

The April 15, 2020, Special Meeting of the Woodbridge Board of Selectmen met via teleconferencing. First Selectman Beth Heller convened the meeting at 5:06 p.m.

Ms. Heller called the roll of members who affirmed they were at the meeting:

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

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

FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

Good evening and welcome to this Special Meeting of the Woodbridge Board of Selectmen, on Wednesday April 15, 2020 at 5 pm. In accordance with Governor Ned Lamont's Executive Order 7 B Section 1, which suspends the open meeting requirements of in-person participation, audio and video of this Special Meeting is being simultaneously televised live on WGATV Channel 79 and youtube@WGATV79, in order to allow the public to view and listen to our meeting. You may access it here at <https://youtu.be/oIiXUz4PvE4>

I will now call the list of all members of the Board of Selectmen and others who are participating in this meeting. I would remind participants to please mute your phones when you are not speaking to eliminate any background noise, and also please state your name for our listening audience, prior to speaking.

She then called the roll of attendance. (The attendance is listed in the heading of these minutes).

Thank you. Item 1 on our agenda is the First Selectman's report.

As we continue to navigate the global pandemic that has changed how we all attempted to keep safe, we are conducting this meeting to address only essential agenda items, or those necessary to continue the most urgent business of our Town. The majority of my time and the efforts of Town employees has been taken up with COVID 19 related work and life safety issues. As your First Selectman, my number one goal is to stop the spread of this deadly virus, by insisting that everyone stay home and stay safe. I would remind everyone to only go out for essential items, minimize travel, hopefully for only food and medicine. This is not a time to "catch up" with friends

We have not seen in a while, socialize while out on daily walks, or begin new projects involving hiring people to come into our homes.

Police Chief Frank Cappiello reported to me that as of 4:45 pm this afternoon, the total number of laboratory confirmed COVIS-19 cases in Woodbridge is 67 and the total number of those that have passed away is 10. My heart goes out to all families who have been touched by this illness and those who have lost loved ones. This is indeed a stark reminder of how dreadful this horrible disease is.

Town Buildings remain closed to the public and have been since mid-March. Last week I closed the Town playgrounds, our athletic fields and tennis courts. The Dog Park Cooperative chose to voluntarily close the dog park, to further minimize resident interaction. Yes, we are isolated, and At times lonely – but this is the very thing that will stop this virus, and help us get back to normal someday, whatever that new normal may be.

I am on regular phone calls with our partners at the federal, state and municipal level as we work through this pandemic. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) is now recommending that everyone now wear a mask in addition to gloves in public. This does not replace the need for social distancing and frequent hand washing. In response to the demand for masks, we are asking residents to either make, and donate masks to the Woodbridge Center for distribution or donate materials for others to make masks. You may visit our Town website for details on how you can help. I am trying to keep all residents up to date on the situation and we have been posting frequently to Facebook and doing CT-Alert phone calls, our monthly mailed newsletter, and weekly e-newsletters.

For information on how to sign up for either of these communication tools, visit the Town website's COVID 19 portal at woodbridgect.org/COVID19.

We are also finalizing the procedure for the Preliminary Budget Hearing, which will be conducted virtually. Details on how to participate will be forthcoming soon, and also on the town website. Jerry Weiner will give An update on the process, and how we have adapted to comply with the Governor's Executive Orders.

Please join me in thanking all Woodbridge employees, and especially our town residents for being flexible and understanding during these unprecedented times. We are working ~~so~~ hard to keep each other safe, and informed, and to provide a safe workplace for our staff so they can continue to serve our residents.

I am so very proud of all our townspeople. The caring and hard work everyone has shown to keep us safe is unprecedented. I remain hopeful that we will get through this - We are staying apart now so we can come together later!

*As you know, Governor Lamont's Executive Order 7 B prohibits in-person meetings of Town Boards and Commissions during the Corona Virus period. The order does however permit meetings of town agencies through the use of remote technology. Meetings of boards and commissions during this period should however, be held **only** if an issue or issues require immediate attention. This will give the public the ability to comment and participate in person which is always preferable to holding a remote meeting, which does not allow for public input. Accordingly, meetings that are not time sensitive should be delayed until the prohibition against*

in person meetings is removed. If a remote meeting is necessary during this period, and cannot be delayed, we have asked commissioners to contact Betsy Yagla in order to make certain the Executive Order is fully complied with.

