

BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES– Final
Public Health Emergency Response Update Virtual Meeting Pursuant to Governor Baker's
March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of Open Meeting Law.
Zoom Meeting ID# 437201565
Monday March 23, 2020
6:30 P.M.

PARTICIPANTS: Jennifer Glass, Chair
(Virtually) James Craig
Jonathan Dwyer
Tim Higgins – Town Administrator
Mary Day – Assistant Town Administrator
Becky McFall, School Superintendent
Tara Mitchell, Chair – School Committee
Trish McGean – Public Health Nurse
Trish Miller – Board of Health
Colleen Wilkins – Finance Director/Town Accountant
Carolyn Bottum – Director, Council on Aging
Kevin Kennedy – Police Chief
Brian Young – Deputy Fire Chief
Valerie Fox – Town Clerk
Peggy Elder – Administrative Assistant

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS:

- Ms. Glass opened the meeting, noting that the Open Meeting Law requirement to have a quorum present in a physical location has been suspended per Governor Baker's declaration of a state of emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and she reviewed the agenda.

Ms. Glass acknowledged and thanked Mr. Higgins for leading his team and coordinating every element of Town government and understanding what it means to be a public employer. She added that she is grateful for his many years of experience in Lincoln as well as his ties with the surrounding communities. She also noted that her thanks are also extended to Ms. Day as she and Mr. Higgins keep the Town functioning and handle complex human resource issues in the midst of ever changing state and federal directives. Ms. Glass also acknowledged the efforts of Superintendent McFall and her team as they work to stay in contact with their faculty, staff, students, and families while also taking care of the most vulnerable of their students by delivering food and technology devices in Lincoln, on the Hanscom base, and in Boston. Ms. Glass also thanked IT Director Michael Dolan who has been working round the clock to support this work from home environment for both employees and volunteers. Ms. Glass highlighted volunteer Jim Cunningham who has made it possible to stream meetings over our broadcasting system. She also acknowledged Finance Committee Chair Andy Paine who has helped many residents learn to navigate the Zoom meeting platform.

Mr. Craig echoed Ms. Glass's sentiments. He thanked the Town's Department of Public Works who continue to support the Town's residents by adding hours to the Transfer Station. He reported that the DPW and Water Department were also busy over the weekend with a water main break that was handled efficiently. Mr. Craig also thanked Lincoln's Public Health Nurse Trish McGean for her tireless work in such an unprecedented situation.

Mr. Dwyer thanked the Police and Fire Department for being on call and for answering the many questions that come up in this type of emergency. He went on to thank Council on Aging staff Carolyn Bottum, Abigail Butt, and Joan Sunderland for all their hard work to be prepared. Their outreach to the Town's most vulnerable citizens is outstanding and he appreciates their creativity and collaborative effort.

Ms. Glass commented that the Coronavirus has forced us to look at how we conduct every aspect of our daily lives and that she wanted to acknowledge the Town's professional team which has been working hard at keeping the Town running and keeping residents safe. She added that residents are here to support Town employees and are available when needed.

Mr. Higgins thanked the Board and the Town for the support he has seen for the past few weeks. He commented that a spirit of generosity has been evident among staff, leadership boards, and the residents all going above and beyond for us and he greatly appreciates the role that each person involved is playing. Mr. Higgins noted the role that the Council on Aging is playing caring for the Town's most vulnerable residents and he wanted to assure the Town that that group of people are foremost on the Town's mind.

DISCUSSION:

- Public Health Emergency Response Update
 1. Governor's Latest Order: Mr. Higgins reported that effective from Tuesday, March 24 at noon and in effect until April 7, 2020 at noon, the Governor has ordered all non essential businesses and organizations to close their physical facilities. It defines a list of essential services that will continue to operate. The list of relevant Town services include health and safety functions, water and public works, IT, and other government designated functions that include financial operations, emergency inspections, cemetery, and vital records. The list of essential services outside of Town functions includes: healthcare providers and pharmacies, human service providers, grocery and carry out food establishments including farmstands and farm's markets, gas stations, liquor stores, as well as the energy industry. The order specifies that gatherings should be of ten or fewer. Church and faith based organizations are not required to close, but they must comply with the restrictions on gatherings under the Governor's order.
 2. Public Health & Safety: Mr. Higgins reported that the top priority is to monitor the evolving health risk to the community and to ensure that our Town officials and residents are receiving timely and accurate information. To this end, we have assembled the Public Health Response Team composed of Town Public Health Nurse, Deputy Fire Chief, Police Chief, Council on Aging Director, School Superintendent, Board of Health member, and Mr. Higgins himself. Our public health officials are in constant contact with local and regional health authorities. They have created a dedicated page on the Town website which is available at www.lincolnpublichealthnews.com. The team has been an invaluable source of information for officials, staff and residents. On Sunday, Lincoln confirmed its first case. Trish McGean and the Board of Health have been monitoring the situation and advising the Town. Trish McGean reported that she received amazing support when she was contacted about the first positive case in Town. She added that the weeks of preparation paid off and

going forward she feels the more information going forward the better, as there are lots of questions.

