



**Town of Amherst
Town Council Meeting
Monday, April 6, 2020
6:30 p.m.
Virtual Meeting**

Minutes

Complete video is available online: <https://amherstmedia.org/content/amherst-town-council-april-6-2020>

1. Call to Order

President Griesemer declared the virtual presence of a quorum, called the meeting to order at 6:40 p.m., and announced audio and video recording by Amherst Media.

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

Councilors Absent: None

Others participating remotely: Town Manager Paul Bockelman, Interim Finance Director Sonia Aldrich, Health Director Julie Federman, Clerk of the Council Athena O’Keeffe

Note: Pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, the meeting was conducted via remote participation.

President Griesemer confirmed that all Councilors can hear and be heard by all participants.

2. Announcements

President Griesemer made the following announcements:

Upcoming Town Council Meetings:

Monday, April 13, 2020 6:30 pm

Monday, April 27, 2020 6:30 pm

Upcoming standing committee meetings

- Tuesday, April 7, 2020, 2:30 PM – Finance Committee
- Wednesday, April 8, 2020, 8:30 AM – Community Resources Committee (CRC)
- TBD – Governance, Organization, and Legislation Committee (GOL)

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 and possible joint Council and School Committee vote to select a candidate
- Thursday, April 16, 6:00 p.m. – If needed, continued candidate interviews and joint Council and School Committee vote to select a candidate

3. Hearings - None

4. General Public Comment – None

5. Proclamations and Commemorations

a. Resolution Adopting an Interim Affordable Housing Policy

Councilor Hanneke reported that the Community Resources Committee voted 4-1 to recommend the Council adopt the resolution. The dissenting vote was in favor of adopting the Housing Policy proposed by Chair of the Amherst Affordable Housing Trust John Hornik.

President Griesemer read a statement from John Hornik.

MOTION: President Griesemer moved, second by Councilor Bahl-Milne, to adopt the Resolution Adopting an Interim Affordable Housing Policy, as presented.

VOTED: Unanimously by roll call to adopt the Resolution Adopting an Interim Affordable Housing Policy, as presented.

6. Presentations and Discussion

a. Town of Amherst COVID-19 Status Update

Lev Ben-Ezra, Executive Director of the Amherst Survival Center spoke about:

- Food insecurity increasing
- Increased need for expanded delivery and safe pickup options
- Folks facing food insecurity before COVID-19
- Center response, lunch, snacks, produce, all pre-packaged and ready to-go
- Full pantry with social distancing
- Laundry, lockers, shower
- Re-worked operations; M, T, H, F 11-3, sanitizing, hygiene, social distancing, face coverings, new volunteers, minimal staff, more food, focus on efficiency
- Partnerships: Amherst & Belchertown Senior Centers, Pelham FD, VA, ServiceNet, CHD, Health Care, Staffing, Storage from Cows Family, and food from restaurants/food service
- Essential services
- Moving forward: need for community investment, people, financial support, creative partnerships
- www.amherstsurvival.org/covid19
- www.amherstsurvival.org/donate

President Griesemer disclosed her involvement with the Survival Center; she continues to serve on the Board of Directors.

Councilor Pam asked about staffing in “pods.” L. Ben-Ezra responded that staff is broken into teams, with some overlap to reduce staff members’ exposure and risk of multiple staff members getting sick at once.

Councilor Schoen asked about specific types of help that are needed, if there are restrictions on age of volunteers and food donations. L. Ben-Ezra responded that the center is not actively seeking food donations, which take a lot of people-power to process. Restaurants, food services, and farms are making donations. No specific restriction on age or preexisting conditions, trust volunteers to make decisions about risk. Accepting volunteers who can commit to a shift or two each week. Most actively seeking partnerships to have staff 3-5 days per week in case of a staff illness.

Councilor Pam asked for details about restaurants contributing. L. Ben-Ezra responded that when restaurants decided to close their doors, they contacted the center to donate food. Donations designated to spend at local restaurants for cooked food.

The Council thanked Lev Ben-Ezra for the Survival Center's vital service to the community.

