

Town of Adams Massachusetts 01220-2087

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

TOWN HALL BUILDING
8 PARK STREET

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Thursday, August 27, 2020, 4:30 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. The meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m. by Board of Selectmen Chairman Hoyt. Present were, Members Blanchard and Nowak. Present in the room were Chief Bacon, Town Administrator Green, Building Commissioner Garner and Town Accountant Beverly. *Vice Chairman Bush called by telephone at 5:32 p.m.*

Chairman Hoyt advised that "pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 *Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18*, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Town of Adams Board of Selectmen is being conducted via remote participation. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings as provided for in the Order.

JOIN ZOOM MEETING

<https://zoom.us/j/91496429314?pwd=V3VKZ09lNWl2ODRsU2h1MmlsdXN3UT09>

Meeting ID: 914 9642 9314; Passcode: BOS0827

Dial In: 1 (929) 436-2866 US; Meeting ID: 914 9642 9314; Passcode: 5402608

Approval of Minutes: The July 29, 2020 Board of Selectmen minutes were submitted for approval. *Motion made by Member Blanchard to waive reading and approve the July 29, 2020 meeting minutes as submitted, second by Member Nowak. Vote: unanimous. Motion passed.*

NEW BUSINESS

Review Temporary Moratorium on Tag Sales and Permit Fees: *Building Commissioner Garner* requested the Board of Selectmen lift the moratorium on Tag Sale Permits. It was noted that on July 3, 2020 the Governor lifted the ban on tag sales and mail has been received inquiring why the Town of Adams is not issuing them. He provided a proposed Covid-19 Control Plan to be adhered to with the updated Tag Sale application. It was noted that most tag sales happen on the weekend, and enforcement by the Code Enforcement Officer and the Building Commissioner is after hours. He explained that North Adams is the only other community not issuing Tag Sale permits. He advised that tag sales are no different than going to Market 32 and picking up produce and if the Control Plan is filled out and people abide by it there should be no problem. An argument made is that people are coming in from outside the area but that still happens in Market 32. Member Nowak advised that it makes sense to reinstitute it if all other communities are issuing them. He expressed concern that there will be a glut of tag sales which may cause extenuating problems with traffic. The burden on the Town was noted as being signage, and there is a compliance impact on the Building Commissioner.

Building Commissioner Garner reported that citizens are now going rogue because they know they cannot get a permit so he is sending out letters warning people that next time they will get a fine. He advised if the Board of Selectmen allows permits if people agree to comply with what they are asked to do. Chairman Hoyt noted that signage is addressed on the application. Building Commissioner Garner asked for an increase in permit fee from \$2 to \$7 due to Covid-19 issues, updating procedures and enforcement. *Member Blanchard* noted that the moratorium was put in place at the recommendation of Inspectional Services and if it is now recommended to be removed he would support it. He noted there may be an influx of them but people are having them anyway. It was noted that some people put up signs and others are advertising them online and providing information and directions. He advised he agreed with the increase in price to start in January. Price gouging was briefly discussed and a \$5 per Tag Sale versus \$7 was considered. ***Motion made by Member Nowak to rescind the moratorium of tag sales with the use of the Covid-19 Control Plan form, second by Member Blanchard. Vote: unanimous. Motion made by Member Blanchard to raise the Tag Sale Permit fee from \$2 to \$7 per tag sale effective immediately, second by Member Nowak. Vote: Unanimous.***