3. Leadership and Communications: Mr. Higgins reported that although non-essential business has temporarily halted, he wanted to assure the Town that the key Boards, i.e. Board of Selectmen, Board of Health, School Committee, and Finance Committee are still functioning and continuing to make key policy decisions for the community. He noted that their support has been instrumental in the past few weeks. In terms of leadership a meeting protocol was issued last week. He worked with Ms. Glass to develop a guidance document that went out to all the Boards and Committees emphasizing the need to evaluate essential versus non-essential functions. The focus should be on the essential functions. The memo suggests that the essential boards continue to meet and function, but that the non-essential boards halt their business unless something urgent arises. Mr. Higgins reported that the staff has been great. Some are working remotely at home, others are working staggered shifts, but all are keeping the work of the Town continuing through this emergency. In terms of communications, Ms. Glass has been his go-to person. As expected in an emergency, communications has been challenging. Mr. Higgins noted that we need to think as a group how we can accomplish this more efficiently. Ms. Glass has been keeping the communication channels to boards and committees going. Mr. Higgins said the staff is doing so as well. Information has gone out to the community via Lincoln Talk, The Squirrel, various email lists, and the. Mr. Higgins stated that the Town has refrained from the use of reverse 911 calls as a channel and will continue to do so unless necessary. As far as communication with Hanscom, Mr. Higgins has been in touch with the Base Commander and is scheduled to have a video meeting with him and the other host community leaders later in the week. He added that our public safety officials are in contact with their counterparts on the Base and are getting public health updates as well.

Ms. Glass noted people should send any questions to selectmen@lincolntown.org when they have non-urgent questions or are not sure which department they should be addressed to.

4. Operational Status of Departments: Mr. Higgins reported that effective last Tuesday, March 17, 2020, decisions were made about the definition of essential and non-essential services, and steps were taken to ensure that our essential services are fully operational. All offices are closed to the public except for emergencies and truly extenuating circumstances. Mr. Higgins is pleased to report to the Board that the public has been amazingly cooperative in that regard. He noted that they really have respected the need for the Town to remain focused on emergency health and safety considerations and he urges the public to continue to cooperate in that regard.

Mr. Higgins commented that as far as essential services go, the public health, fire, police, emergency communications, water, public works, the Selectmen and Town Administrator's Office are open and remain fully staffed and operational. Most of these offices continuing to function in an emergency is second nature due to protocols that have been in place going back to 9/11 and the efforts that took place after that event and have paid off for the Town in preparedness.

Police Chief Keven Kennedy thanked the town residents, the Selectmen, and Mr. Higgins for all of their support thus far. He added that they are continuing business as usual at the

moment with the same level of services. They are keeping in constant contact with Town Offices as well as to their local and regional counterparts. As it relates to mutual aid, they have been working on developing contingency plans. Staffing levels are the same currently, but hours and shift times may be required to change at some point in the future. Mental health clinician and domestic violence prevention programs are still available. Chief Kennedy extended his thanks to Minuteman Tech which donated a number of personal protection equipment including the N95 masks, full masks with respirators, surgical masks, gowns and tyvac suits. As far as enforcement in regard to the Governor's order, they will be using information rather than enforcement measures which would have to go through the Board of Health.

Deputy Fire Chief Brian Young reported that they have implemented some protocols at the station to enable social distancing. They've asked people to call for burn permits and they are waiving the fees this year to lessen the contact with the public. He added that the 26-F inspections (smoke and carbon dioxide detector) have been put off until 90 days after the emergency. Dep. Chief Young reported that they have made the necessary changes in protocol for transport in preparing for the transport of a positive tested patient. He noted that there has been a shift in the staff during this emergency. They are seeing themselves as members of the community and not just medical professionals, so they are going to start wearing masks on every call just for the sake of protecting the residents. He noted that one of his fears at the beginning was that there would be an overwhelming need for medical transport due to fears of the coronavirus, but what they have seen is a decrease in medical calls. While that is good for the hospitals, we have a fear that people are too afraid to go to the hospital. Those that have medical conditions that require medical care should not be afraid to go to the hospital for care as all safety precautions are being taken. At the station they are practicing social distancing by keeping the ambulance crews and engine crews separate. Echoing what Chief Kennedy had said regarding the possible mutual aid scenarios, the Department plans to operate the same whether it is Lincoln personnel or other local communities personnel.

