

The March 24, 2020 Special Meeting of the Board of Selectman to discuss closing of Town offices due to the Coronavirus crisis was convened by First Selectman Beth Heller at 5:00 p.m. via Tele-conferencing.

Ms. Heller ascertained that each member and staff was present on the phone via roll-call.

Present: First Selectman Beth Heller, Deputy First Selectman Mica Cardozo, Joseph J. Crisco, Jr., Joseph S. Dey III, Dwight Rowland, Sandra T. Stein.

Present for Staff: Administrative Officer/Director of Finance Anthony Genovese, Town Counsel Gerald Weiner, Assistant Administrative Officer Betsy Yagla, and Mrs. Shaw, Clerk.

THE FIRST SELECTMAN'S REMARKS

"Good evening everyone. Welcome to the March 24, 2020 Special meeting of the Board of Selectmen.

We are "live" with audio only on Channel 79 and you tube.

The situation at Town Hall and at the state and federal level continues to change rapidly. Things have of course changed drastically over the past week for all of us here in Woodbridge, and I have asked for this meeting to bring you all up to date on where things stand.

I will begin by thanking our wonderful town staff and all residents for being flexible and working together as we navigate through this global crisis. These are unprecedented times and the situation continues to change rapidly.

Before I update the Board on what we have been doing at Town Hall, I am going to briefly summarize for our listening audience, some key points on best practices during this pandemic:

It is imperative that everyone practice social distancing – continue to stay at least 6 feet away from one another, avoid gatherings and only leave home when necessary.

Do not visit friends or family unless there is an urgent need for health or safety and please try to avoid or limit interactions between the young and the elderly.

Wash your hands often for at least 20 seconds and clean high-touch surfaces in your home daily with Lysol or a solution of four teaspoons bleach per quart of water.

*There is a lot of disinformation about this new disease. **Misinformation is dangerous.** Please rely on trusted sources of information you can go to: [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus) for health information and guidance, [ct.gov/coronavirus](https://www.ct.gov/coronavirus) for state updates and [woodbridgect.org/covid19](https://www.woodbridgect.org/covid19) for local news.*

We have continued to make difficult decisions and I suspect things will only get harder before they improve. Please remember that our decisions have been made to keep everyone healthy and safe.

We have a new page on our town website where we are centralizing local information related to the pandemic.

You could visit [woodbridgect.org/COVID19](https://www.woodbridgect.org/COVID19) for details.

Additional guidance and information can be found on the regional health district website, Quinnipiack Valley Health District, [qvhd.org](https://www.qvhd.org)

If you have more questions or worry that you may have symptoms, call 1-833-ASK-YNH. Please keep our local businesses in mind during these uncertain.

On the COVID19 page on our Town website, you will also find a round-up of local businesses continuing to operate. The list is being updated as new information comes in. If your business has something to add, please get in touch with Betsy Yagla.

We have no idea how long this may continue. As we receive information, we will pass it along. Again, remember that we are here to help you, and we ask that you do everything you can to stay healthy and safe.

Now to the members of the Board of Selectmen:

Town buildings have been closed to the public since March 13, but until yesterday staff continued to report to work. We have canceled all programs indefinitely. Many services that the Town provides are available online or by phone. I have been convening frequent department head meetings via a conference call, and I am on regular conference calls with local, state and federal partners.

In accordance with Governor Lamont's Executive Order 7H, which permits only essential services to remain open and operational, the Town of Woodbridge offices closed at 8 pm last night, Monday March 23, with the exception of first responders and all other essential personnel.

The determination of essential personnel was made by Administrative Officer Tony Genovese and me, in conjunction with all department heads. Tony and I spoke with each of them yesterday.

Each department head, in conjunction with Tony and I, decided on essential services that must be performed. We also discussed how to perform such services from home or if necessary on site with necessary staffing and minimalizing contact. We have tried to answer as many questions as we could with each department head, and he and I are striving to maintain communication with all employees as well.

During this period, ONLY essential services will be provided to residents.

We have made provisions for mail and packages to be delivered to the Police Dispatch Department. We have devised a plan for one employee (alternating) to retrieve the mail and notify department heads that mail or packages are there.

As of today, we hope to revisit this policy at our next Board of Selectmen meeting on April 7th, or sooner, depending upon circumstances.

WE ARE TRYING TO SAVE LIVES ... asking folks to stay home and stop the spread!

Now I will ask Tony to give an update re personnel matters. Thank you Tony."

STATUS OF TOWN PERSONNEL

Mr. Genovese said that many of the part time employees, especially in the library and recreation, were instructed not to report due to lack of work as many of the programs have been canceled. If necessary, and at the discretion of the department head, a few part time employees may be asked to report. These employees asked to report will be paid. Those part time employees told not to report will of course be eligible to file for unemployment.

