



Board of Selectmen

Date of Meeting: Monday, March 22nd, 2021
Time: 6:30 PM – 7:31 PM
Members Present: Chair Jamie Underwood; Selectmen Matt Mecum and Seth Ridinger;
April Steward, Town Administrator

The meeting commenced at 6:31 PM.

Financial Warrants were signed in agreement.

Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

The meeting will be livestreamed from the *Zoom Application*.

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86280024796?pwd=U1VmSFdjWjN0WDdXS1RTUEFJSEM0UT09>

Passcode: 642440

Or iPhone one-tap :

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+13017158592,,86280024796#,,,,*642440#

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Confirming Member Access:

April Steward, Town Administrator recited the following:

Members, when I call your name, please respond in the affirmative.

- Seth Ridinger: Yes
- Jamie Underwood: Yes
- Matthew Mecum: Yes

Staff, when I call your name, please respond in the affirmative.

- Stephen Madaus: Yes

Introduction:

April Steward started off the meeting by stating the following: Good evening everyone. This Open Meeting of the Board of Selectmen is being conducted remotely consistent with Governor Baker's Executive Order of March 12, 2020, due to the current State of Emergency in the Commonwealth due to the outbreak of the "COVID-19 Virus."

In order to mitigate the transmission of the COVID-19 Virus, we have been advised and directed by the Commonwealth to suspend public gatherings, and as such, the Governor's Order suspends the requirement of the Open Meeting Law to have all meetings in a publicly accessible *physical* location. Further, all members of public bodies are allowed and encouraged to participate remotely. The Order, which you can find posted with agenda materials for this meeting allows public bodies to meet entirely remotely so long as reasonable public access is afforded so that the public can follow along with the deliberations of the meeting. Ensuring public access does not ensure public participation unless such participation is required by law. This meeting will feature public comment.

For this meeting, the Board of Selectmen is convening by video conference via Zoom App as posted on the Town's Website identifying how the public may join. Please note that this meeting is being recorded, and that some attendees are participating by video conference. Accordingly, please be aware that other folks may be able to see you, and that take care not to "screen share" your computer. Anything that you broadcast may be captured by the recording.

Meeting Materials:

All supporting materials that have been provided members of this body are available on the Town's website unless otherwise noted. The public is encouraged to follow along using the posted agenda unless the Chair notes otherwise.

Meeting Business Ground Rules (Jamie Underwood):

We are now turning to the first item on the agenda. Before we do so, permit me to cover some ground rules for effective and clear conduct of our business and to ensure accurate meeting minutes.

- I will introduce each speaker on the agenda. After they conclude their remarks, the Chair will go down the line of Members, inviting each by name to provide any comment, questions, or motions. Please hold until your name is called. Further,
 - Please remember to mute your phone or computer when you are not speaking.
 - Please remember to speak clearly and in a way that helps generate accurate meeting minutes.
- For any response, please wait until the Chair yields the floor to you and state your name before speaking.
- If members wish to engage in dialogue with other members, please do so through the Chair, taking care to identify yourself.

For Items with Public Comment:

After members have spoken, the Chair will afford public comment as follows:

- The Chair will first ask members of the public who wish to speak to identify their names and addresses only.
- Once the Chair has a list of all public commentators, I will call on each by name and afford 3 minutes for any comments.
- Finally, each vote taken in this meeting will be conducted by roll call vote.

Discussion on Memorial Day:

Earlier in the day April Steward and Matt Mecum spoke with Scott Larkin and Betty Larkin of the Memorial Day Committee. The committee's plan is to proceed as normal and they are looking to the Board of Selectmen for their support. If COVID-19 trends continue in a positive direction, the Memorial Day Committee would like permission to move forward.

Matt Mecum noted that the Health Agent agrees that it would be premature to consider cancelling Memorial Day events. Jamie Underwood noted that there are ways to expand the event's footprint by extending the parade route and potentially spreading booths into the Center Basketball Courts area.

All agreed that while it may look different than in years past, Memorial Day events should take place if possible.

Discussion on Reopening of Town Buildings:

The Chair noted that Town Hall employees have done a great job working remotely when necessary and that they are doing well with the implementation of the new online building permit system. He does feel, however, that it is time to move forward with the reopening of Town buildings.

April Steward noted that Boylston is now in the "Gray Category", meaning that the town has ten or less active cases of COVID-19. She indicated that she was very pleased with the safety measures put in place by the Facilities Manager. Bob has installed plexiglass dividers on counters and in doors, only one additional person is allowed in offices at a time, and distance markings have been placed on floors.