With regard to recent vacancies that remain on a couple of our commissions, such as the West Rock Ridge Advisory Committee and the Area 2 Cable Advisory Committee, and the establishment of the membership of the new Agricultural Commission, I plan to add these to the next agenda of an in-person meeting.

Lastly, I would like to address a recent request from a member of the Board to add an item to our agenda regarding hiring and placing a caretaker AT THIS TIME at the Darling House. First, I want to be clear that the suggested couple, Trish and Peter Vander Veer from Shelton may be wonderful candidates for this position. This is not the issue here. They may emerge as the ideal people for tenancy at the Darling house. The question is whether this is a reasonable time to install any new tenant at the Darling house.

Prior to our "lockdown" related to the COVID 19 Pandemic, the Board of Selectmen voted to complete a new AWHS/Town lease agreement, and the appointment of an Oversight Committee. One of the functions of the Oversight Committee, when established, will be to assist and support the Historical Society in vetting tenant candidates. Defining and agreeing on the Caretakers' duties and job description is an essential part of this. This work is not yet in place.

Even if we had a candidate fully vetted by the Oversight Committee, the house and apartment requires an inspection by our Building Official & Fire Marshal to ensure the tenant's safety and, most importantly, to protect the Town of Woodbridge from liability.

I was surprised to learn from an email forwarded to me from one of our Selectmen that the Historical Society had gone into the apartment on its own and painted, performed minor repairs, and hired Pace Electric for a "good going over including the installation of better lighting for the outside doors." Unfortunately, they seem to have forgotten that this is a town-owned building for which the Town of Woodbridge bears responsibility and potential liability. No one from the town (me, Tony, Brad, Betsy, no one, was told about this). This cannot be tolerated.

Yesterday, Town Counsel Jerry Weiner and I spoke with Historical Society treasurer Barbara Baldwin. We had a very cordial conversation. She agreed that the Town the Society should have notified the Town ahead of any repairs that the Society was making to the tenant apartment. Obviously, there may be more repairs that need to be dealt with. I also discussed the reasons why certain things must be in place before we have a lease with a new caretaker/tenant.

This morning I was surprised to receive several e-mails from Barbara Baldwin, informing me (and apparently, she copied the Board of Selectmen and others) that she had called our Building

*Official Andy Rizzo, our Fire Marshal Joe Cappucci and our Building Maintenance Official Brad Parsons, following our phone call yesterday, to set up inspections. She stated in the e-mails to these folks that I had asked her to do this. Jerry Weiner was on the phone call that I had with her, and he confirmed with me that I **DID NOT ask that she do this**. Again, THIS IS A TOWN BUILDING – The Amity Woodbridge Historical Society has NO authority to request these inspections.*

As you may recall, following a recent tour of the Darling House and the apartment by members of the Board of Selectmen, there were concerns from Board members regarding assessing the need for electrical repairs, suspected mold remediation and other maintenance prior to another tenant occupancy.

Now that the apartment is vacant, it is the Board's responsibility to the Town of Woodbridge to do our due diligence, to do a thorough inspection, and to make proper repairs and remediation as needed. Again, as landlords, WE, the Town of Woodbridge, must ensure the tenant's safety and, most importantly, protect our Town from liability.

I also received a call today from a resident who was concerned about lead levels in the apartment and the building. Barbara Baldwin also reported through e-mail that she does not believe "a remediation plan is necessary." This is the Town's responsibility – not the Society's. At my direction, Mr. Rizzo will review the entire file and the previous inspections that have been performed. He will organize an inspection of the entire building, and include Mr. Cappucci and Mr. Parsons. They will work together to complete this, and I have asked them to submit their report to Tony Genovese and to me. I will forward this to the Board, and the Society. Andy assured me that this will be completed over the next few days, depending upon what they find. I also asked Fire Marshal Cappucci to review the current fire alarm system, and make recommendations for how we might better protect this wonderful asset.