FY21 Budget Reduction Review and Approval: *Town Administrator Green* advised that the state said to use Fiscal Year 2020 state Cherry Sheet fiscal numbers and the Town budgeted with that number. He noted \$68,000 in reductions and explained that the cuts exceeded the target goal by \$18,000 to give a buffer in case receipts dropped so there was more of a cushion. Capital Outlay was reviewed and it was reduced by \$413,000 with the Town putting \$299,176 into free cash. He explained he wanted to have a sharp discretionary outlay list for Free Cash and put it into ongoing funding for Fiscal Year 2022 for authorized purchases. He reported that the Town did not have to use any Stabilization Funds. He advised that the budget has mostly remained the same, and there are no significant changes. He explained that the Town used tools to reduce the budget. The Police Department had significant retirements that achieved savings by hiring junior officers and this could not have been anticipated in March. He reviewed the painful decision that was made to furlough staff and outlined the fiscal effect achieved by that savings in Fiscal Year 2020 while not knowing what the receipts would be. He explained that through the furloughs effective July 1st and into Fiscal Year 2021 the Town achieved savings on labor costs initially up front. He noted that if he had put line items at 100% salary, the Town would have to raise that amount of money on the tax rate. The amount not spent would show up in Free Cash. He explained that he reduced hours that staff worked and in Fiscal Year 2022 will bring them back up to where they would be. *Town Accountant Beverly* explained the reverse of Fiscal Year 2020 and cutting what the Town is not spending. She pointed out that Operating Expenses carry \$140,000 on the electricity line item and the solar field has earned tremendous credits so she was applying them to larger electric accounts at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. She noted a \$10,000 reduction in power and that the poisonous hogweed was removed. She reported that the Town should not be paying for much electrical power and therefore is able to take that much out of the budget. She advised there were credits in December so she paid a half year of power on numerous accounts. *Town Administrator Green* reviewed the Council on Aging budget and noted they had been operating with four Part-Time Van Drivers. He explained they have hired six in last year and a half and retention has been an issue so it was decided to try hiring one Full-Time Van Driver at 35 hours per week with benefits, and increased the Per Diem Van Driver line item from \$3,000 to \$6,000. He noted that they will keep the second van and save \$22,000 by doing that.

He noted that there was a conversation with BRTA and they have a route optimizer and route scheduler to provide an efficient model to operate with. *Town Accountant Beverly* advised that this will dictate where the van will go and advise the people utilizing the van what days they have to make their appointments in which town instead of catering to the schedules of those booking the van. Concern was expressed about making scheduling consistent so citizens can count on it for appointments. *Town Administrator Green* advised if it doesn't work it will be reconsidered but he is putting more attention and management on hiring the right person for that job. He also noted a savings in the Library budget, because none of the part time employees there are working so they have realized savings. He reported that two full-time people are working part-time and will be put back up to full-time after the budget has been voted through. He explained that the savings achieved by keeping people furloughed he will be able to preserve the Library Page position that would have otherwise been cut. He reminded the Board Members that Library Director Jayko put half of the book money toward the Library Page position last year and the Town will be giving back another \$5,000 to restore book money for the Fiscal Year 2022 budget. He explained that the Library receives state funding assistance and if positions are cut it would be under scrutiny for other departments being equally cut. He advised that Board and Commission stipends are also on the reduction list. He proposed to level-fund all stipends to \$300 with the Chairman of Boards and Commissions receiving \$350 for this fiscal year to make the goal. Included would be the Board of Selectmen, Assessors, Registrar of Voters, Board of Health, and Cemetery Commission. He advised that he is looking at what other communities pay for stipends or if they pay them at all. He noted that there are no staff or service reductions. The Stabilization Fund level was noted as being at \$466,576. Funds are being taken out of Free Cash to offset the tax rate leaving a balance of \$299,176. *Member Nowak* explained that the best sun generation is in the winter, but the panels are snow covered and low profile. He pointed out that when the snow comes off of them it piles up above them and generation is lost. He suggested the Town look at more use of solar as there is a lot of town property available and there is funding out there to put in another solar array which would be advantageous. He noted that the Town missed out on funding receipts from not having marijuana retail businesses operational and other communities have millions of dollars coming in. He inquired if the lottery money came back and it was explained that it now goes into general government in a lumped sum. He inquired about what savings were received on fuel and it was explained that the Town is experiencing some savings due to locking in good pricing in August for last winter. It was noted that there is only one building running oil. It was also explained that vehicle fuel is locked in at a lower rate as well so the Town is saving on fuel costs. *Member Nowak* asked about saving money on overtime and recognized that it essential and needed for plowing and other duties. He pointed out that there is a glut of overtime and staff use the opportunity to put extra money in their pockets. He expressed disappointment that last year the DPW spent all of their overtime budget while other communities saved money. He requested it be looked at to change the mentality and tactics and possibly equipment for dispersion of salt. He advised of his concern on the overuse of salt and that he will continue to bring it up. He acknowledged that public safety is the main goal but he is also an environmentalist and salt not good for streams or private water sources. *Town Administrator Green* noted the concern and advised that the Police Department and DPW are the largest budgets. DPW Director Tober is looking into it and over five-year trend the overtime budget has been fairly steady and staying the same. He noted that snow and ice control is dictated by the weather and when the DPW is called in after hours for emergency purposes.