Matt Mecum noted that with schools fully reopening on April 5th, the Town should also follow suit. He said that in addition to Town Hall, the Townhouse and Hillside Gymnasium should reopen. There have been requests from Boylston Youth Baseball and the pickle ball group for use of the gym. Bob has been in touch with Mark Antilla of BYBS to go over the cleaning protocols that will be in place for the gymnasium, to include disinfection of high-touch surfaces and use of the fogger. There will be no unnecessary traffic to the gym – only coaches and players, no parents – and masks will be worn at all times while inside the building. Parks and Recreation will coordinate days and hours of availability as in the past.

Jamie Underwood said that the new less restrictive guidelines, including moving from a 6-foot distance to 3-feet, will make it easier to allow the use of the Town House. Many seniors and other Boylston residents would enjoy the use of the Town House and it will be positive to move forward with reopening it.

There was some discussion of sports guidelines, and Seth Ridinger agreed that as long as the Town continues to be vigilant and exercise caution he feels the Town should move forward with reopening facilities.

April Steward noted that all safety measures and protocols related to Step 1 of Phase 4 will be followed.

It was noted that reopening will provide a little more normalcy for residents. There was some discussion with regard to a reopening date. It was decided to reopen in one week on Monday, March 29th, to allow time for employees to acclimate.

Matt Mecum made a motion to reopen Town buildings effective March 29th, 2021. Seth Ridinger seconded the motion. Matt: Yes, Seth: Yes, and Jamie: Yes. Voted all in favor.

Vaccination Update:

Matt Mecum addressed Town-specific progress. The Lions Club has been very successful in helping residents secure appointments. Lions Club volunteers and the Council on Aging are focusing on assisting those without internet access and those with the inability to use computers. To date, close to 300 appointments have been secured. According to State data, 31.4% of Boylston residents have already received their first shot. This is all thanks to the efforts of volunteers and residents themselves. Teachers and staff at Boylston Elementary are already at 100% for (at a minimum) vaccination appointments and first shots. This is after only two weeks of eligibility. Tahanto Regional High School is at 92% and Berlin Memorial Elementary is at 90%. There is a new waitlist option available through Mass.Gov which will be very helpful to those trying to make appointments.

Matt noted that April, Joe Flanagan, and Dennis Costello have been working hard with their counterparts in other towns to receive approval for a regional vaccination site. Last week this was approved through the DPH, providing another close option for Town residents to be vaccinated.

April Steward updated the Board on the regional vaccination clinic. Boylston has partnered with Ashland, Holliston, Hopkinton, Northborough, Southborough, and Westborough to petition the Massachusetts Department of Public Health for a joint application to institute a regional vaccination site.

April, Boylston's Fire Chief, and Boylston's Health Agent met with the partner communities last week to discuss plans. It was decided to follow the group's original proposal of having one main site at the Double Tree Inn, Westborough. The hotel is large capacity, with plenty of parking and the ability to refrigerate vaccines. It was determined that Fire Chiefs and Health Agents will continue discussions and report back to their respective towns. There will be 500 vaccines available per day to start and will hopefully ramp up as time goes on and more vaccine becomes available.

Town Administrator Report to BOS:

The Town Administrator said that she had three items to bring before the Board; the first one – the Regional COVID Vaccine Site – having already been discussed.

April then announced that thanks to the efforts of Town Planner Paul Dell'Aquila Boylston has been approved for the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative Local Rapid Recovery Grant Program. The first meeting with the CMRPC was held on March 19th, with Paul and April in attendance. April has included the agenda from that meeting in the Selectmen's packets. It will be a fast-moving process and will be completed at the end of August. The Town will need to solicit input

from business owners, especially along the Route 140 Corridor. Paul will go into deeper detail during his update to the Board.

Lastly, April noted that effective today the State is now in Phase 4, Step 1. Massachusetts is loosening restrictions, moving towards full reopening of the economy. Boylston is in the “Gray Category”, with currently only seven active cases in town. Trends are moving in a positive direction.

