



**Town of Amherst
Special Town Council Meeting
Monday, March 23, 2020
6:30 p.m.
Town Room, Town Hall
Virtual Meeting via Teams
4 Boltwood Avenue
Minutes**

Complete video is available online: <https://amherstmedia.org/content/amherst-town-council-special-meeting-march-23-2020>

1. Call to order

President Griesemer called the meeting to order at 6:37 p.m., announced audio and video recording and live broadcast by Amherst Media.

Councilors Present: President Griesemer

Members Absent: None

Members Participating Remotely: Councilors Bahl-Milne, Brewer, De Angelis, DuMont, Hanneke, Pam, Ross, Ryan, Schoen, Schreiber, Steinberg, Swartz

Others present: Information Technology Director Sean Hannon

Others participating remotely: Town Manager Paul Bockelman, Senior Services Director Mary Beth Ogulewicz, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Michael Morris, Health Director Julie Federman, Clerk of the Council Athena O'Keeffe

Note: This meeting was held in compliance with Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §20.

2. Announcements

Town Council Meeting

- Monday, March 30, 6:30 p.m.
- Monday, April 6, 6:30 p.m.

Joint meetings of Town Council and School Committee to fill School Committee

Vacancy, Town Room, Town Hall:

- Tuesday, April 14, 6:00 p.m. – Candidate interviews
- Thursday, April 16, 6:00 p.m. – Continued candidate interviews, if needed, and joint Council and School Committee vote to select a candidate

President Griesemer announced the Council has planned to meet weekly to keep residents apprised of Town efforts to manage the coronavirus crisis, and spoke about the immediate needs of the Town that the Council will address in the coming weeks, and the uncertainty the Town faces around those issues.

3. Hearings - None

4. **General Public Comment** - *None*
5. **Proclamations and Commemorations** - *None*
6. **Presentations and Discussion**
 - a. **COVID-19 Update**

Town Manager Paul Bockelman gave an update regarding the following:

- Governor's Stay at Home order issued today
- The status of the outbreak
- Essential employees reporting to work
- Childcare for emergency worker program
- New firefighters and a new wastewater treatment plant operator
- Ongoing efforts for continuity of operations, committee meetings, and communications
- New website for information about the coronavirus outbreak
- Ongoing communications
- Continuity of operations

Health Director Julie Federman spoke about the following:

- Social distancing as a mitigation tool
- Development of a vaccine will take about a year
- Flattening the outbreak curve in order to avoid overwhelming our healthcare system with protective measures like social distancing
- Age distribution of the confirmed cases

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Michael Morris spoke about the following:

- School closure
- Ongoing communication with families and staff
- Distance learning
- Food services for families
- Technology for grades 7-12 and technology support for staff
- Mental health support for families
- Internet access for families without internet
- Volunteers

Senior Services Director Mary Beth Ogulewicz spoke about the following:

- Status of the Senior Center
- Senior Center staff is working and available
- Continuity of services
- Plans to continue service
- Need for volunteers
- New nurse health advice line is available 6 hours per week, funded by resident Dorothy Gavin
- Potential volunteers can contact Senior Center Director Mary Beth Ogulewicz directly

Councilor Brewer asked Health Director Julie Federman asked to clarify communications about social distancing practices to residents.

Councilor Schoen asked about seniors who use a shared ride service to supermarkets, and group gatherings outdoors. J. Federman responded that she will reach out to Applewood regarding shared ride service, and social distancing of more than 6 feet outdoors.

Councilor Schoen asked about the Governor's order and potential fines. P. Bockelman responded that the Town does not have plans to introduce fines at this time.

Councilor Bahl-Milne asked about the status of Craig's Doors, and people who are fearful of being evicted. J. Federman responded that shelter guests are being screened by medical professionals, cots are arranged to provide social distance, and additional sanitation at the shelter. Craig's Doors is seeking additional volunteers. P. Bockelman added that the Governor stated that there are no eviction proceedings moving forward, as the courts are closed.

Councilor DuMont asked about the plan if a Craig's Doors resident tests positive for Covid-19. J. Federman responded that the Town is working on how shelter guests may be quarantined and monitored. Councilor Ross asked if current projects will be ongoing. P. Bockelman responded that some projects can be accommodated with social distancing, and that it is important to keep moving forward where possible.

7. Action Items

b. Consent Agenda

Consent Agenda: The following items were selected because they were considered to be routine and it was reasonable to expect they would pass with no controversy.

MOTION: President Griesemer moved, second by Councilor Hanneke, to move the following items, and the printed motions thereunder and approve those items as a single unit:

7.d. Town Council Rules of Procedure Rules 8.2, 8.6, and 10.3

10.a. Approval of March 9, 2020 Town Council Meeting minutes, as presented

10.b. Approval of March 16, 2020 Special Town Council Meeting minutes, as presented

VOTED Unanimously by roll call to approve the following items as a single unit:

7.d. Town Council Rules of Procedure Rules 8.2, 8.6, and 10.3

10.a. Approval of March 9, 2020 Town Council Meeting minutes, as presented

10.b. Approval of March 16, 2020 Special Town Council Meeting minutes, as presented

c. Town Manager State of Emergency Declaration

MOTION: President Griesemer moved, second by Councilor Hanneke, to ratify the Town Manager's March 16, 2020 State of Emergency Declaration.

Councilor Bahl-Milne spoke in support of the motion and asked for clarification of the implications of the State of Emergency declaration. P. Bockelman responded that many cities and towns in the Commonwealth have declared a state of emergency, it may help residents who are filing insurance claims, it may help the Town apply for federal funds, and it helps to communicate to the public the seriousness of the pandemic.