Mr. Higgins reported that as far as non-essential operations go, the Town has some employees working from home and up until this morning's order from the Governor, some were reporting on a staggered schedule and checking in. That will have to cease due to the Governor's order. He encouraged the public to take advantage of the Town's various online services. The public announcement that he and Ms. Glass released last week had a detailed list of the many services that can be accessed online. Mr. Higgins noted that there is a group of employees that fall in the middle of essential and non-essential as they are critical to the basic operations of the Town. They are the Social Services network, Finance, Accounting, Collections, and IT. The Town Clerk's office is working through some unique challenges associated with cemeteries and vital records. They are doing the best they can to accommodate people as much as possible. Mr. Higgins wanted to point out that the staff has begun working across departments when able to do so.

Council on Aging Director Carolyn Bottum reported that the COA activities have been suspended, but they do have some online classes and they are trying to start up some support groups through Zoom. She added that most of their work is with the most vulnerable residents right now. The first week of March they identified 175 residents of all ages that were at high risk. A letter written by Public Health Nurse Trish McGean that

included a lot of information and what to do to prepare for the pandemic was sent to everyone on that list. At this point all on the list have been called and they have determined who needs and wants check-in calls. They will be in regular contact with roughly 70 residents. She reported that they are finding that many of these residents already have family and neighbors who are checking in on them and providing whatever assistance that is needed. She added that with some people who have adult children now working from home at this time actually now have more assistance than they normally do. Ms. Bottum noted that they are dealing with people who are concerned about access to food and worried about loss of income at this time. She added that she is developing a list of volunteers who are helping deliver food and help in whatever form needed.

Mr. Higgins reported that the Parks and Recreation Committee has closed all parks and playgrounds, but wanted to note that all trails in the Town are open for use.

5. Legal Guidance Received: Mr. Higgins reported that the issues are coming at the Town quickly, but the Town is getting great support from KP Law, our Town Counsels, and from other sources including other communities and the Mass Municipal Association. The kind of information that we are getting covers a range of topics from clarifying basic governmental authorities to issues of public health and safety. He noted that they are applying common sense and doing our due diligence with the latest information available. He added that the process to postpone the Annual Town Meeting has been another labor intensive exercise. While the legal authority to postpone the Town Meeting was pretty clear, the legal authority to postpone the election was not as clear. That said, the Town made the decision to put public health and safety first and postponed the Town Election. Although the Town had solid legal advice on our authority to postpone it, Mr. Higgins said that he was gratified to hear last week that the Governor and the legislature had caught up to Lincoln and passed statewide legislation to make the mechanics of that happen more smoothly. He added that this is an good example of how they as a leadership are trying to function because they are going to be forced make decisions before the legal landscape has solidified. In that situation they were in close consultation with Town Moderator Sarah Cannon-Holden who was integral to all the decision making that took place. Mr. Higgins confirmed that the leadership team is thinking about issues that are time sensitive and need to be voted on, monitoring the evolving health conditions and will be reassessing the timing of the Town Meeting and the Election. Mr. Higgins reported that there is a lot of legal guidance coming out in regard to Town financing and relaxation of ordinary laws and regulations so that we can respond more nimbly. On the human resource side, probably the most complex of legal issues we are dealing with, Mary Day, Assistant Town Administrator, is also the Human Resource Director for the Town and she has been keeping up to date on the legal side of human resources as it continues to change. Similar to the conditions that are driving the postponement of the election, the guiding principal of human resources is that we need to protect our people and acknowledge the contributions that they are making. For example, our Public Safety workers are continuing to come to work and are continuing to put themselves out on the front lines and we want to make sure that the decisions that we make about leave time, compensation, etc. are guided by the fact that those folks have been there for the Town. He wanted to assure our employees that those are the principals that are going to guide anydecision making going forward.

