



Town of Bellingham

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

10 Mechanic Street

Bellingham, Massachusetts 02019

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May 2, 2020

The Board of Selectmen meeting was called to order remotely at 10:00 AM by Chairman Daniel Spencer using Zoom Technology. A roll call confirmed all members of the Board were participating. Also actively participating in the meeting was Town Administrator Denis Fraine, Administrative Assistant Hilarie Allie, Chief Financial Officer Mary MacKinnon, State Representative Mike Soter and State Senator Ryan Fattman. The remote meeting was being monitored by Jim Kupfer, Town Planner and Zoning Officer. It was determined by Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place that no in-person attendance of Board members or any member of the public would be permitted at this meeting. This meeting was accessible to the public via the Zoom online option.

Mr. Spencer explained that today's meeting would be more like a round table discussion about the reopening of businesses in Bellingham. The Board has had some private conversations with individuals but there has been no formal discussion up to this point. Before doing so, Mary MacKinnon, CFO asked that the Board take care of a housekeeping item.

On a Martinis/McNulty motion, the Board unanimously voted that the Town authorize the CFO to request spending in excess of appropriations as required by the Department of Revenue in Bulletin 2020-01. Under discussion Mrs. MacKinnon stated this is a peremptory action and that the Department of Revenue sent out a bulletin letting all communities know that if they are spending in excess of appropriations that they need to be on record and have written approval from the director of accounts at the DOR. Mrs. MacKinnon stated we are currently not spending in excess of appropriation but that we are incurring expenses and charging our operating budget. She stated the Town has received some grant funding and currently collecting receipts to send to FEMA for reimbursements. If the Town started to spend in excess of appropriations, she will let the Board know.

Round Table Discussion Summary

Mr. Spencer stated that 30.3 million unemployment claims have been filed in the Nation in the last 6 weeks, 3.9M claims came in in the last 7 days. The state of Massachusetts has had 724,000 claims filed in the last 6 weeks with 71,000 new claims just this past week. He stated the Governor put out an executive order of who and what can do business and what is considered essential and nonessential and unfortunately we have to abide by that order. However, there are businesses in the gray area and those businesses are

currently shut down but their services are being provided by outside vendors via major corporations, mobile businesses or online businesses. He stated that these are the businesses our Town should be focused on getting up and running and noted this as the reason behind the formation of the Economic Development Sub Committee. He stated he was hopeful to focus on golf courses as one of those businesses, but they were specifically named on the Governor's executive order as a nonessential business. Opening such businesses could essentially put the Town in jeopardy with regards to financial implications as well as putting these businesses at risk for fines and penalties. He stated his frustration with the Governor in treating the entire state equally – what is happening in the major cities is not what is happening in a town like Bellingham.

Senator Fattman stated there are about 900,000 residents in Massachusetts who are currently unemployed which equates to roughly 24% and things are only going to get worse. For instance, there are no plans for starting up elective surgeries at community hospitals who employ thousands of individuals. Elective surgeries are how they make and generate most of their money and if they do not begin again soon there will be significant layoffs. There have also been no plans for local government and some Towns have started to lay off employees. There is going to be a huge loss of revenue without meals taxes and corporate withholdings income tax coming in. One of the biggest inhibitors to opening the economy is the fact that daycares are closed until June 29th and Senator Fattman is working to get that changed. His best piece of advice right now is for local businesses to submit a business plan to their town so when the appropriate time comes towns feel comfortable letting those businesses open. He stated there is a meeting every Friday morning with Secretary Kennealy and the local chambers of commerce and Bellingham Business Association is not on that call and would like to see that happen. He did commend the Town for getting ahead of the game by setting up the Economic Development Sub Committee to help get these nonessential and gray area businesses up and running. Senator Fattman also mentioned that the Department of Unemployment Assistance is fielding about 100,000 calls per week and if anyone in Town has been laid off and needs help he asked that they call him or Rep Soter directly and they will try and expedite the process.

Mr. Soter thanked the Board for having him and thanked Senator Fattman for his dedication to our Town and stated he agreed with the Senator in that the Town needs to start requesting business plans from local businesses on what their plans are to move forward with the guidelines as they are today.

Mr Connor asked for clarification on the golf situation and other businesses in town opening. He had heard Lt. Governor Polito was meeting with some businesses over the weekend. Senator Fattman confirmed that Governor Baker was leaving it up to his reopening committee to make these determinations. He also stated that because we are in a Commonwealth this Town has the latitude to help some of these businesses move

forward. Geographically we are only a small portion of the state and this area was not impacted like the larger cities have been impacted.


Mr. Martinis stated he feels for these nonessential small businesses on a personal and professional level; however, he does not want to go against the Governor's orders and take the risk of hurting our Town financially down the road. He feels we need to hang in there a little bit longer and come up with a plan for the businesses in our Town.

Mrs. McNulty wanted to let the small business owners and residents know that as elected officials the Board is here to advocate for them and that an Economic Development Sub Committee has been formed to help in the process of getting these businesses open.

Mr. Biagi stated he is encouraged to see the support the Town is receiving from Senator Fattman and Rep Soter on the State level. He stated the economic impact that this pandemic is having on our community is frustrating and asked Rep Soter if the residents could get some sort of update about the phasing in plan from the reopening committee before May 18th comes around. Rep Soter stated he is hopeful this will happen but is most certain there will be some things on the 18th they can move forward on and some things that won't be able to be touched.

Mr. Spencer thanked everyone for participating in the round table and encouraged resident and business owners to contact the Town for questions and help.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hilarie J. Allie", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Hilarie J. Allie
Administrative Assistant