



TOWN OF THORNTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Town of Thornton • 16 Merrill Access Road • Thornton NH, 03285 • 603.726.8168

Approved on:	30 Mar 20
BOS Initial:	pmm
Rec'd by Town Clerk on:	4/6/2020
Town Clerk Initials:	dpr

Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes March 17, 2020

11:04 A.M. Chairwoman Peabody opened the Thornton Board of Selectmen meeting work session with the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL: Chairwoman Marianne Peabody, Vice-Chairman Brad Benton, Selectman Roy Sabourn, Selectman Jack Gaites and Selectman Joseph Monti.

STAFF PRESENT: Debra Shepard, Town Administrator, Chief Miller, Chief Defosses

COVID-19

TA Shepard presented a packet of information regarding the status of COVID-19 and how other towns are handling the Governor's order for social distancing. Other surrounding towns are temporarily converting to a virtual town hall providing services via telephone and email. The town clerk through the State of NH has the ability to complete auto renewal registrations, dog licenses, etc. Marriage licenses and some other services would need to be put on hold since these need to be completed in person if the Board decides to follow the protocol of the other towns. This would also allow staff to remain working in the town offices and assisting people remotely. The State is also recommending that all board meetings be canceled until after April 6, 2020.

Selectman Monti stated that he is unsure why the town office would close to the public. Chairwoman Peabody explained that the town has been asked by the State to do whatever they can do to protect themselves, employees, and the public in order to limit the spread of the virus in the area. The towns have been asked to comply.

Selectman Monti stated that the town hall has not been ordered to close. Selectwoman Peabody agreed that the State has not ordered a closure, however all of the surrounding towns have closed until April 6, 2020 in the best interest of the health and safety of staff and the public.

Selectwoman Peabody stated that if an employee contracts COVID-19 and /or needs to self-quarantine for a time period due to exposure, the employee should continue to receive their regular rate of pay without having to use their sick time.

Selectman Monti argued that the governor has already indicated that any employee that is self-quarantined due to the illness can apply for unemployment benefits. He stated that this should be done instead of offering employees their regular salary. Selectwoman Peabody argued that if the office is closing to the public for the next 17 days, the Board should not put their employees through the unemployment process should they contract the virus. The Board discussed further. Chief Miller stated that the maximum pay through

unemployment is only \$427 per week. The Board also discussed that employees may decide to not self-quarantine if they cannot afford to forego their regular paycheck and this would put many others at risk. After some consideration, Selectman Sabourn agreed with Chairwoman Peabody and stated that the town has good employees and he does not agree that employees should be required to sign up for unemployment due to a temporary illness. He also stated that the funds for salaries are already in the budget, their employees are loyal, and the Board should take care of their employees. He did agree that if the employee was going to be out of work for months or an extended amount of time, unemployment benefits would be reasonable and their decision can be discussed again.

Selectman Monti stated that the employees have sick time for being sick and that this should be used.

MOTION: "To continue to pay employees their normal rate of pay, if the employee contracts COVID-19 and/or needs to self-quarantine per doctor orders for a time period due to exposure. The employee will not need to use their accrued sick time for the extenuating circumstances caused by this virus. The Board will discuss this decision further should an employee need a long-term absence from work."

Motion: R. Sabourn

Seconded: J. Gaites

Discussion: Selectman Monti asked how they will know if the employee is quarantining for personal fear or for an actual exposure risk. Selectman Monti stated that there should be some type of documentation required for an excused absence. Selectman Sabourn stated amended the motion to include a doctor's note that specifies the need to self-quarantine and for the amount of time is specified by the doctor.

Motion Passes: 5 – Yes, 0 – No

Selectman Sabourn stated that the Planning Board has a meeting scheduled for Thursday. Selectman Monti stated that he believes it is an overreaction to cancel the board meetings and that this puts all town business at a standstill. He also stated that the residents will not get ZCA's approved and that the business before the Planning Board and Zoning Board will be put on hold. He feels that this will have a negative effect on the local economy as well. Selectman Monti suggested that the town continue to hold their Board meetings and suggested asking the School to use their gymnasium in an effort to spread people out. Selectwoman Peabody and Selectman Sabourn agreed that they do not feel comfortable asking the school for use of their building since it has been ordered to close.

Chief Defosses stated that the availability for testing is lower than ideal and the test results take time. Chief explained that the idea behind flattening the curve of the virus is to prevent the influx in the need for hospital care. Chief stated that there is concern that the US will have a much higher need for medical services than our hospitals can provide and that the DHHS is taking this very seriously.

Selectwoman Peabody stated that she also has concern with the operation of the Transfer Station at this time. She feels that the household garbage is less of a concern, but that

the disposal of other items such as construction debris, recyclables, etc. should be discontinued for a time period.

Chief Miller stated that the Thornton Police Department lobby is closed to the public and that 911 calls are being handled over the phone and in person as needed. The officers have personal protection equipment for in person contact to minimize exposure. Chief has directed officers not to respond to medical calls unless absolutely necessary.