Town Planner Report to BOS:

Town Planner Paul Dell’Aquila said that, as April mentioned, the Rapid Response Grant Program is now underway. At last Friday’s meeting roles and responsibilities of the Town and the CMRPC were outlined. CMRPC is designated as the project lead by the State. It is the Town’s responsibility to provide a lot of the initial upfront data, but as we are currently going through the Master Plan process the CMRPC already has a lot of data on hand. As part of the first stage, CMRPC will do an intensive direct data outreach to Route 140 corridor businesses. The Town had to define a discrete area, including commercial and industrial properties and properties in the business overlay section of the corridor. After data collection, target interviews will be conducted with businesses and key Town employees. The focus will be on what we want to see for the corridor in the future and making a plan of things that can be implemented in the short term. There is a strong possibility that the Town will be eligible for additional funds after going through this process. It will be a fast-moving process with the final plan completed at the end of August. Periodic updates will be provided; perhaps BOS Meetings would be a good venue for this. Business outreach and surveys are already taking place. Paul’s time constraints as a shared employee limit his time for data-gathering; this process will provide valuable information to use moving forward. This process will synthesize into an actionable blueprint for the Town.

Paul then spoke about the Master Plan Community Visioning Workshop, which will take place from 6:30-8 p.m. on Wednesday March 24th. This is a wonderful opportunity for folks outside of the working group to provide input. Residents are encouraged to share their thoughts and desires of what they want to see in town. This will be a discussion of who we are now and what we want to be moving forward. All Selectmen agreed that they would like to see as much resident input as possible. Seth Ridinger clarified the date for the Visioning Workshop (March 24th) and noted that the separate Housing Production Plan Workshop will be held on Thursday, April 8th.

Lastly, Paul announced that the Town had received an application for another large-scale distribution facility adjacent to Federal Express. The Planning Board Hearing will take place on April 5th. For a project of this scale, there will be several rounds of meetings and peer review; it will be a lengthy process, but Paul is very excited to move forward.

Building Inspector Report to BOS:

Tony Zahariadis reviewed new reports and explained their layout. The Building Department is moving forward with the new software and tasking different departments to become engaged with the portal. Conservation and Board of Health will be able to facilitate permits quicker. It will help to keep Plumbing, Gas, and Electrical Inspectors in the loop. They will be able to pick up on applicants who pull permits but don’t call for inspections. The new system will take office focus away from data entry and put it on things that are more important to the Town. Tony did indicate

that a process is necessary to incent applicants who have not yet begun using the online system. Perhaps implementing a processing fee for people who choose not to use it. Seth Ridinger asked if contractors and homeowners need to set up an account before using the system. Tony said that they do need to set up an account, but once their initial information is entered, they do not need to re-enter it. They can just put in new addresses and the work that will be completed for each job. Seth asked if the same account can be used across multiple towns. Tony said yes, the same account can be used in any town that has this software.

Tony touched on the new warehouse application that is coming before the Town. He indicated that the warehouse is larger than the one previously located in the same spot, but he also said that he is comfortable with the company. Jamie noted that as the company previously had a similar business in Boylston they already know what to expect and things should move forward smoothly.

Tony asked if BOS meetings would soon go back to an in-person format. Jamie said that there are obstacles to going back with regard to capacity limits. Matt said that this would be discussed in more detail later in the meeting.

The Town has received a request for a permit to hang green lights in support of Childrens Mental Health Awareness Week, May 2nd-May 8th: Rochelle Peret, Co-President of SEPAC, discussed "Light it Up Green for Childrens Mental Health Awareness". Rochelle said that she was told by the Town Clerk that due to the refurbishment of the gazebo, it may not be a viable location to consider. Rochelle said she is open to suggestions of spots with high visibility. Dawn Porter suggested encouraging private homeowners to hang lights, and April Steward suggested the triangle where the Powder House is located. Jamie thinks there may even be power at that location. Seth suggested allowing April to provide authorization for the lights once a spot is determined. Jamie offered to look into more information on the gazebo renovation schedule and check to see if there is power at the Powder House location. Matt will ensure that a message is displayed on the Lions Club sign. April will follow up with Rochelle. All three Selectmen voiced strong support for the initiative; Jamie noting that especially this year it is important to show support for children.

Discussion on Postponing Annual Town Meeting:

Due to the chance of inclement weather at beginning of May, and a couple of large items appearing on the Warrant, Jamie suggested that there needs to be a discussion with regard to postponement of Town Meeting. Seth suggested early June, possibly June 7th. Jamie confirmed that the owner of 85 Sewall Street is amicable to a new date.

Matt made a Motion to move Town Meeting to Monday, June 7th. The Motion was seconded by Seth. Voted all in favor. Matt: Yes, Seth: Yes, and Jamie: Yes.

