



Town of Bellingham

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

10 Mechanic Street
Bellingham, Massachusetts 02019
Tel: 508-657-2800 * 508-966-4425

June 1, 2020

The Board of Selectmen meeting was called to order remotely at 7:00 PM 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 and Administrative Assistant Hilarie Allie. 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.

Public Hearing – to discuss a proposed grant application for FY 2019 CDBG–CV funding under the Massachusetts CDBG Program from the MA Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). This is a special funding round resulting from an appropriation through the CARES Act of 2020. For this application, the Town of Bellingham will be the lead community in a regional application that may include any or all of the following municipalities: Franklin, Foxborough, Medfield, Norfolk, Walpole and Wrentham. The Town intends to seek funding to provide 1) grants to businesses defined as micro-enterprises (those with 5 or fewer employees, including the owner(s) and/or 2) funding to support public social services activities designed to assist persons who have been impacted by the COVID-19 virus. The maximum funding available is \$400,000 per individual community.

Mr. Spencer read the public hearing notice.

Paula Stuart stated as part of the funding made available by Congress as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the state of Massachusetts received and was making available \$19.65M and of that amount \$9.65M was being made available through a competitive grant application to municipalities. The maximum amount a single community is eligible to receive would be \$400,000 and the amount a single micro-enterprise business could receive would be \$10,000. The first purpose of the grant is to help assist micro-enterprise businesses (those with 5 or fewer employees including the owner) who have been affected negatively by COVID-19. These funds could help pay for operating costs and there will be eligible income requirements. The second purpose of the grant is to assist public service agencies who are providing services to low and moderate income families as a direct response to COVID-19. The state has made it clear that they will favor regional applications lead by communities with experience managing CDBG grant programs. Bellingham will lead the process and team up with Franklin, Foxborough, Medfield, Norfolk, Walpole and Wrentham. Applications are due to the state by June 12th and the grants should be awarded and funded sometime in July. There is also another \$10M of funding available to regional housing agencies that currently manage the existing RAFT (Residential Assistance to Families in Transition) program and these funds will be available to help families pay their rent, mortgage, utilities and/or real estate taxes.

Mr. Spencer asked Mrs. Stuart if the micro-enterprise businesses that took advantage of the PPP (Paycheck Protection Program) could also take advantage of this grant. Mrs. Stuart said they could as long as they were not duplicating funds in the same time period. Mr. Biagi asked how many businesses in Bellingham qualified as a micro-enterprise business. Mr. Kupfer stated based on the current business certificates there is well over 200 but they would have to look to see if those are income eligible.

Mr. Martinis asked if there any restrictions on the type of micro-businesses that are eligible. Mrs. Stuart listed dispensaries and real estate as a few that would not be eligible. Mr. Spencer asked if there was anyone on the call who wished to comment on the Public Hearing. Mrs. MacKinnon asked if the same individual limits will apply to the public social services agencies or will there be a grant threshold for the agencies. Mrs. Stuart stated she is working with agencies such as food pantries to get an idea of what their unmet needs are so they can calculate what they will realistically expend over the course of the time they have to spend the money. After no further comments the Board unanimously moved on a Biagi/Connor motion to close the Public Hearing.

On a Martinis/Connor motion the Board unanimously voted to approve the submission of a Regional Grant Application for FY2019 CDBG-CV funding under the Massachusetts CDBG Program from the MA Department of Housing and Community Development.

On a Biagi/McNulty motion, the Board unanimously voted to authorize the Chairman of the Board of Selectmen and the Town Administrator to sign any documents needed in connection to submitting the grant application.

Small Business Grant Acceptance

Mr. Jim Kupfer explained the Attorney General's office released a requested for proposals to seek small business grant funding to all the municipalities in the state. Twelve communities across the state were awarded this grant only 4 of which were towns and the remaining were gateway cities. The Town requested \$50,000 but received \$30,000 and will use the funds to help small businesses in Town with 50 employees or fewer recover losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Town choose to cap the application funding at \$5,000 per business. Applications will be available online to all eligible businesses and the goal is to have them approved by the Board within the next 30 days. They will be reviewed by the Economic Sub Committee but ultimately approved by the Board.

