #93, AMERICAN FEDERATION OF STATE, COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO (CLERICAL UNIT)

At 7:10 Motion made by Member Nowak to enter into Executive Session for Reasons #3 as read aloud coming out only to adjourn, second by Member Bush. Roll Call Vote: Chairman Hoyt, Vice Chairman Bush, Members Duval, Nowak and Blanchard. Motion passed.

At 8:03 p.m. Motion made by Member Nowak to exit the Executive Session, second by Vice Chairman Bush. Roll Call Vote: Chairman Hoyt, Vice Chairman Bush, Members Duval, Nowak and Blanchard. Motion passed.

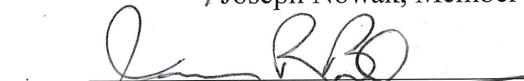
ADJOURNMENT: Motion made by Member Nowak to adjourn the meeting, second by Vice Chairman Bush. Roll Call Vote: Chairman Hoyt, Vice Chairman Bush, Members Duval, Nowak and Blanchard. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 8:04 pm

Respectfully Submitted by Deborah J. Dunlap,
Recording Secretary



Joseph Nowak, Member

John Duval, Member



James Bush, Vice Chairman

Richard Blanchard, Member



Christine Hoyt, Chairman