The Board continued to discussed canceling all town Board meetings and in-person town business for the next 17 days until April 6th.

MOTION: "To cancel all town Board/Committee meetings and close the town offices to in-person business for 17 days, until April 6, 2020. The Board of Selectmen will come to town hall to sign manifests on March 25, 2020. The Selectman will also discuss this situation after April 6, 2020.

Motion: B. Benton

Seconded: J. Gaites

Discussion: Discussion continued on the safety for transfer station employees.

The Board agreed to include limitations for items accepted at the Transfer Station in a separate motion. Selectman Monti asked how the Town Hall would operate virtually. J. Monti asked what the residents will do if they cannot come to town hall. TA Shepard explained that notice will be given to the public of the virtual services that can be provided through the town website which include vehicle registration renewals, dog licenses, ZCA, applications for Planning Board and Zoning Board, property tax payments, assessing records etc. TA Shepard further explained that staff will be working as usual and will be available to assist the public with the online components if needed. J. Monti asked how the staff will maintain a six foot distance between them while working in the office. TA Shepard stated the staff will be working in their own spaces and offices and are wiping down surfaces every hour. J. Monti asked what will happen if an employee does not feel comfortable with this working. TA Shepard stated that the employee can be self-quarantined with a doctor's note as the Board had discussed previously. M. Peabody stated that the town will know more after the 17 days. TA Shepard stated that forms can be mailed from the office as well if a person does not have internet access. TA Shepard provided templates as to what other towns are doing in this situation.

Motion Passes: 5 – Yes, 0 – No

MOTION: "To suspend recycling at the Transfer Station for the next 17 days. The Transfer Station will continue to accept household garbage only and order 2 additional cans to accommodate an increase in trash and encourage residents to hold their recyclables until further notice."

Motion: J. Monti

Seconded: B. Benton

Discussion: J. Monti suggested having an additional can for the plastic recyclables which will be handled by the residents themselves. Discussion continued on the recyclables. R. Sabourn and B. Benton suggested having an extra can for household garbage and asking residents to hold their recyclables and if they can't then recyclables will need to be disposed of with the household garbage. TA Shepard stated that household trash can be disposed of by residents themselves and every other department is social distancing. J. Monti recommended that residents be allowed to continue to bring recyclables and items costing a fee. He suggested that employees remove items from the vehicle and collect the fee, changing their gloves at every interaction. R. Sabourn stated that for 17 days, residents can hold onto their recyclables and items costing a fee in order to treat all employees fairly.

Motion Passes: 5 – Yes, 0 – No

MOTION: "Effective immediately, the Transfer Station will not accept items requiring a fee or punch card for the 17 days until the Selectboard can make a further assessment. No more than one employee can be in the office (doghouse) at a time."

Motion: B. Benton

Seconded: R. Sabourn

Discussion: J. Monti would like this notified at the entrance of the Transfer Station to inform residents of these decisions. The Board agreed. TA Shepard will provide signage for the Transfer Station.

Motion Passes: 5 – Yes, 0 – No

MOTION: "The Highway Department will restrict public access to the Highway Department and will communicate with residents via phone calls for the next 17 days."

Motion: B. Benton

Seconded: J. Gaites

Discussion: J. Monti stated that Highway Department employees should keep their cell phones on for calls.

Motion Passes: 5 – Yes, 0 – No

12:13 P.M. MOTION: "To enter into nonpublic session pursuant to RSA 91A:3, II (a,c)."

Motion: R. Sabourn

Seconded: B. Benton

Discussion: None.

Roll Call: R. Sabourn – Yes, M. Peabody – Yes, Brad Benton – Yes, Joseph Monti – Yes, Jack Gaites – Yes.

Motion Passes: 5 – Yes, 0 – No

12:34 P.M. MOTION: "To come out of nonpublic session."

Motion: R. Sabourn

Seconded: B. Benton

Discussion: None.

Motion Passes: 5 – Yes, 0 – No

MOTION: "To accept the resignation from Kevin McGuire as the Transfer Station manager effective March 16, 2020."

Motion: R. Sabourn

Seconded: B. Benton

Discussion: None.

Motion Passes: 4 – Yes, 1 – No, Joseph Monti

Chairwoman Peabody stated that the Assistant Manager will temporarily fill these duties until the virus epidemic is contained. J. Monti stated that he is not comfortable with the Assistant Manager assuming the manager duties based on decisions that he has made in the past, specifically closing the transfer station twice when it should not have been closed. Chairwoman Peabody stated that the assistant manager's job is to assume the manager's work in the absence of a manager. R. Sabourn and B. Benton agreed. R. Sabourn stated that if there any issues regarding employees or coverage at the transfer station, the assistant manager should consult with the town administrator in his decision making process.

6:35 p.m. MOTION: "To adjourn."

Motion: R. Sabourn

Seconded: J. Monti

Discussion: None.

Motion Passes: 5 - 0

Respectfully submitted,

Jessi Fleury
Board Secretary