On a Martinis/McNulty motion the Board unanimously voted to accept the Small Business Relief Partnership Grant from the Attorney General's office in the amount of \$30,000.

FY20 Budget Transfers

On a Connor/Biagi motion, the Board unanimously voted to approve the end of fiscal year 2019 budget transfers in the amount of \$155,733 as presented by Mary MacKinnon, CFO.

Mr. Fraine stated he wanted to address the Board regarding the budget for FY21. He stated there has been a lot of discussions in the last few months about the FY21 Revenues and what would be happening at the state level as far as local aid all as a result of the pandemic. Nothing definitive has been announced yet but they are estimating that there will be a reduction in state aid of approximately \$1,051,000 and a drop in local receipts of \$782,379 all as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

He stated that he and Mary have made some recommendations and spoken with various department heads including schools to make some adjustments to reflect these reductions. The Town did receive a COVID-19 grant in the amount of \$1,500,000 that can be used to pay for COVID-19 related expenses and will help to ease the impact to what would have been hard cuts.

Mr. Spencer commented that with the lack of state aid and local receipt revenues things could have been a lot worse but with the hard work of Mary MacKinnon, Denis Fraine, and all the department heads to make adjustments, FY21 should end up ok. Mr. Connor wanted to get a sense that going forward with the new adjustments that all departments shared the pain not just the school department or the police and fire who are already understaffed. He also questioned if funds were to free up in the upcoming months could those funds be spent in a priority fashion. Denis confirmed that all departments had to make adjustments to their budget and adjustments could be made again at the Fall Town Meeting. Mr. Martinis agreed that if funds were restored there needs to be a priority list and it is his opinion that those funds should go to the schools. Mrs. MacKinnon stated that only 25% of the funds received from the CARES Act have been distributed and she would anticipate that a second round of funding would become available for the schools as they make plans to reopen this fall. Mrs. McNulty asked Mrs. MacKinnon if she could put together what she would call an executive overview of fact based bullet points to explain what is going on with the budget as a result of COVID and anticipated loss of state aid. Mr. Martinis agreed this would be helpful as well as a presentation to our residents at Town Meeting.

On a Biagi/Martinis motion, the Board unanimously voted to approve the revised budget and forward the recommendations onto the Finance Committee.

On a Biagi/McNulty motion, the Board unanimously voted to abate the capital improvement, sewer, trash and water charges for the month of April in the amount of \$3,175.64

Town Administrator Report

Mr. Fraine wanted to extend a thank you to all the department heads who have been working closely with he and Mary to finalize the FY21 budget.

The High School will be having a parade of Friday June 5th to honor the seniors and a code red will be going out to alert the residents.

The beach at Silver Lake will open this Saturday June 6th and will be staffed with lifeguards.

The Recycling Center continues to be open just Saturdays for the time being.

At this point the Town Hall is ready and fully staffed and awaiting the green light from the Governor to open to the public.

New Business

Mrs. McNulty stated she would like to propose changing the name of the Board of Selectmen to the Select Board. She stated most towns refer to themselves as the Select Board and wanted to see how the rest of the Board felt about changing the name.

Minutes of June 1, 2020

Page 4

All members were in favor of changing the name and Denis stated the Board could adopt the policy of referring to themselves as the Select Board and the necessary changes can be made at the time of the Charter review.

On a McNulty/Biagi motion, the Board unanimously voted to change how they refer themselves as the Select Board.

Mr. Connor asked if we could start approving some executive session minutes even if they were not ready to be released and Denis stated we could do that.

Mr. Connor also stated that he strongly feels the \$1.5M override needs to pass.

On a Martinis/McNulty motion, the Board unanimously voted to approve the April 13th, April 27th, May 2nd & May 11th minutes as submitted.

On a Connor/Biagi motion, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 7:57 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Hilarie J. Allie".

Hilarie J. Allie
Administrative Assistant