

*Town of Adams Massachusetts 01220-2087*

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

**TOWN HALL BUILDING  
8 PARK STREET**

**Wednesday, February 17, 2021, 7:00 p.m.**

**Meeting Minutes**

**CALL TO ORDER:** On the above date the Board of Selectmen held a Zoom meeting. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Board of Selectmen Chairman Hoyt. Present via video were Chairman Hoyt, Member Duval, Town Administrator Green, Town Counsel St. John III, Town Clerk Meczywor, DPW Director Tober, Northern Berkshire Community Television, Jack Guerino of iBerkshires, and Administrative Assistant Dunlap. Attending via telephone was Member Nowak.

**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. A recording of this meeting can be made available for anyone who wishes.

***The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.***

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** The January 20, 2021 and January 27, 2021 minutes were submitted for approval. ***Motion made by Member Duval to waive reading and to approve meeting minutes for January 20, 2021 and January 27, 2021 as submitted, second by Member Nowak. Roll Call Vote: Chairman Hoyt, Members Duval and Nowak. Motion passed.***

**PUBLIC CALL-IN:**

***Join Zoom Meeting:***

<https://zoom.us/j/99551032665?pwd=QmtSTFN5bjNNNG5GUGQ4RzBwU1NwQT09>

Meeting ID: 995 5103 2665; Passcode: 628347

***Dial In:*** 1 (929) 436-2866 US (New York); ***Meeting ID:*** 995 5103 2665; ***Passcode:*** 628347

**Public Comment:** *There were no comments made at this meeting.*

**NEW BUSINESS**

**2021 Town of Adams Election Calendar:** *Town Clerk Meczywor* reviewed the 2021 Election Calendar. She advised that the next election is May 3<sup>rd</sup>. Nomination papers have been available since January 25<sup>th</sup> and the deadline to submit them is Monday, March 15<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 p.m. The deadline to register to vote is April 13<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 p.m. She reviewed the open positions and information on them can be found on the Town Website, the Town Clerk page, and on the Election Calendar. Town Hall is closed to the public, so those interested in taking out papers are asked to call the office to get papers made available. It was clarified that people can register to vote online at Secretary of the Commonwealth website, call the Town Clerk office to mail out a form, or through the Registry of Motor Vehicles.

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21 MAR 11 AM 10:59  
TOWN CLERK  
ADAMS  
MASS

**Application for Zoning Board of Appeals, Nathaniel W. Karns:** *Chairman Hoyt* reviewed the application received from Mr. Karns for the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). It was explained that Mr. Duda moved out of town, making him ineligible to be on the ZBA. Mr. Duda was thanked for his service in serving on the ZBA. Currently there is an additional vacancy on ZBA and one anticipated vacancy to fill in the coming months. It was noted that the Town is fortunate to have someone of this caliber to be interested in serving on the Board. ***Motion made by Member Duval to approve the appointment of Nathaniel Karns to the ZBA, second by Member Nowak. Roll Call Vote: Chairman Hoyt, Members Duval and Nowak. Motion passed.***

**Ratification of DPW Administrative Assistant II: Michelle DeRose.** *Town Administrator Green's* letter recommending Ms. DeRose to the position was read aloud. It was explained that this hire is to replace Marilyn Kolis's from her recent retirement. He noted he reviewed the position to see if it could be done part time. Ms. DeRose will be brought in to work for DPW Operations first and then will train on Inspectional Services. It was noted that she has extensive experience and she interviewed very well. It was clarified that there were four applicants, and two were interviewed. It was explained that Ms. DeRose is from North Adams. ***Motion made by Member Duval to approve the ratification of Michelle DeRose to the position of DPW Administrative Assistant II, second by Member Nowak. Roll Call Vote: Chairman Hoyt, Members Duval and Nowak. Motion passed.***

