

Memorial Town Hall, 1 Library Street, Georgetown, MA 01833

Ph. (978) 352-5755 □ Fax (978) 352-5727

BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES

Workshop with the Finance and Advisory Board

Memorial Town Hall

3/19/20

7:00PM-General Meeting

Televised and video attendance by members - no audience because of COVID-19

Selectmen Present: Joseph Bonavita, Chairman; Charles Durney, Clerk; Gary C. Fowler, Douglas W. Dawes, and David J. Twiss

Others Present: Michael Farrell, Town Administrator; Janet Pantano, Administrative Assistant; Finance and Advisory: Edward Dobie, Chairman; Sheila Ruth; Eric Burton; Alicia Raspa; Steven Epstein

Absent: Wayne Snow, FinCom

7:08PM Call to order

Broadcast and recorded on Cable TV and on BlueJeans.

Call to order by a roll call vote.

Ed Dobie, FinCom Chair called the FinCom meeting to order with a roll call vote.

Mr. Bonavita thanked the FinCom for attending and he stated that the Selectmen have a few emergency items to discuss tonight before we get started.

ITEMS NOT REASONABLY ANTICIPATED BY THE CHAIR 48 HOURS IN ADVANCE OF THE MEETING

SELECTMEN NEW BUSINESS

Declaration of a State of Emergency for the Town of Georgetown

Mr. Bonavita stated he talked to Chief Cudmore and the Town Administrator and they recommend the board declare a State of Emergency. He asked Mr. Farrell to explain.

Mr. Farrell stated that having the declaration puts the town in the position to apply and accept grants and funding from the Federal Government. He stated that it does not give the board any additional authority.

Mr. Durney moved that due to the Covid-19 Virus Pandemic, he moves to declare a State of Emergency in the Town of Georgetown. Mr. Dawes seconded the motion and the motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

Appointment of Town Administrator Michael Farrell to the Emergency Management Team

Mr. Bonavita stated that we have an Emergency Management Team that has 6 members and it is an oversight that the Town Administrator is not part of the team. He stated that he would like to add the Town Administrator to the Emergency Management Team. He asked Mr. Farrell what they do. Mr. Farrell stated that they are the point of contact with the State and Town and do planning for the emergencies. Mr. Bonavita stated that the committee is composed of the Police

Chief, Fire Chief, Peter Durkee, Highway Surveyor; Lt. Scott Hatch, Officer Dean Julien, and Deb Rogers, Health Agent.

Mr. Dawes stated that Mr. Farrell should be on this committee and all members agreed.

Mr. Bonavita asked if legal has given an opinion on this. Mr. Farrell stated that he has not talked to legal on his issue but he would be able to help the team with finances and keep the board informed.

Mr. Durney moved to appoint Michael Farrell, Town Administrator to the Emergency Management Team for the Town of Georgetown term to expire June 30, 2020. Mr. Twiss seconded the motion and the motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

OLD BUSINESS

FY21 Budget Workshop with Finance & Advisory Board

Mr. Bonavita stated that as we did last year he wanted to get the feedback from the FinCom and have a lively discussion.

Mr. Dobie stated that he would like to discuss the budget with the board. He stated that they have given the Library the funding for opening on Thursday, they have been asking every year and this affects the whole community. He stated that they have added a firefighter. He stated not increase to staff at the CoA, or GYCC. He stated that they capped the Schools at 2 ½% increase, and then only anything legally needed. He stated that this puts the budget \$70K in the black. Mr. Farrell stated that this is subject to change, as we do not have all revenue numbers, insurance costs, and these he increased by 5%, but we do not know if that is enough.

Mr. Dobie stated that Mr. Farrell shows a surplus of \$70K right now and this will be taken up by other items.

Mr. Epstein stated that they have not finalized the Park & Rec budget and these numbers may change. He stated that they went above what was discussed.

Mr. Dobie stated Park & Rec stated that the budget the FinCom had was different from the one given to them. He stated that they do not plan to charge fees and he has a problem with this. He stated with CORONA virus the center will be closed and we can look at it again in the fall.

Mr. Twiss stated that he had no issue with his discussion and he stated grants are not guaranteed.

Mr. Dobie stated with the final budget you need numbers. He stated if a \$15K grant comes in all the better.

Mr. Epstein stated that they will not charge fees and all others do for sports, afterschool care, etc.

Mr. Bonavita stated that this was considered and they have only been open for a month. He stated that the committee was not opposed to fees but wanted to get open and have kids come in to see what is available. He expects fees to happen. He stated that they can look at this in the fall and there may be additional resources in the fall.

