

March 19, 2020

**Board of Selectmen  
March 19, 2020  
Town Hall**

**AMENDED**

**Present:**

Mary Blanchard, Chairman  
Mary Dowling, Vice Chairman  
Selectman Suprenant  
Priscilla Gimás

**Staff:**

Jeff Bridges, Town Administrator

**Absent:**

Selectman Kaitbenski  
Andrea Mensen, Administrative Assistant

**Chair Blanchard called the meeting to order at 9:00 am**

**The Selectmen led the Pledge of Allegiance**

**Chair Blanchard read through the agenda.**

**Take necessary actions in response to Covid- 19**

Mr. Bridges informed the Board of the shift in operations due to COVID-19 and explained the Town's plan for virtual meetings, employees who are working from home, and that daily postings will be populated.

Linda Cocalis, chairman of the Board of Health came before the Board with a Doctor on the phone to assist with any questions. She stated that the Board of Health is working with the local businesses who need to close, daycares, and the restaurants who will be providing takeout and delivery. She mentioned the Board of Health is collaborating with the Senior Center.

Ken Lacy, Health Agent, came before the Board to go over information regarding COVID-19.

Ms. Cocalis mentioned that they do not have any reported cases in Sturbridge yet, but to assume the virus is already here since not many people are getting tested. She stated that the Board of Health would post to the public when they have confirmed cases in town.

Vice Chair Dowling stated she thinks the Board of Health is doing a great job, and that transparency is very important, but she would also like to see presumptive cases posted as well.

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Selectwoman Gimas stated that she agrees with Vice Chair Dowling, stating that she doesn't feel the seriousness is getting to people, and people need to realize that every human being can be impacted by this.

Ms. Cocalis stated her advice would be to stay within your own family group.

Chair Blanchard stated that she agreed people are still not taking the risks of COVID-19 seriously, so she does think it should be posted.

Ms. Cocalis and the Board agreed that there would be a public posting in the event that Sturbridge has a confirmed case of COVID-19.

Selectman Suprenant stated he's glad to know there will be public notification when there is a confirmed case, he also stated his biggest concern is notification to the public safety officials.

Vice Chair Dowling asked where the nearest drive by testing place is going to be. Ms. Cocalis and the Doctor on the phone could not provide a clear answer at the moment because most people who have symptoms are simply requested to stay home and take care of themselves, and area hospitals are working to figure things out.

Ms. Cocalis stated that the Board of Health's administrative assistant is working from home, and that the Board of Health's priority is the coronavirus at this time, leaving other projects behind to focus solely on what is going on now with COVID-19.

Selectman Suprenant left the meeting for another work related meeting.

Tom Ford, police chief and John Grasso, fire chief, came before the Board. Chief Ford said they are continuing business as usual, the officers are holding up well, and they have supplies all in place. Chief Grasso stated that they are fully prepared to handle this situation and they continue to investigate supply, but right now they are fully equipped. Chief Grasso stated that the fire department is working with the senior center, helping them with meals on wheels and sending an EMT for senior checkups. The Board asked if a list of seniors could be made, because there are people that are looking to volunteer, and calling to check up on seniors would be a great way to volunteer.

Vice Chair Dowling asked if they were to respond to somebody with flu or COVID- 19 like symptoms, what the procedure is as far as cleaning and disinfecting the ambulance after used to transport the questionable patient. Chief Grasso assured the Board that that ambulance would be taken off the road until fully sanitized.

**Motion: To extend the closure of Town Hall and Center Office Building to the public until April 7, 2020 By: Selectwoman Gimas**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: Vice Chair Dowling**

**Vote: All in Favor (3-0) (Selectman Kaitbenski and Selectman Suprenant Absent)**

**Motion: To accept the change in the number of people in one room to ten effective immediately By: Selectwoman Gimas**

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**2<sup>nd</sup>: Vice Chair Dowling**

**Vote: All in Favor (3-0) (Selectman Kaitbenski and Selectman Suprenant Absent)**

The Board discussed the three hours that hourly employees would be missing if they were to only work until 4pm on Tuesdays instead of 7pm. Selectwoman Gimas feels the hourly employees should be paid their normal salary, and that they should still close at 4pm on Tuesday and keep Fridays as is and leave at 12pm. She stated she thinks everyone is going to hurt financially from this, and doesn't think employees pay should change. Vice Chair Dowling agreed. Chair Blanchard stated that she doesn't necessarily agree, because there are a lot of people that are out of work that are not getting paid. Mr. Bridges stated he would compromise to say that employees would get the choice to continue to work until 7pm on Tuesdays or they could be available by phone until 7pm on Tuesdays.

Mr. Bridges mentioned that there will still be some employees that will come to work, and he stated that he is allowing that decision to be at the employee's discretion whether they come to work or work from home.

Vice Chair Dowling stated she doesn't believe inspections or permits should be going on. She stated that the city of Boston is putting all of theirs on hold, so she believes Sturbridge should definitely follow. Mr. Bridges stated that he has talked with the building inspector and he is on board with doing inspections that are absolutely needed.

**Motion: That all hourly employees receive normal compensation through April 7, 2020, if there is an hourly employee that is willing and able to be reached by cell phone in an emergency on a Tuesday evening, that employee can do so By: Selectwoman Gimas**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: Vice Chair Dowling**

**Vote: All in Favor (3-0) (Selectman Kaitbenski and Selectman Suprenant Absent)**

The Board discussed the employees having the choice to work from home. Vice Chair Dowling said that these are extraordinary times and employees shouldn't have the discretion, they should be staying home, and she stated this is not a "business as usual" situation.

Vice Chair Dowling asked who the acting Town Administrator would be in the event that Mr. Bridges got sick.

Mr. Bridges stated he would have to ask an individual if they would be willing, and once he selects someone and they agree, he will send a memo to the Board.

**Motion: To adjourn at 10:42am By: Selectwoman Gimas**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: Chair Blanchard**

**Vote: All in Favor (3-0) (Selectman Kaitbenski and Selectman Suprenant Absent)**

**Minutes prepared by: Andrea Mensen**

**Clerk of the Board:**  **Date signed:** 06-29-2020

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