VOTED Unanimously by roll call to ratify the Town Manager's March 16, 2020 State of Emergency Declaration.

Agenda item 13. Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair 48 Hours in Advance of the Meeting

President Griesemer spoke about the need to adjust the dates of the budget deadlines due to the emergency. The legislature is looking at a bill to extend the deadlines, and regional towns are delaying town meetings.

Councilor Bahl-Milne asked about repercussions of pushing the budget forward. P. Bockelman responded that the Town anticipates a loss of revenue extending into the FY21 budget.

Councilor Brewer asked about waiving late fees and penalties for late excise taxes. P. Bockelman responded that it is in the hands of the legislature, there is little cities and towns can do.

Councilor Steinberg spoke in support of the exception request from the Town Manager.

MOTION: President Griesemer moved, second by Councilor Hanneke, to suspend rule 8.4 for the current agenda item.

Motion by: Griesemer

Seconded by: Hanneke

VOTED Unanimously by roll call to suspend rule 8.4 for the current agenda item.

MOTION: President Griesemer moved, second by Councilor Hanneke to grant the exceptions requested by the Town Manager on March 23, 2020 under Charter Section 5.9 to modify the deadline established in Charter Section 5.4(a) for the Amherst School Committee, Regional School Committee, and Library Trustees to submit their proposed adopted budgets for fiscal year 2021 to the Town Manager from April 1, 2020 to May 1, 2020, and the deadline established in Charter Section 5.4(b) for the Town Manager to submit a proposed budget for fiscal year 2021 to the Town Council from May 1, 2020 to June 1, 2020 due to the extra time needed because of the Governor's declaration of a state of emergency related to COVID-19.

VOTED Unanimously by roll call to grant the exceptions requested by the Town Manager on March 23, 2020 under Charter Section 5.9 to modify the deadline established in Charter Section 5.4(a) for the Amherst School Committee, Regional School Committee, and Library Trustees to submit their proposed adopted budgets for fiscal year 2021 to the Town Manager from April 1, 2020 to May 1, 2020, and the deadline established in Charter Section 5.4(b) for the Town Manager to submit a proposed budget for fiscal year 2021 to the Town Council from May 1, 2020 to June 1, 2020 due to the extra time needed because of the Governor's declaration of a state of emergency related to COVID-19.

a. School Committee Vacancy Process and Suggested Interview Questions

Councilor Brewer commented that there are serious shortcomings in the questions, asked that the Council either give the President authority to approve the questions, or agree by consensus rather than approve them as a Council.

Councilor Ross commented that he hopes the final list is shorter than it is currently, spoke in support of the idea of voting to empower the President to finalize the list, expressed concern about the Council's voting weight versus the School Committee, and asked that School Committee member questions be prioritized.

Councilor Hanneke commented about the number of questions, and spoke in favor of the Council and School Committee approving the questions rather than authorizing the President to approve.

Councilor Schoen agreed that the number of questions should be pared down and the Council should have input.

Councilor DuMont agreed that there are too many questions and that the Council should have input, and asked if there is a list of criteria for selection.

Councilor Pam spoke in favor of the President and School Committee chair approving questions in the interest of time.

Councilor Brewer spoke about SC input and spoke in opposition to the specificity of some of the questions. Councilor Brewer suggested alternating written and verbal questions, and suggested that there

may be a scenario where we use written questions only in case there is difficulty with in-person interviews.

8. Appointments - None

9. Committee Reports

- a. Community Resources Committee – next meeting will be April 8
- b. Finance Committee – next meeting will be April 7
- c. Governance, Organization and Legislation Committee – next meeting will be April 8
- d. Joint Capital Planning Committee – next meeting is tentative on April 8
- e. Outreach, Communications, and Appointments Committee – Councilor Ross reported that the committee will meet on the 30th to develop interview questions for Zoning Board of Appeals interviews, Councilors can submit questions until Friday
- f. Town Services and Outreach Committee – President Griesemer will schedule the first organizational meeting on April 6 at 9:30 am

10. Town Manager Report

11. Town Council Comments

President Griesemer stated that additional reports about human services will be on the next Council agenda.

Councilor DuMont requested that public comment be incorporated into the next meeting.

12. Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair 48 Hours in Advance of the Meeting

13. Executive Session – None

14. Adjourn

President Griesemer adjourned the meeting at 9:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Athena O’Keeffe

Clerk of the Council

Record of Agenda Packet Materials and Documents Presented

- 00. 03-23-2020 Draft Motions for Town Council
- 00. 03-23-2020 FINAL Town Council Agenda
- 6.a. COVID-19 Town Council Presentation 03-23-2020 FINAL
- 6.a.2. ARPS COVID Response TC 3.24.20 (final)
- 6.a.2. ASC PPT town council
- 7.b. State of Emergency Declaration - FINAL 03-16-2020
- 7.c. Suggested Questions for School Committee Candidates as of 03-21-2020
- 7.d. Council Rules 8.2, 8.4, 10.3 - Draft Revisions - GOL Voted 2020-02-26
- 10.a. 03-09-2020 DRAFT Town Council Minutes
- 10.b. 03-16-2020 Special Town Council Minutes - COVID-19

13.a. Town Manager COVID-19 Memo to Town Council Extension of Timelines - 03-23-2020
Essential Services Order Gov Baker 03.23.2020
List of essential services 3.23.2020 from Gov Baker
SS April 2020 v2 FINAL
Well being call guidelines