Mr. Genovese explained that: *‘For municipalities, the State passes through 100% of those unemployment costs to Woodbridge for our own employees. We essentially pay our own unemployment costs. This is in lieu of any federal or state tax. So we don’t pay any unemployment taxes, we just pay our direct unemployment costs. It is the Town’s plan to continue to pay our full-time staff members. Many full-time staff, on-site or remotely, will continue to work a full or near full-time schedule. This of course includes police officers, dispatch, fire, custodial, maintenance, and public works on a modified schedule as well as department heads and senior staff. This is the majority of our staff so we have worked it out so staff can either work at home or in the office or a combination to fulfil essential tasks. Some of our full-time members will work a modified schedule based on need and others on a limited schedule.*

I just want to say that our custodians that are working on site – our custodians and all our maintenance staff have been working tirelessly and have developed a very strict cleaning regimen so that we all remain as safe as we can while we continue our work. They have been doing a great job for us.”

QUESTIONS

Ms. Heller invited the Board to ask any questions.

Ms. Stein had a question regarding the part-time staff. *“Normally when we have had to close down operations in the past, i.e. the pool – were part-time staff basically not paid during those points in time?”*

Mr. Genovese – said that was correct. He cited the time, approximately three or four years ago, when the library had a leak. The part-time employees were not paid while it was closed.

Ms. Stein – commented that the Town was basically requesting that the former protocol be followed.

Mr. Genovese agreed

Ms. Stein asked: *“if those part-time staff are needed to come back on a more limited basis to help with a particular project – does that impact their unemployment at all?”*

Mr. Genovese answered that: *“The employee would have to report that to the State. I am not exactly sure how that would impact unemployment benefits. They are of course welcome to come back should there be work necessary. I know the library and recreation department are trying to do many things on line – and programs on line. I know recreation is developing many programs on line – so that may happen over time.”*

Mr. Cardozo asked Ms. Heller: *“Did I understand you to say that you were planning to review this again at our meeting or sometime or before, depending on what happens?”*

Ms. Heller stated that he was correct. And added: *“Sometimes these things are changing daily related to the Governor’s executive orders and we obviously have to follow those. It is possible that the Board may have to have another special meeting next week or the week after. The next regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen is [Tuesday] April 7th and we will have discussion again if we don’t have one sooner.”*

RESOLUTION

The Board of Selectmen acted on the following resolution:

Be it hereby moved that the Town implement a policy in conformance with Governor Lamont’s Executive Order 7H whereby only essential employees will be required to report to work to continue

with their normal duties. All full-time employees whether essential or non-essential will continue to be paid. Some non-essential workers may have some work they can do from home and that will be determined by the Administrative Officer and the First Selectman. An essential employee will be determined by the department head, the Administrative Officer, and the First Selectman. Part-time workers have already been asked to not report to work as many of the programs they work in have been deferred. Part-time employees will be eligible to file for unemployment benefits. This policy will be reviewed at the next regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen or sooner if appropriate.

Ms. Heller moved and Ms. Stein seconded to move the resolution.

Discussion – Ms. Heller asked if any member of the Board had anything to add to or remove from the motion/resolution.

Ms. Stein said that: *“as long as all employees have been informed as to whether they are “essential” or not – and obviously people know whether they are full-time or part-time and know that this is a stop-gap measure until we have further direction – I think it is fine.”*

Mr. Genovese assured the Board that all employees have been contacted.

Mr. Rowland said that he assumed it is the Town’s intention to offer the laid off employees their jobs back once regular operations were resumed.

Mr. Genovese stated that that is the Town’s intention.

Ms. Heller asked if there were any further questions or comments. Hearing none she called for a roll-call as to each individual’s vote on the resolution:

Mica Cardozo – Yay
Joseph Dey – Aye

Sandy Stein – Yay
Dwight Rowland – Aye

Joseph Crisco - Yay
Beth Heller – Aye

Ms. Heller declared the Resolution adopted.

REMARKS

Mr. Weiner reminded everyone that the meeting was being recorded on Channel 79 by Pua Ford (Media Specialist) as well as being available on YouTube simultaneously with the meeting.

Ms. Heller noted she mentioned the live recording in her remarks and thanked Mr. Weiner the reminder.

Mr. Weiner suggested that the Board be apprized that it may have to hold a special meeting in view of the Governor’s executive order regarding the adoption of the municipal budget for the next fiscal year.

Ms. Heller agreed and reminded the Board that the Preliminary Budget Hearing is scheduled for April 20 followed by the Annual Town Meeting in May and that those meetings will not be occurring in the usual manner. The Board will hold a meeting to discuss/decide how those meetings will be held – given the Governor’s executive order.

There were no further questions or comments from those participating in the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

On a non-debatable motion by Ms. Heller, seconded by Mr. Cardozo, the meeting adjourned at 5:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: Geraldine S. Shaw, Clerk