**Review and Approve Modified Town Hall Hours:** *Town Administrator Green* reviewed that the Board made the decision to go to a four-day work week in 2017, and he has been asked about was to go back to a five-day work week. He noted the issue comes up a lot on holidays and during various parts of the year. He explained that the Board asked him to look at it and bring back his findings. He stated he reviewed the minutes for the reasoning for the four-day work week which included providing a later day for constituents, retaining and recruiting staff, and cost savings for heat. Cost savings was done, and the minutes showed little to no request for office hours after 6:00 p.m. so the Town adopted a 7:45 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. for Town Hall only, with other offices on different schedules. He noted that other offices operate five days a week, including the Town Administrator and DPW Director. He pointed out the Town Clerk and Treasurer are often in on Fridays as needed, and several Department Heads and salary staff continue to work on Fridays so heating and cooling required to be at 68 degrees. He noted disparate scheduling of hours for the Council on Aging and other offices due to holidays, which are governed by collective bargaining, and treated differently in each building. He pointed out that the Town worked through it, and staff asked if it was a good way of doing things as the Town is treating staff differently. Overtime costs were noted on Fridays for Code Enforcement due to this, as well as Covid and hourly staff that need to come in on Fridays have an overtime cost. He explained that the majority of the work for Code Enforcement is because of the pandemic, and is being charged to the Cares Act but prior to pandemic Code Enforcement was in on Fridays. He emphasized that certain weeks other staff had to use Fridays to catch up, and custodial staff cannot do things when the building is closed. Productivity of staff was looked at for the 7:45 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. schedule and he noted he could not say staff was more productive. After discussion, he explained that 50% of staff prefer to end their day at 4:00 p.m. He detailed that Open Meeting Law posting requirements come into play as departments have to post a week in advance for holiday weeks, catching them off-guard and making staff scramble. Feedback from staff was not pleasant, but split as some appreciate having Fridays off to get errands done and others prefer to have a shorter workday. Salaried staff continue to work on Fridays and with people not coming to the door and phones not ringing it has proven to be more productive. With Covid-19 and the building closed, staff has been able to do more by phone and email. People have adapted accordingly, but will be coming to building again. He advised he took a snapshot of other municipalities and only one other community, Dalton has a four-day work week. Others work until

4:00 p.m. His recommendation was to align the Council on Aging and Town Hall municipal office hours to eliminate disparity. He noted that the Library can align with schedules if need be but thought it best they dictate their own schedule. The Police Station is close to what is proposed. He recommended hours on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday to be 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Wednesday to be open until 5:00 p.m. and Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. to address constituent concerns for Fridays, evening hours, and eliminate overtime. He noted that the Cares Act covers the DPW dry fog spraying the offices at 7:00 a.m. which is earlier than the normal 7:30 a.m. start time and that expires in December. He explained that maintaining a five-day work week for staff is an attractive schedule with a half-day year-round on Fridays. He pointed out that Fridays off is also attractive but this would still attract people. He explained he would provide a limited work at home policy for some salary positions on Fridays under the Human Resources role due to pandemic, and he has done it occasionally for people for specific reasons. The Library is on the same schedule and aligns our offices with other communities. He advised that if the Board wanted, this will address concerns and maintain office hours on Fridays or the Town could maintain current hours and address it in a few months. He noted that the Clerical Union would be impacted and this would need to be bargained, but is not an abnormal change. Provisions are already in place in the agreement to revert back to a five-day work week but he would need to sit down with the union to review it. *Member Duval* noted that back in 2016 the focus was to be open later than 5:00 p.m. for those who don't get back to town until after 4:00 p.m. It was pointed out that the building is cold on Fridays in the winter, and when people are working it must be at a certain heat level. It was originally discussed that there would be some savings in utility costs if the building was not open on Fridays but it didn't add up. It was stated it is a good schedule for staff to work four days a week with Fridays off, but the Town serves the community it is best to maintain a 35-hour work week with a half-day on Fridays. He noted that it helps him as a Selectman as he has every other Friday off and he can come into Town Hall to discuss things with those working on Fridays so he doesn't have to get into Town Hall during the week. He noted he has no interaction with employees anymore and this would allow for discussions and to do research. He recommended Town Administrator Green look into it with the unions to have a five-day work week as the preferable work schedule for employees. *Member Nowak* advised when it was changed back in 2016 he had a concern about the perception with the three-day weekend where people thought staff should be there five days a week. He noted Thursday should be the 5:00 p.m. day with banks staying open. *Town Administrator Green* advised he experienced feedback at Maple Grove Civic Club so he is opening it up to bargain with the Unions on this issue. He noted that he will have a preliminary discussion with the Union Representative and Labor Counsel will guide him through it. He stated he will report back to the Board, and if necessary go back to the drawing board. It was clarified that the Town can re-bargain units of the contract during the life of the contract. *Chairman Hoyt* added her opinion that she also was "called out" in Maple Grove Civic Club about this, and there were strong opinions about four days versus five days. She pointed out that the Town is not at a point to go forward with a 4.5-day work week but would like to give the Town Administrator Board feedback and guidance on whether to move forward and bring a bargaining proposal back to the Board. Discussion took place and it was stated that the Board should wait for the Town Administrator to come back with information for the Board to work toward a final solution. It was pointed out that in 2016 employers changed employee schedules and the workforce to work from home because they were becoming tech savvy. It was pointed out that that this helps to bring in employees to Berkshire County, but the Town serves the community. It was noted that businesses are working with employees to keep employment. It was explained that the pandemic changed things and now people are home all the time. *Chairman Hoyt* advised that consensus was reached for the Town Administrator to continue to work forward. *Member Nowak* expressed concern that the Board was



