Selectmen’s Emergency Work Session  March 12, 2020

MINUTES

Selectmen:  Joel R. Mudgett, Chair, Russell C. Wakefield, Jean M. Beadle, Charles M. McGee, Kevin D. Quinlan; Walter P. Johnson, Town Administrator, Hope K. Kokas, Administrative Assistant, Fire Chief Dave Bengtson, Mike Kepple Facilities & Grounds Supervisor, Steve Zalewski Health Officer, Paul Punturieri Town Moderator, Jon Tolman School Board Chair, Patrick Andrew School Superintendent.

I. CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Mudgett called the meeting to Order at 3:00 P.M.

II. Postponing Town Meeting: Chairman Mudgett announced he called this emergency meeting to discuss if the Town should postpone Town Meeting scheduled for Saturday March 14th due to the current Covid-19 virus and the concern for public health at large gatherings. Fire Chief Dave Bengtson reported on information coming from the regional health network and the State of NH HSEM office regarding large gatherings. They don’t believe social distancing is necessary at this time. Frequent hand washing is recommended and there is a higher risk to a certain segment of the population for people over 60 years of age and those with underlying medical issues. Health Officer Steve Zalewski provided the latest information and guidance from the CDC stating that this issue is likely to grow significantly over the next few weeks and it may be best to hold the meeting now while the numbers are low. Town Moderator Paul Punturieri reported he and Walter have been in consultation with Town Counsel and he recommends going forward with the meeting as scheduled. Paul read sections of the opinion from Town Counsel and stated the Attorney General’s office issued a release stating there is currently no basis for postponing the meeting under State law unless a health emergency is declared. The Board discussed the option of holding the meeting as scheduled but tabling articles 5, 6, and 7, then continuing the meeting to a date certain in the future when hopefully there would be no longer a health concern. It was noted that a favorable vote of the majority of the voters in attendance is required to table the articles and there was no guarantee that would occur. Walter reported that Town Counsel recommended if the meeting was continued then a minimum of 60 days is suggested. Joel opened up the meeting for questions and comments. Barbara Kohler, Josh Bartlett, Nancy Wright spoke in favor of postponing the meeting in the best interest of the health and safety of the older voters of the community. Susette Remsen commented that not all older voters are against a community center as she is in favor of having one. The Board agreed by majority consensus 4-1 with Chuck opposing to support the Moderator’s recommendation to hold the meeting as scheduled based on information available today and reconsider if things change between now and Saturday morning. Joel thanked all in attendance for coming and expressing their thoughts and opinions on this important matter.
III. Adjournment: Kevin Made the Motion to Adjourn. Jean Seconded. Motion Carried Unanimously. Joel adjourned the meeting at 3:45 p.m.

Joel R. Mudgett, Chair
Approved

3/26/2020 Walter P. Johnson
Date
Respectfully Submitted
Walter P. Johnson, Town Administrator