6. Finances of the Town: Mr. Dwyer noted that in the House bill that helps us navigate when we are having our elections, there was a clause about finances and he wondered if the Town was dealing with this proactively. The expenses associated with COVID-19 while paid in this fiscal year and the next fiscal year can be amortized over a few years. He asked if the Town is already tracking those expenses. Mr. Higgins responded that in terms of finances, he wanted to assure the front line people that the Town will do whatever it needs to do to ensure that they have the resources necessary to continue to provide essential services. He added that they are looking at a number of budget relief options and revenue sources. He noted that they have been in conversation with the Finance Committee and Colleen Wilkins, Finance Director is leading those efforts. The Town is starting to see COVID-19 related expenses being incurred in several departments. A new chart of accounts has been created to make sure those costs are being monitored in real time. He anticipates that at some point there will be State and Federal monies available and we want to be able to respond quickly and efficiently in submitting applications. That chart of accounts will be enormously helpful in pulling those expenses together. As far as expenses that bridge fiscal years, there are reserve fund transfers and Municipal Relief Act that are available to us that will allow us to make transfers between departments. One budget relief spot is that there is quite a bit of funding left in the Snow and Ice budget, as there has not been much use of that budget this year. As a result, the reserve fund is in better condition than it typically would be at this time of year. Mr. Higgins noted that they would be looking into all grants and emergency relief programs and will be assigning one member of the staff to lead those efforts, adding that there are a number of capable grant writers on staff and they will take advantage of those skills as the Town applies for reimbursement. Other financial imperatives foremost on their minds are collections, banking, and cash flow. The Treasurer/Collector's office is paying close attention to those issues. The Accounting department is making sure that payroll and accounts payable continue to happen. They are thinking of all sorts of contingency plans while being mindful of employee health and wellness going forward.
7. Ongoing Town Priorities: Mr. Higgins stated that he wanted to make sure all involved know that at some point the emergency is going to pass and normal business will resume and we are not taking our eye off of the several important issues and efforts that were ongoing before the emergency began. Those include Town Meeting and Special Town Meeting, the Election, the School Building project, and Lincoln Station planning being at the top of the list along with several others. Mr. Higgins added that he cannot say enough about the support and the collaboration that has been happening across the Town and how much he appreciates it. He asked for the Town's continued patience as we go forward through this emergency and genuinely welcomes the Town's feedback in terms of communication, etc. noting that the feedback is tremendously helpful to the team as they go forward.

Mr. Craig asked if declaring a state of emergency in Lincoln would aid in the Town getting needed funding, or whether it would be more of a symbolic declaration given that the State has already declared a state of emergency. Mr. Higgins consulted Town counsel on this and stated that these declarations are made more in an effort to set tone and encourage responsible behavior, but they are not necessary to make the Town eligible for any State or Federal funds. Mr. Dwyer added that he watched the Town of Concord deliberate this and their Town Counsel and Town Manager stated the same.

8. Schools: Mr. Higgins wanted to thank Superintendent McFall for all her work on behalf of students and families. She has been in regular communication, reaching out, keeping him aware of what is going on with the School department, and he has been doing the same with her. Given the close partnership the Superintendent McFall and the School Committee have with Hanscom, they have also been helpful in regard to keeping communication flowing between those channels.

Superintendent McFall thanked the Board for inviting her to come and give an update and noted that there will be a School Committee meeting Thursday night. She invited all who were interested in a more extensive update regarding the schools to join the meeting, which will be held via Zoom. She acknowledged Mr. Higgins and his team at Town Offices for their spirit of collaboration as they work through the legal and operations issues and what they are going to do as a Town as they await more formal guidance from the State. In addition, she thanked her School team – Administrators, the Facilities Department, and faculty and staff who are working extremely hard to get systems in place. She noted that when the schools closed on March 13th, it was done with very little planning in place. However, her team has come together to plan for how to meet the needs of their families, students and staff. She reported that all of their employees are working remotely and they are working to minimize the contact that they have with each other as well as the public. Currently there are only four people who have access to the schools, Michael Haines, Facilities Director, Buck Creel, Administrator for Business and Finance, Rob Ford, Technology Director, and herself. These four are the only people who can invite other employees to come in to do essential operations as needed. They are keeping that to a minimum as much as possible. This is to limit contact between employees, but also to keep the buildings clean. After the schools closed on the thirteenth, the buildings were deep cleaned. The hope is to keep them that way as long as possible. Before they are re-opened they will be deep cleaned again. Close monitoring of who enters the buildings and where they go is done so those areas can be recleaned right after they are vacated.

In this update, Superintendent McFall wanted to focus on three core areas:

- Access to Food
- Access to Technology
- Access to Learning Resources

Surveys were sent out to families to assess their needs in these three areas. Based on those results systems were put into place.

Access to Food - Lincoln does not qualify for the available federal assistance for meal assistance. There is advocacy from our Department of Education to the State legislature to provide some reimbursement to those districts who do not meet the federal criteria for reimbursement for meal programs. However, the schools went ahead and put a system in place that is providing meals for those in need right now. Currently they are providing lunch to 52 students in 31 families in Lincoln, Hanscom and Boston. Donelans has donated 400 reusable grocery bags that they are using to deliver the food. All public health protocols are being used with little or no personal contact.