never advised in 2016 that when a Town office is closed it has to stay at 68 degrees, as it is considered an office building, in order to comply with state sanitary code. It was explained that the concept was that the building would be entirely closed, which legally allows the building temperature to be allowed to drop. In the last two years been there, the Town Clerk, Treasurer and DPW Director have been in the building and when people see the Town Administrator's vehicle they come into the building. In practice, there has been at least one or two people in building and if the temperature is set low it got to the point where it required that the building is heated anyway because people are there. In theory it saved money if people were not there but in practice people are there. It was noted that the Town changed all the light bulbs to LED and there is very little uptick in electrical cost because they are efficient.

## DEPARTMENT REPORTS

**Town Administrator:** *Town Administrator Green* advised the Town had a Heart Bomber, which was covered by local news, and thanked whoever arranged it. He noted he received a lot of text messages and photos that shows community spirit and it was the highlight of the last few days. He pointed out that Adams still in the red for Covid-19 but other communities are dropping to yellow. He explained that if looking at how the number is calculated, it is just a data figure and there is a lag in how data is being reported. He stated it may be only one or two cases away from dropping to yellow and is just how the Department of Public Health monitors things. Numbers in the state are dropping slightly and guides how the School District and Town offices work, and whether people go into a local establishment. He urged everyone to be cautious, wear masks, and to social distance as it can affect local businesses if the Town stays in the red so everyone's personal choice effects everyone. He reported that the Governor mentioned three times that the Berkshires are doing very well in following state guidelines for vaccinations, and he has been at all but two of the clinics in North Adams, which is a working model, identical to Great Barrington and Pittsfield. He noted that Town Clerk Meczywor, Chairman Hoyt, and Council on Aging staff have done a fantastic job working on this, and thanked everyone for volunteering their time. He noted that commendations were due particularly for the Council on Aging staff and those watching should speak with Barb, Liz, or Erica who will go through the process with them and will pick them up. He noted that vaccinations are now open for those aged 65 and older with two co-morbidities, and people can book their appointment through [getvaccinatedberkshires.org](http://getvaccinatedberkshires.org). The clinic is vaccinating 500 to 700 people in a single day and the clinic is planning to get up to 1,000 providing both Pfizer and Moderna at the same time. He reported that Town Accountant Beverly is retiring at the end of the month, then vacationing but will be spending time at Town Hall. The Town will have a ratification after some logistics to report at a future meeting. He noted that he asked Department Heads to have budgets level-funded and put into the system and he will have a budget hearing after that. *Member Duval* noted he was advised that Chief Kelley is up to speed and he will be looking at having a Public Safety Sub-Committee Meeting in near future. Town Administrator Green and Chairman Hoyt will be having a meeting with the Hoosac Valley School District Superintendent tomorrow and will be meeting with McCann Superintendent Brosnan soon. He reported there is a Snow Emergency for Thursday night at midnight until Friday night at midnight. The DPW worked on Park and Summer Streets to remove snow before the next snow arrives. He noted that no significant feedback was received on the parking ban and the Police Department has stepped up more to help the DPW by enforcing it. *Member Duval* noted he was pleased with the response of the Council on Aging to assist the elderly population, and many people don't have internet so a phone call to the Council on Aging makes it happen. He thanked Chairman Hoyt, Town Administrator Green and other staff for volunteering to make the clinic happen. *Town Administrator Green* advised other staff pitched in as well to get vaccinations done for the Council on Aging when they were bombarded.