It was also explained that the Wastewater Treatment Plant is on standby and weekend duty is paid out of the overtime budget and comprises at least \$12,000 a year as built-in overtime which may make the DPW budget look inflated. *Member Nowak* noted that in the last two years the Town spent the most overtime funds that DPW and Police have used in a while. It was explained that some years the storms are all on the weekends and a bad winter could be an impact.

At 5:18 p.m. Town Accountant Beverly left the meeting.

Personal Services

Selectmen: The changes were noted as reduction of stipends for the Board of Selectmen to be consistent with all boards and commissions. *Member Nowak* pointed out that the amount of time being put in by Selectmen compared with other boards and commissions seemed unequal for the same stipend amount. Chairman Hoyt stated it was not for the Board of Selectmen to judge how much time other boards put into their work, and noted that the Board of Health has handled Covid-19 and the Assessors are required to keep up with training. She pointed out that when the conversation took place about eliminating all of stipends she didn't want to reduce it to zero, but it did make for a significant savings of \$15,998. She explained it was a difficult conversation, and *Member Duval* had asked to not get a stipend in initial budget conversations so it was decided to go with \$300 for Members and \$350 for the Chair as a compromise. *Member Nowak* asked if the Town Administrator would consider giving back some of his funds.

At 5:28 p.m. Chairman Hoyt announced that Vice Chairman Bush had contacted her to let her know despite attempts he had not been able to enter the meeting. At 5:32 p.m. Vice Chairman Bush was connected by Chairman Hoyt's cell phone and was able to hear for voting purposes. Motion made by Member Nowak to approve the revised pages of the budget as submitted, second by Member Blanchard. Roll Call Vote: Chairman Hoyt, Vice Chairman Bush, Member Blanchard and Member Nowak. Motion passed.

Assessor: It was explained that changes were made to the Part-Time Assessor positions to reduce stipends from \$1800 to \$300. It was explained that no Selectmen is doing the work for the stipend, but some of the other positions would need to be reviewed going forward since it is tough to get people to serve on boards and committees. It was noted that people's financial situation could be a factor and it is unclear if people are members of boards and commissions for the money. Town Administrator Green advised he served on Chicopee and Pittsfield boards and received no pay or stipend and going forward he would look at the microcosm. *Motion made by Member Blanchard to approve the Assessor Personal Services budget as presented, second by Vice Chairman Bush. Roll Call Vote: Chairman Hoyt, Vice Chairman Bush, Member Blanchard and Member Nowak. Motion passed.* Chairman Hoyt advised she will send letters out to Board and Commission Members.

