

SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

MEETING DATE: FRIDAY, MARCH 13, 2020
8:30 A.M.

MEETING PLACE: TOWN CAMPUS ROOM D

BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING SPECIAL MINUTES

8:30 a.m. Special Session

First Selectwoman Lyons called the Special Meeting of the Board of Selectmen to order at 8:32 a.m.

1. Pledge of Allegiance.

First Selectwoman Lyons led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Citizens Comments.
None.

3. Discuss and take possible actions pertaining to the response to COVID-19 pandemic.

First Selectwoman Lyons gave an update on the steps that the internal Task Force has undertaken to make appropriate decisions as well as to disseminate information to the public. She stated that,

“Town government has been working hard to stay on top of events regarding the coronavirus. In late February, the town launched a Corona Virus working group and has held numerous planning sessions since then. Since the Governor Declared a Public Health Emergency on Tuesday, the situation continues to evolve on a daily and even minute by minute basis. We have been working closely with local, regional and state emergency preparedness entities as well. We think we’ve been ahead of the curve in establishing contingency plans, and in communicating with the public, which has included email, social media and our website. We launched a robo call this morning for those without access to the internet. We will continue to share information and provide guidance to the public as it becomes available.

We are in uncharted territories. This outbreak has the potential to harm some of our most vulnerable residents and disrupt all of our daily lives for an extended period of time. We will need to figure out how we can conduct town business and operations under a Town meeting form of

government structure that requires people to gather together to make decisions. We will do our best to come up with solutions that maintain the integrity of our government, preserves as many services as possible to town residents, but does not compromise the health and safety of our community or our town employees.

So far we have been recommending that public gatherings of 100+ more be cancelled, and that our community practices social distancing for all its activities. We also closed the Madison Senior Center to protect our most vulnerable residents. We will continue to need to take further actions soon, when we deem it necessary.

I am confident our town government will rise up to this challenge, and our community will pull together for the common good. We are fortunate to have a group of highly dedicated professionals working in our government and have an incredibly talented group of volunteers across all our boards and commissions. More information and guidance on town government activities, programming, events, meetings, and school closures will be forthcoming, so I urge you to stay informed. We will continue to use the Town of Madison website at madisonct.org for the most up-to-date information on what's happening in our community.”

State Senator Christine Cohen stated that this is an unprecedented situation, but, Connecticut is acting early and swiftly to minimize the spread and the stresses on our hospitals. She gave an overview of the Executive Order that was signed by the Governor. There are 5 positive cases in Connecticut, with 6 positive cases coming out of Connecticut state labs. If you feel sick, immediately isolate yourself and contact your health care provider for further direction. The DMV has extended all renewals by 90 days to eliminate the possibility of large crowds at their locations. There are new rules pertaining to nursing homes and long term care facilities, and the Connecticut state university system has closed campuses.

Trent Joseph, Health Director, stated that more social distancing may need to be practiced, as well as other measures. He provided some testing guidelines and noted that,

- People without symptoms should not be tested for COVID-19. Testing individuals with no symptoms is not recommended by CDC.
- If you were with someone who does not have symptoms, the risk of transmission is very low.
- There are many respiratory illnesses circulating in Connecticut, such as the flu and the common cold. Having respiratory symptoms DOES NOT mean you have COVID-19.
- People are at higher risk for COVID-19 if they have symptoms of the virus (cough, fever, shortness of breath) AND if they were in contact with a positive case of COVID-19 or have traveled to locations with community transmission.
- Someone is considered a contact if they have had direct, face-to-face contact with a person with COVID-19.

- People who are severely ill or think they have COVID-19 should call their healthcare provider for instructions. These people SHOULD NOT go directly to a healthcare facility without first calling a healthcare provider (unless they are experiencing a medical emergency).
- People sick with mild symptoms of respiratory illness should stay home to take care of themselves and stay away from others. This includes distancing themselves from people in their household and vehicles.
- Our local health care systems are preparing for what could be a surge in patients. That means the ability to access emergency care may start to change in the coming weeks and months.
- Hospitals, clinics, health centers, medical groups, and other healthcare systems are enhancing their efforts to screen and care for people. This may include screening patients outside before you enter the building. Follow instructions on all posted signage.
- Connecticut nursing homes have been directed by the CT DPH to impose restrictions on all visitors, except when a current health state (e.g. end-of-life care) is in question.