Town Manager Paul Bockelman gave an update on the Town's response to COVID-19, and spoke about:

- Current number of cases in the state and county, 10 cases in Amherst
- Next 7-10 days are crucial, expect an uptick in cases in hospitals
- Governor extended non-essential closures and schools to May 4
- Playgrounds are closed
- Basketball courts closed
- Puffers Pond closed to groups
- Metered parking enforcement suspended
- Core Emergency Team and Continuity of Operations
- Adequate force of Firefighters, Police and Dispatch healthy
- Wastewater treatment operators healthy
- Finance, health, IT, HR all doing well
- Call in events for live Q & A
- Virtual cuppa joe Friday April 10 8-9:30
- COVID-19 webpage www.amherstCOVID19.org
- What's ahead: most difficult 4-6 weeks, continued outreach, weekly updates to Council
- Local business impact

Health Director Julie Federman spoke about:

- CDC recommendation that people wear homemade cloth face coverings
- Directions online to make masks, use tightly woven cotton fabric, two layers: one of flannel and one tightly woven cotton, insert with coffee filter or paper towel
- Urged to wear a face covering to protect in close proximity to others in a grocery store or in public
- Wash mask when you come home, no special care directions
- Donate N95 or surgical masks if you have extra

Councilor Schreiber spoke about areas that are growing the quickest, asked Hampshire County growing fast. J. Federman responded that the state has increased testing, makes sense we are seeing more cases reported. The disease has been here and now we are seeing the increased numbers.

Councilor Schoen asked a question from a resident, what do you do if you see a group of people gathering outside. P. Bockelman responded that groups of 10 or more can be reported to police and dispatch will send an officer to educate about social distancing.

Councilor Ross commented about assumptions about the age of people gathering, and asked that people not assume it is always young people gathering. Councilor Ross asked about announcing numbers of confirmed cases in Amherst & value of numbers and privacy considerations. Councilor Ross asked about parking enforcement personnel. P. Bockelman responded that parking enforcement is enforcing handicapped parking spaces, loading zones, etc. Also employed to do other duties as required. Initially did not want to release numbers for cases in Amherst. Benefit to release numbers. J. Federman added that typically, we do not release number or demographics, DPH were advising not to release numbers. Do not want people to feel that information is withheld. Can give a false impression. Did not want people to incorrectly assume who was sick.

Councilor Bahl-Milne asked for links to the COVID-19 webpage in the alert on the Town webpage, asked about spaces for homeless population, grocery stores, and local and regional hospitals. J. Federman responded that some grocery stores are using social distancing. People are advised not to use reusable bags, to wipe carts, then put groceries outside or in unused area for 24 hours, wipe down refrigerated items with a bleach wipe before putting away, fresh vegetables can be washed in the sink, shopping bags leave for 24 hours or spray with disinfectant. Hospitals are doing a lot, Cooley rearranged units to allow for more space for COVID-19 patients. When surge comes, demand for ventilators, masks and N95 masks. Homeless folks, implemented health care workers to screen guests at Craig's Doors, set up shelter to allow for social distancing, dinner is served on individual trays, no ill guests right now. New site to isolate individuals who are experiencing homelessness and test positive for the virus. P. Bockelman added that the Town is working closely with the City of Northampton on homelessness needs in both communities. Limiting factor is qualified staff. Learning from other communities who are ahead of Amherst in the crisis.

Councilor Steinberg observed that people need the opportunity to get outside and exercise, educate people about how to social distance in parks and on trails. P. Bockelman the Town is asking public to pack their own trash.

Councilor Brewer commented that not everyone has a garage to keep groceries, Lysol wipes, or extra fridge. Not realistic expectations. No wipes at the store. J. Federman groceries can be kept out of the way or use bleach solution: 3 teaspoons of bleach, one cup of water, can soak a paper towel and use as a wipe. 9:1 water:bleach. Or wash with soap and water for 20 seconds and allow to dry.

Councilor Pam confident that we are doing as best as we can. Ask if we have information about recoveries after being on ventilators. J. Federman responded that people need to discuss outcomes with health care providers.