Registrar of Voters: It was noted that the changes are the stipends from \$625 for the Chair, \$525 members and stipend for clerk. *Motion made by Member Blanchard to approve the amended personal services budget for the Registrar of Voters, second by Vice Chairman Bush. Roll Call Vote: Chairman Hoyt, Vice Chairman Bush, Member Blanchard and Member Nowak. Motion passed.*

Inspection Services: It was explained that the reductions are for the Board of Health. *Chairman Hoyt recused herself but needed to manage the Zoom technology so she did not leave the table. Motion made by Member Blanchard to approve the amended Inspectional Services budget as provided, second by Member Nowak. Abstention by Chairman Hoyt. Roll Call Vote: Vice Chairman Bush, Member Blanchard, and Member Nowak. Motion passed.*

Police Department: The savings on this budget were noted as being from retirements and hiring junior officers at lower pay. It was noted that there is one more officer to be hired and funding is in place. It was budgeted mid-range as Step 4 in case the person hired has lateral experience, and health insurance and Medicare are matched from existing expenses. Open enrollment was discussed. *Motion made by Member Blanchard to approve the Police Department Personal Services budget as presented, second by Vice Chairman Bush. Roll Call Vote: Chairman Hoyt, Vice Chairman Bush, Member Blanchard and Member Nowak. Motion passed.*

Council on Aging: Reductions were noted as being the change to staffing discussed earlier from four Part-Time Van Drivers to one Full-Time Van Driver to help with staff retention and the change of the Per Diem budget from \$3,000 to \$6,000. *Motion made by Member Blanchard to approve the Council on Aging Personal Services budget as provided, second by Vice Chairman Bush. Roll Call Vote: Chairman Hoyt, Vice Chairman Bush, Members Blanchard and Nowak. Motion passed.*

Library: Reductions were noted as savings from hours not worked in Fiscal Year 2021 from staff being furloughed, which was applied to the budget. It was explained that the furlough decision was made depending on function and not on seniority. *Motion made by Member Blanchard to approve the Library Personal Services budget as presented, Second by Vice Chairman Bush. Roll Call Vote: Chairman Hoyt, Vice Chairman Bush, Members Blanchard and Nowak. Motion passed.*

Department of Public Works: The reduction of the Cemetery Commission stipends was noted as the change to the budget. *Motion made by Member Blanchard to approve the Department of Public Works Personal Services budget for Highway as presented, second by Vice Chairman Bush. Roll Call Vote: Chairman Hoyt, Vice Chairman Bush, Members Blanchard and Nowak. Motion passed.*

Operating Expenses

Public Building and Property Maintenance: Adjustments were noted as being due to solar panel savings which reduced the budget by \$10,000 in actual savings. *Motion made by Member Nowak to approve the Public Buildings and Property Maintenance budget as presented, second by Member Blanchard. Roll Call Vote: Chairman Hoyt, Vice Chairman Bush, Members Blanchard and Nowak. Motion passed.*

Chairman Hoyt commended the work done to reduce the budget. She noted that it will go before the Finance Committee on Monday at 5:00 p.m. She explained that Finance Committee Chairman Burdick joined the Budget Sub-Committee Meeting with Members Duval and Hoyt to become aware of the reductions being proposed. She pointed out that it will be part of the warrant articles before Board of Selectmen next Wednesday and at the Finance Committee meeting on Thursday as well. She pointed out that Finance Committee Members do not receive stipends.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

#6 To consider the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property

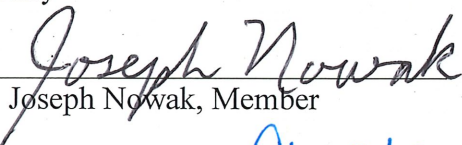
At 5:52 p.m. Motion made by Member Blanchard to enter into Executive Session for Reason #6 as was read aloud, second by Vice Chairman Bush. Roll Call Vote: Chairman Hoyt, Vice Chairman Bush, Members Blanchard and Nowak.

At 6:07 p.m. Motion made by Member Blanchard to come out of Executive Session, second by Member Nowak. Roll Call Vote: Chairman Hoyt, Vice Chairman Bush, Members Nowak and Blanchard. Motion passed.

Motion made by Member Blanchard to adjourn the meeting, second by Vice Chairman Bush. Roll Call Vote: Chairman Hoyt, Vice Chairman Bush, Members Blanchard and Nowak. Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 6:08 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by Deborah J. Dunlap,
Recording Secretary



Joseph Nowak, Member

Richard Blanchard, Member



Christine Hoyt, Chairman