It is my recommendation that we continue with the agreed upon process:

*1) We must first **complete the lease agreement** between the Town and the AWHs. Jerry and I have a virtual meeting set up with Todd Levine of the State Historical Preservation Office of the Department Economic & Community Development for this Friday afternoon. Prior to the pandemic crisis, we were waiting for some language from Todd to add to the lease agreement, which he felt would satisfy the needs of both the Society and the Town. Over the past few weeks, Todd and Jerry and I were tied up with more pressing matters due to the COVID 19 pandemic. I am confident that with Todd's suggested specific language, this lease agreement will meet the needs of both the AWHs and the Town of Woodbridge, and will be signed by both parties*

*2) With the lease agreement in place, an **oversight committee will be appointed**; a charge for the committee will be developed (which will include, among other things, all the necessary items*

for a caretaker/tenant agreement), and the further important work of the Oversight Committee will begin

*3) Again, most importantly, to protect the Town from any liability regarding the apartment, the Board of Selectmen will determine (with **inspections and recommendations from various Town authorities such as the Building Official and the Fire Marshal**) the improvements needed prior to occupancy by a tenant. Those must be completed prior to occupancy.*

*4) A suitable **caretaker/tenant will be installed** in the apartment at the Darling House*

I would now like to ask Board members if they have any suggestions or concerns regarding items that in your opinion require investigation which I will pass along to Andy, Joe and Brad prior to their inspections.”

The Board of Selectmen offered the following remarks:

Mr. Cardozo – the Board should have confirmation that a remediation plan is or is not required.

Mr. Crisco – no questions or comments

Mr. Dey – nothing to add as to recommendations as he did not attend the tour or visited the Darling House. However, he said that it was his opinion that since the Amity Woodbridge Historical Society’s request to be on the agenda was denied, Beth should not have reported on or should there be discussion re the care-takers apartment.

Mr. Rowland – whatever is found from the inspections by the Fire Marshal and Building Official be address as quickly as possible so the lease agreement can be approved.

Ms. Stein – thanked Ms. Heller and staff for all they are doing to shepherd the Town through this very unprecedented situation. Believes Ms. Heller is putting the right steps forward to try and resolve and finalize the plan that the Board of Selectmen did approve. One suggestion regarding the inspection – check the integrity of the outside kitchen wall.

Ms. Heller then resumed her comments: *“Again, thank you to everyone virtually here this evening, and the Townspeople. We will emerge from this better than ever – TOGETHER, and Woodbridge STRONG. To all listening this evening, PLEASE continue to stay home so that you can keep everyone safe. Does anyone want to make any additions to the agenda and any further comments?”*

There were no further comments and no one asked for an addition to the agenda. The meeting resumed.

ADOPT STATE AFFIRMATIONS – TO BE ADOPTED DURING THE MONTH OF APRIL EACH YEAR.

On a roll call by Ms. Heller, the Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** by roll call vote (Stein – Crisco) to approve and adopt the following State Affirmations for the ensuing year:

- American with Disabilities Act Municipal Grievance Procedure
- American with Disabilities Notice
- Affirmative Action Policy Statement
- Compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Fair Housing Policy Statement
- Fair Housing Resolution

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER/DIRECTOR OF FINANCE – COVID-19 FINANCIAL UPDATE

Mr. Genovese reported that: The rate of interest return on Town funds has dropped from 2.4% to 0.8% and the slowdown in permit applications, resulting in reduced revenue, will have a negative impact on the budget. However, the elimination of four positions, the mild winter, the vacant mechanic position, and the balance in the contingency fund will offset the salary increases and the reduced revenue. The cost of unemployment claims has been factored into the financial analysis. Mr. Genovese said that departments are keeping track of impacted expenditures for possible FEMA reimbursement. He expects to have an analysis for the Selectmen at the May meeting.

REVIEW POLICY REGARDING CLOSING OF TOWN OFFICES

Mr. Genovese reported that full-time staff continues to work either from the office, from home or a combination of both. Recreation has developed over a dozen on-line programs. Library staff continues to work with patrons and develop programs. The Senior Center and Human Services staff is supporting the making of and delivering masks; continues to deliver food to seniors and address other needs. Public works has been working on a rotating basis, keeping the transfer station open, and shortly will begin to address vegetation issues. He said that employees have adapted well to the new schedules and working conditions.

Ms. Heller noted that the staff is continuing “business as usual” but in a different way.

The Board agreed to continue the policy as adopted at the March 24, 2020, meeting until May 20th unless earlier modified.

ACTION AS APPROPRIATE

On a roll call by Ms. Heller, the Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (Heller – Crisco) to approve/adopt 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 remain in effect until May 20, 2020 unless earlier modified.