*Member Duval* inquired about the Route 8 and Town Common projects. It was noted that the Town Common gazebo is partially built and the grass needs to be monitored. The dedication of the Susan B. Anthony Statue will take place after people are vaccinated and when the weather breaks to appropriately celebrate Susan B. Anthony and honor the work of the Adams Suffrage Centennial Celebration Committee in an outdoor event. The Route 8 project is not behind schedule and property owner concerns are being addressed. *Member Nowak* expressed disappointment that with all of the work being done to mitigate Covid-19, Adams is in the Red category. He noted that the West African mutation of the virus may require boosters of the vaccine. He pointed out that he received the email about volunteer work at St. Elizabeth for the vaccine schedule and was told he was not needed despite the email having people's names on it with the schedule of volunteer dates. He thanked Chairman and Dr. Hoyt for helping out the people of the community. He inquired about the new police vehicle and it was clarified that this was an existing unit that was cleaned up by the DPW staff, and a new vehicle will be pursued in the next budget cycle. It was explained that the frame broke on the last Chief's vehicle and it needed to be replaced. *Member Nowak* asked for regular reports from the Animal-Parking Control Officer, and thanked the Town Administrator for sending informational updates. He emphasized that he is looking to see how the Town is doing with meter ticketing and income. He noted he is eager as part of the former ASCCC to have the Town set a date for the Susan B. Anthony events and reminded the Board that fireworks must take place as that was part of the donation requirements.

**Town Counsel:** *Town Counsel St. John III* advised that he has received and responded to a Public Records Request that was submitted to the Town Clerk. He asked Town staff to determine how many hours would be needed to comply with the request and the costs of copies, and when that was presented to the requester she withdrew her request. He reviewed and advised the Board of Health regarding a request concerning an executive session matter at its last meeting. He responded to requests from the Code Enforcement Officer and a property owner regarding a health issue involving the property owner and his tenant. He responded to a property owner's request concerning an abandoned property and he attended a portion of today's Board of Health meeting. *Member Duval* asked for updates on Curtis Fine Paper and it was explained that land court is still reviewing matters and it is delayed. *Member Nowak* inquired if there is any movement on the Mobile Station parcel, and it was explained that Town Counsel St. John III is not privy to the remediation of hazardous waste portions but has drafted a purchase and sale agreement for the Town Administrator.

**SUBCOMMITTEE AND LIAISON REPORTS:** *Member Duval* reported the Budget Subcommittee must get going to meet the schedule. He noted it is good to meet with the School District and is glad to see level funding for Town staff which is good to pass on to the schools as it is not a good budget season. It was pointed out that part of a bill is going through from the Governor is not known what it will be at this time but they will be meeting soon. He advised that Parks Commission and youth leagues should meet to go over restrictions and Covid-19 issues that are still faced this spring, to make sure all leagues will be respected and considered for play under Board of Health restrictions. He pointed out the importance to treat every league fairly and equally and restrictions will have to be worked through so that everyone understands. *DPW Director Tober* advised that compliance is under the Board of Health and a meeting will be held on Monday for leagues to discuss it further. *Member Nowak* reported a Mohawk Trail Woodland Partnership (MTWP) Executive Committee meeting took place and they are working with an administrator from New England Forestry Foundation. He noted that ties have been broken with both NBRP and Peggy Sloan with Franklin County, who were both instrumental in the program. He reported the Chairman of MTWP is Henry Art, and a meeting will take place February 23<sup>rd</sup> to talk about the Vulnerability Program.



