

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MINUTES OF MEETING
APRIL 7, 2020**

In accordance with Governor Baker's March 12, 2020, Order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law G.L. c.30A, §20, the meeting was held remotely in an on-line conference mode hosted on Zoom.com and members of the public were not able to physically attend. The meeting was broadcast live on Comcast channel 12 and was able to be viewed via live stream at WHCA.tv. The meeting was subsequently broadcast on YouTube.com.

In attendance were Chairman Carl F. Kowalski; Vice Chairman Daniel L. Salvucci; Clerk Brian J. Bezanson; Member Randolph G. LaMattina; Member Justin R. Evans; and Town Administrator Francis J. Lynam. Chairman Kowalski opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Chairman Kowalski asked everyone to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. This was followed by a moment of silence.

Chairman Kowalski announced the meeting is being recorded and televised by WHCA.

Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to approve bill and payroll warrants. **Second** Mr. Bezanson. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; Mr. Salvucci – yes; and Chairman Kowalski – yes. **So voted 5-0.**

Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to accept correspondence in the Read File. **Second** Mr. Bezanson. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; Mr. Salvucci – yes; and Chairman Kowalski – yes. **So voted 5-0.**

Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to approve the Open Session minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, March 10, 2020. **Second** Mr. Bezanson. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; Mr. Salvucci – abstain; and Chairman Kowalski – yes. **So voted 4-0-1.**

Fire Chief Timothy Grenno, Board of Health Chairman Eric Joubert, Town Moderator Michael Seele and Town Clerk Dawn Varley were present for the meeting.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Update: COVID-19

Mr. Lynam advised the Board of two emergency bills that were passed that affect our ability to manage when we meet and when we hold an election. The Town is working on minimizing the exposure of the virus by working with a rotating staff that is necessary for work to be done in each office. Also, there have been some increases in our expenses due to having to maintain the facilities. Mr. Lynam stated that he is concerned with the impact on revenues which will eventually trickle down to us. He is expecting a 10 percent reduction in local aid, and sales and meals taxes are down. This is something that we will have to look at as we move forward with our budgeting. Mr. Lynam went on to say that this has been a stressful time for many. No employees have tested positive for the virus; however family members of employees have and

we have managed those situations in order to minimize exposure. Mr. Joubert commended Mr. Lynam for being proactive and doing an outstanding job. Mr. Lynam stated that everyone has contributed. He then recognized the efforts of the Board of Health, Police Department and Fire Department. Chairman Kowalski asked how citizens can be kept up to date. Mr. Lynam advised Chairman Kowalski that there are links on the town website with all of the current information. In addition, all offices are staffed and residents can reach out via phone or email. Mr. Bezanson stated that while he was out earlier today, he noticed how crowded the park was and asked if the first automated call to residents asked them to avoid the park. Mr. Lynam said no, residents were asked to avoid the playground area and the basketball court. The police are aware of the situation and are asking those people who are congregating in groups to move along. Mr. Joubert advised the Board that the Board of Health has discussed this same issue and is hoping that people will do the right thing; however, if the situation worsens, they will consider closing the park to the public. Mr. Lynam advised the Board that he will make a town-wide call in order to update residents of some decisions made tonight and to remind them to practice physical distancing.

Annual Town Meeting & Annual Town Election Schedule

Chairman Kowalski asked Mr. Lynam to discuss Town Meeting and the Annual Town Election. Mr. Lynam stated that the Board of Selectmen has the ability to change the Town Meeting and election schedule. Town Meeting can be rescheduled for up to 30 days through the Town Moderator who will make the decision after consulting with the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Health. There is also a provision to make a second extension if a 30 day extension is not adequate. In addition, there is a provision to reschedule the May 16, 2020, Annual Town Election which must occur by June 30, 2020. Mr. Lynam noted that most surrounding towns have rescheduled their meetings and Whitman will most likely have to do the same due to the health emergency. Chairman Kowalski noted that the town clerk has been helpful in providing information regarding this issue. He then asked for a motion to postpone the Annual Town Election until June 27, 2020, and to ask Mr. Lynam to consult with the town clerk. Mr. Joubert agreed, stating it is best to be proactive and this is the most appropriate decision from a health standpoint. Town Clerk Dawn Varley advised the Board that the election can be postponed this evening without setting a date. The latest date the Board of Selectmen can call for the election is June 9, 2020, which would be for an election to be held on June 30, 2020. Chairman Kowalski asked if it would be more convenient if the Board set a date tonight. Mr. Lynam suggested the Board vote to simply postpone the meeting. Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to postpone the Annual Town Election to a date yet to be determined in order to preserve the safety and wellbeing of the citizens of Whitman as a result of the declaration of emergency to respond to COVID-19.

