

**Town of Haverhill
Select Board
Emergency Meeting MINUTES
Saturday, March 6, 2021
4:00 PM
R. E. Clifford Memorial Building
65 South Court St.
Woodsville, NH 03785**

The meeting was **CALLED TO ORDER** at 4:00 PM by Darwin Clogston, Chair.

Pledge of Allegiance

Town Employees Present:

Town Manager: Brigitte Codling

Assistant Town Manager: Jennifer Boucher

Select Board Members Present: Matthew Bjelobrk, Howard Hatch, Fred Garofalo, Steve Robbins, Darwin Clogston. A quorum was met.

Members of the Public Present:

Online

Mark Johar

Doug Dutile

Guy Mitchell

In Person

Wayne Fortier

Joe Longacre

Mike Lavoie

INTRODUCTION

Clogston stated that this Saturday, March 6, 2021, Emergency Select Board Meeting will have no input from the public. Clogston stated that the Board is here to discuss whether the date of the Town Meeting should be changed.

DISCUSSION: TOWN MEETING

Codling opened the discussion stating that there is information being disseminated about HB1129 and what will result from a “No” vote on Article 2. The voters in Haverhill are confused about Article 2, and some have asked to have a public forum to speak with the Board. Codling recommended to the Select Board that at the upcoming Informational Meeting, the Board should be very clear about the process and carefully and slowly go through the Warrant. The Board has to be clear about how residents can send information about amending the articles. There is a group who have countered with contradictory information about the process.

Codling stated that she and Boucher have worked with the Town’s legal team since October sorting through the process of virtual meetings. Recently, she and Boucher have spoken with the Secretary of State, and he noted that residents from Haverhill have been contacting him. Codling

asked for a written opinion about HB1129 from the Town's legal group about the ramifications of a "No" vote on Article 2, which was confirmed by the Secretary of State. This legal opinion was shared throughout Haverhill, but there were still advocates for a "No" vote on Article 2.

Codling continued that Boucher and the Finance Administrator worked diligently to assess what would occur if Article 2 were voted down—the Town would have to operate without the leased highway vehicles, paving projects would not be done, the Rec Commission programs will be canceled, and more. Sherri Sargent and Boucher prepared a video about Article 2 that was well received.

Clogston stated that he spoke with Deputy Secretary of State Scanlon and one of the Town's legal team, who said that the calls they have been getting are from people posing as Select Board members.

Codling continued noting that they spoke with the election legal council from the Secretary of State's office asked him if there was any possibility under the law to postpone the Town Meeting and reschedule the meeting to later in the summer, and the legal response was that it is possible. Codling stated that she is offering this option to the Board for their consideration. Boucher noted that the meeting would be held on the second Tuesday in April, May, June, or July.

Board Comments:

- Garofalo suggested postponing the Town Meeting until warmer weather, use the Haverhill Fairgrounds, and have an in-person Town Meeting because without a budget and warrant article, it would be extremely detrimental to the Town. The Board discussed the capacity of that venue during Covid restrictions.
- Codling noted that there is large participation in the virtual meetings, and much more than at in-person meetings. Codling suggested that the walk-through voting will be much more well attended than at an in-person meeting. Garofalo suggested that changes in the way Town Meeting has been done in the past is what the Town voters are fighting against.
- Robbins stated that HB1129 has made him uncomfortable because the public cannot stand up and amend the articles. Robbins agreed that doing the Town Meeting in person would be a better way.
- Hatch is in agreement with opening up the meeting.
- Codling noted that during the second virtual meeting, the meeting could be opened up to have people speak about the articles.
- Clogston stated that postponing the Town Meeting will add another layer of confusion.
- Hatch brought up the Fire Department Committee issues. Codling is working with the North Haverhill Commissioners to wrap up that Fire Department transition. Codling and Clogston have met with Haverhill Corner Commissioners several times to discuss planning, and Codling is scheduled to meet with Woodville Commissioners soon. Codling stated that any decision from the Board at this meeting affects the Commissioners and the precincts. Doug Dutile asked how a decision at this meeting will

affect the precincts. Bjelobrk stated that voting to have a virtual Town Meeting was a sound decision and that the Town's meetings have been virtual for 10 months and participation has been good. Bjelobrk noted that everything has been warned, any changes will affect the precincts, and people are paying attention, so he suggested that the virtual meeting go forward to avoid more confusion. Bjelobrk suggested opening the Q&A session for residents to speak.

- Garofalo asked how a postponement of the budget vote would affect money going to the precincts. Boucher noted that the tax bills would be sent out, the precincts would be sent their portion, and the balance will be sent in the later half of the year.
- Clogston noted that the Article 2 confusion is that people are concerned about losing their voice, but if they voted "Yes" then they would be able to vote on every single article. Clogston is concerned about a state of more confusion if the meeting is postponed. Bjelobrk noted that the Town is in compliance with State law, and the Board can address the residents' concerns at the virtual meeting.
- Garofalo asked about the verifiability of the online presence of Haverhill residents only. Codling noted that those who log in must put their names on their Zoom window. Codling noted that the Supervisors of the Checklist could be online verifying names of participants.
- Discussion continued about the funding of the Town's Fire Department and the ambulance service.

MOTION #1: Bjelobrk made a motion to continue with the virtual meeting as planned on Thursday, March 11, 2021, and modify the plan by opening the meeting to public input, so that the public will not be excluded. The motion was seconded by Robbins.

- Discussion continued. Garofalo stated that for the benefit of the Town and the districts, he will approve the virtual meeting and open public discussion. Bjelobrk stated that there is more accessibility for the public because the polls will be open all day.

Roll Call Vote: Matthew Bjelobrk (Aye), Howard Hatch (No), Fred Garofalo (Aye), Steve Robbins (No), Darwin Clogston (Aye). The motion passed with three "Ayes" and two "No" votes.

ADJOURN

MOTION #2: Robbins made a motion and Bjelobrk seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:45 PM.

Roll Call Vote: Matthew Bjelobrk (Aye), Howard Hatch (Aye), Fred Garofalo (Aye), Steve Robbins (Aye), Darwin Clogston (Aye). The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was ADJOURNED at 4:45 PM.

Transcribed by Joanna Bligh