In general, Mr. Joseph stated that the public can be ready by being informed. Those who are immunocompromised are the top priority.

Superintendent Scarice stated that officials are relying on the experts in Town / BOE staff. Most importantly, the Town has considered the impact of regional closures as has been evidenced to be most impactful. School will be closed indefinitely beginning on Monday; buildings will be accessible for staff, but classes will not be in session. There is an expectation that school will go until June 30th and the 180-day minimum will not be met. The BOE is looking at this closure in two phases, a short term closer will see curriculum based type of materials provided to families to work on at home. However, as far as distance and e-learning, there are strict requirements that the BOE could not adhere to on such short notice.

Emergency Management Director, Sam DeBurra, stated that Emergency management has helped the Department of Health in requesting supplies from outside agencies. It is important for any suspected cases to be reported to the Health Director so that he can make a note for first responders to be aware of any potential exposure as they respond to calls. Mr. Joseph stated that in general there is a shortage of personal protective equipment and we are not sure of the real quantity of what is available via our regional consortium.

First Selectwoman Lyons provided an overview of what Emergency Action might be possible for the Town. The Town in general is operating under recommendations from the state. Town meetings expected to see less than 100 participants can still be held. There are other considerations that need to be reviewed and the Town is working with the Town Attorney to determine the best way forward. There are two Special Town Meetings currently scheduled for March 23, 2020 and April 2, 2020 and the Board needs to review whether to move these meetings. She suggested that the Board meet early next week to review the process for moving forward with changing, cancelling or postponing town

meetings. The March 23rd Special Town Meeting will most likely be postponed to a future date.

First Selectwoman Lyons stated that the Board needed to gather more information and speak with the Town Attorney before officially declaring an emergency or holding an Emergency Meeting.

Town Services Coordinator / Risk Manager, Lauren Rhines, provided an overview of Charter rule pertaining to Emergency Declarations, the powers assigned to the Board and the First Selectwoman under this guideline as well as past practices and instances of Emergency Declarations.

Selectman Murphy questioned if the Town had considered allowing “non-essential” employees to work from home as the state had been recommending to private sector employees.

First Selectwoman Lyons stated that the Town had enacted policies for staff pertaining to their health, but that staff can report to work as normal.

Selectman Wilson stated that the Town Meeting portion of government and day-to-day operations are two different topics to consider. At this moment in time, there are no confirmed cases and no suspected cases. Selectman Wilson stated that the Board should be working towards taking action to prevent even one infection. Rather than wait and see until we see cases in Town, the Board should work to bring about measures to protect the health of the residents and the staff. He encouraged the Town to consider a holistic, regional approach and perhaps to reach out to area towns. If we push out our Town calendar by 21 days (or so), there may be an opportunity to get out ahead of this.

First Selectwoman Lyons stated that the Board should discuss closing facilities to the public for events and usage, including Memorial Town Hall and the Town Gym. It is likely that these events will need to be cancelled. She suggested that the Town reconvene in a couple of days and decide when we pull the trigger. She wanted to make sure the public knew that the Town was considering all of these things.

Selectwoman Duques stated that if we can differentiate between essential and non-essential town functions, then the Board could create these closures.

The Board reviewed that closures and postponements might also affect the budget referendum and have impacts on how the budget and funding for July 1, 2020 will be implemented.

The Board reviewed that closing town facilities for public use through March 31, 2020 would not be a decision to wait until Monday. The Board agreed that events and programming for the public held in Town buildings can be closed without waiting and without needing an official vote.

Selectman Murphy confirmed that deep cleaning of Town facilities should commence once they are closed to the public. The Board also reviewed whether outdoor facilities should be closed in conjunction with the indoor facilities.

Selectman Wilson stated that the Director of Health should be the public information point person and that he should be sharing updates daily and posting them to the Town Facebook page.

Selectman Goldberg summarized that the information is key, we are all in this together, and we all need to remain calm.

4. Citizens Comments.

Tony Doina stated that any restrictions should be clarified for indicate timing for the restriction as well as timing for revisiting the guidelines.

Health Director, Trent Joseph summarized steps that everyone can take to avoid exposure to the virus.

5. Adjournment.

There being no objections, First Selectwoman Lyons adjourned the meeting at 10:02 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lauren Rhines
Town Services Coordinator / Risk Manager