Town Counsel Stephen Madaus stated that the rain date/overflow date would carry over as posted on the Warrant. He also stated that the Town Election date would remain the same and a separate Election Warrant would be necessary.

Discussion on Shortening Polling Hours at Annual Town Election:

Dawn Porter put forward the option of shortening polling hours to 3-7p.m., as viewed acceptably by the State. The reasoning behind the proposal is that in addition to ongoing COVID-19 concerns, there are no contested races and, in fact, two open seats for the Parks and Recreation Commission. Vote-by-Mail has been extended and scheduling voting hours as 3-7 p.m. would allow most working people to cast a vote if they wish. Dawn doesn't feel that people would be put out by the shortened hours and thought the Board might want to look at this option. Jamie and Matt were initially receptive to the proposal; Seth was not in favor. Seth stated that he was apprehensive about restricting access to the democratic process. Jamie noted that there was plenty of time for voters to take advantage of the mail-in option. Dawn said that she felt that write-in campaigns, especially in the case of Parks and Recreation, should be encouraged. Stephen Madaus asked if there would be in-person Early Voting available. Dawn said that it is not required by the State and, due to cost and time, Boylston would not be offering it. She indicated that as far as she knew the majority of towns are not going to offer it. Matt asked if other towns were considering shortening polling hours. Dawn said that the towns who are considering it are those that are in the same situation as Boylston, with no contested races. Dawn confirmed that the traditional voting hours are 12 noon to 8 p.m. She indicated that she could see Seth's viewpoint, but feels that voters have many avenues available to them to cast a ballot and she feels that the Town would not be restricting the voting process by shortening hours. Dawn also mentioned that part of her concern is for the mostly volunteer staff who would need to be available at Town Hall for nine hours without much activity taking place. Matt asked Seth if he would feel more comfortable with five hours versus four. Seth said that he was really inclined to leave hours as is, as those are the traditional voting hours and to allow for last minute write-in campaigns. Jamie said that he doesn't want the appearance of restricting voting but is concerned about getting enough volunteers to work the polls. Dawn indicated that there should be no problem securing volunteers and that to keep standard hours is not really hurting the Town; the cost was planned for and she also would not want the appearance of restricting voting. Jamie asked how soon a decision needs to be made. Dawn feels that a decision would need to be made by the next BOS Meeting at the latest. If there was a change in polling hours she would want to be sure there was plenty of advance notice given to residents. Matt and Jamie indicated that perhaps the Town should keep traditional polling hours. Seth is in agreement, so there is no action necessary. Polls will be open on May 10th from 12 noon to 8 p.m.

Miscellaneous Items:

Bob Bourassa has already messaged in to the meeting to say that the Lions Club volunteers can work around the lights on the gazebo during the first week of May. SEPAC can move forward with their initiative.

Matt said that he feels there should be discussion with regard to in-person Board of Selectmen Meetings as long as there is also a Zoom option available. Jamie said that he feels that if Town Hall employees are on site and Town Hall is fully open, the BOS should also be meeting in-person. There was some discussion about needing a larger room for this to take place. While the current restriction is 100 people indoors, April noted that we still need to abide by the size of the room. Stephen said that he hasn't yet encountered a true hybrid scenario, but he has seen meetings where there was a public comment section at the beginning. Jamie, Matt, and Stephen all indicated that they didn't see the value in that format. Matt said that he would still like to explore options and asked that this topic be placed on the next BOS Meeting Agenda.

Andrew Wilcox, a local jazz musician and Tahanto graduate, had approached Seth about the possibility of giving concerts this summer. Seth spoke with Eric Hoffses from Parks and Recreation about the possibility of moving forward with this – potentially at Hillside or on the Town Common. All Selectmen are very supportive of holding outdoor events if possible. Seth will continue to update the Board.

At 7:54 PM, Seth Ridinger made a motion to adjourn. Matt Mecum seconded. Voted all in favor. Matt: Yes, Seth: Yes, and Jamie: Yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Dawn A. Porter
Town Clerk

Meeting Materials:

Agenda	On File in The Board of Selectmen’s Office
Town Administrator’s Report	On File in The Board of Selectmen’s Office
Building Inspector Report	On File in The Board of Selectmen’s Office
Town Planner Report	On File in The Board of Selectmen’s Office
Massachusetts Final Reopening Guide	On File in The Board of Selectmen’s Office
Safety Standards and Checklist	On File in The Board of Selectmen’s Office