Second Mr. Bezanson. Mr. Evans asked if this will have an effect on absentee ballots. Mrs. Varley said no. She will be promoting early voting by mail, which is different than absentee voting. Mr. Bezanson expressed his concern with the candidates not being able to campaign. Mrs. Varley advised Mr. Bezanson that the candidates can mail out flyers, do interviews with the local cable tv station, etc. Chairman Kowalski called for a vote in connection with the motion on the floor. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; Mr. Salvucci – yes; and Chairman Kowalski – yes. **So voted 5-0.**

Mr. Lynam suggested the Board of Selectmen recommend the town moderator delay Town Meeting. The town moderator can postpone the meeting for up to 30 days and extend it later if

necessary. Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to advise the Town Moderator to postpone the annual Town Meeting to June 3, 2020, due to a public health emergency. **Second Mr. Bezanson.** Mr. Salvucci asked if Town Meeting is postponed beyond June 30, 2020, will the town be operating on a 1/12 budget. Mr. Lynam said yes, but not less than 1/12 of last year's budget. Mr. Salvucci asked how operating on a 1/12 budget will effect town departments and union contracts. Chairman Kowalski advised Mr. Salvucci that the Board needs to concentrate on the postponement of Town Meeting. Mr. Seele advised the Board that he is scheduled to be out of town on June 3rd. If the state of emergency is still in effect in late May, the date can be pushed further out. Chairman Kowalski asked for a vote in connection with the motion on the floor. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; Mr. Salvucci – yes; and Chairman Kowalski – yes. **So voted 5-0.** Mr. Seele asked for input from the Board of Health and public safety with respect to postponing Town Meeting to June 3, 2020, or later. Mr. Joubert stated the Board of Health feels it is best to postpone Town Meeting in the interest of safety and public health. Chief Grenno agreed. Mr. Seele concurred.

Mr. Lynam advised the Board that he received an inquiry from a citizen about the Board meeting electronically without the opportunity for citizens to participate. Mr. Lynam went on to say that this is not a question of our willingness to invite the public to participate, but rather a practicality. It is difficult to control comments; and the emergency regulation allows us to meet like this. Possible issues with people connecting to the meeting and making unnecessary comments were also anticipated, therefore allowing for the absence of public participation. Mr. Lynam continued, noting that the agenda is posted 48 hours prior to the meeting. People can review the agenda and submit any questions or comments to the Selectmen's office or via email to info@whitman-ma.gov prior to the meeting.

BUDGET REVIEW

Non-mandated Busing

Chairman Kowalski stated that he received information in connection with non-mandated busing from Dawn Byers which he forwarded to the other Board members. Mr. Lynam noted that the information Ms. Byers provided has well thought out ideas about how funds could be used to better serve the community as it seems we are operating a couple of empty buses each day. It would be appropriate to pass the information around and provide feedback to the Finance Committee. The information could also be posted publicly with an invitation for comments from the public. Chairman Kowalski stated that he is giving serious thought to some of her suggestions; and he encouraged the Board of Selectmen to review her email before any further discussion at Town Meeting or during our budget deliberations. Mr. Evans stated it will come down to how we want to allocate our revenues to the schools. Mr. LaMattina stated that he feels given the current circumstances, it might be best to let families get back on their feet before we implement another charge. Mr. Evans noted that the superintendent of schools feels this should be phased in so that it would affect the 2021-2022 budget. Mr. Lynam agreed, stating this should be presented to the citizens in order for us to get a feel from them.