GOVERNOR'S EXECUTIVE ORDER 7S – Tax/Interest rates/deferment

Mr. Weiner said that the Governor's Executive Order 7S offers municipalities two programs for residents' payment of taxes. The Towns have until April 25th to make a decision and may elect one or both.

1 – Deferment Program states that for the period of March 10, 2020 through and including July 1, 2020 eligible tax payers impacted by COVID-19 may defer taxes on real and personal property for 90 days.

2- Low Interest Rate Program states that the delinquent portion of the principal of any taxes on real or personal property shall be subject to an interest rate of three (3) percent per annum for 90 days. This includes delinquent taxes as of March 10, 2020.

The Board requested more information before voting on one or both programs and agreed to hold a Special Meeting on Wednesday, April 22, 2020 at 5:00 p.m. for further discussion and a decision.

ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF THE TOWN CLERK'S REPORT – On a roll call by Ms. Heller, the Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (Heller – Cardozo) to acknowledge receipt of the Town Clerk's report for March 1 through March 31, 2020 and cumulative from July 1, 2019 through March 31, 2020.

ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER'S REPORT – Discussion regarding two oversized banners on Center Road

Ms. Yagla explain that a Town family has stepped forward to donate two oversize banners to be displayed on Center Road. The proposed language on the banners is: "WOODBIDGE STONG! / Thank you for keeping Woodbridge safe / We're all in this together".

ACTION AS APPROPRIATE - On a rollcall the Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (Heller – Dey) to accept the generous donation by Keno Graphics of two banners displaying two hearts superimposed with "WOODBIDGE STRONG! / Thank you for keeping Woodbridge safe / We're all in this together. The banners will be erected on the Old Fire House Triangle and in front of the wall behind the garden at the corner of Center Road and Meetinghouse Lane.

MINUTES – On a roll call by Ms. Heller the Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** to approve the minutes of:

- March 11, 2020 – Regular Meeting (Heller – Stein)
- March 24, 2020 – Special Meeting (Heller – Stein)
- April 1, 2020 – Special Meeting (Heller – Dwight)

TOWN COUNSEL'S REPORT – Explanation of process for the FY2020-2021 Budget Hearing

Mr. Weiner said that the "Call of the Preliminary Budget Hearing" that went to each household described the process for the FY2020-2021 budget per Governor Lamont' Executive Orders 7B and 7I.

- Budget Hear will be held on Monday April 20, 2020
- Board of Finance Chair Matthew Giglietti and Finance Director Anthony Genovese will be in the same location, probably the Town Hall
- Pua Ford who will record and televise the meeting for channel 79 and YouTube
- The meeting will be held remotely through WEBEX technology
- Residents may obtain information from the Town website as to how to participate in the meeting

and ask questions, give comments

- Residents may e-mails comments for the meeting to Karen Crosby until 4:00 p.m. April 20, 2020
- The budget documents are on the Town's website
- Once the hearing is over – Board of Selectmen has already designated the Board of Finance, the budget making authority in the Town, to establish a budget and mill rate for FY2020-2021.
- The Annual Town Meeting will not be held this year as in-person meetings are not allowed
- The Board of Finance, usually meets following the Annual Town Meeting to adopt the budget and establish the mill rate – this year they may meet after the Amity Budget is adopted, and the Board of Selectmen has directed that the budget be adopted and mill rate established no later than May 18, 2020

Mr. Dey asked if the Board of Finance had agreed to meet with the Selectmen following the budget hearing. Ms. Heller said that she has not heard back from Chairman Giglietti.

Ms. Heller stated that she has reminded all Department Heads that they are required to log into the meeting in order to be present to answer resident's questions. Board of Finance and Board of Selectmen are also expected to log into the meeting.

Mr. Dey asked if public participation would be possible at the Board of Finance meeting to adopt the budget and establish a mill rate.

Mr. Weiner said that it would be a regular or special Board meeting and public participation is not mandated.

Mr. Dey said that it should be made clear to the taxpayers that the public hearing is their only opportunity to make comments or ask questions about the budget before it is adopted.

ADJOURNMENT

On a non-debatable motion by Ms. Heller, seconded by Mr. Rowland, via roll call vote the meeting adjourned at 6:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted
Geraldine S. Shaw, Clerk