Mr. Twiss asked if seniors pay for activities at the Senior Center.

Mr. Epstein stated that they do pay fees. He stated that they discussed a \$300 fee per family per year and this is a babysitting service. He stated that this allows families to work or do other things.

Mr. Bonavita stated that it is not a babysitting services. He stated that they have to come up with a number and maybe subsidize some, we do not want to turn kids away. He stated that there are families who work pay check to pay check. Mr. Epstein stated that they have had 5 months to figure this out. He stated that some towns use what kids funding at school to use for other programs. Mr. Bonavita stated that the Teen Center was voted to fund at the Town Meeting.

Ms. Ruth stated that the town has provided funds for staff and the Center has to find funds for all they want. She stated that they are getting some funds to get started and we can see at the fall town meeting how they are doing, they have not been open for long. She stated that we need more facts. Mr. Bonavita asked the number they have in the budget. Ms. Ruth stated \$63K was the number they provided on the Saturday meeting. She stated that they have 2 staff members and have the funds from the State. She stated a lot of those funds have not been used because they were not open and still have town funds. Mr. Bonavita stated that they have to give State funds back if not spent by June 30th. Mr. Dawes stated that at the town meeting the town gave them \$30K and they only wanted \$15K. Mr. Bonavita stated that the funds will be going back because they are not open. Mr. Dawes stated that other towns are fee based and no idea where this will be 6 months from now and do not want to spend more than need. Mr. Epstein stated we gave them \$30K and they have a State Grant for \$15K. He stated that Park & Rec budget is at \$122K as opposed to \$116K that we discussed. Ms. Ruth stated that this is the whole Park & Rec budget. Mr. Farrell stated that is the total \$122,640 for Park & Rec and GYCC. Mr. Epstein stated the budget was only reduced by \$6K. Mr. Farrell stated that \$30K from state and \$30K from the town meeting. He stated that unspent State funds would go back but the \$30K in the warrant article will stay and will not go into the general fund and will be available to be used in the next year.

Mr. Burton asked can they use next year and the next if possible. He asked if it is spent first and then the budget. Mr. Farrell stated that it should be spent first. Mr. Bonavita stated that can this be used for salaries. Mr. Farrell stated that it can be. Mr. Bonavita stated that he likes that it is still there and can be used to fall back on.

Mr. Dobie stated that the more the GYCC grows the funds will have to come from the School budget. Mr. Bonavita stated that they have tasked the director to look into grants and corporate sponsors. He stated that he hopes they ramp this up and would not need to come back to the town and if they have a fee it would also help.

Mr. Dobie stated that we are giving them an opportunity.

Mr. Bonavita asked what the cost for the library to stay open on Thursday's would be. Ms. Ruth stated \$27K however this also reduces cost from the State. Mr. Dobie explained. Mr. Bonavita asked where they see the demand. Ms. Ruth stated that they did provide signatures from residents requesting an additional day at the Library. Mr. Dobie stated that they have a lot of programs for pre-school children, book clubs, speakers, music programs, etc. Ms. Ruth stated that it is less than they are giving the GYCC. Mr. Bonavita stated that taxes should be used for other things than bills and should be used for residents.

Mr. Twiss asked if the shared services for maintenance would include the Library. Mr. Farrell stated that it would. Mr. Dobie stated that the FinCom is in favor of shared services.

Mr. Dobie stated that they did not change the Town Clerk hours as this is an elected position.

Mr. Twiss stated that he disagrees. Mr. Dobie stated that the Selectmen can direct them to add additional hours. Mr. Dobie asked how many hours is the position. Mr. Farrell stated 20 hours.

Mr. Twiss stated that he thinks she should have 30 hours.

Mr. Dobie stated that they did not touch Highway, kept Police the same, Fire they added one fire fighter. He stated that the school was reduced 2 ½% over last year.

Mr. Bonavita stated public safety is top of his list and does not have a problem assisting Fire & Police. He asked what the issue is on filling the fire department. Mr. Dobie stated that the Fire Chief is going to a full time staff and dependable staff.

Discussion on funding and marijuana funds coming in.

Mr. Bonavita asked if they looked at departments and are we overspending and do departments need more staff. Mr. Farrell stated departments were told to not to ask for additional funds and some could use hours.

Mr. Fowler stated that we need a Park & Rec director and this has been discussed. Mr. Dobie stated if we can find a way to fund.