Councilor DuMont asked if Craig's Doors will need to close and open a second location if someone tests positive. J. Federman responded that focus on isolation that if someone is sick that they have somewhere to go, and contact tracing.

b. Town Financial Update

Town Manager Paul Bockelman spoke about:

- Fiscal Years 2020 and 2021
- Due dates for taxes extended real estate taxes moved to June 1
- Personal property now due May 1
- Bills due March 10 or later now due June 1
- Exemptions and deferrals new date
- Interest payments and penalties are waived until June 30
- No termination of water and sewer service due to nonpayment
- What we know – revenues and expenditures in 2-3 weeks as of March 31
- State revenues were up by 3%
- Tomorrow at 9:30 Senate and House Chairs of Ways and Means and Sec of Admin & Finance
- Projecting a dramatic loss of revenue
- We don't know what expenditures will be for current year, revenue forecasts for FY21, or budget for FY21
- No roadmap, will be different from last financial collapse

- Revenue projections: revenue streams gone from budget, state aid uncertain, enterprise funds dropped dramatically when students left Town. All sources of revenue will be depleted
- Maintain operating budgets for town, schools, regional schools, library.
- Have to pay debt service, capital
- Assessment to meet for retirement and OPEB
- Time deadlines upcoming: changed to 5/1 for Regional School, School, and Library budget
- June 1 Town manager budget due
- June 30 Council adoption of budget
- Budget coordinating group will be called soon to talk about revenue forecasts
- Will revise and update revenue projections, and new budget scenarios
- Continuing to send bills on regular schedule, new due date

Interim Finance Director Sonia Aldrich added:

- Tax bills have already been sent with original due date
- 3rd quarter revenues are on target, won't know anything till end of next quarter

Councilor Schoen asked if there is a point when we decide to proceed with budget one month at a time. P. Bockelman responded that deadlines in the Charter are directive, so maintain transparency and take things a month at a time. Many cities and towns in a similar situation.

Councilor Pam commented that at least we are starting from a good place.

Councilor Steinberg commented that he is working to make sure Finance Committee is synchronized to make sure we get where we need to be in an orderly process. Statute is permissive for cities. Will be discussed at Finance Committee meeting tomorrow so community is aware of depth of problem.

7. Action Items

a. 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.

To remove an item from the consent agenda for discussion later in the meeting, ask that it be removed when the President lists the consent agenda items. The request to remove an item from the consent agenda does not require a second.

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

- 7.b. Referral of Bylaw Banning Use of Wild and Exotic Animals to Community Resources Committee, and automatic referral to Governance, Organization, and Legislation Committee
- 7.d. Acknowledgement of First Discussion of Amendment to Town Council Rules of Procedure rule 10.8k
- 10.a. Approval of March 30, 2020 Special Town Council Meeting minutes, as presented

VOTED: Unanimously by roll call to move the following items, and the printed motions thereunder and approve those items as a single unit:

- 7.b. Referral of Bylaw Banning Use of Wild and Exotic Animals to Community

Resources Committee, and automatic referral to Governance, Organization, and Legislation Committee

- 7.d. Acknowledgement of First Discussion of Amendment to Town Council Rules of Procedure rule 10.8k
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c. Proposed Parking Regulation Changes to Lincoln Avenue – *Second Discussion, Council Rules of Procedure rule 8.4*

President Griesemer summarized Council action up to this point, referral to Town Services and Outreach (TSO) Committee of other proposed changes. Issue is only for setbacks to allow greater visibility of setbacks.

Councilor De Angelis spoke about the inconsistency of the setbacks at different intersections.

Councilor Schoen asked about the 30 and 60 in the motion sheet. President Griesemer responded that 60 feet would make it consistent with the others.

Councilor Pam noted the distance is 200 ft on Amity Street and 120 ft on Northampton Road.

Councilor Hanneke spoke to the Councilor questions: McClellan to Fearing intersection was referred to TSO. That would not be repealed in the motion, would remain in effect if voted tonight.

Councilor Bahl-Milne asked to summarize the loss of parking and effect on surrounding neighborhoods.

President Griesemer significant changes were referred to TSO. They will look at surrounding neighborhoods. The only thing we are dealing with are setbacks from intersections.

Councilor Brewer comfortable dealing with this as the safety issue, would like someone to keep track of the parking loss number as we continue the conversation.

Councilor Pam agree with Councilor Brewer. This is the safety issue. Deal with other issues later.