Access to Technology – Superintendent McFall noted that it is important that as we transition to remote learning, all students must have access to the technology required to use the resources being provided. She reported that last Friday the technology team put together in the range of 50-70 laptops, Chromebooks, and iPads which were given out to families in need via curbside pick up. Another message will be sent out tomorrow to check in for a second wave, as there were families that said on the initial survey they were not in need, but that when they started at-home learning they realized they really could use another device. They are hoping to get these out this week.

Learning Resources: Superintendent McFall reported that they are looking to the State for some guidance. She noted that it is a balancing act between the guidance from the Department of Education (DESE) and the needs of the community and our families. Initial guidance from DESE was that they should be providing enrichment resources to students because of the varying types of support students have at home as well as ability to access the internet. She noted that there is a link to learning resources by grade level and by School on the School's website, www.lincnet.org. Additional assignments are being added by faculty. Superintendent McFall stated that families will receive a message from Jess Rose, Assistant Superintendent, with additional online resources for students.

Superintendent McFall reported that the Superintendent's Leadership Association met with the Commissioner of Education and the Presidents of the two main Teacher's unions in the state (AFT and MTA), and they are trying to come to some agreement as to the correct guidance and parameters around virtual distance learning. She hopes to get more guidance from them by the end of the week. She stressed the importance of being a collaborative team player with all of the other districts across the state.

Mr. Craig asked if the State had made any decisions in regard to the MCAS testing. Superintendent McFall responded that nothing definitive had been decided, but some options being discussed include widening the testing "windows" or changing the test dates completely. They could also choose not to test at all, or if they do test to waive this year's test scores and hold districts harmless.

Water Department: Mr. Higgins reported that the Water Commission, the Water Department, and the staff that support it really turned a corner about a month ago. He felt it important that the public know that especially in an emergency like this that the Town has reassembled a good team and that they are a very competent group. The Water Commissioners, Ruth Ann Hendrickson, Michelle Barnes and Jennifer Glass, as well as Jim Hutchinson and Tom Sander from the Finance Committee have been enormously helpful. He added that the public water supply is safe and all safety precautions are being followed. Ms. Glass reported that there was a water main break over the weekend, but it has been repaired. She added that if the Commission needed to meet they would make the necessary arrangements to make that happen.

- Liaison Reports

School Building Committee – Ms. Glass reported that the committee is meeting virtually on Wednesday and is only doing so because there are contracts and payments that need to be voted on in order for the project to continue on schedule.

Hanscom Air Force Base – Mr. Dwyer reported that Hanscom Air Force base has declared a public health emergency and has formed a crisis action team last week when they identified a COVID-19 positive airman who just returned from service. He was in quarantine since his arrival.

Lincoln Minutemen - Mr. Dwyer reported that the Lincoln Minutemen proactively cancelled their Patriot's Day related celebrations.

Hanscom Area Towns Committee (HATS) – Mr. Dwyer reported that Lisa Wieland, the new CEO of Massport, attended and she reported that there is no plan for additional growth at Hanscom. Massport is focusing on Worcester and Boston.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Signing of Warrants - Ms. Glass said that the Board needs to vote on a protocol for signing warrants during this emergency. She asked Mr. Higgins if the requirements were loosened at all. Mr. Higgins stated that during this time an electronic signature would be appropriate. Ms. Glass made a motion that Mr. Dwyer be authorized to sign warrants (either in person or electronically) for the Board of Selectmen during this time of emergency in the Town of Lincoln. Mr. Craig seconded the motion. With no further discussion, it was unanimously approved by roll call vote: Glass: Aye; Craig: Aye; Dwyer: Aye.

MEETING SCHEDULE:

It was decided that for the time being, it would be best to meet on a weekly basis. Meetings will be convened on Monday's at 6:30pm via Zoom. The meetings will continue to be broadcast via Comacast channel 8 and Verizon channel 33. They are also available on through the town website, www.lincolntown.org . Details about Zoom participation will be included on the agendas.

WARRANTS:

- Mr. Craig moved to approve the warrants. Mr. Dwyer seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion was approved unanimously with a roll call vote: Dwyer: Aye; Craig: Aye; Glass: Aye.

MINUTES:

- March 9, 2020 - Mr. Craig moved to approve the minutes of the March 9, 2020 meeting. Mr. Dwyer seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion was approved unanimously with a roll call vote: Dwyer: Aye; Craig: Aye; Glass: Aye.

Mr. Craig made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Dwyer seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion was approved unanimously with a roll call vote: Dwyer: Aye; Craig: Aye; Glass: Aye. The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:46 P.M.

Submitted by Peggy Elder

Approved 03/30/20