Mr. Bonavita asked about insurance numbers. Mr. Farrell stated health insurance is accurate, he stated that property and auto numbers are not final. Mr. Twiss asked about Workers Comp. Mr. Farrell stated that the town pays full workers comp. He stated medical went up 4.9%.

Mr. Bonavita asked what we are waiting for. Mr. Farrell stated insurances and revenue figures, and union contracts. He stated all meetings were canceled due to the virus. He stated will not have until after town meeting. He stated that this is another issue of when will we have town meeting.

Mr. Farrell stated that Free Cash is at \$700K, he stated we need \$100K for Snow & Ice and that leaves us with \$600K and the board wanted to keep \$300K balance.

Mr. Burton asked if crisis gets worse does this team have the funds we may need. He asked if we have to make cash available and how do we get funds. Mr. Farrell stated we spend from the current budget first and if needed we do have the Reserve Fund and FEMA will reimburse 75%.

Mr. Burton asked how he gets funds if he needs them. Mr. Dawes stated that the BoS must approve any directive. Mr. Burton asked how much red tape would there be. Mr. Bonavita stated that there would not be a problem if funds are needed.

Mr. Bonavita thanked the FinCom for joining the meeting tonight.

Mr. Epstein moved to adjourn the FinCom meeting. Ms. Ruth seconded the motion and the motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

ITEMS NOT REASONABLY ANTICIPATED BY THE CHAIR 48 HOURS IN ADVANCE OF THE MEETING

Board Business

Mr. Bonavita stated that he saw a post online that there were a lot of people at American Legion Park, kids play basketball, on jungle gym. He stated he was upset and people should be staying home. He asked how the board feels about closing all town parks to keep people from congregating. He stated that they have to do this and keep social distancing. He asked how people feel.

Mr. Durney stated he agrees and that people are not taking this seriously. He stated people have large enough yards. He stated that it is ridiculous and he cannot believe we have to talk about this.

Mr. Twiss stated that he agrees and that it is not a good idea to be congregating. He stated that someone has to Police the parks. He listed the parks, American Legion Park, the Perley School, Penn Brook School, and High School fields and playgrounds, West Street fields, Little's Hill field, and East Main Street Park.

Mr. Bonavita stated that we can have our Police force drive by hourly. He stated we should be shutting down the fields if people are congregating and not arresting but sending them home. .

Mr. Twiss stated he agrees and we need to put up signs and enforce.

Mr. Fowler stated that we have an emergency management team in place and ask them to look at this. He stated that people do get cabin fever, but we cannot have 25 people congregating and heard should be 10 people or less. He stated that wants to hear from the Police Chief on Monday. Mr. Durney stated that may need to talk to BoH and it may be their decision.

Mr. Bonavita stated that we can do this now otherwise we have a whole weekend.

Mr. Dawes stated that there has been a declared State of Emergency in the State and in the Town, but people have to do their part, most have yards that they can stay in, people can communicate with Facebook. He stated that the Emergency Management Team is in charge.

Mr. Farrell stated he did not know what we can accomplish tonight. He stated that he has a plan and can get this to the board over the weekend and vote on Monday.

Mr. Dawes asked how often does the team get together and meet. Mr. Fowler stated Mr. Farrell can get our requests to the team. Mr. Farrell stated he will send a draft to the board over the weekend.

Mr. Bonavita stated can we close the parks tonight. Mr. Farrell stated that you can it is just enforcement. Mr. Bonavita stated that the board can do this. Mr. Dawes stated he agrees with Mr. Fowler.

Mr. Durney stated it is not a time to wait, and if we can stop people from going down to the parks for just the weekend we should get it done. Mr. Twiss stated that he cautions that may not be enforced until after the weekend. Mr. Bonavita asked for a motion

Mr. Durney moved that under the declaration of State of Emergency to close all parks including American Legion Park, the Perley School, Penn Brook School, High School fields and playgrounds, West Street fields, Little's Hill field, and East Main Street Park until further notice. Mr. Bonavita seconded and a roll call 3-2 vote, the motion was approved. Mr. Fowler and Mr. Dawes were not in favor of the vote.

Mr. Bonavita asked Mr. Farrell to let the Police Chief know and request they get up signage and that this is a good first step.

Mr. Bonavita stated that on Monday we need to discuss moving Town Meeting and Election.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Fowler moved to adjourn. Mr. Twiss seconded the motion and the motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

NEXT MEETING

Monday, March 23, 2020 at 7:00PM, 3rd floor meeting room, Town Hall

Meeting adjourned at 8:59PM.

Minutes transcribed by J. Pantano.

Minutes approved April 13, 2020.