MOTION: Councilor Hanneke moved, second by Councilor Ryan, to do the following:

1. Repeal the following existing parking restrictions voted by the Select Board on July 27, 2015:
 - Parking prohibited as a tow zone, on the east and west side of Lincoln Avenue, 120 feet north of the intersection of Northampton Road.
 - Parking prohibited as a tow zone, on the east and west side of Lincoln Avenue, 30 feet north and south of Gaylord Street.
 - Parking prohibited as a tow zone, on the east and west side of Lincoln Avenue, 120 feet north and south of Amity Street.
 - Parking prohibited as a tow zone, on the west side of Lincoln Avenue, 30 feet south of Elm Street.
 - Parking prohibited as a tow zone, on the east side of Lincoln Avenue, 30 feet south of McClellan Street.
2. Repeal the following additional parking restrictions:
 - Parking prohibited as a tow zone, on the west side of Lincoln Avenue, from Elm Street to Fearing Street.
3. Enact the following parking restrictions:
 - Parking prohibited as a tow zone, on the east and west side of Lincoln Avenue, for a distance of 120 feet north of the intersection of Northampton Road.

- Parking prohibited as a tow zone, on the east and west side of Lincoln Avenue, for a distance of 60 feet north and south of Gaylord Street,
- Parking prohibited as a tow zone, on the east and west side of Lincoln Avenue, for a distance of 200 feet north and 120 feet south of Amity Street.
- Parking prohibited as a tow zone, on the west side of Lincoln Avenue, beginning 200 feet north of Amity Street to North Hadley Road.
- Parking prohibited as a tow zone, on the east side of Lincoln Avenue, for a distance of 60 feet north and south of McClellan Street.

Councilor DuMont asked about the different lengths of setbacks.

Councilor Pam spoke in support of the motion.

VOTED: Unanimously by roll call to do the following:

1. Repeal the following existing parking restrictions voted by the Select Board on July 27, 2015:
 - Parking prohibited as a tow zone, on the east and west side of Lincoln Avenue, 120 feet north of the intersection of Northampton Road.
 - Parking prohibited as a tow zone, on the east and west side of Lincoln Avenue, 30 feet north and south of Gaylord Street.
 - Parking prohibited as a tow zone, on the east and west side of Lincoln Avenue, 120 feet north and south of Amity Street.
 - Parking prohibited as a tow zone, on the west side of Lincoln Avenue, 30 feet south of Elm Street.
 - Parking prohibited as a tow zone, on the east side of Lincoln Avenue, 30 feet south of McClellan Street.
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 - Parking prohibited as a tow zone, on the west side of Lincoln Avenue, from Elm Street to Fearing Street.
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 - Parking prohibited as a tow zone, on the east and west side of Lincoln Avenue, for a distance of 120 feet north of the intersection of Northampton Road.
 - Parking prohibited as a tow zone, on the east and west side of Lincoln Avenue, for a distance of 60 feet north and south of Gaylord Street,
 - Parking prohibited as a tow zone, on the east and west side of Lincoln Avenue, for a distance of 200 feet north and 120 feet south of Amity Street.
 - Parking prohibited as a tow zone, on the west side of Lincoln Avenue, beginning 200 feet north of Amity Street to North Hadley Road.
 - Parking prohibited as a tow zone, on the east side of Lincoln Avenue, for a distance of 60 feet north and south of McClellan Street.
8. **Appointments** - *None*
9. **Committee Reports**
 - a. **Community Resources Committee** – Councilor Hanneke reported that the committee will elect a chair and vice chair at the next meeting Wednesday, April 8 at 8:30 a.m., the committee will take up zoning process issues and land use section of the Master Plan next.
 - b. **Finance Committee** – No additional report

- c. **Governance, Organization and Legislation Committee** – Councilor Ryan reported there is a written committee report in the Council packet, and the next committee meeting will be on Wednesday, April 22
- d. **Joint Capital Planning Committee** – Councilor Schoen reported that the committee will not meet until April 22 at the earliest, the committee’s work is on hold at this point
- e. **Outreach, Communications, and Appointments Ad Hoc Committee** – Councilor Ross reported that the committee meeting to interview applicants to fill Zoning Board of Appeals vacancies will be Thursday, April 16 at 7:00 p.m., or following the joint Council and School Committee meeting, if it is needed
- f. **Town Services and Outreach Committee** – President Griesemer reported that the committee elected Councilor DuMont and Councilor Ross as chair and vice chair, respectively. The committee will address Town Manager appointments, if filed with the Town Clerk, at their next meeting on April 13 at 11:30 a.m.