He advised sub-committees will be created to hopefully get the program running and make it a valuable asset to the communities. He emphasized that there will be no sale of properties to the federal government, but they are there to give direction and technical help. *Chairman Hoyt* provided updates on the Hoosac Valley School District School Committee. She reported that Dr. Bush resigned from the School Committee, and there was an application from an Adams resident who has been appointed and is a representative. Dr. Bush was thanked for his service. She noted that data, including school data, effects decisions. She noted there was input from residents asking for the school to return to in-person learning. She explained that the Chair of the School Committee reached out and reassured the Board that there is unison in representing the whole of district and maintaining a hybrid model while opening up negotiations with the teacher unions. She noted that the Chair is working with her and the Town Administrator in their decisions, they have implemented committees and had participation from families in the District.

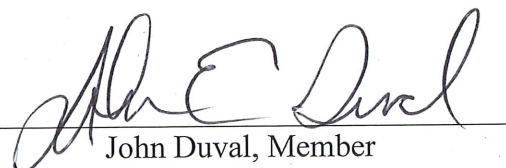
**ANNOUNCEMENTS AND GOOD OF THE ORDER:** *Member Nowak* noted that studies show young children are being affected by the lack of interaction with other kids. He explained that doing things virtually and the hybrid system is difficult for families. He inquired about the status of the Town Administrator evaluation, as it has been a year past when the Board was to do the review. It was explained that it is with labor counsel. *Chairman Hoyt* explained that there was no process in place in Town to do a Town Administrator evaluation and it had to be created. She reached out to Massachusetts Municipal Association and they didn't have any. She noted that there had been a discussion on evaluations and it is a unique situation because the Town must comply with Open Meeting Laws. She noted that it went out to Board Members in October, was collected in December and she is working with labor counsel to make sure there is a composite. She explained she had to find a Town employee to make the composite document in order to comply with Open Meeting Laws. She emphasized that labor counsel will make sure the document drafted is compliant with Open Meeting Laws soon. She noted that she hopes labor counsel will address whether this evaluation can be for two years so the Board does not have to do it again in May to be on target and she doesn't want to put the Town in a position to have done something wrong. *Chairman Hoyt* advised that the Baker/Polito Administration opened up Covid-19 vaccinations appointments to people aged 65+ beginning 8:00 a.m. tomorrow via [www.getvaccinatedberkshires.org](http://www.getvaccinatedberkshires.org). She advised that the Council on Aging can help with appointments at 743-8333 or citizens can call the state 211 hotline for help. She noted that clinics in the Berkshires were highlighted as a model to be duplicated in the state. February 20<sup>th</sup> is the next eligible vaccination clinic and those interested can find the list of underlying issues for non-threshold of age on the website. She advised that there will be a discussion whether there will be a workshop next week and the next scheduled meeting will take place on March 3<sup>rd</sup> at 7:00 p.m.

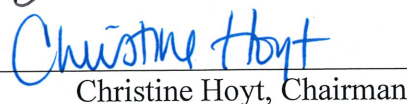
**ADJOURNMENT:** *Motion made by Member Duval to adjourn the meeting, second by Member Nowak. Roll Call Vote: Chairman Hoyt, Members Duval and Nowak. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 8:44 p.m.*

Respectfully Submitted by Deborah J. Dunlap,  
Recording Secretary

  
Joseph Nowak, Member

Richard Blanchard, Vice Chair

  
John Duval, Member

  
Christine Hoyt, Chairman