



Board of Selectmen

DRAFT

Date of Meeting: Monday, June 13th, 2020
Time: 2:04 PM – 2:32 PM
Members Present: Chair Jim Woods; Selectmen Matt Mecum and Jamie Underwood; April Steward, Town Administrator; Stephen Madaus, Town Counsel (by telephone), Kim Rozak, Town Moderator, Sarah Scheinfein, Board of Health Chair (by telephone).

Chairman Wood opened the meeting by confirming that those participating by telephone could be heard and could hear others at the meeting. The Chairman then described the potential for a recommendation to postpone the Annual Town Meeting scheduled for Monday, June 15, based on new concerns raised by the Board of Health. The Town Moderator, Kim Kohler, requested additional information from Sarah Scheinfein to understand the Board of Health's position and concerns about holding the Annual Town Meeting indoors.

Selectman James Underwood raised two concerns; the first is a concern about liability of the Town, and the second was excluding high risk individuals from attending the meeting. Stephen Madaus redirected the question to the Board of Selectmen, citing the definition of an emergency from the Open Meeting Law, and asked the Board of Selectmen to explain what circumstances arose to call for this emergency meeting. Selectman Mecum responded that yesterday (Friday, June 12) he received an e-mail from the agent of the Board of Health, Dennis Costello, raising concerns about indoor venue for Town Meeting. Based on that e-mail, Selectman Mecum then had a telephone conversation this morning (Saturday) and that this morning, with the chair of the Board of Health and from that conversation he became aware that the Board of Health is of the opinion that, due to concerns about Coronavirus-19, the Town Meeting should be held outdoors, not inside. Selectman Mecum stated that this was new information to him and he believes it requires immediate consideration by the Board of Selectmen, since Town Meeting is scheduled for Monday (June 15), so he requested the emergency meeting. Upon learning this information, the other members of the Board of Selectmen agreed with Selectman Mecum's determination.

Discussion then resumed concerning the venue for Town Meeting. The Town Moderator described the indoor venue of the gymnasium and the auditorium at Tahanto Regional Middle and High School, and how adequate spacing would be provided to ensure social distancing and that safety measures would be in place, such as hand sanitizers and signage that face coverings are required, consistent with the guidelines and protocols recently issued by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. The Town Moderator asked the chair of the Board of Health if the Board of Health had an objection to the current plan to hold Town Meeting on Monday night, inside at Tahanto. The chair of the Board of Health responded that, based on an advisory from the Massachusetts Association of Health Boards and its counsel, Town Meeting should be held inside only if an outdoor venue is not available. The chair of the Board of Health said she strongly preferred holding Town Meeting outdoors and she would encourage people to not attend if the meeting is held indoors. Town Counsel asked if the chair of the Board of Health would put her recommendation to the Board of Selectmen in writing and she responded that she will forward a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen that Town Meeting be postponed, so that it may be rescheduled to be held outdoors.

Selectman Mecum then stated that several other communities have already moved their town meetings outside and he recommended the Town of Boylston do the same. The only way we would be able to make this change, he said, was to hold an emergency meeting today, make the change, and then post for voters to know of the change.

Town Moderator cited the recommendation from the chair of the Board of Health and then had discussions about a potential new date for Town Meeting with the Board of Selectmen. Following these discussions, the Town Moderator cited the public health concerns raised by the Board of Health and announced her decision to postpone Town Meeting scheduled for 7:00 pm on Monday, June 15, to 7:00 pm on Monday, June 29, for the purpose of allowing the Town to hold Town Meeting outdoors, with a rain date of June 30.

In light of concerns about protecting the public health as expressed by chair of the Board of Health, the Board of Selectmen instructed the Town Administrator to publish notice of the Board's intent to adjust the number of registered voters required to achieve a quorum at Town Meeting. Following publication of the notice, the Board of Selectmen will consider adjusting the number required for a quorum at their next meeting, scheduled for 6:00 pm on Monday, June 29th. Selectmen Underwood made the instructions to the Town Administrator in the form of a motion; Selectmen Mecum seconded the motion; all voted in favor.

At 2:32 PM the Board voted unanimously to adjourn
Respectfully submitted,

April C. Steward, Town Administrator