Councilor Schoen asked about the number of Zoning Board of Appeals vacancies that will be filled. Councilor Ross responded that it will depend on interviews and committee votes.

10. Approval of Minutes

- a. **March 30, 2020 Special Council Meeting minutes** –*Approved via Consent Agenda*

11. Town Manager Report

Town Manager Report

Highlight:

- Census response rate is about 40%
- Supportive housing at 142 Northampton Rd received project eligibility letter, so they can apply for a comprehensive permit from the ZBA. Make sure community is engaged through that process
- Farmer’s market working with them to create more social distance to allow access to fresh food and prevent gatherings
- Volunteers, meals on wheels, thank volunteers & senior center needs volunteers
- New website for Kendrick Park playground, announced soon

12. Town Council Comments

Councilor Pam asked date of next TSO meeting. 4/13 at 11:30.

Councilor Hanneke asked if response rate includes students living on campus. Does not include students living on campus.

Councilor Brewer Northampton road project, believe what we will be doing is working with the applicant to tell them if they file by the end of April, all deadlines will be pushed way out. Hoping they are thinking through if they need to do that. Hope that people do not feel pressure. Farmer’s Market support the market but concern that it will have to look radically different with social distancing. April products are not fresh food products. Nervous about what we are trying to do and how realistic it is.

Councilor Pam for the Farmer’s Market get guidance about how important the market is. Hope to see it in a new safer format.

Councilor Bahl-Milne echo what Councilor Pam was saying about farmer’s market. Keep the market going.

Councilor Schreiber echo, support local farms. Story in the Globe about importance of farms in metro Boston area.

President Griesemer asked about the Farmer's Market use of the public way. Bockelman strict guidelines, gateways to monitor the number of people and will find out if it requires and additional request for public way. Hanneke have not dealt with request for this year.

Councilor Pam reminder that SNAP benefits users get added benefit at farmer's market.

President Griesemer thank you for patience for scheduling committee meetings to allow proper training, we have not been scheduling committees of the Town that is available and accessible. Getting there and are putting out guidelines to get there as quickly as we can. Virtual meetings take more work than meeting in person.

Next meeting on 4/13, no meeting on 4/20 unless there is an emergency.

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

14. Executive Session – None

15. Adjourn

President Griesemer declared the meeting adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Athena O'Keeffe

Clerk of the Council

Record of Agenda Packet Materials and Documents Presented

00. 04-06-2020 Draft Motions for Town Council-rev 4-6-20

00. 04-06-2020 FINAL Town Council Agenda

10.a. 03-30-2020 DRAFT Special Town Council Minutes - rev 4-6-20

11. Town Manager Report 04-06-2020

2020-03-23 GOL Report to Town Council

2020-04-02 CRC Report to Town Council

5.a. 2020-02-26 Interim Affordable Housing Policy Resolution - As Sponsored by CRC

6.a. COVID-19 Town Council Presentation 04-06-2020

6.a. Survival Center - Town Council Presentation 2020.04.06

6.b. Town Finance Update 04-06-2020

7.b. info sheet exotic animal ban

7.b. PROHIBITING THE USE OF WILD AND EXOTIC ANIMALS IN TRAVELING SHOWS AND CIRCUSES

7.c. Lincoln Ave maps - side by side existing and proposed regulations

7.c. Public Way - Lincoln Avenue 02-05-2020 Updated 03-05-2020

7.d. Proposed Revision to ROP 10.8(k)
KP Law Update Land_Use_Permitting_Deadline_Extensions 04-04-2020
KP Law Update Municipal_Relief_Legislation 04-04-2020
PROPOSED Parking Reg Sketch Mid Lincoln6
PROPOSED Parking Reg Sketch N Lincoln6
PROPOSED Parking Reg Sketch S Lincoln6