



**Town of Amherst
Special Town Council Meeting
Monday, August 17, 2020
5:00 p.m.
Virtual Meeting
Minutes**

Complete video is available online: <https://amherstmedia.org/content/amherst-town-council-august-17-2020>

1. Call to Order

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, Assistant Town Manager David Ziomek, IT Director Sean Hannon, and Clerk of the Council Athena O’Keeffe

After confirming all participants could hear and be heard, President Griesemer declared the presence of a quorum, called the meeting to order at 5:08 p.m. and announced audio and video recording by Amherst Media.

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

2. Announcements

Upcoming Town Council Meetings:

- Regular Town Council Meeting: August 31, 2020 6:30 p.m.
- Regular Town Council Meeting: September 14, 2020 6:30 p.m.

Upcoming Council Committee Meetings:

- Community Resources Committee: August 18, 2020 2:00 p.m.
- Finance Committee: TBD
- Governance, Organization, and Legislation Committee: August 19, 2020 10:30 a.m.
- Town Services and Outreach Committee: August 20, 2020 6:30 p.m.

All meeting agendas and details are posted at www.amherstma.gov/calendar

3. Hearings

- a. 7:00 p.m. Public Hearing: Eversource request to install three jointly owned poles on Harkness Road – It was determined that the location of the poles requested is in Pelham, and a public hearing was no longer required.

Until 7:00 pm, Councilors reviewed Town Manager evaluation documents with no discussion. At 7:00 pm, President Griesemer confirmed all Councilors could hear and be heard.

- 4. General Public Comment – None**
- 5. Consent Agenda - None**
- 6. Resolutions and Proclamations - None**
- 7. Presentations and Discussion**
 - a. Town Manager Performance Evaluation**

Councilors discussed edits to the document “FY20 Town Manager Evaluation Memo - DRAFT as of 8-27-2020” including:

- Specific reference to the economic impact of COVID-19
- Clarification of the Town Manager’s length of service
- Agreements, and lack thereof, with higher education institutions
- Number of questions that Councilors responded “unable to judge”
- Phrasing of “police issue” that may be unclear without more context
- Discussion of the downtown vision and plans
- The tone of the memo
- Inclusion of minority views
- Inclusion of suggestions or goals
- Reference to individual Councilor evaluations, or addition of evaluations as an appendix

Public Comment:

Curry Kautz, Amherst resident, asked for more clarity regarding the timing of public comment, commented that community safety is important, and stated that no one is doing enough regarding community safety.

b. Town Council Performance Goals for Town Manager FY21

President Griesemer spoke about the draft goals, which represent a change to fewer specific goals and reflects broad goals with examples of achievement of the goal.

Councilor Steinberg noted the policy goals are listed alphabetically and their placement does not indicate priority.

Councilors discussed the following:

- Establishment of a police review board
- Adding a goal related to community health, safety, and social justice
- Adding a goal related to racial equity
- Diversity and empathy training for Councilors and Town staff

- Adopting the goals and making additions or revisions in the future
- Creating an oversight commission on police practices
- Use of the goals for the Town Manager evaluation next year
- Town Manager goals as a tool for accomplishing the Council's policy goals
- How to incorporate racial equity into the goals

Public comment:

Demetria Shabazz, Amherst resident, spoke in support of inclusion of minority opinions, and in support of a specific racial equity goal, commented that Councilors' bias is written into policy, and spoke about specific, measurable goals.

Lydia Irons, Amherst resident, echoed the previous speakers' comments, added that racial equity should be paramount in the Town Manager's goals, spoke about Councilors comments made during committee meetings and urged the Council to include racial equity goals in the Town Manager's goals.

Sarah Pallas agreed that racial equity needs to be front and center, and commented that it is unacceptable for a Council member to state that comments made by black residents are fabricated.

Allegra Clark, Amherst resident, spoke in support of creating a racial equity goal and weaving racial equity into all of the Town Manager's goals.

Gabriel Davila, Amherst resident, stated that it is unacceptable that the Council sees racial justice as another goal that the council has to deal with, spoke about how racism exists in Amherst including experiences as an Amherst student that never experienced a teacher of color, and stated that people of color should not have to prove that racism exists.

Jose Adastrá, Northampton resident, spoke about fighting abolition, lost family members due to drug wars, colonization of Puerto Rico, the feeling of being a second class citizen, lack of representation, asked the Council be sensitive to the requests of the Black Lives Matter movement and asked the Council to reach out to Black Lives Matter activists.

Isolda Ortega-Bustamante, Amherst resident, commented that the Town Manager goals were not available with enough time for reasonable discussion, stated that the goals fail to give a meaningful response to systemic racism in Amherst, spoke about voting places and the need for listening sessions.

Councilor Schoen spoke about suggested changes to the economic vitality and capital projects sections.

Councilor Pam asked for a way forward regarding racial equity goals.

Councilor Ross asked about process.

Councilor DuMont commented about the climate action goal, and that it was disappointing that the climate action goal was less than the goals adopted by the Council last year.

Councilor Brewer spoke about the review instrument and review process.

8. Action Items

a. Eversource Pole Petition – *Not required*

9. Appointments - *None*

10. Committee and Liaison Reports - *None*

11. Approval of Minutes – *None*

12. Town Manager Report

13. Town Council Comments - *None*

14. Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair 48 Hours in Advance of the Meeting - *None*

15. Executive Session – *None*

16. Adjourn

President Griesemer declared the meeting adjourned 9:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Athena O'Keefe

Clerk of the Council

Record of Agenda Packet Materials and Documents Presented

00. 08-17-2020 Draft Motions for Town Council

00. 08-17-2020 FINAL Town Council Agenda

3.a. 8.a. Eversource Pole Petition - Harkness Road

7.b. Timeline for Town Manager FY20 Evaluation - Draft as 8-17-2020

All Individual Council Responses Data TM EVAL 2020

Composite TM EVAL by TC 2020 Summary with bar graphs only

FY20 Town Manager Evaluation Memo - DRAFT as of 8-27-2020

Manager Performance and Assessment Goals FY21 - DRAFT Rev.5 2020-08-12

Questions 6, 13, 20, 27, 32, 40, 45, 46, 47 summary data