Progress on current Budget

Mr. Evans asked if a joint meeting with the Finance Committee will be taking place. Mr. Lynam said yes, but we are not ready to do that just yet. He met with the Finance Committee prior to

this meeting and feels a few articles need to be cleaned up in order to have a warrant ready for review. The biggest concern is FY22, with funding for salaries and positions needing to be looked at. Revenues are down at the state level, particularly the cherry sheet and local receipts for excise tax, etc. Mr. Lynam will be taking a second look over the next couple of weeks; and would like to come up with some numbers to be presented to the Board at its next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

License Renewals – Fuel Storage, Junk Collector & Junk Dealer

Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to approve license renewals for the following license holders for the period May 1, 2020, through April 30, 2021, subject to the submission or renewal paperwork, renewal fees and current tax status:

1. Fuel Storage Licenses

- a. Whitman Burial Vault/Watertown Engineering, 1200 Auburn Street
- b. The Stop & Shop Company, LLC #444, 465 Bedford Street
- c. TMC II Realty, dba Carey's, 672 Bedford Street
- d. Jiffy Lube International #1918, 691 Bedford Street
- e. Whitman Middle School, 100 Corthell Avenue
- f. Department of Public Works, 100 Essex Street
- g. Ceejay Realty Trust (Joseph Saccone), 106 Essex Street
- h. Conley School, 100 Forest Street
- i. Bullet Realty Co., dba T&K Asphalt Services, 7 Industrial Way
- j. Duval School, 60 Regal Street
- k. Trillium Fuel, dba Whitman Gas, 180 South Avenue
- l. OM South Avenue LLC, 311 South Avenue
- m. A.L. Prime Energy Consultant, Inc., 79 Temple Street
- n. Cumberland Farms, Inc., 280 Temple Street
- o. MKPM Whitman, LLC, dba New World, 359 Bedford Street

2. Junk Collector's Licenses

- a. Joseph Saccone (J. Saccone & Sons, Inc.), 106 Essex Street
- b. Peter J. Perry (P.J. Perry Trucking), 70 Kendrick Street
- c. Environmental Pick Up Corp., dba Conway Scrap Metal, 36 Vincent Street

3. Junk Dealer's Licenses

- a. Joseph Saccone (J. Saccone & Sons, Inc.), 106 Essex Street
- b. JC's Things (Carl Danforth), 356 South Avenue
- c. Irresistible Treasures (Denise Donahue), 1122 Washington Street

Second Mr. Bezanson. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; Mr. Salvucci – yes; and Chairman Kowalski – yes. **So voted 5-0.**

Dollars for Scholars: Request to Erect Fundraising Thermometer

Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to approve the request of Michael Ganshirt on behalf of Whitman & Hanson Dollars for Scholars to erect a fundraising thermometer on the front lawn of Town Hall from mid-April through the end of May. **Second** Mr. Bezanson. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; Mr. Salvucci – yes; and Chairman Kowalski – yes. **So voted 5-0.**

Request to Appoint Checkers for the Annual/Special Town Meeting

Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to approve the request of the Town Clerk to appoint checkers for the 2020 Annual/Special Town Meeting (date to be determined) as outlined in a memo dated March 26, 2020. **Second** Mr. Bezanson. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; Mr. Salvucci – yes; and Chairman Kowalski – yes. **So voted 5-0.**

Signature on Warrants

Mr. Lynam advised the Board that there is a provision of the Municipal Relief Act which allows the Board of Selectmen to designate someone to sign the warrants, with that person reporting at the next meeting that the warrants were signed. Mr. Salvucci stated that he would like to see the procedure remain the same and to require three signatures on the warrants. Mr. Evans said he would prefer to authorize one person to sign in case someone is ill. Mr. Lynam noted the provision does not preclude three signatures – it simply allows for one signature if necessary. Mr. Salvucci stated that he will agree to one signature if the warrants remain in the office for a period of time before being returned to the accountant in case someone else would like to review and sign them. Mr. Bezanson asked if this would be temporary. Mr. Lynam advised that a motion to authorize can include a sunset date or duration of the state emergency. Mr. Lamattina **MOVED** to authorize Vice Chairman Salvucci to sign warrants on behalf of the Board of Selectmen until the state of emergency associated with COVID-19 is lifted. **Second** Mr. Bezanson. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; Mr. Salvucci – yes; and Chairman Kowalski – yes. **So voted 5-0.**

At 7:57 p.m. Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to adjourn the meeting. **Second** Mr. Bezanson. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; Mr. Salvucci – yes; and Chairman Kowalski – yes. **So voted 5-0.**

Brian J. Bezanson, Clerk